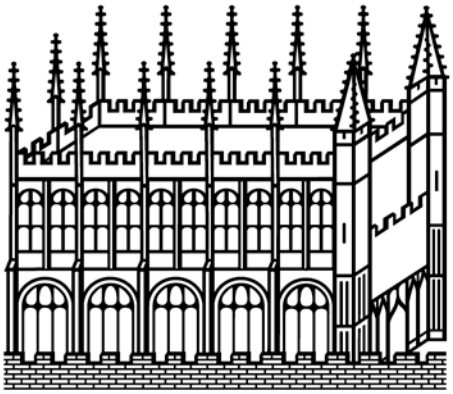

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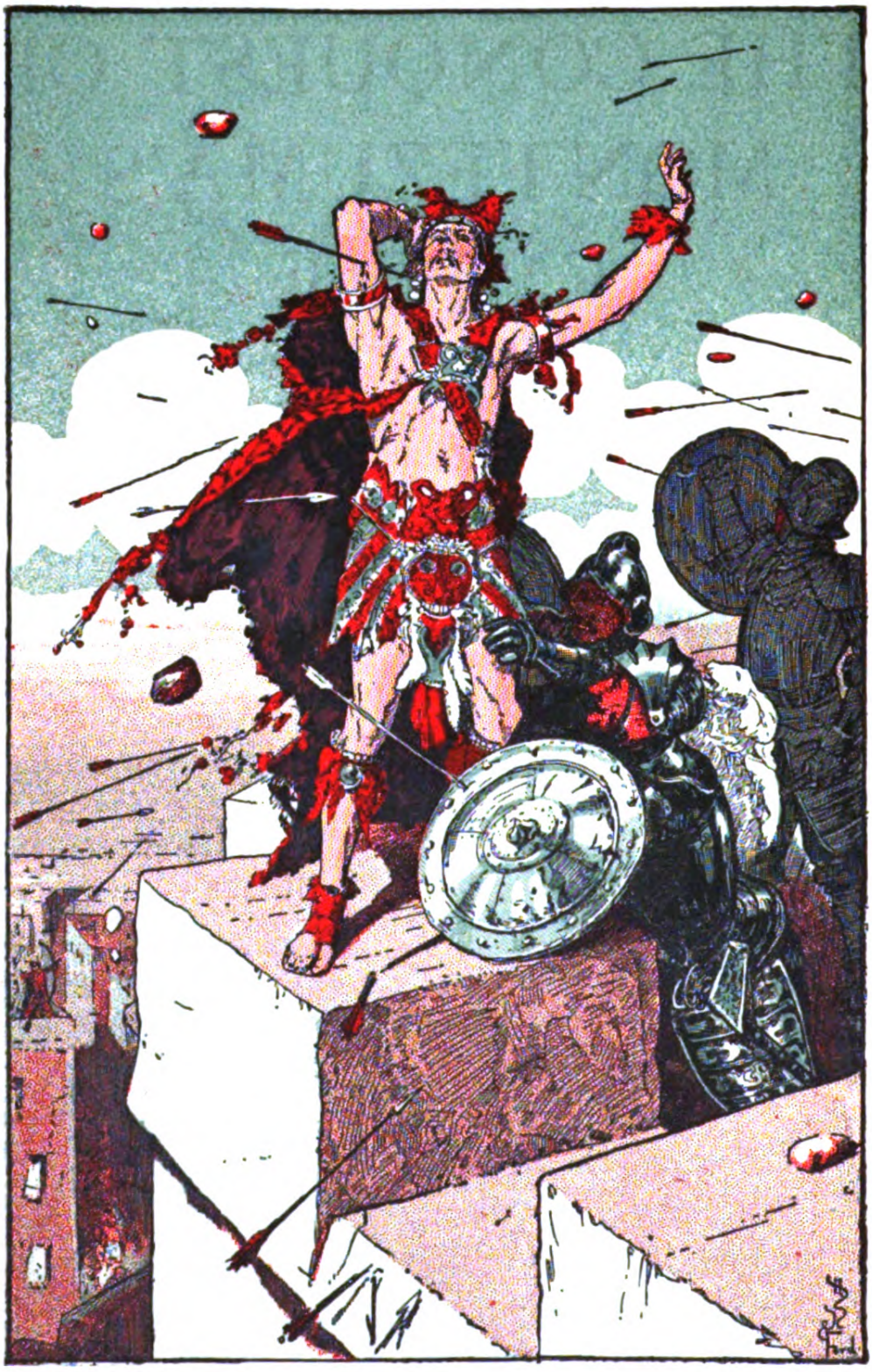

MONTEZUMA ASSAILED BY MISSILES

THE CONQUEST OF MONTEZUMA'S EMPIRE

FROM

W. H. PRESCOTT

EDITED BY

ANDREW LANG

ILLUSTRATED BY

H. J. FORD

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
LONDON • NEW YORK • TORONTO
1932

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FOREWORD

THIS is a long story, but to the editor's taste, it is simply the best true story in the world, the most unlikely, the most romantic. For who could have supposed that the new-found world of the West held all that wealth of treasure, emeralds and gold, all those people, so beautiful and brave, so courteous and cruel, with their terrible gods, hideous human sacrifices, and almost Christian prayers?

That a handful of Spaniards, themselves mistaken for children of a white god, should have crossed the sea, should have found a lovely lady, as in a fairy tale, ready to lead them to victory, should have planted the cross on the shambles of Huitzilopochtli, after that wild battle on the temple crest, should have been driven in rout from, and then recaptured, the Venice of the West, the lake city of Mexico—all this is as strange, as unlooked for, as any story of adventures in a new planet would be.

FOREWORD

No invention of fights and wanderings in No Man's Land, no search for the mines of Solomon the King, can approach, for strangeness and romance, this tale which is true, and vouched for by Spanish conquerors like Bernal Diaz, and by native historians like Ixtlilochitl, and by later missionaries like Sahagun.

Cortés is the great original of all treasure-hunters and explorers in fiction, and here no feigned tale can be the equal of the real. As Mr. Prescott's admirable history is not a book much read by children, the editor hopes they will be pleased to read the "Adventures in Anahuac" here. Miss Edgeworth tells us in *Orlandino* how much the tale delighted the young before Mr. Prescott wrote his excellent narrative of the world's chief adventure here reduced by Miss Wright. May it please still, as it did when the country was young!

A. L.

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THE CONQUEST OF MONTEZUMA'S EMPIRE

CHAPTER I

THE YOUTH OF CORTÉS

LONG ago, when Henry VIII was King of England and Charles V was King of Spain, there lived a young Spanish cavalier whose name was Hernando Cortés.

His father, Don Martin Cortés, sent him to Salamanca when he was about fourteen years old, intending to have him educated as a lawyer. But Hernando cared nothing for books, and after wasting two years at college returned home, to the great annoyance of his parents. They were glad enough when, after another year of idleness, he proposed to go and seek his fortune in the New World so lately discovered by Columbus.

An exploring expedition was just being fitted out, and Hernando Cortés had quite made up his mind to join it. But he unluckily fell from a high wall which he was climbing, and before he had recovered from his injuries the ships had sailed without him. Two more years did he remain at home after this misadventure. But at length, when he was nineteen years old, he joined a small fleet bound for the Indian Islands.

The vessel in which he sailed was commanded by one Alonso Quintero. When they reached the Canary Islands, and all the other vessels were detained by taking in supplies, Quintero stole out of the harbor under cover of the night, meaning to

reach Hispaniola before his companions, and so secure a better chance of trading. However, he met with a furious storm, and was driven back to the port with his ship dismasted and battered.

The rest of the fleet generously consented to wait while his ship was being refitted. After a short delay they set out again, but so soon as they neared the islands, the faithless Quintero again gave his companions the slip, but with no better success. For he met with such heavy gales that he entirely lost his reckoning, and for many days his ship tossed about helplessly, until one morning they were cheered by the sight of a white dove, which settled upon the rigging. Taking the direction of the bird's flight, they soon reached Hispaniola. Here the captain had the satisfaction of finding all the other ships had arrived before him, and had sold all their cargoes.

Cortés, as soon as he landed, went to see Ovando, the Governor of the island, whom he had known in Spain. And presently Cortés was persuaded to accept a grant of land and settle down to cultivate it, though at first he said:

"I came to get gold, not to till the ground like a peasant."

So six years passed, during which the monotony of Cortés' life was broken only by occasional expeditions against the natives, in which he learned to endure toil and danger, and became familiar with the tactics of Indian warfare.

