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Joseph de Acosta

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The Natural and Moral History of the Indies

VOLUME 1: THE NATURAL HISTORY

JOSEPH DE ACOSTA

EDITED BY CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM



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THE
NATURAL & MORAL
HISTORY OF THE INDIES,

BY

FATHER JOSEPH DE ACOSTA.

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BY

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INTRODUCTION.

THE *Natural and Moral History of the Western Indies* by Acosta, which has been selected to form two volumes of the Hakluyt Society's series, is a valuable work for two reasons. It contains an exposition of the ideas of learned men of the sixteenth century on physical geography, and it is one of the leading authorities on the ancient civilisations of Peru and Mexico.

Our chief knowledge of the author is derived from his published works, only a few facts being forthcoming from other sources. His parents lived at the town of Medina del Campo, the city of the plain, about twenty-four miles from Valladolid, in Old Castille,¹ on the left bank of the swampy river Zapardiel,² and overlooked by the old castle of La Mota.³ They had five sons, named Geronimo, Christoval, Joseph, Diego, and Bernardo; and at least two, if not more, of these boys joined the Society of Jesus. Joseph de Acosta was born in the year 1540, and he was devoted to the Society before he had completed his fourteenth year. Bernardo de Acosta entered upon the same career, and

¹ Between Valladolid and Salamanca.

² A southern affluent of the Douro.

³ Where Queen Isabella died in 1504.

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probably Christoval¹ also. The Acostas were fellow townsmen of that charming old soldier Bernal Diaz, who told the story of the conquest of Mexico, but they were many years his juniors.

Joseph de Acosta became a Jesuit in 1553, and for the next eighteen years he must have devoted himself to the study of sacred and classical authors, for he was a man of very great learning, when, at the age of thirty-two, he sailed for the New World, in company with several brethren of the same Society.

Acosta left Spain in the year 1570, touched at the Canaries, and made a rapid passage across the Atlantic; which, he tells us, would have been still more rapid if the mariners had made more sail.² He landed at Carthagena, and finally at Nombre de Dios, whence he journeyed through eighteen leagues of tropical forest to Panama.³ Here he enjoyed the beauties of the glorious scenery, the novel sights at every turn, and was interested, at Capira, in the clever antics of troops of monkeys.⁴ From Panama the Jesuit, in pursuance of his missionary work, embarked for Peru, looking forward with curiosity, and some dread, to the passage

¹ But this is not the Christoval de Acosta who wrote the well-known book on the medicines and drugs of India. He was a native of Burgos. His work (*Tractado de las drogas y medicinas de las Indias Orientales con sus plantas debuxadas al vivo por Christoval Acosta medico y cirrejano que las vió ocularmente: en el qual se verifica mucho de lo que escribió el Dr. Garcia de Orta*) was published at Burgos in 1578. It contains plates of the spice-yielding and other plants. Dr. Acosta, called *El Africano*, suffered captivity in Africa, Asia, and China. His work completed what the learned Portuguese, Dr. Orta, began.

² Page 56.

³ Page 263.

⁴ Page 285.

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across the equinoctial. For he was steeped in all the lore of the ancient philosophers concerning the unbearable heat of the burning zone. He crossed the line in March, and, to his surprise, it was so cold that he was obliged to go into the sun to get warm, where he laughed at Aristotle and his philosophy.¹

On his arrival at Lima, he was ordered to cross the Andes, apparently to join the Viceroy in the interior. He took the route, with fourteen or fifteen companions, across the mountainous province of Huarochiri, and by the lofty pass of Pariacaca,² where the whole party suffered severely from the effects of the rarified atmosphere.³ Acosta describes these sufferings, which he tells us were renewed on the three other occasions that he had occasion to cross the cordillera, by Soras and Lucanas,⁴ by Collahuas,⁵ and by Cavanoas.⁶ He also mentions an attack of snow-blindness, and the way in which an Indian woman cured him.⁷

Acosta arrived in Peru at an important time. Don Francisco de Toledo, second son of the Count of Oropesa, a man advanced in years and of great administrative experience, had come out as Viceroy two years before, in 1568. He was a stern man, capable of com-

¹ Page 90.

² Pariacaca is over 14,000 feet above the level of the sea.

³ Page 130.

⁴ The road through the districts of Soras and Lucanas leads to the coast valley of Nasca.

