

INDIANA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY

Volume XXXVII

September, 1941

No. 3

The Early Life of Lew Wallace

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Brookville, all of twenty years old in 1827, was one of the foremost towns in Indiana, and Indiana in turn was the shining goal of farm-hungry settlers by thousands. A land office had followed the retreating Indians there and now offered plow-resistant acres at a dollar and a quarter. In response, as soon as the Ohio River became navigable and the road passable in the spring, came the immigrants, poling flatboats up into the Whitewater or prodding teams across the state line.¹

The tavern in Brookville was conducted by Andrew Wallace, a third-generation Scotch-Irishman whose experience, at forty-nine, made him a capable host. He had kept a store at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, completed the first land survey at Troy, Ohio, published books and a newspaper at Cincinnati, and fathered seven sons and a daughter.² He had rubbed elbows with William Henry Harrison, farmer and Indian-fighter. Since then, of course, Harrison had routed Tecumseh's warriors at Tippecanoe and been elected United States senator. As evidence of this connection Andrew cited the success of his eldest son, "Colonel" David Wallace, whose brick house stood not far from the tavern. Harrison had placed at the disposal of his Cincinnati neighbor, Andrew

¹Logan Esarey, *A History of Indiana* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1915, 1918), I, 239, 271, 306, 314; "The Whitewater Valley. . . ." *The Indianian*, III (1899), 101-09; Amos W. Butler, "Notes Concerning Brookville, Ind., A Century Ago" in *Indiana Magazine of History*, XIII, 148; Berry R. Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana* (Philadelphia, 1884), 214B.

²Neander M. Woods, *Woods-McAfee Memorial* (Louisville, Ky., 1905), 355; Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Ohio* (2 vols., Cincinnati, 1902), II, 248; Charles T. Greve, *Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens* (2 vols., Chicago, 1904), I, 790; Lew Wallace, *An Autobiography* (2 vols., New York, 1906), I, 2, 3.

Wallace, an appointment to West Point originally earmarked for one of Harrison's own sons. After graduation David taught mathematics at the Academy for two years and then, no war being in sight, resigned from the army to return to Brookville with the title of Colonel. A year's study at the office of Judge Miles C. Eggleston—whose first cousin, once removed, was to write *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*³—won admittance to the bar. Another year brought sufficient prosperity to warrant marriage with Esther French Test of Brookville, daughter of a judge and sister of a judge-to-be.⁴ Dark-eyed, clean-shaven, David at twenty-eight was "a man of noble presence in the slender elegance of youth," wrote David's son.⁵

This last mentioned son, Lewis Wallace, was born on April 10, 1827, and named after Major Samuel Lewis, U.S.A., an uncle by marriage.⁶ Other uncles, blood kin, were to attain distinction—Benjamin Franklin Wallace in the Iowa legislature, John Thomson Wallace in the United States Adjutant General's office, and William Henson Wallace, Governor of Washington, Governor of Idaho, and delegate to Congress from both territories in turn—but their fame lay in the future.⁷ So none of the Colonel's four sons—William, born in 1825; Lewis, 1827; John Test, 1829; Edward Test, 1831—was named after one of his three successful brothers.⁸

Months of each year David saw little of his family. At first he accompanied the Third Judicial Court, astride "Ball," a horse valued as high as forty dollars.⁹ Then, elected on the Whig ticket, he attended three consecutive sessions of the Assembly at Indianapolis (the pay was two dollars a day).¹⁰ Meanwhile the land office, like "the pillar of a cloud" in Ex-

³ Harriet C. Goode (Judge Eggleston's granddaughter) to Irving McKee, March 27, 1940.

⁴ George S. Wallace (comp.), *Wallace; Genealogical Data* (Charlottesville, Va., 1927), 141; Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 5, 32.

⁵ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 4-5.

⁶ George S. Wallace, *Wallace*, 143.

⁷ Hubert H. Bancroft, *Works* (39 vols., San Francisco, 1883-1890), XXXI, 71n., 211, 218, 442, *passim*.

⁸ George S. Wallace, *Wallace*, 143; Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 8.

⁹ Oliver H. Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches* (Cincinnati, 1858), 5, 118-19; Charles W. Taylor, *Biographical Sketches and Review of the Bench and Bar of Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1895), 140.

