

**BERNAL DIAZ DEL CASTILLO;  
BEING SOME ACCOUNT OF HIM,  
TAKEN FROM HIS TRUE HISTORY  
OF THE CONQUEST OF NEW  
SPAIN**

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Bernal Diaz del Castillo; being some account of him, taken from his true history of the conquest of New Spain by R. B. Cunninghame Graham

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**R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM**

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# BERNAL DIAZ DEL CASTILLO

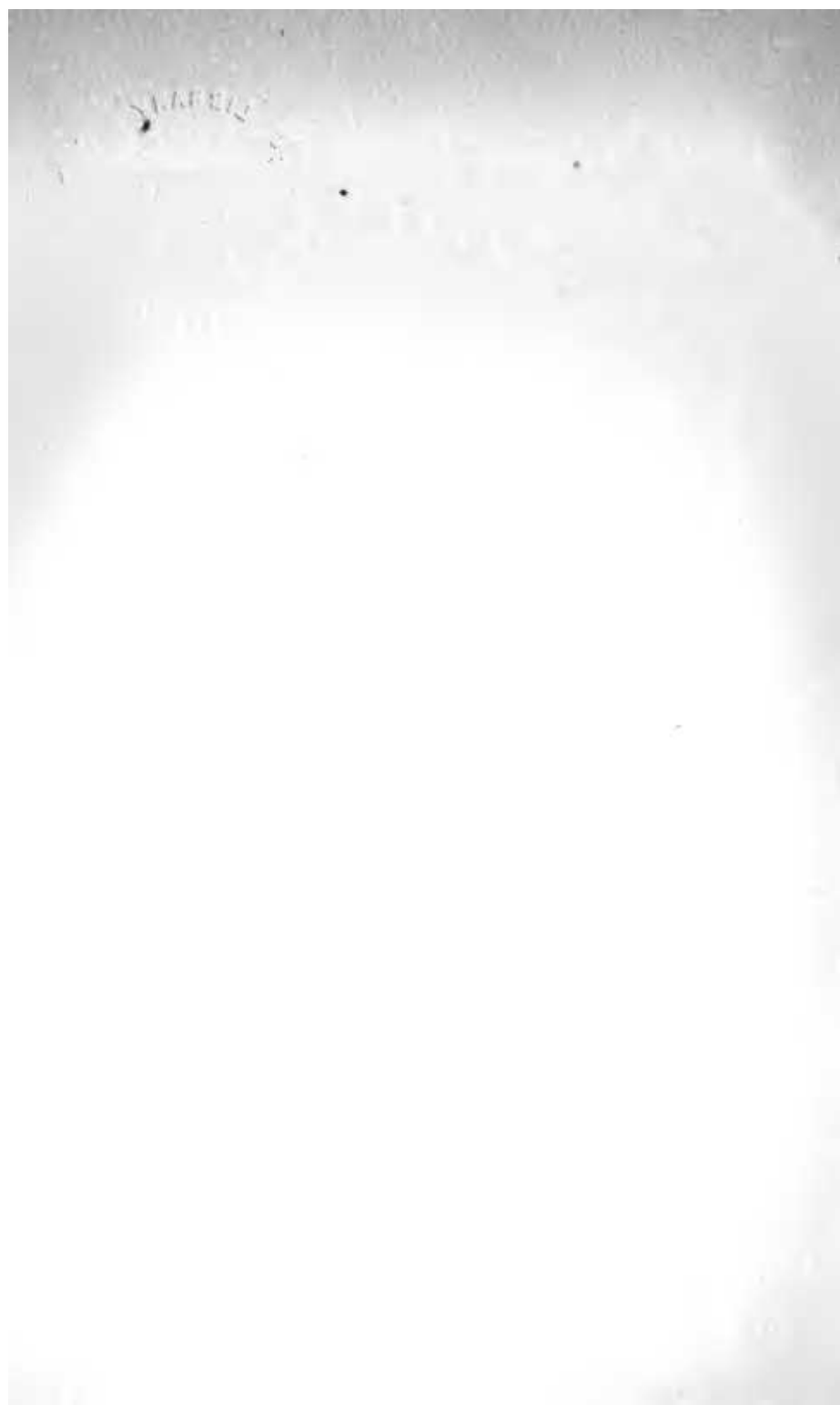
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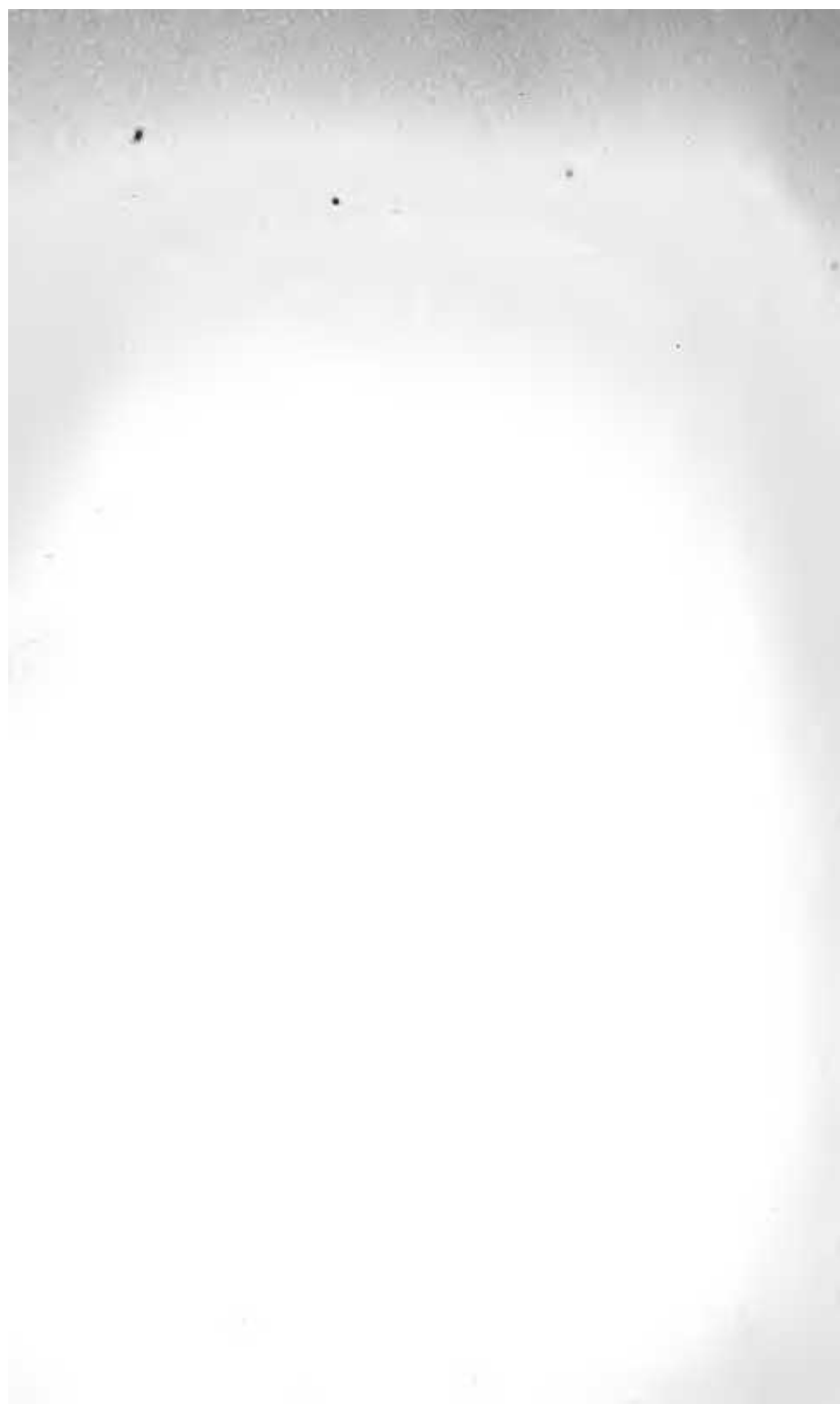
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LONDON  
EVELEIGH NASH  
1915