⁵ Collahuas is further north, in the modern department of Arequipa, province of Huari.

⁶ Cavanoas, in the department of Puno. This was one of the routes from the Collao to Arequipa.

⁷ Page 288.

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mitting unjust and cruel acts to secure the success of a policy ; but, on the other hand, he was conscientiously anxious to settle the government of the country with a view to the well-being of the people, and his energy and industry were marvellous. He was one of the most prolific legislators in history, and his regulations were suited to the wants of the time and were enduring. In 1571 he had committed a great political crime, in order to secure tranquillity, by beheading the unfortunate young Ynca Tupac Amaru. He then devoted five years to a tour through every part of the Viceroyalty of Peru ; and to a settlement of the country, in which he was aided by the Licentiate Polo de Ondegardo, the Jesuit Acosta, and the Judge Matienza. His labours were successful, and the Indians themselves acknowledged that the land had not been so well governed since the days of the good Ynca Tupac Yupanqui.¹ Toledo was practically the founder of the University of St. Mark at Lima. This Viceroy saw what were the true sources of wealth of the country he governed. He did not name silver and gold. But he said that “the two things which Peru had that were rich and of great nourishment—the two staples—were maize and llamas,” corn and wool.²

Our author accompanied the Viceroy to Charcas,³ and was with him during his unsuccessful expedition against the fierce Chirihuana Indians.⁴ The principal seat of the Jesuits was, at that time, in the little town of Juli, near the western shores of Lake Titicaca.

¹ “Desde el buen Tupac Yupanqui no habia estado la tierra tan bien gobernada.” ² Page 256. ³ Page 155. ⁴ Page 151.

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Here a college was formed, the languages of the natives were studied, and eventually a printing-press was established. Acosta probably resided much at Juli during his stay in Peru. It was here, in all likelihood, that he observed the famous comet of 1577, from 1st November to 8th December, which extended like a fiery plume from the horizon nearly to the zenith.¹ Here, too, he devoted much of his time to the preparation of several learned works, which he took home with him in manuscript, including the first two books of the *Natural History of the Indies*.² The particulars respecting the religion and festivals of the Peruvians, in the work of Acosta, are chiefly derived from the Licentiate Polo de Ondegardo.³ Several of Acosta's brethren at Juli have been made known to us through their works. Among these were Blas Valera, whose valuable writings have been partially preserved by the Ynca Garcilasso; Dr. Francisco de Avila, who wrote on the folk-lore of Huarochiri; Pablo José de Arriaga, the extirpator of idolatry in the Peruvian coast valleys; the half-caste, Diego de Alcobaça, who wrote religious confessionaries in the native languages; and the learned Dr. Gonzalo Holguin, who composed a valuable Quichua grammar. A few years later, the college at Juli was the residence of Ludovico Bertonio, who compiled a copious Aymara dictionary; and it was at Juli that this dictionary was printed in 1611, as well as a Life of Christ in the same language. At Juli, Father Acosta received information respecting the river Amazon from a brother who had formerly been in the famous piratical cruise of Aguirre.⁴

¹ Page 122.² Page 103.³ Page 391.⁴ Page 82.

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Towards the close of the viceroyalty of Toledo, Father Acosta appears to have moved from the interior of Peru to Lima. Here he mentions having been engaged in superintending the casting of a great bell, and that there was difficulty in getting fuel for the furnace, which made it necessary to fell some great trees in the valley of the Rimac.¹ He mentions also that he saw camels in Peru,² which had been brought from the Canaries; and that the Viceroy Toledo sent home seeds of the beautiful white *datura*, which grows round Lima, as worthy of a place in the royal gardens.³ In 1579 Sir Francis Drake was on the coast, and the Viceroy dispatched a fleet under Don Pedro Sarmiento, partly to chase the English pirate, and partly to explore and survey the Straits of Magellan. Acosta had conversations with the pilot of Sarmiento's fleet, and was allowed to inspect his chart, thus obtaining much hydrographical information, and particulars respecting the tides in the straits. He also conversed with the new Viceroy Henriquez on the same subject.⁴

Don Francisco de Toledo returned to Spain in 1579, and was succeeded by Don Martin Henriquez, a younger son of the Marquis of Alcanises, who had previously been Viceroy of Mexico. Don Martin made his entry into Lima on May 4th, 1581. Three weeks afterwards the new Archbishop, Dr. Toribio Mogrovejo, was installed, and commenced his saintly and active career; which acquired for him so great a name for purity and holiness that he was eventually

¹ Page 308.² Page 272.³ Page 255.⁴ Pages 133, 140, 143, 145.