¹⁰ William W. Woolen, *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1883), 70; *Indiana Special Acts, 2nd Session, 1817-1818*, ch. XXVIII, sec. 2.

odus, had moved westward from Brookville to the state capital.¹¹ The Colonel, now Lieutenant-Governor (also at two dollars a day), read the signs; joining brother Benjamin in "merchandising," he transplanted his family across Indiana to Covington on the Wabash in the spring of 1832.¹² En route two of his sons contracted scarlet fever; John died at Indianapolis, but Lewis, despite scalding saffron tea, recovered, remembering till old age his mother's eyes, swimming in tears.¹³

Covington was in uproar, like Cincinnati twenty years before (so the frontier went). In May a large body of hostile Sauks under Black Hawk swooped out of the West coming within thirty miles, killing two settlers; another attack was expected every day. No sooner had the Wallaces taken root in their one-story frame house than the Colonel was raising and drilling a company of militia. They never marched to war, for Black Hawk soon suffered defeat, but the incident left a deep impression on the five-year-old Lewis.¹⁴

He embarked upon a school career in the best American—especially Indiana—tradition: daydreams punctuated by floggings, trancies evoking maternal tears and the paternal rod. One of these phenomena ceased with a vengeance when, in 1834, Esther Wallace died of "galloping" consumption. Her friends remembered her as a devout and charitable Methodist, but withal so irrepressible in social enjoyment that she could dance from Sunday to Sunday. Her son Lewis, at

¹¹ "The Whitewater Valley," *The Indianian*, III, 101-09.

¹² Anna L. Lingelbach, "David Wallace" in *Dictionary of American Biography* (20 vols., New York, 1928-1936); Woollen, *Biographical Sketches*, 70; Charles Kettleborough, *Constitution Making in Indiana* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1916), I, 99, Constitution of 1816, Art. IV, sec. 15-16; *The Revised Laws of Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1831), ch. XXXVII, sec. 3; Ella Lonn, "Ripples of the Black Hawk War in Northern Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XX, 288-307. Lew Wallace recalled that the family moved in "the first summer month," but he was attending school during the Black Hawk episode, May-August; so he must have moved to Covington in May at the latest. Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 9. Benjamin Franklin Wallace was state senator from Franklin County, 1831-1832, as well as merchant. Thomas F. Davidson, *History of Fountain County*, 46, 96 [this work is paged separately but bound with Hiram W. Beckwith, *Historic Notes on the Wabash Valley* (Chicago, 1881)].

¹³ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9, 16-18; Lonn, "Ripples of the Black Hawk War in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XX, 288-307; Sanford C. Cox, *Recollections of the Early Settlement of the Wabash Valley* (Lafayette, Indiana, 1860), 86-97.

seventy, paid tribute to "her eyes, large, sparkling, and deeply brown—they follow me yet."¹⁵

Education continued sporadically at Crawfordsville, thirty miles east, where the three Wallace boys were boarded out while their father earned a solid reputation as president of the Indiana Senate.¹⁶ The preparatory department of Wabash, Crawfordsville's new Presbyterian college, as well as the county seminary there, were uncongenial to the tow-headed Lewis; in each the inevitable bullying master ruled, and, fleeing each, the truant learned more of woods and fields than of grammar, arithmetic, and Latin. At the end of three years the Lieutenant-Governor returned to Crawfordsville with his party's nomination for the governorship and with a new wife, the former Zerelda Gray Sanders, nineteen, daughter of a well-to-do Indianapolis physician.¹⁷ David Wallace had been one of the foremost proponents of Indiana's impossible, grandiose Internal Improvement Act of 1836, fuse of an ultimately unfortunate speculative boom; but he won handily in the gubernatorial election of 1837. With his wife and four children (the new union had quickly borne fruit) he moved back to Indianapolis. Despite a current bank panic, the new Governor (whose salary was \$1200 a year) assured everybody that the outlook was glorious.¹⁸

The Hoosier capital lived in the future. Stumps were frequent in its vacant lots; there was no railroad, and it was a ten days' haul to the Ohio River, the main line of extra-state commerce. Nevertheless, immigrants were swelling the population of the city beyond the four-thousand mark, dig-

¹⁵ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 20-33; obituary of Esther Wallace, *Western Constellation* (Covington, Indiana), July 18, 1834. A silhouette of his mother with an inscription in his handwriting hangs in the Lew Wallace Study, Crawfordsville.

¹⁶ Woollen, *Biographical Sketches*, 70.