At length, in 1511, when Diego Velasquez, the Governor's Lieutenant, undertook the conquest of Cuba, Cortés gladly accompanied him, and throughout the expedition made himself a favorite both with the commander and the soldiers. But when later on there arose discontent over the distribution of lands and offices, the malcontents fixed upon Cortés as the most suitable person to go back to Hispaniola, and lay their grievances before the higher authorities.

This came to the ears of Velasquez, however, and he at once seized Cortés, whom he loaded with fetters and threw into prison. Luckily he soon succeeded in freeing himself from the irons. Letting himself down from the window he took ref-

uge in the nearest church, where he claimed the right of sanctuary.

Velasquez, who was very angry at his escape, stationed a guard with orders to seize Cortés if he should leave the sanctuary. This he was soon careless enough to do. As he stood outside the church an officer suddenly sprang upon him from behind, and made him prisoner once more.

This time he was carried on board a ship which was to sail the next morning for Hispaniola, where he was to be tried. But again he managed to escape by dragging his feet through the rings which fettered them, and dropping silently over the ship's side into a little boat under cover of the darkness. As he neared the shore the water became so rough that the boat was useless, and he was forced to swim the rest of the way. But at last he got safely to land, and again took refuge in the church.

After this he married a lady named Catalina Xuarez, and by the aid of her family managed to make his peace with Velasquez. Cortés now re-

ceived a large estate near St. Jago, where he lived prosperously for some years, and even amassed a considerable sum of money.

But at last news came of an exploring expedition which had set out in 1518 under Grijalva, the nephew of Velasquez. He had touched at various places on the Mexican coast. He had held a friendly conference with one cacique, or chief, who seemed desirous of collecting all the information he could about the Spaniards, and their motives in visiting Mexico, that he might transmit it to his master, the Aztec emperor.

Presents were exchanged at this interview. In return for a few glass beads, pins, and such paltry trifles, the Spaniards had received such a rich treasure of jewels and gold ornaments that the General at once sent back one of his ships under the command of Don Pedro de Alvarado to convey the spoil. And to acquaint the Governor of Cuba with the progress of the expedition, and also with all the information he had been able to glean respecting the Aztec Emperor and his dominions.

Now in those days nothing whatever was known about the interior of the country or of its inhabitants. It was as strange to the explorers as another planet.

CHAPTER II

THE WONDERS OF MEXICO

THIS was what they had to tell the Governor. Far away towards the Pacific Ocean there stood, in a beautiful and most fertile valley, the capital of a great and powerful empire, called by its inhabitants Tenochtitlan, but known to the Europeans only by its other name of Mexico, derived from Mexitli, the war-god of the Aztecs.

These Aztecs seem to have come originally from

the north, and after many wanderings to have halted at length on the south-western borders of a great lake, of which there were several in the Mexican valley. This celebrated valley was situated at a height of about seventy-five hundred feet above the sea. It was oval in form, about sixty-seven leagues in circumference, and surrounded by towering rocks, which seemed to be meant to protect it from invasion.

It was in the year 1325 that the Aztecs paused upon the shore of the lake, and saw, as the sun rose, a splendid eagle perched upon a prickly pear which shot out of a crevice in the rock. It held a large serpent in its claws, and its broad wings were opened towards the rising sun.

The Aztecs saw in this a most favorable omen, and there and then set about building themselves a city, laying its foundations upon piles in the marshy ground beside the lake. To this day the eagle and the cactus form the arms of the Mexican republic.

The little body of settlers increased rapidly in number and power, and made their name terrible

throughout the valley, in which various other tribes had long been settled. At last they united themselves with the King of the Tezcucans, to aid him against a tribe called the Tepanecs, who had invaded his territory.

The allies were completely successful, and this led to an agreement between the states of Mexico, Tezcuco, and Tlacopan, that they should support each other in all their wars, and divide all the spoils between them. This alliance remained unbroken for over a hundred years and under a succession of able princes the Aztec dominion grew, till at the coming of the Spaniards it reached across the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

The Aztecs had many wise laws and institutions, and were indeed in some respects a highly civilized community. When their emperor died a new one was chosen by four nobles from among his sons or nephews. The one preferred was obliged to have distinguished himself in war. His coronation did not take place until a successful campaign had provided enough captives to

grace his triumphal entry into the capital, and enough victims for the ghastly sacrifices which formed an important part of all their religious ceremonies.

Communication was held with the remotest parts of the country by means of couriers, who, trained to it from childhood, travelled with amazing swiftness. Post-houses were established on the great roads, and the messenger bearing his despatches in the form of hieroglyphical paintings, ran to the first station, where they were taken by the next messenger and carried forward, being sent in one day a hundred or even two hundred miles. Thus fish was served at the banquets of the Emperor Montezuma which twenty-four hours before had been caught in the Gulf of Mexico, two hundred miles away. Thus too the news was carried when any war was going on. As the messengers ran to acquaint the court with the movements of the royal armies, the people by the way knew whether the tidings were good or bad by the dress of the courier.

But the training of warriors was the chief end

and aim of all Aztec institutions. Their principal god was the god of war, and one great object of all their expeditions was the capture of victims to be sacrificed upon his altars. They believed that the soldier who fell in battle was transported at once to the blissful regions of the sun, and they consequently fought with an utter disregard of danger.

The dress of the warriors was magnificent. Their bodies were protected by a vest of quilted cotton, impervious to light missiles. Over this the chiefs wore mantles of gorgeous feather-work, and the richer of them a kind of cuirass of gold or silver plates. Their helmets were of wood, fashioned like the head of some wild animal, or of silver surmounted by plumes of variously colored feathers, sprinkled with precious stones. Besides which they wore many ornaments of gold, and their banners were embroidered with gold and feather-work.

The Aztecs worshipped thirteen principal gods, and more than two hundred of less importance, each of whom, however, had his day of festival,

which was duly observed. At the head of all stood the war-god, the terrible Huitzilopochtli, whose fantastic image was loaded with costly ornaments, and whose temples, in every city of the empire, were the most splendid and stately.

The Aztecs also had a legend that there had once dwelt upon the earth the great Quetzalcoatl, god of the air, under whose sway all things had flourished and all people had lived in peace and prosperity. But he had in some way incurred the wrath of the principal gods, and was compelled to leave the country. On his way he stopped at the city of Cholula, where a temple was dedicated to him, of which the great ruins remain to this day.

When he reached the shores of the Mexican Gulf he embarked in his magic boat, made of serpents' skins, for the fabulous land of Tlapallan. But before he bade his followers farewell he promised that he and his descendants would one day come again. The Aztecs confidently looked forward to the return of their benevolent god, who was said to have been tall in stature, with a white skin, long dark hair, and a flowing beard. And

this belief of theirs prepared the way, as you will presently see, for the success of Cortés.[1]

The Mexican temples, or teccallis "Houses of God" as they were called were very numerous, there being several hundreds of them in each of the principal cities. They looked rather like the Egyptian pyramids, and were divided into four or five stories, each one being smaller than the one below it. The ascent was by a flight of steps at an angle of the pyramid. This led to a sort of terrace at the base of the second story, which passed quite round the building to another flight of steps immediately over the first. Thus it was necessary to go all round the temple several times before reaching the summit.

The top was a broad space on which stood two towers, forty or fifty feet high, which contained the images of the gods. Before these towers stood the dreadful stone of sacrifice, and two lofty al-

[1] In 1121 Bishop Eric left Iceland for Vinland, part of America discovered by Leif the Lucky (1000–1002). Bishop Eric was heard of no more. Can he have reached the Aztecs, and been regarded as a god?

tars on which the sacred fires burned continually.

Human sacrifices were adopted by the Aztecs about two hundred years before the coming of the Spaniards. Rare at first, they became more and more frequent till at length nearly every festival closed with this cruel abomination.

The unhappy victim was held by five priests upon the stone of sacrifice, while the sixth, who was clothed in a scarlet mantle, emblematic of his horrible office, cut open his breast with a sharp razor of itztli, a volcanic substance as hard as flint. Tearing out his heart, the priest held it first up to the sun, which they worshipped, and then cast it at the feet of the god to whom the temple was devoted. And to crown the horror, the body of the captive thus sacrificed was afterwards given to the warrior who had taken him in battle, who thereupon gave a great banquet and served him up amid choice dishes and delicious beverages for the entertainment of his friends. When the great teocalli of Huitzilopochtli was dedicated in the year 1486, no less than seventy thousand prisoners were thus sacrificed, and in the whole kingdom every

year the victims were never fewer than twenty thousand, or, as some old writers say, fifty thousand.