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canonised as St. Toribio. In 1582 a Provincial Council was called to meet at Lima, consisting of the Archbishop and the Bishops of Cuzco, Imperial, Santiago de Chile, Paraguay, Quito, Charcas, and Tucuman.

Don Martin Henriquez opened the third Council of Lima in person. He also founded the College of St. Martin, to be managed by the Jesuits, and was active in promoting useful measures; but his career as Viceroy of Peru was cut short by death on March 12th, 1583. The Council proceeded with its sittings, and got through a vast amount of work. Full instructions were drawn up for the guidance of parish priests, and catechisms were prepared for the instruction of the Indians. It may be observed that the proceedings of these Lima Councils throw much light on the religion and folk-lore of the people. For they enter into many minute details respecting the customs and superstitions which the priests were to suppress, and have thus preserved an invaluable record of the beliefs of the ancient Peruvians. Father Acosta was very busily employed during the sessions of the third Council of Lima, and he was its historian.

The last sitting took place on October 18th, 1583, on which important occasion the Jesuit Father Joseph de Acosta delivered an eloquent and learned oration.¹ The proceedings were forwarded to Spain, and received the royal assent on September 18th, 1591, having previously been confirmed by the Pope. The Papal approval was announced by Cardinal Caraffa, in 1588,

¹ “*Una elegante y docta oracion.*”—*Montalvo*, page 214.

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to the Archbishop of Lima.¹ Shortly after the close of the last session of the Council, Acosta embarked, with all his valuable manuscripts, representing the literary labours of about fifteen years, and commenced his voyage to Mexico. He shows himself, in his remarks during the passage, to be a shrewd observer of nature, and an eager seeker after knowledge.² During this, or the subsequent voyage home, he learnt from an expert Portuguese pilot that there were four points of no variation on the earth, and that one of them was the island of Corvo in the Azores.³ Acosta landed, after a long voyage, at the port of Guatulco,⁴ at the western end of the Gulf of Tehuantepec, in the Oaxaca province, whence he journeyed by land to Mexico, where he resided in 1586.⁵ In this country he had opportuni-

¹ There are two lives of Archbishop Toribio Mogrovejo. One is by the learned Don Antonio Leon-Pinelo, entitled *Vida del Ilustrissimo Reverendissimo D. Toribio Alfonso Mogrovejo, Arcobispo de la ciudad de los Reyes* (1653). The other is by Dr. Juan Francisco A. de Montalvo, and has a quaint title-page—*El Sol del Nuevo Mundo ideado y compuesto en las esclarecidas operaciones del Bienaventurado Toribio Arcobispo de Lima* (Kome, 1683). Leon Pinelo gives very full particulars of the Archbishop's family and ancestry. The work of Montalvo is valuable because it contains notices of the lives of many Peruvian authors.

² Page 127.

³ Page 52.

⁴ Page 400. Sir Francis Drake, during his famous voyage of circumnavigation, arrived at Guatulco on April 15th, 1579. Here he got provisions, and also "a certaine pot full of rials of plate which we found in the towne, together with a chain of gold, and some other jewels, which we intreated a gentleman Spaniard to leave behind him, as he was flying out of towne." (*Drake's World Encompassed*, p. 113.) Here Drake landed a Portugal pilot whom he had captured out of a vessel at the Cape Verde Islands. This man is mentioned by Acosta; see page 140.

⁵ Page 454.

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ties, of which he diligently availed himself, for collecting information touching the natural products, and the civilisation and ancient religion of the Aztecs. His chief informant, respecting the rites and festivals of the Mexicans, was a brother of the Company of Jesus named Juan de Tobar, who was then a Prebend in the church at Mexico.¹ He also enjoyed the pleasure of seeing his brother Bernardo once more, a Jesuit who died at Mexico on May 29th, 1613.