¹⁷ Sister-in-law of Dr. Richard J. Gatling, inventor of the Gatling gun, she became first president of the W.C.T.U. and, according to Jacob P. Dunn, *Indiana and Indianans* (5 vols., Chicago, 1919), II, 1059, was "recognized everywhere as the foremost woman speaker of the State." See also Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, *American Women* (2 vols., New York, 1897), II, 742, and William H. Smith, *The History of the State of Indiana* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1897), II, 870-72. The second Mrs. Wallace gained nationwide favor in W.C.T.U. circles.

¹⁸ Sulgrove, *Indianapolis*, 114; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, I, 417, 456-59; Alvin F. Harlow, *Old Towpaths* (New York, 1926), 270-71; George S. Wallace, *Wallace*, 143; *Revised Laws of Indiana*, 1831, ch. XXXVII, sec. 2, 256.

ging canals and laying track. Imminent wealth dominated the dusty odors of construction. Nothing in Covington or Crawfordsville compared with the state house, gala in its fresh stucco. Overawed by this sixty-thousand-dollar edifice, Lewis Wallace would have been the last to concur in the historian's judgment that it was "spoiled by a contemptible little dome, about as suitable as an army cap on the Apollo Belvidere."¹⁹

New diversions, however, served merely as new motives for truancy, and the local seminary compared favorably in brutality with those left behind.²⁰ Watching Jacob Cox, pioneer Indiana artist, execute a portrait of the Governor,²¹ the boy discovered in himself a yearning for brush and pigment which, though temporarily stifled by his practical father, remained with him through life. In the state house library, he made the acquaintance of Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, whose vistas succeeded those of Jesse Olney's *Geography*, Plutarch's *Lives*, and *The Life of Daniel Boone*. As a member of "The Red Eye and the Hay Press Club," with quarters accessible only by trap-door, he engaged in garden-raids, feasts, bell-pullings, and athletic contests in the woods.²² Berry R. Sulgrove, subsequently a prominent local historian and newspaperman, was a favorite companion. Truancy reached a climax late in May, 1840, when Indianapolis was the rallying-point for a mammoth Harrison-for-President celebration to be staged at Tippecanoe Battleground. Whig delegates and delegations, twenty thousand strong—in carriages, on horseback, on foot—formed a column twenty-five miles in length up the four-day route to the Battleground. His father away, Lewis Wallace joined the parade and lived thrillingly under the "Log Cabin and Hard Cider" banner for twelve days.²³

By this time Governor Wallace was desperately striving

¹⁹ Sulgrove, *Indianapolis*, 16, 103-04, 122; Jacob P. Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis* (2 vols., Chicago, 1910), I, 105; Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 47-48.

²⁰ Sulgrove, *Indianapolis*, 214B; Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 51.

²¹ The portrait was reproduced in Dunn, *Indiana and Indianans*, I, 423.

²² Sulgrove, *Indianapolis*, 59, 266-68; Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 48-51, 52-55.

²³ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 73-75; William R. Holloway, *Indianapolis, a Historical and Statistical Sketch* (Indianapolis, 1870), 70-71; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, I, 364.

to retrieve a hopeless political situation. His fortunes had risen with the Internal Improvement Act, and they rapidly declined with it. At the end of 1838 he dolefully addressed the Assembly concerning the state balance sheet, riddled with bad planning, incompetent administration, and outright embezzlement. His proclamation, November 28, 1839, of the first Thanksgiving Day in Indiana, was bitter irony in view of the fifty years' debt and humiliation the state faced. Inevitably the Whigs repudiated him in their 1840 convention.²⁴ The ex-Governor moved his household to a one-story, weather-boarded log building on Massachusetts Avenue, with a farm attached, and turned to consider the refractory Lewis again. In four years the boy had failed in as many schools; people were branding him, at thirteen, as wicked and destined for hanging.

Professor Samuel K. Hoshour, specialist in German, was well spoken of as a moulder of the young; to him, at Centerville, a village seventy miles east, went Lewis. He and his older brother William, a model student, were boarded by Aunt Rebecca Test of Centerville.²⁵ The expedient turned out surprisingly well. Jaws decorated by fascinating yellow wattles, Hoshour was the first sympathetic teacher Lewis had met, or recognized. Upon occasion he still received a flogging, but the pain was ameliorated by discrimination and sound justice. Moreover Hoshour revealed the splendors of John Quincy Adams's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory*, *The Spectator*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and the verses in St. Matthew telling of the three wise men, later on to be the genesis of *Ben-Hur*.²⁶

²⁴ Harlow, *Old Towpaths*, 263-78; Sulgrove, *Indianapolis*, 379; Woollen, *Biographical Sketches*, 71.