The Aztec writing was not with letters and words, but consisted of little colored pictures, each of which had some special meaning. Thus a "tongue" denoted speaking, a "footprint" travelling, a "man sitting on the ground" an earthquake. As a very slight difference in position or color intimated a different meaning, this writing was very difficult to read, and in the Aztec colleges the priests specially taught it to their pupils. At the time of the coming of the Spaniards there were numbers of people employed in this picture-writing. But unfortunately hardly any of the manuscripts were preserved, for the Spaniards, looking upon them as magic scrolls, caused them to be burned by thousands.

In many mechanical arts the Aztecs had made considerable progress. Their ground was well cultivated. They had discovered and used silver, lead, tin, and copper. Gold, which was found in

the river-beds, they cast into bars, or used as money by filling transparent quills with gold dust. They also made many fantastic ornaments of gold and silver, and cast gold and silver vessels, which they carved delicately with chisels. Some of the silver vases were so large that a man could not encircle them with his arms.

But the art in which they most delighted was the wonderful feather-work. With the gorgeous plumage of the tropical birds they could produce all the effect of a beautiful mosaic. The feathers, pasted upon a fine cotton web, were wrought into dresses for the wealthy, hangings for their palaces, and ornaments for their temples.

These then were the people of whom Grijalva sent back to Cuba a few vague reports, and these, and the accounts of the splendor of the treasure, spread like wildfire through the island. The Governor having resolved to send out more ships to follow up these discoveries, looked about him for a suitable person to command the expedition and share the expenses of it. Several of his

friends recommended that he choose Hernando Cortés, and he presently did so.

Cortés had now attained his heart's desire, and at once began with the utmost energy to purchase and fit out the ships. He used all the money he had saved, and as much more as he could persuade his friends to lend him. Very soon he was in possession of six vessels, and three hundred recruits had enrolled themselves under his banner.

His orders were, first, to find Grijalva and to proceed in company with him. Then he was to seek out and rescue six Christians, the survivors of a previous expedition, who were supposed to be lingering in captivity in the interior; and to bear in mind, before all things, that it was the great desire of the Spanish monarch that the Indians should be converted to Christianity. They were to be invited to give their allegiance to him, and to send him presents of gold and jewels to secure his favor and protection. The explorers were also to survey the coast, acquaint themselves with the general features of the country, and to barter with the natives.

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNING OF THE EXPEDITION

BUT before Cortés was ready to start, a jealousy and distrust of him took possession of the mind of Velasquez, so that he determined to entrust the command of the fleet to someone else. This came to the ears of Cortés. With great promptitude he assembled his officers secretly, and that very night set sail with what supplies he was able to lay hands

upon, his ships being neither ready for sea nor properly provisioned.

When morning broke news was carried to Velasquez that the fleet was under way and he rose hastily and galloped down to the quay. Cortés rowed back to within speaking distance.

"This is a courteous way of taking leave of me, truly," cried the Governor.

"Pardon me," answered Cortés, "time presses, and there are some things that should be done before they are even thought of."

And with that he returned to his vessel, and the little fleet sailed away to Macaca, where Cortés laid in more stores. This was on November 18, 1518. Shortly afterward he proceeded to Trinidad, a town on the south coast of Cuba, where he landed. Setting up his standard, he invited all who would to join the expedition, holding out to them great hopes of wealth to be gained.

Volunteers flocked in daily, including many young men of noble family, who were attracted by the fame of Cortés. Among them were Pedro de Alvarado, Cristóval de Olid, Alonso de Avila,

Juan Velasquez de Leon, Alonso Hernandez de Puertocarrero, and Gonzalo de Sandoval, of all of whom you will hear again before the story is finished.

Finally, in February 1519, when all the reinforcements were assembled, Cortés found he had eleven vessels, one hundred and ten mariners, five hundred and fifty-three soldiers, and two hundred Indians. He also had sixteen horses, ten large guns, and four lighter ones which were called falconets.

Cortés, before embarking, addressed his little army, saying that he held out to them a glorious prize, and that if any among them coveted riches, he would make them masters of such as their countrymen had never dreamed of. And so they sailed away for the coast of Yucatan.

The first thing that happened was that they were overtaken by a furious tempest. Cortés was delayed by looking after a disabled vessel, and so was the last to reach the island of Cozumel. Here he found that Alvarado, one of his captains, had landed, plundered a temple, and by his violence

caused the natives to fly and hide themselves inland.

Cortés, much displeased, severely reprimanded his officer, and, by the aid of an interpreter, explained his peaceful intentions to two Indians who had been captured. Then he loaded them with presents, and sent them to persuade their countrymen to return, which they presently did. And the Spaniards had the satisfaction of bartering the trifles they had brought for the gold ornaments of the natives.

Next Cortés sent two ships to the opposite coast of Yucatan, where they were to despatch some Indians inland, to seek for and ransom the Christian captives, of whom he had gained some tiddings from a trader. While they were gone he explored the island, and induced the natives to declare themselves Christians by the very summary method of rolling their venerated idols out of their temple, and setting up in their stead an image of the Virgin and Child. When the Indians saw that no terrible consequences followed, they listened to the teaching of the good priest,

Father Olmedo, who accompanied the expedition. Though it is probable that they did not, after all, understand much of his instruction.

After eight days the two ships came back, but with no news of the captives, and Cortés sorrowfully decided that he could wait no longer. He accordingly took in provisions and water, and set sail again, but before they had gone far one of the ships sprang a leak, which obliged them to put back into the same port.

It was lucky that they did, for soon after they landed a canoe was seen coming from the shore of Yucatan, which proved to contain one of the long-lost Spaniards, who was called Aguilar. He had been for eight years a slave among the natives in the interior. But his master, tempted by the ransom of glass-beads, hawk-bells, and such treasures, had consented to release him.

When he reached the coast the ships were gone. But owing to the fortunate accident of their return, he found himself once more among his countrymen. Cortés at once saw the importance of having him as an interpreter. But in the end he

proved to be of more use to the explorers than could have been at first imagined.

Again the fleet set out, and coasted along the Gulf of Mexico till they reached the mouth of the Rio de Tabasco. Here Cortés landed, but found that the Indians were hostile, and were drawn up in great force against him. However, after some hard fighting the Spaniards were victorious. And having taken possession of the town of Tabasco, Cortés sent messengers to the chiefs saying that if they did not at once submit themselves he would ravage the country with fire and sword.

As they had no mind for any more fighting they came humbly, bringing presents, and among them thirty slaves, one of whom, a beautiful Mexican girl named Malinche, was afterwards of the utmost importance to the expedition. She had come into the possession of the cacique of Tabasco through some traders from the interior of the country, to whom she had been secretly sold by her mother, who coveted her inheritance.

Cortés now re-embarked his soldiers and sailed

away to the island of San Juan de Uloa, under the lee of which they anchored. Soon he saw the light pirogues of the Indians coming off to them from the mainland. They brought presents of fruit and flowers, and little ornaments of gold which they gladly exchanged for the usual trifles.

Cortés was most anxious to converse with them, but found to his disappointment that Aguilar could not understand their dialect. In this dilemma he was informed that one of the slaves was a Mexican, and could of course speak the language. This was Malinche, or as the Spaniards always called her, Marina.

Cortés was so charmed with her beauty and cleverness that he made her his secretary and kept her always with him. She very soon learned enough Spanish to interpret for him without the help of Aguilar. But at first they were both necessary, and by their aid Cortés learned that his visitors were subjects of Montezuma, the great Aztec Emperor, and were governed by Tenhtlile, one of his nobles. Cortés having ascertained that there was abundance of gold in the interior, dis-

missed them, loaded with presents, to acquaint their governor with his desire for an interview.

The next morning he landed on the mainland with all his force. It was a level sandy plain, and the troops employed themselves in cutting down trees and bushes to provide a shelter from the weather. In this they were aided by the natives, who built them huts with stakes and earth, mats and cotton carpets, and flocked from all the country round to see the wonderful strangers. They brought with them fruits, vegetables, flowers in abundance, game, and many dishes cooked after the fashion of the country; and these they gave to, or bartered with, the Spaniards.

The next day came Tenhtlile, the governor, with a numerous train, and was met by Cortés and conducted to his tent with great ceremony. All the principal officers were assembled, and after a ceremonious banquet at which the governor was regaled with Spanish wines and confections, the interpreters were sent for and a conversation began.

Tenhtlile first asked about the country of the

strangers, and the object of their visit. Cortés replied that he was the subject of a powerful monarch beyond the seas, who had heard of the greatness of the Mexican Emperor, and had sent him with a present in token of his goodwill, and with a message which he must deliver in person. He concluded by asking when he could be admitted into Montezuma's presence. To this the Aztec noble replied haughtily:

"How is it that you have been here only two days, and demand to see the Emperor?"