Acosta went home to Spain in the fleet of 1587, which had a most precious cargo. It contained twelve chests of gold,² each weighing 100 lbs. ; 11,000,000 pieces of silver,³ two chests of emeralds,⁴ each weighing 100 lbs. ; 22,053 cwts. of ginger,⁵ 50 of sarsaparilla, 48 of *cassia fistula*, 350 of *lignum sanctum*, 1309 of Brazil wood,⁶ and 99,794 hides from St. Domingo.⁷ When they unloaded at Seville, he says that it was a wonderful thing to behold the river and the arsenal, with such piles of hides and merchandise.⁸

The first object of Acosta, after his return to Europe, appears to have been to make arrangements for the publication of his manuscripts. In February 1588 he was in Madrid, at which place he wrote the dedication to Philip II of the two books on the *Natural History of the Indies*, and of his work on the *Conversion of the Indians*, which were published in Latin at Salamanca in 1588 and 1589. He then went to Rome, where his theological works saw the light. His *De Christo*

¹ Page 391.² Page 194.³ Page 204.⁴ Page 226.⁵ Page 239.⁶ Page 260.⁷ Page 271.⁸ Page 271.

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revelato appeared in 1588, and his *De temporibus novissimis* in the same year. His *Concilium Limense* appeared shortly afterwards, and his *Concionum* in 1596. His complete work on the *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* was published at Seville in 1590.

Acosta was head of the Jesuits' College at Valladolid, and Visitor in Aragon and Andalusia. Finally, he was appointed to the charge of the College at Salamanca, where he died¹ on the 15th of February 1600, in his sixtieth year.

The theological works of Acosta give evidence of great learning. The *De Christo in scripturis revelato* consists of nine books, dedicated to Cardinal Caraffa. They are intended to prove that Christ is the centre of all scriptures, the Saviour whose coming was announced by the Baptist, and that heretics twist the words of revelation to their own purposes.² This work was published at Rome in 1588, and again in 1590, in quarto. Other editions appeared at Paris in 1592, at Salamanca, at Venice; and, finally, at Paris in 1841.³ The

¹ But not in the grand college of the Jesuits (*La Clericia*) which may now be seen at Salamanca. It was not built until 1614. In the time of Acosta the Jesuits occupied another building, now the cemetery; and it was here that Acosta died. See *Madoz*.

² Lib. I. Universum scripturæ scopum esse Christum. II. Falli Hæreticos que scripturæ sensum facilem jactant. III. Recte divinam scripturam tractari cum ad Dei dilectionem dirigetur. IV. Jesus verus. V. Jesus salvator. VI. Jesus Mater Maria supra omnes Deo grata et nostræ salutis administra electa divinitas. VII. Jesum Joannes Baptista Præcursor annuntiat. VIII. IX.

³ In the *Scripturæ Sacræ cursus completus ex commentariis omnium perfectissimis ubique habitis, et a magna parte episcoporum*

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De temporibus novissimis is usually bound up with the *De Christo revelato*. It consists of four books on the prophecies, and on the latter days, with speculations on the coming of the day of the Lord.¹ The *Concionum*, in three volumes, was published at Salamanca in 1596, at Venice in 1599 (4to.), and at Cologne in 1600 (8vo.). The *Concilium Limense*, a record of the proceedings of the Council of Lima in 1583, was composed in three books, in Latin.

The results of Acosta's South American researches first saw the light at Salamanca in 1588 and 1589, the two works being usually bound up together. *De natura novi orbis, libri duo, et de promulgatione Evangelii apud barbaros, sive de procuranda Indorum salute, libri sex*. The *De natura* is the first two books of the Natural History in Latin. These books were written in Peru. A second edition was published at Salamanca in 1595, and again at Cologne in 1596. The *De promulgatione* is an interesting essay on the conversion of the Indians. Acosta here maintains that the salvation of the people of Peru must not be despaired of, on account of the difficulties which surround the missionaries. He urges the importance of study-

necnon theologorum Europæ Catholicæ universim ad hoc interrogatorum designatis unicé confletus. Tom. ii (Paris, 1841); 398 pages, beginning at page 698. It is preceded by a short life of Acosta, and is furnished with a good index.

¹ Lib. i. Sacris literis trade, Diem Judicii propinquare. II. De magna tribulatione sub Antichristo futura deinceps dicendum. III. Ecclesiam non esse Antichristi quamvis valida persecutione superandam. IV. An Dies Domini repentinus an potius vehementer formidatus veniat.

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ing the native languages, and gives advice on the various details of a well organised parochial system.