²⁵ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 55-56; Hoshour taught at the "old seminary" at Centerville, built in 1827, which became the nucleus of the short-lived Whitewater College (1853-1870); see Helen V. Austin, "Historic Houses and Personages of Centerville," *Indiana Magazine of History*, I, 180. David Wallace, as president of an educational convention at Indianapolis, heard Hoshour speak in 1839. The latter became Superintendent of Public Instruction at Indianapolis, 1862-1863, Sulgrove, *Indianapolis*, 494. Charles H. Test lived for a time at Centerville; Taylor, *Bench and Bar*, 70-71. Test was married to Rebecca Davis, *Commemorative Biographical Record of Prominent and Representative Men of Indianapolis and Vicinity* (Chicago, 1908), 91; Walter E. Spahr, *History of Centerville*, manuscript in Indiana State Library, 111.

²⁶ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 55-59. A fellow student at Centerville was Oliver P. Morton, who, as Governor of Indiana, in 1861, launched Wallace upon his Civil War career, *ibid.*, I, 260-62; Sulgrove, *Indianapolis*, 186-99.

Back at the Indianapolis seminary after a year, Lewis suddenly found he could more than hold his own there. On Friday evenings the classroom was the scene of the Union Literary Society's meetings, throbbing with debates, recitations, readings, and parliamentary exercises. The chairman meted out assignments and levied uncollectable fines; strangely enough, the Society lived for eighteen years.²⁷ With various young ladies for inspiration, lyrics flowed freely from young Wallace's pen and were not only read to the members of the Society but, occasionally, published in a friendly newspaper. In time there evolved a historical poem with John Smith of Virginia the hero, in the style of "Marmion" and "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," its several hundred lines concluding, to the author's entire satisfaction, with the rescue of Pocahontas.²⁸ This was followed by a rather elaborate epic called "The Travels of a Bed-bug," in which the main character sprang from the quarters of a local lawyer, passed from office to office and from hotel to hotel, until, like Alexander, it succumbed to overdrink. Here a poetic career also expired, for upon publication Lewis found himself the object of search by several gentlemen with canes in their hands.²⁹

With more profit the aspirant, now sixteen, turned to the novel. "Even then," he recalled a half-century later,

²⁷ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 60-61; Sulgrove, *Indianapolis*, 106.

²⁸ Perhaps partly inspired by Robert Dale Owen's play, *Pocahontas*, performed by the Indianapolis Thespian Corps in the winter of 1839-1840, with William Wallace in the title role and Lewis as "Numony," Pocahontas's sister. Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis*, I, 460.

²⁹ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 61-62. In addition, a poem of his entitled "Lines Addressed to the Lady Who Bandaged My Cut Finger—An After-Thought," survives from this period. The first of its five stanzas run:

"'Twas a little thing, a simple kindness,
Yet I cannot pass it by:
The blood-drop from the wound you answered
With a tear-drop in your eye."

Of the *Sturm und Drang* school is "The Dream," of which the following lines are sufficiently suggestive:

"I lay in utter darkness of soul. My heart
Was as morally diseased. Its blood
Was still, and flowed laggard-like. Life was
As a sky starless and cloud-veiled . . .
. . . By my side stood a form
Higher in the scale of beauty than aught
Of angel e'er dreamed. . . .
'I am thy Destiny,' said the golden mist. . .
My Destiny was good and from Heaven."

(Manuscripts in the Indiana State Library.)