Then he added that he was surprised to hear that there could be another monarch as powerful as Montezuma. But if it were so his master would be happy to communicate with him, and he would forward the royal gift brought by the Spanish commander, and so soon as he had learned Montezuma's will would inform him of it.

Tenhtlile then ordered his slaves to bring forward the present for the Spanish general. It consisted of ten loads of fine cotton, several mantles of gorgeous feather-work, and a wicker basket of golden ornaments.

Cortés received it with due acknowledgments, and in his turn ordered the presents for Montezuma to be brought forward. These were an armchair richly carved and painted, a crimson cloth cap with a gold medal, and a quantity of collars, bracelets, and other ornaments of cut-glass, which in a country where glass was unknown were as valuable as real gems.

The Aztec governor observed a soldier in the camp in a shining gilt helmet, and expressed a wish that Montezuma should see it, as it reminded him of one worn by the god Quetzalcoatl. Cortés declared his willingness that the helmet should be sent, and begged that the Emperor would return it filled with the gold dust of the country, that he might compare its quality with that of his own. He also said that the Spaniards were troubled with a disease of the heart, for which gold was a sure remedy. In fact, he made his want of gold very clear to the governor.

While these things were passing Cortés observed one of Tenhtlile's attendants busy with a pencil, and on looking at his work he found it was a sketch

of the Spaniards, their costumes, weapons, and all objects of interest being correctly represented both in form and color. This was the celebrated picture-writing, and the governor said that this man was drawing all these things for Montezuma, as he would get a much better idea of their appearance thus.

Thereupon Cortés ordered out the cavalry, and caused them to go through their military exercises upon the firm wet sands of the beach. The appearance of the horses, which were absolutely unknown in Mexico, filled the natives with astonishment, which turned to alarm when the General ordered the cannon to be fired, and they saw for the first time the smoke and flame, and beheld the balls crashing among the trees of the neighboring forest and reducing them to splinters.

Nothing of this sort was lost upon the painters, who faithfully recorded every particular, not omitting the ships, the "water-houses," as they called them, which swung at anchor in the bay. Finally, the governor departed as ceremoniously as he had come, leaving orders with his people to

supply the Spanish general with all that he might require till further instructions should come from the Emperor.

In the meantime the arrival of the strangers was causing no small stir in the Mexican capital. A general feeling seems to have prevailed that the Return of the White God, Quetzalcoatl, was at hand, and many wonderful signs and occurrences seemed to confirm the belief.

In 1510 the great lake of Tezcuco, without tempest, earthquake, or any visible cause, became violently agitated. It overflowed its banks, and, pouring into the streets of Mexico, swept away many buildings by the fury of its waters. In 1511 one of the towers of the great temple took fire, equally without any apparent cause, and continued to burn in defiance of all attempts to extinguish it.

In the following years three comets were seen, and not long before the coming of the Spaniards a strange light broke forth in the east, resembling a great pyramid or flood of fire thickly powdered with stars. At the same time low voices were

heard in the air, and doleful wailings, as if to announce some strange, mysterious calamity. A lady of the Royal house died, was buried, and rose again, prophesying ruin to come. After the Conquest she became a Christian.

Montezuma, terrified at these apparitions, took counsel of Nezahualpilli, King of Tezcuco, who was a great proficient in astrology. But far from obtaining any comfort from him, he was still further depressed by being told that all these things predicted the speedy downfall of his empire.

When, therefore, the picture-writings showing the Spanish invaders reached Montezuma, they caused him great apprehension. And he summoned the Kings of Tezcuco and Tlacopan to consult with them as to how the strangers should be received. There was much division of opinion, but finally Montezuma resolved to send a rich present which should impress them with a high idea of his wealth and grandeur, while at the same time he would forbid them to approach the Capital.

After eight days at the most, which however

seemed a long time to the Spaniards, who were suffering from the intense heat of the climate, the embassy, accompanied by the Governor Tenhtlile, reached the camp, and presented to Cortés the magnificent treasure sent by Montezuma. One of the two nobles had been sent on account of his great likeness to the picture of Cortés which the Aztec painter had executed for Montezuma. This resemblance was so striking that the Spanish soldiers always called this chief "the Mexican Cortés."

After the usual ceremonious salutes, the slaves unrolled the delicately wrought mats and displayed the gifts they had brought. There were shields, helmets, and cuirasses embossed with plates and ornaments of pure gold, with collars and bracelets of the same precious metal, sandals, fans, plumes, and crests of variegated feathers wrought with gold and silver thread and sprinkled with pearls and precious stones. Also imitations of birds and animals in wrought or cast gold and silver of exquisite workmanship; and curtains, coverlets and robes of cotton, fine as silk, of rich

and varied hues, interwoven with feather-work that rivalled the most delicate painting.

There were more than thirty loads of cotton cloth, and the Spanish helmet was returned filled to the brim with grains of gold. But the things which excited the most admiration were two circular plates of gold and silver as large as carriage-wheels. One, representing the sun, was richly carved with plants and animals, and was worth fifty-two thousand five hundred pounds.

The Spaniards could not conceal their rapture at this exhibition of treasure which exceeded their utmost dreams. And when they had sufficiently admired it the ambassadors courteously delivered their message, which was to the effect that Montezuma had great pleasure in holding communication with so powerful a monarch as the King of Spain. But he could not grant a personal interview to the Spaniards; the way to his Capital was too long and too dangerous. Therefore the strangers must return to their own land with the gifts he had sent them.

Cortés, though much vexed, concealed his an-

noyance and expressed his sense of the Emperor's munificence. It made him, he said, only the more desirous of a personal interview, so that he felt it was impossible that he should present himself again before his sovereign without having accomplished this great object of his journey.

He once more requested them to bear this message to their master, with another trifling gift. This they seemed unwilling to do, and took their leave repeating that the General's wish could not be gratified.

The soldiers were by this time suffering greatly from the heat, surrounded as they were by burning sands and evil-smelling marshes, and swarms of venomous insects which tormented them night and day. Thirty of their number died, and the discomfort of the rest was greatly increased by the indifference of the natives, who no longer brought them such abundant supplies, and demanded an immense price for what they did provide.

After ten days the Mexican envoys returned, bearing another rich present of stuffs and gold

ornaments, which, though not so valuable as the first, was yet worth three thousand ounces of gold. Beside this there were four precious stones, somewhat resembling emeralds, each of which they assured the Spaniards was worth more than a load of gold, and was destined as a special mark of respect for the Spanish monarch, since only the nobles of Mexico were allowed to wear them. Unfortunately, however, they were of no value at all in Europe.

Montezuma's answer was the same as before. He positively forbade the strangers to approach nearer to his Capital, and requested them to take the treasure he had bestowed upon them, and return without delay to their own country. Cortés received this unwelcome message courteously, but coldly, and turning to his officers exclaimed:

"This is a rich and powerful Prince indeed, yet it shall go hard but we will one day pay him a visit in his Capital."

Father Olmedo then tried to persuade the Aztec chiefs to give up their idol-worship, and endeavored by the aid of Marina and Aguilar to

explain to them the mysteries of his own faith, but it is probable that he was not very successful.

The chiefs presently withdrew coldly, and that same night every hut was deserted by the natives, and the Spaniards were left without supplies in a desolate wilderness. Cortés thought this so suspicious that he prepared for an attack, but everything remained quiet.

The General now decided to remove his camp to a more healthy place a little farther along the coast, where the ships could anchor and be sheltered from the north wind. But the soldiers began to grumble and be discontented, and to say that it was time to return with their spoil, and not linger upon those barren shores until they had brought the whole Mexican Nation about their ears.

Fortunately at this juncture five Indians made their appearance in the camp, and were taken to the General's tent. They were quite different from the Mexicans in dress and appearance, and wore rings of gold and bright blue gems in their

ears and nostrils, while a gold leaf, delicately wrought, was attached to the under lip.

Marina could not understand their language, but luckily she found that two of them could speak in the Aztec tongue. They explained that they came from Cempoalla, the chief town of a tribe called the Totonacs, and that their country had been lately conquered by the Aztecs, whose oppressions they greatly resented. They also said that the fame of the Spaniards had reached their master, who had sent to request them to visit him in his Capital.

It is easy to imagine how eagerly Cortés listened to this communication, and how important it was to him. Hitherto, as he knew absolutely nothing of the state of affairs in the interior of the country, he had supposed the Empire to be strong and united.