Acosta then translated the two books of the *De natura* from Latin into Spanish, and added five others, which completed the *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*. The first four books are devoted to the natural history, the last three to the moral history, of the Indies. In the former, the learned Jesuit touches upon all points of interest relating to physical geography as it was then understood, comparing the knowledge of his time with the opinions and beliefs of ancient philosophers and Fathers of the Church. In this spirit he discusses the form of the earth and of the heavens, the distribution of land and sea, the habitability of the tropics, and the way in which America may have been peopled. In the first two books the discussion is more general, while the next two treat especially of the New World and its productions. Chapters are devoted to the winds and tides, and to the fisheries, others to the lakes and rivers, to the varied aspects of the lands, to volcanoes and earthquakes, to the mineral resources, and to the vegetable and animal kingdoms. The last three books, including the "Moral History of the Indies", give an interesting account of the religion and government of the people of Peru and Mexico, and form a valuable body of information respecting those ancient American civilisations. Acosta was a man of great learning; he was an intelligent and indefatigable observer, as well as a very diligent collector of information, and he had exceptionally good opportunities; so that his work will

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always rank high as an authority on the subjects of which it treats.

The *Historia Natural*, in its complete form, was first published at Seville in 1590 (4to.), next at Barcelona in 1591 (8vo.). The Madrid editions appeared in 1608¹ and 1610. An Italian translation, by Giovanni Paolo Gallucio, appeared in 1596² at Venice.

The work of Acosta was translated into Dutch by the great traveller J. Huyghen van Linschoten, and published at Enckhuysen in 1598 (8vo.), and at Amsterdam in 1624 (4to.).³ The French translation was by R. Regnaud, and two editions appeared at Paris in 1597 and 1600.⁴ De Bry published the work in Latin at Frankfort in 1602 (fol.) and 1603, and a German edition in 1601 (fol.): being Part IX of his *America*.⁵ A compilation from it was published by De Bry at Frankfort, in Latin in 1624, and in German in 1623;⁶

¹ It is with the Madrid edition of 1608 that the translation, now reprinted, has been collated.

² *Historia naturale e morale delle Indie, novamente tradotta della lingua Spagnuola nella Italiana de G. P. Galucci.* (Venetia, 1596, 4to.)

³ *Historie naturael ende morael van de Westersche Indien nu eerstmeel uyt den Spaenschen overgheset door J. Huyghen van Linschoten.* (Enckhuysen, 1598, 8vo.)

⁴ *Histoire naturelle et morale des Indes . . . traduite par R. Regnaud.* (Paris, 1597, 8vo.)

⁵ *Theodor de Bry. Americæ novæ pars . . . de novis orbis naturæ. Acosta. America, Pars ix.* (Francoforti, 1602, fol.)

Von gelegenheit der Elemente natur—de Newer Welt J. H. van Linschoten. De Bry. (1601, fol.)

⁶ *Paralipomena Americæ, hoc est discursus accuratæque Americæ descriptio.* T. de Bry. *America, Pars xii.* (Frankfort, fol., 1624.)

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and it also appeared in Dutch, in the collection of P. van der Aa, in 1727.¹

The English translation of Acosta, which is reprinted in the present volume, was first published in London in 1604. On the title-page only the initials of the translator are given—"E. G." But it has been ascertained that this was Edward Grimston, a writer and translator of note, during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. Edward Grimston belonged to an Essex family, which sprung originally from the Grimstons of Grimston Garth, in Yorkshire. Edward served in the wars, was made prisoner at Calais in 1558, and afterwards escaped from the Bastille. Besides translating Acosta, he wrote a history of France, and a general history of the Netherlands. The latter work, published in London in 1609, is a translation of the *History of Jean François le Petit* (Dordrecht, 1601), with additions from the manuscripts of Sir Roger Williams, and brought down to 1608. Edward Grimston, who is said to have lived to the age of ninety-eight, was the grandfather of Sir Harbottle Grimston of Bradfield, a well-known politician during the civil wars, and ancestor of the present Earl of Verulam.

Grimston's translation of Acosta is, on the whole, creditable and trustworthy. There are some omissions, and occasional blunders, especially as regards proper

¹ *Ontdekking van West Indien vlijtig ondersogt, aangeteekend door J. D'A. op sign Reys Toeg derwaarts gedaan. Anno 1592 en vervolgens . . . uyt het Spaens vertaald.*

In P. van der Aa. *De Aanmerkens waardigste Zee en Landreizen der Portugeezen, etc. Deel 8.* (1727, fol.)