"the importance to a writer of first discerning a body of readers possible of capture and then addressing himself to their tastes was a matter of instinct with me." At the moment the Society's taste ran to G.P.R. James, who had reiterated *Richelieu* (1829) with six other weighty tales of knighthood. James was easier to imitate than Scott, who had served James for a model, as Thackeray's *Burlesques* had demonstrated.³⁰

Lewis Wallace's "The Man-at-Arms: A Tale of the Tenth Century" owed much of its romanticized history and extravagant sentiment to James; for battle scenes the Hoosier apprentice acknowledged a debt to James Macpherson's *Ossian*. In the course of two hundred and fifty closely written pages of foolscap, Pedro, a valiant page, ran the gamut from agony to bliss in his devotion to Inez, the Rose of Guadalupe (meaningfully aged sixteen). Clandestine meetings led to Pedro's banishment, à la *Romeo and Juliet*, but a nurse and a hermit, also faintly Shakespearean, conspired to effect a secret marriage. Betrayed, Inez was incarcerated by wrathful parents and her marriage fraudulently annulled. She escaped a threatened match with an eligible prince by feigning madness. A helmet hiding his identity, Pedro became a hero of the First Crusade, and in time the father of Inez was overtaken with such remorse that he too, with his family, embarked on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. There, with Pedro apparently (but only apparently) dying, Inez' sanity returned and the two were reunited.³¹

The foolscap disappeared, happily, during the Mexican War, but at the time that it absorbed ink in David Wallace's law office above a shoe shop and was read to an attentive Society, it served a significant purpose. It left with the tyro the lifelong conviction that the sentimental historical novel was not only a popular medium, but one which lent itself readily to his hand.³²

The impulse of truancy, though more often dormant,

³⁰ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 62-63.

³¹ *Ibid.*, I, 63-72; Meredith Nicholson, *The Hoosiers* (New York, 1900), 181.

³² Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 72; Sulgrove, *Indianapolis*, 53.

still remained. It broke out one day when Lewis and Aquilla Cook, two years older and "bright,"³³ had been reading accounts of the heroic fight at the Alamo in Texas a few years before, and of the giants who there met their death. Perhaps a vague desire to avenge that barbaric massacre—or maybe the threat of a new Mexican attack—impelled the two to leave home and school to reinforce Commodore Moore of the Texan Navy. In any event, after a vain attempt at recruiting, the boys embarked on a skiff down the White River, intent upon overtaking a flatboat bound for New Orleans. Unfortunately they were successfully pursued by Dr. Sanders and a constable.³⁴

For David Wallace there was nothing picturesque about the Alamo incident; it was the last straw. The former Governor had served a term in Congress (at eight dollars a day), had been defeated for re-election mainly because he had championed fantastic Professor Samuel F. B. Morse's side of the "electro-magnetic-telegraph" issue, and was now re-establishing a legal practice.³⁵ He felt it his duty to speak realistically and decisively to the tall, thin, and olive-hued, but withal robust youth, who suddenly seemed a stranger. He did it with his accustomed good address and unexceptionable manners:

Were I to die tonight, your portion of my estate would not keep you a month. I have struggled to give you and your brothers what,

³³ He was the son of John Cook, the first State House librarian (1841-1843). Aquilla subsequently married a dancer in Cincinnati, and killed a man on her complaint that she had been insulted. He was never heard of afterwards, except in a letter to a Cincinnati paper boasting of the way he had fooled the police and escaped arrest. See Sulgrove, *Indianapolis*, 258.

³⁴ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 75-77. Wallace dates the Texan War of Independence 1842 or 1843; actually it was fought and won in 1836, though Mexico did not recognize the new state of affairs until 1843. Popular works of the time were *Sketches and Eccentricities of Col. David Crockett* (New York, 1833); *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett: . . . Written By Himself* (Philadelphia, 1834); *An Account of Col. Crockett's Tour to the North and Down East* (Baltimore, 1835); and *Col. Crockett's Exploits and Adventures in Texas* (Philadelphia, 1837). See William J. Ghent, "David Crockett" in *Dictionary of American Biography*. The Dr. Sanders mentioned was the father of the stepmother of Lewis Wallace.

³⁵ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 5-6; Woolien, *Biographical Sketches*, 71.

in my opinion, is better than money—education. Since your sixth year I have paid school-bills for you; but—one day you will regret the opportunities you have thrown away. I am sorry, disappointed, mortified; so, without shutting the door upon you, I am resolved that from today you must go out and earn your own livelihood. I shall watch your course hopefully.³⁶