Now he saw that the discontent of the provinces conquered by Montezuma might be turned to his own advantage, and that by their aid he might hope to succeed in his cherished scheme of subduing the Emperor himself. He therefore dis-

missed the Totonacs with many presents, promising soon to visit their city.

Then with his usual energy and diplomacy he turned upon the immediate difficulties which beset him; the discontent of the soldiers, the jealousy of some of his officers, and the fact that he had no warrant for his ambitious plans in the comission that he had received from Velasquez. By tact and cunning he managed to settle everything as he wished, and set to work to establish a colony in the name of the Spanish sovereign. He appointed his chief friend Puertocarrero to be one of its magistrates, and Montejo, who was a friend of Velasquez, to be the other.

The new town was called Villa Rica de Vera Cruz, "the rich town of the True Cross," and, as you see, its governors and officials were appointed before a single house was built. To them Cortés then resigned the commission which he had received from Velasquez. Then the council, which consisted chiefly of his own friends, immediately reappointed him to be Captain-General and Chief

Justice of the colony, with power to do practically just as he liked.

Of course this caused a great commotion in the opposing party. But Cortés put the leaders into irons and sent them on board one of the ships, while he sent the soldiers on a foraging expedition into the surrounding country. By the time these returned with supplies they had altered their minds, and joined their companions in arms, pledging themselves to a common cause. While even the cavaliers on board the ship came to the same conclusion, and were reconciled to the new government, and were from that time staunch adherents to Cortés.

Peace being thus restored, the army set out to march northward to the place where it had been decided to build the town. They crossed a river in rafts and broken canoes which they found upon its bank, and presently came to a very different scene from the burning sandy waste, which they had left. The wide plains were covered with green grass, and there were groves of palms, among

which the Spaniards saw deer and various wild animals, and flocks of pheasants and turkeys.

On their way they passed through a deserted village, in the temples of which they found records in the picture-writing, and also, to their horror, the remains of sacrificed victims. As they proceeded up the river they were met by twelve Indians, sent by the cacique of Cempoalla to show them the way to his town.

The farther they went the more beautiful did the country become. The trees were loaded with gorgeous fruits and flowers, and birds and butterflies of every hue abounded. As they approached the Indian city they saw gardens and orchards on each side of the road, and were met by crowds of natives, who mingled fearlessly with the soldiers, bringing garlands of flowers, in which they specially delighted, to deck the General's helmet and to hang about the neck of his horse.

The cacique, who was tall and very fat, received Cortés with much courtesy, and assigned to the army quarters in a neighboring temple, where they were well supplied with provisions, and the

General received a present of gold and fine cotton. But in spite of all this friendliness Cortés neglected no precautions, stationing sentinels, and posting his artillery so as to command the entrance.

The following morning Cortés paid the cacique a visit at his own residence. By the aid of Marina, a long conference was held in which the Spanish general gained much important information, and promised to aid the Totonacs against Montezuma, and prevent him from carrying off their young men and maidens to be sacrificed to his gods.

The next day the army marched off again to the town of Chiahuitztla, which stood like a fortress on a crag overlooking the gulf. Though the inhabitants were alarmed at first, they soon became friendly. The chiefs came to confer with Cortés and the cacique of Cempoalla, who had accompanied him, carried in a litter.

Just then there was a stir among the people, and five men entered the market-place where they were standing. By their rich and peculiar dress they seemed to belong to a different race. Their dark glossy hair was tied in a knot at the top of the

head, and they carried bunches of flowers in their hands. Their attendants carried wands, or fans, to brush away the flies and insects from their lordly masters.

These persons passed the Spaniards haughtily, scarcely deigning to return their salutations, and they were immediately joined by the Totonac chiefs, who seemed anxious to conciliate them by every sort of attention. The General, much astonished, inquired of Marina what this meant, and she replied that these were Aztec nobles empowered to receive tribute for Montezuma.

Soon after the chiefs returned in dismay, saying that the Aztecs were very angry with them for entertaining the Spaniards without the Emperor's permission, and had demanded twenty young men and maidens to be sacrificed to the gods as a punishment. Cortés was most indignant at this insolence, and insisted that the Totonacs should not only refuse the demand, but should also seize the Aztec nobles, and throw them into prison.

This they did, but the Spanish general managed to get two of them freed in the night, and brought

before him. He then very cunningly made them believe that he regretted the indignity that had been offered them, and would help them to get away safely, and the next day would do his best to release their companions. He also told them to report this to Montezuma, assuring him of the great respect and regard in which he was held by the Spaniards.

Then he sent them away secretly to the port, and they were taken in one of the vessels, and landed safely at a little distance along the coast.

The Totonacs were furious at the escape of some of their prisoners. They would at once have sacrificed the remainder, had not Cortés expressed the utmost horror at the idea, and sent them on board one of the ships for safe keeping, whence he very soon allowed them to join their companions. This artful proceeding had, as we shall presently see, just the effect it was meant to have upon Montezuma.

By order of Cortés, messengers were now sent to all the other Totonac towns, telling them of the defiance that had been shown to the Emperor, and

bidding them also refuse to pay the tribute. The Indians soon came flocking into Chiahuitztla to see and confer with the powerful strangers, in the hope of regaining liberty by their aid. And so cleverly had Cortés managed to embroil them with Montezuma, that even the most timid felt that they had no choice but to accept the protection of the Spaniards, and make a bold effort for the recovery of freedom.

Cortés accordingly made them swear allegiance to the Spanish sovereign, and then set out once more for the port where his colony was to be planted. This was only half a league distant, in a wide and fruitful plain, and he was not long in determining the circuit of the walls, and the site of the fort, granary, and other public buildings.

The friendly Indians brought stone, lime, wood, and bricks, and in a few weeks a town rose up, which served as a good starting-point for future operations, a retreat for the disabled, a place for the reception of stores, or whatever might be sent to or from the mother-country, and was, moreover, strong enough to overawe the surrounding country.

This was the first colony in New Spain, and was hailed with satisfaction by the simple natives, who could not foresee that their doom was sealed when a white man set his foot upon their soil.

While the Spaniards were still occupied with their new settlement they were surprised by another embassy from Mexico. When the account of the imprisonment of the royal collectors first reached Montezuma, his feelings of fear and superstition were swallowed up in indignation, and he began with great energy to make preparations for punishing his rebellious vassals, and avenging the insult offered to himself.

But when the Aztec officers liberated by Cortés reached the Capital and reported the courteous treatment they had received from the Spanish Commander, he was induced to resume his former timid and conciliatory policy, and sent an embassy consisting of two young nephews of his own and four of his chief nobles to the Spanish quarters. As usual they bore a princely gift of gold, rich cotton stuffs, and wonderful mantles of feather embroidery.

The envoys on coming before Cortés presented this offering, with the Emperor's thanks to him for the courtesy he had shown to the captive nobles. At the same time Montezuma expressed his surprise and regret that the Spaniards should have countenanced the rebellion. He had no doubt, he said, that Cortés and his followers were the long-looked-for strangers, and therefore of the same lineage as himself. From deference to them he would spare the Totonacs while they were present, but the day of vengeance would come.

Cortés entertained the Indians with frank hospitality, taking care, however, to make such a display of his resources as should impress them with a sense of his power. Then he dismissed them with a few trifling gifts and a conciliatory message to the Emperor, to the effect that he would soon pay his respects to him in his Capital, when all misunderstanding between them would certainly be adjusted.

The Totonacs were amazed when they understood the nature of this interview; for, in spite of the presence of the Spaniards, they had felt great

apprehension as to the consequence of their rash act. And now they felt absolutely in awe of the strangers who even at a distance could exercise such a mysterious influence over the terrible Montezuma.

Not long after the cacique of Cempoalla appealed to Cortés to aid him against a neighbor with whom he had a quarrel. The General at once marched to support him with a part of his force. But when they reached the hostile city they were received in a most friendly manner, and Cortés had no difficulty in reconciling the two chiefs to one another. In token of gratitude the Indian cacique sent eight noble maidens, richly decked with collars and ornaments of gold, whom he begged the General to give as wives to his captains.

Cortés seized the opportunity of declaring that they must first become Christians, and be baptized, since the sons of the Church could not be allowed to marry idolaters. The chief replied that his gods were good enough for him, and that he should at once resent any insults offered to them, even if

they did not avenge themselves by instantly destroying the Spaniards.

However, the General and his followers had seen too much already of the barbarous rites of the Indian religion and its horrible sacrifices. Without hesitation they attacked the principal teocalli, whereupon the cacique called his men to arms, the priests in their bloodstained robes rushed frantically about among the people, calling upon them to defend their gods, and all was tumult and confusion.