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names and native words, which have been carefully corrected in the present edition.

The *Natural History* of Acosta has been much used by subsequent writers on Peru and Mexico. It is quoted twenty-seven times in the *Royal Commentaries of the Ynca Garcilasso de la Vega*, and sometimes these quotations consist of long passages. I have given a list of them in the index to my translation of the first part of the *Royal Commentaries*.¹ A full notice of Acosta and his works is given by Antonio.²

Purchas, in his *Pilgrimage*, quotes largely from Acosta, in his account of the Mexican superstitions and sacrifices, and of Peruvian religious ceremonies and government.³ An abstract of the *Natural and*

¹ II, page 547.

² "Josephus de Acosta. Medinensis, postquam in sodalitia Societatis, cui se puerum Salmanticæ tradidit, omni disciplinarum genere, indefessi vir laboris, ingenium prestans atque acre judicium instruxisset, in occidentalem Indiam delatus, provinciam ibi Peruanam sodalium rexit præpositus, septemdecimque totos annos comoratus est, ea curiose observans et in commentaria digerens, quæ hodie magno cum fructu atque operæ pretio de rebus Indias ab eo extant. Inde reversus visitatorem egit in provinciis Aragoniæ ac Bæticæ, necnon et aliquando procuravit Romæ promovitque salutis Indorum spiritualem causam; quod postremum ab eo impensum officium Bibliothecæ Societatis scriptorem fugit. Sexagenarius tandem e vita migravit munus gerens rectoris in Salmantino collegio, pluribus scriptis clarus, superstesque anno 1599." Then follows a list of his works: *Bibliotheca Hispani Nova sive Hispanorum Scriptorum qui ab anno M.D.—ad M.D.C.LXXXIV floruerunt notitia: auctore D. Nicolao Antonio Hispalensi, J. C.* (Madrid, 1783, fol. i, page 800.)

³ Purchas, *Pilgrimage* (1623), lib. v, page 869; and lib. vi, page 931.

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Moral History is given in Harris's voyages,¹ and in other similar collections, and the work is much relied upon as an authority by Robertson, and by Prescott in his histories of the conquests of Peru and Mexico. Mr. Prescott quotes Acosta nineteen times in his *Conquest of Peru*, and nine times in his *Conquest of Mexico*. Adopting Mr. Prescott's *Peru* as a test, Acosta takes the fourth place as an authority. Garcilasso de la Vega is quoted eighty-nine, Cieza de Leon forty-five, Polo de Ondegardo forty-one, and Acosta nineteen times. Then follow Pedro Pizarro, Montesinos, Zarate, Herrera, and Gomara.

¹ Harris's *Voyages*, vol. 1, lib. v, cap. xiii, pages 751 to 799.

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THE
 NATURAL AND MORAL
History of the Indies.

In which are discussed the notable things of the heavens,
 the elements, metals, plants, animals; and the rites,
 ceremonies, laws, government, and wars of
 the Indians.

COMPOSED BY THE

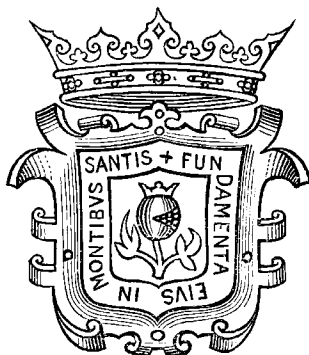
FATHER JOSEPH DE ACOSTA

(A Priest of the Company of Jesus).

DEDICATED TO THE

MOST SERENE INFANTA DOÑA ISABELA CLARA
 EUGENIA DE AUSTRIA.

In the Year



1608.

With Licence.

Printed in Madrid, in the house of Alonso Martin. At the charges of
 Juan Berrillo, seller of books.

c

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To the Most Serene Infanta Doña Ysabela Clara
Eugenia de Austria.¹

LADY,—The King's Majesty, our Lord, having given me permission to offer to your Highness this small work, entitled *The Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, it should not be attributed to me as want of consideration, to desire to occupy the time which is so fully spent by your Highness in matters of importance, by diverting it to subjects which, in treating of philosophy, are somewhat obscure, and, as describing barbarous races, may seem out of place. But as a knowledge of, and speculations concerning the works of nature, especially if they are remarkable and rare, causes a feeling of pleasure and delight in refined understandings, and as an acquaintance with strange customs and deeds also pleases from its novelty, I hold that this work may serve as an honest and useful entertainment to your Highness. It will give occasion to consider the works which have been designed by the Most High in the machinery of this world, especially in those parts which we call the Indies, which, being our territory, give us more to consider, and being the abode of new vassals, whom the Most High God has given to the crown of Spain, a knowledge of it is not altogether strange to us. My desire is that, during some spare moments, your Highness should amuse yourself with the reading. With this object it is

