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Ben Hur.

It is said that General Lew Wallace toiled over "Ben-Hur" in its writing for close to seven years. In 1877 he was appointed governor of Mexico by President Hayes, who told him he "probably would have a lot of leisure out there."

When General Wallace went to Santa Fe, the venerable city of the Pueblos, he took with him large chests of books dealing with ancient Egypt, Palestine, Turkey, Rome, Greece and Levant, as well as all the encyclopedias he could find. At least he himself is responsible for the latter information.

In that remote section of our then half-Mexicanized possessions, amid traditions of the Spanish missionaries of the sixteenth century, far from the gunfire of Shiloh and Fort Donelson, and almost as far as the rumblings of that conflict that had cost Maximilian an empire and placing Diaz in the saddle of republican power, Wallace did the greater part of the writing of "Ben-Hur."

Although it is "a tale of the Christ," and as such frequently devotional, his explanation of its origin is remarkable in that "every line of it was written," he said "for pastime!" Never was a

more astonishing reason given by the creator of first class work of art than "I did for fun."

When "Ben-Hur" first appeared it created a great sensation. It was noted by the London "Times" as not inferior to the strongest English work with which it has any point of contact, Charles Kingsley's "Hypathia." Our own Literary authorities admitted that in it the author touched "the acme of conservative view and labored exactitude in the study of historical detail and propriety of diction."

Lew Wallace began the writing of "Ben-Hur" during the summer of 1875. He received inspiration for the work through the impression made upon him by the birth of Jesus and its fore-tellings by the Wise Men. At the time of his beginning, he says, he was not in the least influenced by religious sentiment, as might be supposed. but instead he neither believed or disbelieved. But he adds, in his "Authobiography," "Long before I was through with my book, I became a believer in God and in Christ."

He first finished the story of the birth of Christ which he had set out to write

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