Cortés acted with his usual promptitude at this crisis. He caused the cacique and the principal inhabitants and the priests to be taken prisoners, and then commanded them to quiet the people, threatening that a single arrow shot at the Spaniards should cost them their lives. Marina also represented the madness of resistance, reminding the cacique that if he lost the friendship of the strangers, he would be left alone to face the vengeance of Montezuma.

This consideration decided him: covering his face with his hands, he exclaimed that the gods

THEY ROLLED THE IDOLS DOWN THE STEPS

would avenge their own wrongs. Taking advantage of this tacit consent, fifty soldiers rushed up the stairway of the temple. Dragging the great wooden idols from their places in the topmost tower, they rolled them down the steps of the pyramid amid the groans of the natives and the triumphant shouts of their comrades, and then burnt them to ashes.

The Totonacs, finding that their gods were unable to prevent or even punish this profanation of their temple, now believed that they were indeed less to be feared than the Spaniards, and offered no further resistance. By Cortés' orders the teocalli was then thoroughly purified, and an altar was erected, surmounted by a great cross hung with garlands of roses, and Father Olmedo said Mass before the Indians and Spaniards, who seem to have been alike impressed by the ceremony.

An old disabled soldier, named Juan de Torres, was left to watch over the sanctuary and instruct the natives in its services. Then the General, taking a friendly leave of his Totonac allies, set out once more for Villa Rica, to finish his arrange-

ments before departing for the Capital. Here he was surprised to find that a Spanish vessel had arrived in his absence, having on board twelve soldiers and two horses, a very welcome addition to the tiny army.

Cortés now resolved to execute a plan of which he had been thinking for some time. He knew very well that none of his arrangements about the colony would hold good without the Spanish monarch's sanction, and also that Velasquez had great interest at court, and would certainly use it against him.

Therefore he resolved to send despatches to Spain himself, and such an amount of treasure as should give a great idea of the extent and importance of his discoveries. He gave up his own share of the spoil, and persuaded his officers to do the same, and a paper was circulated among the soldiers, calling upon all who chose to resign the small portion which was due to them, that a present worthy of the sovereign's acceptance might be sent home.

It is only another proof of the extraordinary

power which Cortés had over these rough soldiers, who cared for nothing but plunder, that not a single one refused to give up the very treasure which he had risked so much to gain.

These are some of the wonderful things that were sent. Two collars made of gold and precious stones. Two birds made of green feathers, with feet, beaks, and eyes of gold, and in the same piece with them animals of gold resembling snails. A large alligator's head of gold. Two birds made of thread and feather-work, having the quills of their wings and tails, their feet, eyes and the ends of their beaks of gold, standing upon two reeds covered with gold, which were raised on balls of feather-work and gold embroidery, one white and the other yellow, with seven tassels of feather-work hanging from each of them.

A large silver wheel, also bracelets, leaves, and five shields of the same metal. A box of feather-work embroidered on leather, with a large plate of gold weighing seventy ounces in the midst. A large wheel of gold with figures of strange animals on it, and worked with tufts of leaves, weighing

three thousand eight hundred ounces. A fan of variegated feather-work with thirty-seven rods plated with gold. Sixteen shields of precious stones, with feathers of various colors hanging from their rims, and six shields each covered with a plate of gold, with something resembling a mitre in the centre. Besides all this there was a quantity of gold ore, and many pieces of richly embroidered cotton cloth and feather-work.

He accompanied this present with a letter to the emperor in which he gave an account of all his adventures and discoveries, and ended by beseeching him to confirm his authority, as he was entirely confident that he should be able to give the Castilian Crown possession of this great Indian Empire. He also sent four slaves, who had been rescued from the cage in which were kept the victims about to be sacrificed, and some Mexican manuscripts.

Very soon after the departure of the treasure-ship Cortés discovered that there was a conspiracy among some of his followers, who either did not like the way he arranged matters, or else were

terrified at the prospect of the dangerous campaign that was before them. They had seized one of the ships, and got provisions and water stored. They were on the eve of setting sail for Cuba, when one of their number repented of the part he had taken in the plot, and betrayed it to Cortês, who at once took measures for the arrest of the ringleaders, two of whom were afterwards hanged.

This affair showed the General that there were some among his followers who were not heart and soul in the expedition, and who might therefore fail him when he most needed them, and might also cause their comrades to desert if there was any chance for them to escape. He therefore determined to take the bold step of destroying the ships without the knowledge of his army.

Accordingly, he marched the whole army to Cempoalla. When he arrived there he told his plan to a few of his devoted adherents, who entirely approved of it. Through them he persuaded the pilots to declare the ships unseaworthy, and then ordered nine of them to be sunk, having

first brought on shore their sails, masts, iron, and all movable fittings.

When the news of this proceeding reached Cempoalla, it caused the deepest consternation among the Spaniards. They felt themselves betrayed and abandoned, a mere handful of men arrayed against a great and formidable empire, and cut off from all chance of escape. They murmured loudly, and a serious mutiny was threatened.

But Cortés, whose presence of mind never deserted him, managed to reassure them, and to persuade them that he had only done what was really best for everyone. And he so cunningly dwelt upon the fame and the treasure which they were on the eve of gaining, that not one of them accepted the offer which he made to them of returning to Cuba in the only remaining ship. Their enthusiasm for their leader revived, and as he concluded his speech they made the air ring with their shouts of "To Mexico! To Mexico!"

CHAPTER IV

THE MARCH TO MEXICO

WHILE he was still at Cempoalla, news came to Cortés from Villa Rica that four strange ships were hovering off the coast, and that they refused to respond to repeated signals made to them by Don Juan de Escalante, who was in command of the garrison left in the town. This greatly alarmed Cortés, who was continually dreading the interference of his enemy, the Governor of Cuba.

He rode hastily back to Villa Rica, and, almost without stopping to rest, pushed on a few leagues

northwards along the coast, where he understood the ships were at anchor. On his way he met with three Spaniards just landed from them, and learned that they belonged to a squadron fitted out by Francisco de Garay, who had landed on the Florida coast a year before, and had obtained from Spain authority over the countries he might discover in its neighborhood.

Cortés saw he had nothing to fear from them, but he did wish he could have induced the crews of the ships to join his expedition. The three men he easily persuaded, but those who remained on board feared treachery, and refused to send a boat ashore. Finally, by a stratagem, Cortés succeeded in capturing three or four more, out of a boat's crew who came to fetch their comrades, and with this small party of recruits he returned to Cempoalla.

On August 16, 1519, Cortés bade farewell to his hospitable Indian friends, and set out for Mexico. His force consisted of about four hundred foot and fifteen horse, with seven pieces of artillery, and in addition to these he had obtained from the

cacique of Cempoalla thirteen hundred warriors, and a thousand porters to carry the baggage and drag the guns.

During the first day the army marched through the "tierra caliente," or hot region. All around them fruit and flowers grew in the wildest profusion, as indeed they did all the year round in that wonderful climate. The air was heavy with perfume, and bright birds and insects abounded.

But after some leagues' travel, over roads made nearly impassable by the summer rains, they began to ascend gradually, and at the close of the second day they reached Xalapa, from which they looked out over one of the grandest prospects that could be seen anywhere. Down below them lay the hot region with its gay confusion of meadows, streams, and flowering forests, sprinkled over with shining Indian villages. While a faint line of light upon the horizon told them that there was the ocean they had so lately crossed; beyond lay their country, which many of them would never see again. To the south rose the mighty mountain called Orizaba, in his mantle of snow, and in an-

other direction the Sierra Madre, with its dark belt of pine-trees, stretched its long lines of shadowy hills away into the distance.

Onward and upward they went, and on the fourth day they arrived at the strong town of Naulinco. Here the inhabitants entertained them hospitably, for they were friendly with the Totonacs, and Cortés endeavored, through Father Olmedo, to teach them something about Christianity. They seem to have listened willingly, and allowed the Spaniards to erect a cross for their adoration, which indeed they did in most of the places where they halted.

The troops now entered upon a rugged, narrow valley, called "the Bishop's Pass." It began to be terribly cold, the snow and hail beat upon them, and the freezing wind seemed to penetrate to their very bones. The Spaniards were partly protected by their armor, and their thick coats of quilted cotton. But the poor Indians, natives of the hot region and with very little clothing, suffered greatly, and indeed several of them died by the way.

The path lay round a bare and dreadful-looking volcanic mountain, and often upon the edge of precipices three thousand feet in depth. After three days of this dreary travelling the army emerged into a more genial climate. They had reached the great tableland which spreads out for hundreds of miles along the crests of the Cordilleras, more than seven thousand feet above the sea-level.