The two parted with mutual politeness, father inscrutable, son dazzled by the vast prospect of life unshadowed by home or school. Not that he gazed without regret, at least in later recollection. David Wallace assumed an awesome stature as his son recalled his love of literature, especially Macaulay and the English quarterlies, and his fireside readings, with voice and expression of remarkable sensitivity, from the writings of Lamb, Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, and Byron; from the sermons of Chalmers, Hall, Bossuet, and Bourdaloue,³⁷ and from the chronicles of Thucydides and the history of George Bancroft. The elder Wallace had assigned declamations to his sons and criticized the performance, with special attention to enunciation. Material included Thomas Campbell's "Hohenlinden," Fitz-Greene Halleck's "Marco Bozzaris," extracts from Webster's speeches, Robert Emmet's "Vindication," Charles Phillips's "Washington," William Collins's "Ode to the Passions," Lord Byron's "Corsair," and Sir Walter Scott's "Marmion" and "Battle of Beal' and Duine."³⁸

From these things Lewis now turned to the office of County Clerk Robert B. Duncan, who was courting Aunt Mary Sanders and coaching brother William in law.³⁹ Duncan gave young Wallace records to copy—captions, pleadings, orders, judgments, dates of filing—at ten cents a hundred words. Soon he was earning eighteen dollars a week, living in a boarding house, attending sociables, and practicing the quadrille in a class conducted by a bandy-legged little Frenchman dubbed "Do-ci-do."⁴⁰ When this respectable routine failed to quench his thirst of the spirit, he found

³⁶ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 78-79.

³⁷ These preachers were probably Thomas Chalmers, Robert Hall, Jacques-Benigne Bossuet, and Louis Bourdaloue.

³⁸ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 82-84.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 85; Sulgrove, *Indianapolis*, 214B, 496.

⁴⁰ Heath Bowman, *Hoosier* (Indianapolis, 1941), 128.

time in the hush of the courthouse vault to apply himself to Lindley Murray's *English Grammar*, while Professor Hoshour's ghost looked approvingly over his shoulder. Then, late that year (1843), he took down from David Wallace's shelves, still accessible, a new three-volume work by the great William H. Prescott: *History of the Conquest of Mexico*. In this the apprentice hewer of tales saw his block of marble. "As a history, how delightful it was!" he rhapsodized in 1896, "as a tale, how rich in attractive elements!—adventure, exploration, combat, heroisms, oppositions of fate and fortune, characters for sympathy, characters for detestation, civilization and religion in mortal issue." And the field was "absolutely" untouched in fiction.⁴¹

He commenced weaving the plot and establishing the background of *The Fair God*, which was to be his first published novel, springing Phoenix-like from "The Man-at-Arms." He loaded Prescott with marginal notes, and then (after learning Spanish) Bernal Diaz' *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España*. Later, during visits to Washington, were to come annotations of other sources—"Hervara, Sahagún, Torquemada"⁴²—as he familiarized himself with the cloud-capp'd towers, gorgeous palaces, and solemn temples of old Mexico. The manuscript was begun in a blank-book one winter's night with no thought of publication, according to the author. For thirty years thereafter

⁴¹ Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 88-89. Actually the field had been opened by Robert Montgomery Bird's *Calavar*; or *The Knight of the Conquest* (Philadelphia, 1834); and *The Infidel*; or *The Fall of Mexico* (Philadelphia, 1835); but it is highly doubtful whether Wallace had read or even heard of these forgotten novels. He may have perused Robert Southey's *Madoc* (Edinburgh, 1805), a romance in blank verse dealing with early Mexico.

⁴² Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 90. Wallace, no doubt, meant to refer to the following histories: Antonio de Herrera, *Historia General de los Hechos de los Castellanos* (8 vols. in 4, Madrid, 1601-1615); Bernardino Sahagun, *Historia de la Conquista de Mexico* (Mexico, 1829), and *Historia General de las cosas de Nueva España* (3 vols., Mexico, 1829-1830); and Juan de Torquemada, *Primera [segunda, tercera] parte de los Veinte i un Libros Rituales y Monarchia Indiana* (Seville, 1615).

⁴³ Walter J. Turner, "Romance," in Edwin Markham, *The Book of Poetry* (2 vols., New York, 1928), II, 2791; Wallace, *Autobiography*, I, 88-91. Preliminary titles of Wallace's *The Fair God* (Boston, 1873), included *The Last of the Tzins*, *The Last Days of Montezuma*, *Guatamozin the Aztec*, and *Montezuma, the God of the Aztecs*. *Ibid.*, II, 890.

it served as a pastime, something to pick up—by memory if, as was often the case, the blank-book had been left behind—when business slackened, a train-ride grew dull, or a wait extended itself. Then indeed

“Shining Popocatepetl
The dusty streets did rule.”⁴³