TO  
WILFRED SCAWEN BLUNT  
OF  
NEW BUILDINGS PLACE  
SOUTHWATER





## PREFACE

FEW books have had more difficulties to face than had the celebrated *History of the Conquest of New Spain*, that Bernal Diaz wrote in his old age. The period at which he wrote (1568 *circa*) is renowned for the difficulties to be encountered in its caligraphy. The handwriting of Bernal Diaz is exceedingly hard to read, twisted and gnarled, and full of strange abbreviations. Moreover, he spells exactly as he must have spoken, setting down *aguelo* for *abuelo* (grandfather) and *bronsne* for *bronce* (bronze), exactly as a Castilian countryman might do even at the present day.

As he was old and war-worn and had been wounded many times, it is not unlikely that his hands were somewhat crippled, or at the least stiff, and anyhow, more used to hold the lance and bridle, than the pen. Although the work was known and appreciated almost as soon as it was finished, for both Herrera in his *General History of the Indies*,<sup>1</sup> Fray Juan de Torquemada and the Licentiate Antonio de Leon Pinelo all quote from it, it long remained in manuscript. The original MS. was preserved most carefully, in Guatemala, first by the descendants of the author, and later by the municipality of the place, where it exists to-day. In the sixteenth century

<sup>1</sup> *Historia General de los hechos de los Castellanos en las Islas y Tierra firme del Mar Oceano*, Madrid, 1601.

a copy was transmitted to Madrid for the King (Philip II.) to be used by his historians.

Up to this time all the quotations and the copy were probably correct, and taken from the original. In 1632 a friar, one Alonso Remon, of the order of the Mercenarians, first printed it. At once it sprang into both popularity and fame, and ran, after some years, to five editions, being considered the most complete of all the histories of the conquest of New Spain.

Already doubts as to the correctness of the editions published by Remon had got abroad in Spain, for, writing in 1629, Don Antonio de Leon Pinelo remarked that Fray Alonso Remon had a "corrected" copy of his own, ready to give out for the press. It is a pity if he had such a copy that he made no use of it, for all through the editions that were published by him, occur omissions and interpolations, on almost every page. This was pointed out by Don Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzman, great-great-grandson of the author, towards the last years of the century (1600).

These alterations and interpolations do not in any way affect the interest of the book as a whole, and it still remains one of the most interesting in the possession of mankind. What they do is to exaggerate numbers, disfigure proper names, and now and then to leave out, and sometimes to interpolate a phrase or two. Fray Remon has omitted several pages of the beginning of the book in which Diaz gives various notes about himself and of his family. As Fray Alonso Remon was a Mercenarian, he naturally wrote to advance the honour of his Order, and several times declares that a friar of his habit, Bartolomé de Olmedo,