¹ Daughter of Philip II, by Elizabeth of Valois, and afterwards wife of the Archduke Albert, and sovereign of the Spanish Netherlands. She was married in 1595, went to Brussels in the following year, and died in 1633, without children.

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DEDICATION.

written in the vulgar tongue, though, if I do not deceive myself, it is not for vulgar understandings. It may be that, as in other things so in this, your Highness showing a liking for it, this little work may be favored so that the King our Lord may choose to pass a short time in the consideration of affairs and of people so nearly touching his royal crown. I dedicated another book to his Majesty, which I composed in Latin, touching the preaching of the evangel to these Indians. I desire that all I have written may serve, so that the relation of what God, our Lord, deposited of his treasures in those kingdoms, may cause the people of them to receive more aid and favor from those to whose charge His high and divine providence has entrusted them.

I entreat your Highness that if some parts of this little work are not agreeable, you will not desist from passing your eyes over the rest, since it may be that other parts may please, and, if so, they cannot fail to be highly profitable; for this favor will be beneficial to people and countries sorely needing such favor. God, our Lord, preserve and prosper your Highness for many years, as is the daily and earnest supplication of your servants to the Divine Majesty. Amen. In Seville, the 1st of March, in the year 1590.

JOSEPH DE ACOSTA.

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THE
N A T V R A L L
and Morall Historie of the
East and West
Indies.

Intreating of the remarkeable things of Heaven, of
the Elements, Mettalls, Plants, and Beasts which
are proper to that Country : Together with
the Manners, Ceremonies, Lawes,
Governements, and Warres
of the Indians.

*Written in Spanish by Ioseph Acosta, and translated into
English by E. G.*



L O N D O N

Printed by *Val. Sims* for *Edward Blount* and *William
Aspley*. 1604.

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To the Right Honorable Sir Robert Cicill, Knight,
Baron of Essingden, Vicount Cranborne, principall
Secretary to his Maiestie, master of the Court of Wardes
and Liveries, and one of his Highnesse most
honourable Privie Counsell.

RIGHT HONORABLE,—If it appeare presumption in me to shew my love, my dutie betraies me to it. The advantage I have gleaned from idle houres, in exchanging this Indian History from Spanish to English, is commended to your Honors Patronage, whose first father Ioseph Acosta, hath with great observation made worthie the over-looking. A greater motive then that you are your selfe, needed not to excite me to this dedication. I beseech you, my good Lord, take it into shelter, and receive that which is not, for that which I would it were. Let my insufficiencie be measured by my good will. So shall my poore abilities thrive vnder your encouragement, and happily leade me on to some stronger vndertaking, wherein I shall bee bound to thanke you for mine owne paines, and for ever remaine

Your Lordships most devoted,

E. G.

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The Authors advertisement to the Reader.

MANY have written sundry bookes and discourses of the New World at the West Indies, wherein they describe new and strange things discovered in those partes, with the actes and adventures of the Spaniards, which have conquered and peopled those Countries. But hitherto I have not seene any other Author which treates of the causes and reasons of these novelties and wonders of nature, or that hath made any search thereof. Neither have I read any booke which maketh mention of the histories of the antient Indians and naturall inhabitants of the New World. In truth, these two things are difficult. The first being the works of Nature, contrarie to the antient and received Philosophy, as to shew that the region which they call the burning Zone is very moist, and in many places very temperate, and that it rains there, whenas the Sunne is neerest, with such like things. For such as have written of the West Indies have not made profession of so deepe Philosophie; yea, the greatest part of those Writers have had no knowledge thereof. The second thing it treats of is, of the proper historie of the Indians, the which required much conference and travaile among the Indians themselves: the which most of them that have treated of the Indies could not doe, either not vnderstanding the language or not curious in the search of their Antiquities; so as they have bene contented to handle those things which have bene most common and superficiall. Desiring, therefore, to have some more particular knowledge thereof, I have