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Review: Mexico and Yucatan

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prospects of the country. There is a good index, and a bibliography, in which not all the works mentioned are dated or placed.

MEXICO AND YUCATAN.

'The American Egypt: a Record of Travel in Yucatan.' By Channing Arnold and Frederick J. Tabor Frost. London: Hutchinson & Co. 1909. *Illustrations, Map, and Plans.* 16s. net.

It would be difficult for any one with a knowledge of Mexico and Yucatan to write with moderation about the book under review, so indiscriminate and unsympathetic is the treatment that the subject has received at the hands of the authors. No dates are given, but as the authors crossed the Atlantic in November, and had concluded their explorations in Cozumel by the time of the carnival, it may be surmised that the length of their stay in the country did not exceed four months.

One week in the "unpromising land" of Mexico is sufficient to show them that the capital is "a combination of Spanish squalor and Paris-cum-New York civilization—very lightly veneered over in some places."

Nothing appears to have pleased the authors but the tramcar service and the drive to Chapultepec. As for the people, "Burke could not find it in his heart to impeach a nation," but one is sorely tempted to forget his advice in writing of the Mexicans. As a people they are disagreeable. . . . The Spanish Mexicans are sensual and apathetic; avaricious, and yet indolent. . . . The Mestizas—near half the population—have all the worst features of their Spanish and Indian parents."

The Mexicans have their faults, and some of the difficulties in front of them as a nation are sufficiently obvious, but one week's observation appears to be rather a short time on which to frame such a sweeping indictment. The authors go on to describe the habits of the people, discuss the government, and prophesy the speedy absorption of Mexico and Central America by the United States.

The authors took ship from Vera Cruz for Yucatan, and, after a short stay in Merida, proceeded to visit the ruins of Chichen Itza, where they were guests at the hacienda of Mr. Thompson, the U.S. Consul, and then went on to Valladolid. (Do the authors really think that they were the first Englishmen to visit Valladolid? They even forget Catherwood.) Here preparations were made for a journey through the country to El Cuyo (? El Cayo), and thence by boat along the coast to Cozumel. This should be the most interesting portion of the book, for although the route has been described by Stephens and Catherwood, this part of the country is rarely visited. The authors state that they were able to prepare a map of this north-eastern corner of Yucatan, which attains an accuracy no map hitherto published has attained; but, unfortunately, this map is not included in the volume, and no explanation is given of how the survey was made. Some three or four weeks were passed in searching the island of Cozumel for ruins, unfortunately with little result. Rough plans of the two small groups of ruins that were discovered are given on pages 179 and 181. After returning to Merida the travellers visited the well-known ruins of Uxmal, Labna, Kabah, and Sayi.

Two hundred pages are taken up with a description of groups of ruins in Central America extracted from accounts by various authors, but principally from Stephens and Catherwood, and with an attempt to prove that the art of building was introduced into America during the eighth century by a party of Buddhists from Java or India, who came by way of the Caroline or Marshall islands. It is not suggested that they came in considerable numbers, "they possibly numbered two or three hundred." They first built Copan and Quirigua, and then those who lived long enough moved on and built Palenque, Menché, and Piedras Negras!

It is impossible to discuss such a statement in a short review, but it may

be safely asserted that it will not commend itself to any serious student of American archaeology. It is supported by statements by various writers, by no means always correctly interpreted, and descriptions and illustrations from Stephens and Catherwood, ignoring to a large extent the great amount of work done since 1840. We may instance the description of the tablet of the cross from Palenque. The authors say, "the right-hand stone has been completely destroyed. Stephens conjectures, probably rightly, that it was covered with hieroglyphics like that on the left." This right-hand slab has been for many years in the National Museum at Washington, and this best known of all Maya monuments has been figured and described again and again.

We may permit ourselves one quotation to show the style of argument employed to support the authors' thesis:—

"In our description of Palenque we have mentioned one of the most curious of all the reliefs—that representing, according to Stephens, women with children in their arms. The Oriental survivals seem to be especially strong at Palenque, and it would not surprise us if in these women-figures there is hidden a cogent proof of the origin of America's first architects. In 'Buddhist Art in Asia,' Prof. A. Grünwedel writes: 'At Sikri, Yusufrai, excavated by Major H. A. Deane in 1888, was found a statue of a woman accompanied by three children, one of which sits astride of her right hip in true Indian fashion, and which she is about to suckle. Among sculptures at Lahore Museum is a statue of a woman completely draped and holding in her left arm a child. It is suggested that these are forms of Haritri, Mother of Demons. She was the mother of five hundred demons, or yakshas, to feed whom she daily stole a child. Buddha rebuked and converted her. An image of her was found sitting in the porch or in a corner of the dining-halls of Indian monasteries, holding a babe in her arms.' Why should not the Palenque figure be a representation of the Hindu goddess Haritri?"

Chapters on the social condition of Yucatan and on the flora and fauna conclude the book.

Before closing this notice we must call attention to the extraordinary letter which the authors saw fit to address to President Diaz on their return to England. As the President naturally took no notice of it, the authors have printed it in their book.

One might be amused at the self-conceit of the whole performance, were it not for the unfortunate results sure to follow. It almost looks as though, having failed to add much to our archaeological knowledge, the authors were determined that no one else should have a chance of doing so, for how can a British Minister ever again have the face to ask for facilities or official attention for any Englishman who wishes to visit the more remote parts of Mexico?

It can only be hoped that if this book should ever be read by any English-speaking Mexican, he will understand that it is the expression of individual eccentricity, and that the procedure of the authors would not be endorsed by the many English travellers and residents who have enjoyed the hospitality of that most attractive country.

One ought to add that the authors confess to a very slight acquaintance with the Spanish language.

A. P. M.

'The Grizzly Bear.' By W. H. Wright. (London: Laurie. 1909. Pp. x., 274. *Illustrations*. 7s. 6d. net.) The author has been not only a hunter of the grizzly, but also a scientific investigator. Therefore, in the course of an entertaining narrative, he has much to tell of the present and formerly wider distribution of the animal, its habits, and so forth.