The vegetation of the torrid and temperate regions had of course disappeared, but the fields were carefully cultivated. Many of the crops were unknown to the Spaniards, but they recognized maize and aloes, and various kinds of cactus.

Suddenly the troops came upon what seemed to be a populous city, even larger than Cempoalla, and with loftier and more substantial buildings, of stone and lime. There were thirteen teocallis in the town, and in one place in the suburbs one of the Spaniards counted the stored-up skulls of a hundred thousand sacrificed victims.

The Lord of the town ruled over twenty thou-

sand vassals; he was a tributary to Montezuma, and there was a strong Mexican garrison in the place. This was probably the reason of his receiving Cortés and his army very coldly, and vaunting the grandeur of the Mexican Emperor, who could, he declared, muster thirty great vassals, each of whom commanded a hundred thousand men.

In answer to the inquiries of Cortés, he told him about Montezuma and his Capital. How more than twenty thousand prisoners of war were sacrificed very year upon the altars of his gods. How the city stood in the midst of a great lake, and was approached by long causeways connected in places by wooden bridges, which when raised cut off all communication with the country; and many other strange things which were not of a kind to reassure the minds of the Spaniards.

They hardly knew whether to believe the old cacique or not, but at any rate the wonders they heard made them, as one of their cavaliers said, "only the more earnest to prove the adventure, desperate as it might appear."

THE SKULLS OF SACRIFICED VICTIMS

The natives were also very curious to know about the Spaniards, their horses and dogs, and strange weapons, and Marina in answering their questions took care to expatiate upon the exploits and victories of her adopted countrymen, and to state the extraordinary marks of respect they had received from Montezuma. This had its effect upon the cacique, who presently sent the General some slaves to make bread for the soldiers, and supplied them with the means of refreshment and rest, which they needed so much after their toilful march.

The army rested in this city four or five days, and even at the end of the last century the Indians would still point out the cypress tree under the shelter of which the Conqueror's horse had been tied. When the journey was resumed, the way was through a broad green valley, watered by a splendid river and shaded by lofty trees.

On either side of the river an unbroken line of Indian dwellings extended for several leagues, and on some rising ground stood a town which might contain five or six thousand inhabitants, com-

manded by a fortress with walls and trenches. Here the troops halted again, and met with friendly treatment.

In their last halting-place Cortés had been advised by the natives to take the route to the ancient city of Cholula, the inhabitants of which were a mild race, subjects of Montezuma, given to peaceful arts, and who were likely to receive him kindly. But his Cempoallan allies declared that the Cholulans were false and perfidious, and counselled him to go to Tlascala, a valiant little republic which had managed to maintain its independence against the arms of Mexico.

The tribe had always been friendly with the Totonacs, and had the reputation of being frank, fearless, and trustworthy. The Spanish general decided to try and secure their goodwill, and accordingly despatched four of the principal Cempoallans with a gift, consisting of a cap of crimson cloth, a sword and a cross-bow, to ask permission to pass through their country, expressing at the same time his admiration of their valor, and of their

long resistance of the Aztecs, whose pride he, too, was determined to humble.

Three days after the departure of the envoys the army resumed its march, lingering somewhat by the way in hopes of receiving an answer from the Indian Republic. But the messengers did not return, which occasioned the General no little uneasiness.

As they advanced the country became rougher and the scenery bolder, and at last their progress was arrested by a most remarkable fortification. It was a stone wall nine feet high and twenty feet thick, with a parapet a foot and a half broad at the top, for the protection of those who defended it. It had only one opening in the centre, made by two semicircular lines of wall overlapping each other for the space of forty paces, and having a passage-way between, ten paces wide, so contrived as to be perfectly commanded by the inner wall.

This fortification, which extended for more than two leagues, rested at either end on the bold, nat-

ural buttresses of the chain of mountains. It was built of immense blocks of stone nicely laid together without cement, and from the remains that still exist it is easy to imagine what its size and solidity must have been. This singular structure marked the limits of Tlascala, and was intended, the natives said, as a barrier against Mexican invasions.

The soldiers paused amazed, and not a little apprehensive as to their reception in Tlascala, since a people who were capable of such a work as that would indeed prove formidable should they not be friendly. But Cortés, putting himself at the head of his cavalry, shouted:

"Forward, soldiers; the Holy Cross is our banner, and under that we shall conquer."

And so they marched through the undefended passage, and found themselves in Tlascala.

The Tlascalan people belonged to the same great family as the Aztecs, and had planted themselves upon the western shore of Lake Tezcuco at about the same period, at the close of the twelfth century. There they remained many years, until

they had, for some reason, incurred the displeasure of all the surrounding tribes, who combined to attack them, and a terrible battle took place.

Though the Tlascalans were entirely victorious, they were so disgusted by this state of things that they resolved to migrate, and the greater number of them finally settled in the warm and fruitful valley overshadowed by the mountains of Tlascala.

After some years the monarchy was divided, first into two, then four separate states, each with its own chief, who was independent in his own territory, and possessed equal authority with the other three in all matters concerning the whole republic, the affairs of which were settled by a council consisting of the four chiefs and the inferior nobles.

They were an agricultural people, and the fertility of their new country was signified by its name, "Tlascala" meaning the land of bread. Presently their neighbors began to be envious of their prosperity, and they were frequently obliged to defend themselves against the Cholulans, and were always successful.

But when Axayacatl, King of the Aztecs, sent demanding the same tribute and obedience from them which the other people of the country paid him, threatening, if they refused, to destroy their cities, and give their land to their enemies, they answered proudly. Neither they nor their forefathers had ever paid tribute or homage to a foreign power, nor ever would pay it. If their country was invaded, they knew how to defend it.

This answer brought upon them the forces of the Mexican monarch, and a pitched battle was fought in which the republic was again victorious. But from that time hostilities never ceased between the two nations, every captive was mercilessly sacrificed, and the Tlascalan children were trained from the cradle to hate the Mexicans with a deadly hatred.

In this struggle the Tlascalans received valuable support from a wild and warlike race from the north, called the Otomies. Some of them settled in the republic, and having proved themselves courageous and faithful, were entrusted with the defence of the frontier.

After Montezuma became Emperor of Mexico greater efforts than before were made to subdue Tlascala. He sent a great army against it, commanded by his favorite son, but his troops were defeated and his son killed. Enraged and mortified, Montezuma made still greater preparations and invaded the valley with a terrific force.

But the Tlascalans withdrew to the recesses of the hills, and watching their opportunity, swept down upon the enemy and drove them from their territory with dreadful slaughter. Nevertheless they were greatly harassed by these constant struggles with a foe so superior to themselves in numbers and resources. The Aztec armies lay between them and the coast, cutting off all possibility of obtaining any supplies.

There were some things, as cotton, cacas, and salt, which they were unable to grow or manufacture, of which they had been deprived for more than fifty years. Their taste was so much affected by this enforced abstinence that they did not get used to eating salt with their food for several generations after the Conquest. This was the state

of affairs in Tlascala when the Spaniards reached it, and it is easy to see how important it was to Cortés to form an alliance with it, but that was not an easy thing to do.

The Tlascalans had heard about the Christians and their victorious advance, but they had not expected that they would come their way. So they were much embarrassed by the embassy demanding a passage through their territories. The council was assembled, and a great difference of opinion was found among its members.

Some believed that these were the white-skinned, bearded men whose coming was foretold. At all events they were enemies to Mexico, and might help them in their struggle against it.

Others argued that this could not be: the march of the strangers through the land might be tracked by the broken images of the Indian gods, and desecrated temples. How could they be sure that they were not friends of Montezuma? They had received his embassies, accepted his gifts, and were even now on their way to his capital in company with his vassals.

This last was the opinion of an aged chief, one of the four rulers of the republic. His name was Xicotencatl, and he was nearly blind, for he was over a hundred years old. He had a son of the same name as himself, an impetuous young man, who commanded a powerful force of Tlascalans and Otomies on the eastern frontier where the great fortification stood.

The old chief advised that this force should at once fall upon the Spaniards. If they were conquered they would be at the mercy of the Tlascalans, but if by any mischance his son should fail, the council could declare that they had nothing to do with the attack, laying the whole blame of it upon the young Xicotencatl. Meantime the Cempoallan envoys were to be detained under pretence of assisting at a religious sacrifice.

By this time, as we know, Cortés and his gallant band had passed the rocky rampart, from which, for some reason or other, the Otomie guard was absent. After advancing a few leagues he saw a small party of Indians, armed with sword and buckler, who fled at his approach. He made signs

for them to halt, but they only fled the faster.

