

This is a translation of Brantz Mayer’s work México, As It Was and As It Is (Baltimore, 1844) which although extended to three editions has become an extremely scarce item of Mexicana. The current edition faithfully reprints all of the excellent illustrations of the original while the prologue and the additional footnotes add much valuable information and explain many of the more obscure references. The translation appears to be not only accurate, but refreshing in idiomatic style passages where a lively turn of phrase in English brings forth an equally lively rendition into Spanish, e.g., “a mighty bad road” becomes “camino endemoniadamente malo.”

Brantz Mayer was the secretary of the United States legation in Mexico in 1841 and 1842. He took advantage of his position to travel widely within the country and to make a full account of all he observed from archaeology through politics and society to zoology. As one of the best of the descriptions of foreign observers in the period between independence and the war with the United States, Mayer’s work has long been consulted by modern scholars who should be exceedingly grateful to the Fondo de Cultura Económica for making this fine combination of American and Mexican scholarship readily obtainable.

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The author has added a prologue in which he briefly reviews changes in his ideas on this subject since the first edition in 1943. (L. H.)


After the first chapter (“Agrarian interpretation of Mexican history up to the Mexican Revolution”) the author considers the “Legislative Phase, 1910-1934,” the “Distributive Phase, 1934-1946,” and the “Technico-Constructive Phase initiated in 1947.” Two-thirds of the book deal with the Alemán administration’s contributions to agrarian reform. The author’s view is favorable toward past accomplishments and optimistic of the future, but he calls for a “true Mexican Rural Code” and “integral attention to the fundamental problems of agricultural production and [agricultural] industrialization [through] special commissions, decentralized organs of a rural character.” He also calls for the establishment of an “Institute of Agrarian Reform of the Mexican Revolution.”

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A biography of Terrazas, the “constructor de Chihuahuas,” with plenteous documentation and a thoughtful prologue. (J. F.)