

purely scientific purpose. Niven's request was denied. "Méjico para los mejicanos" rang in his ears.

Niven wrote to Mann of in his "hope deferred" on May 21. He had wanted to have more good news before responding to Mann's latest letter but, unfortunately, none was forthcoming. Ramón Mena had promised to write up Niven's Tampico donations to the National Museum (made in December, January, and February). This, too, had not yet materialized. The refusal of the Mexican government to allow him to excavate at his old diggings in the Valley of Mexico was all the more troubling because it also meant that his entire collection of archaeological artifacts could be seized for violating Mexican law. "Fortunately I have all the receipts of objects donated since 1890 with letters of permission to export and concessions showing that not only had I worked with the consent of the government, but with their cooperation . . ."

In July J. H. Cornyn, a Canadian linguist and specialist in Aztec literature in Mexico City, wrote to Niven. "From time to time I hear of your excavations in Tampico and surrounding district and I am always very much interested. Keep up the good work. People are beginning to come around to the fact that the things taken out of the Valley of Mexico and belonging to the earlier civilizations are of great archaeological and historical value." Cornyn was preparing for publication an Aztec heroic poem, "The Song of Quetzalcoatl." His vast knowledge

of Mexican literature enabled him to decipher the iconography on several of the tablets. Earlier he had written "Mexico's Mystery Writing" for the *Bulletin of the Pan American Union*, which made reference to Niven's discoveries. In particular, he was interested in tablet 1389, earlier examined by Mann. "The . . . figure called 'Jupiter,' is not even a man," he noted. "It is Xochi-quetzal, wife of the old Fire God. One typical headdress," he went on, "is the sign *macuilli*. The earrings are the typical *xochitl*, flower, made in four sections or leaves, to represent the Four Directions, or divisions of the earth over which Macuill-xochitl ruled as the goddess of vegetation . . ."

Niven was greatly encouraged by Cornyn's findings, which would finally place his discoveries in a Mexican cultural context. Regarding the reliability of Mann, who had supposedly "found the key to the symbols" based upon mathematical computations, Niven simply replied that Mrs. Niven was from Missouri, the "show me" state. He was open to new interpretations.