The Spaniards spurred their horses, and soon succeeded in overtaking them, when they at once turned, and, without showing the usual alarm at the horses and strange weapons of the cavaliers, attacked them furiously. The latter, however, were far too strong for them, and they would soon have been cut to pieces had not a body of several thousand Indians appeared, coming quickly to their rescue. Cortés seeing them, hastily despatched a messenger to hurry up his infantry.

The Indians, having discharged their missiles, fell upon the little band of Spaniards, striving to drag the riders from their horses and to tear their lances from their grasp. They brought one cavalier to the ground, who afterwards died of his wounds, and they killed two horses, cutting their necks through with one blow of their formidable broadswords. This was a most serious loss to Cortés, whose horses were so important, and so few in number.

The struggle was a hard one, and it was with no small satisfaction that the Spaniards saw their

comrades advancing to their aid. No sooner had the main body reached the field of battle, than, hastily falling into position, they poured such a volley from their muskets and cross-bows as fairly astounded the enemy, who made no further attempt to continue the fight, but drew off in good order, leaving the road open to the Spaniards, who were only too glad to get rid of their foes and pursue their way.

Presently they met two Tlascalan envoys, accompanied by two of the Cempoallans. The former, on being brought to the General, assured him of a friendly reception in the capital, and declared the late assault upon the troops to have been quite unauthorized Cortés received his message courteously, pretending to believe that all was as he said.

As it was now growing late the Spaniards quickened their pace, anxious to reach a suitable camping-ground before nightfall, and they chose a place upon the bank of a stream, where a few deserted huts were standing. These the weary and famishing soldiers ransacked in search of

food, but could find nothing but some animals resemblings dogs, which, however, they cooked and ate without ceremony, seasoning their unsavory repast with the fruit of the Indian fig, which grew wild in the neighborhood.

After several desperate battles with the Tlascalans, Cortés won a great victory.

The next day, as he usually did after gaining a battle, the Spanish commander sent a new embassy to the Tlascalan capital, making as before professions of friendship, but this time threatening that if his offers were rejected he would visit their city as a conqueror, razing their houses to the ground and putting every inhabitant to the sword.

Of course this message was given to the envoys by the aid of the Lady Marina. She became day by day more necessary to Cortés, and was, indeed, generally admired for her courage and the cheerfulness with which she endured all the hardships of the camp and raised the drooping spirits of the soldiers, while by every means in her power she alleviated the miseries of her own countrymen. This time, the ambassadors of Cortés re-

THASCALAN ENVOYS

ceived a respectful hearing from the deeply dejected council of Tlascala, for whom nothing remained but to submit.

Four principal caciques were chosen to offer to the Spaniards a free passage through the country, and a friendly reception in the capital. Their friendship was accepted, with many excuses for the past, and the chiefs were further ordered to touch at the camp of Xicotencatl, the Tlascalan general, and require him to cease hostilities and furnish the white men with a plentiful supply of provisions.

While the Tlascalan envoys were still in the camp came a fresh embassy from Montezuma. Tidings had been sent to him of each step in the progress of the Spaniards, and it was with great satisfaction that he had heard of their taking the road to Tlascala, trusting that if they were mortal men they would find their graves there.

Great was his dismay, therefore, when courier after courier brought him news of their successes, and how the most redoubtable warriors had been scattered by this handful of strangers. His super-

stitious fears returned with greater force than ever, and in his alarm and uncertainty he despatched five great nobles of his court, attended by two hundred slaves, to bear to Cortés a gift consisting of three thousand ounces of gold and several hundred robes of cotton and feather-work.

As they laid it at his feet they said that they had come to offer Montezuma's congratulations upon his victories, and to express his regret that he could not receive them in his Capital, where the numerous population was so unruly that he could not be answerable for their safety.

The merest hint of the Emperor's wishes would have been enough to influence any of the natives. But they made very little impression upon Cortés; and, seeing this, the envoys proceeded, in their master's name, to offer tribute to the Spanish sovereign, provided the General would give up the idea of visiting the Capital. This was a fatal mistake, and a most strange one for such a brave and powerful monarch to make, for it amounted to an admission that he was unable to protect his treasures.

Cortés in replying expressed the greatest respect for Montezuma, but urged his own sovereign's commands as a reason for disregarding his wishes. He added that though he had not at present the power of requiting his generosity as he could wish, he trusted "to repay him at some future day with good works." You will hear before long how he kept his word.

The Mexican ambassadors were anything but pleased at finding the war at an end and a firm friendship established between their mortal enemies and the Spaniards. And the General saw with some satisfaction the evidences of a jealousy between them, which was his surest hope of success in undermining the Mexican Empire.

Two of the Aztecs presently returned to acquaint Montezuma with the state of affairs. The others remained with the Spaniards, Cortés being willing that they should see the deference paid to him by the Tlascalans, who were most anxious for his presence in their city.

The city of Tlascala lay about six leagues away from the Spanish camp, and the road led through

a hilly region, and across a deep ravine over which a bridge had just been built for the passage of the army. They passed some towns by the way, where they were received with the greatest hospitality.

The people flocked out to meet them, bringing garlands of roses, with which they decorated the Spanish soldiers, and wreathed about the necks of their horses. Priests in their white robes mingled with the crowd, scattering clouds of incense from their censers, and thus escorted the army slowly made its way through the gates of the city of Tlascala.

Here the press became so great that it was with difficulty that a passage was cleared for it. The flat housetops were crowded with eager spectators. Garlands of green boughs, roses, and honeysuckle were thrown across the streets, and the air was rent with songs and shouts and the wild music of the national instruments.

Presently the procession halted before the palace of the aged Xicotencatl, the father of the general, and Cortés dismounted from his horse, that

the blind old man might satisfy his natural curiosity respecting him, by passing his hand over his face. He then led the way to a spacious hall, where a banquet was served to the whole army. After which, quarters were assigned to them in a neighboring teocalli, the Mexican ambassadors being, at the desire of Cortés, lodged next to himself that he might the better protect them in the city of their foes.

For some days the Spaniards were feasted and entertained in four quarters of the city, which was really like separate towns divided from one another by high walls, in each of which lived one of the rulers of the republic, surrounded by his own vassals. But amid all these friendly demonstrations the General never for a moment relaxed the strict discipline of the camp, and no soldier was allowed to leave his quarters without special permission.

At first this offended the Tlascalan chiefs, as they thought it showed distrust of them. But when Cortés explained that this was only in accordance with the established military system of

his country, they began to think it admirable, and the young Xicotencatl proposed, if possible, to imitate it.

The Spanish commander now turned his thoughts to the converting of the Tlascalans. But as they refused to part with their own gods, though they were willing enough to add the God of the Christians to their number, he took the advice of the wise Father Olmedo, and abandoned the idea for the time.

However, a cross was erected in one of the great squares, and there the Spaniards held their religious services unmolested. And it happened, strangely enough, that they had scarcely left the city when a thin, transparent cloud settled like a column upon the cross, wrapping it round, and continuing through the night to shed a soft light about it.

This occurrence did more for the conversion of the natives than all the preaching of Father Olmedo. Several of the Indian princesses were now baptized, and given in marriage to the officers of Cortés. One, who was the daughter of Xicoten-

catl, became the wife of Alvarado, who was always a great favorite with the Tlascalans. From his gay manners, joyous countenance, and bright golden hair, he gained the nickname of "Tonatiuh," or the "Sun." Cortés, who hardly ever appeared anywhere without the beautiful Marina, was called by the natives "Malinche," which you will remember was her Indian name.

While all this was happening, came yet another embassy from Montezuma, loaded as usual with costly gifts. This time he invited the Spaniards to visit him in his Capital, assuring them that they would be welcome. Further, he besought them to enter into no alliance with the base and barbarous Tlascalans, but he invited them to take the route of the friendly city of Cholula, where arrangements were being made, by his orders, for their reception.

The Tlascalans were much concerned that Cortés should propose to go to Mexico. What they told him fully confirmed all the reports he had heard of the power and ambition of Montezuma, of the strength of his Capital, and the number of

his soldiers. They warned him not to trust to his gifts and his fair words, and when the General said that he hoped to bring about a better understanding between the Emperor and themselves, they replied that it was impossible. However smooth his words, he would hate them at heart.

They also heartily protested against the General's going to Cholula. The people, they said, though not brave in the open field, were crafty. They were Montezuma's tools, and would do his bidding.

That city, too, was specially under the protection of the god Quetzalcoatl, and the priests were confidently believed to have the power of opening an inundation from the foundations of his shrine, which should overwhelm their enemies in the deluge, and lastly, though many distant places had sent to testify their goodwill, and offer their allegiance, Cholula, only six leagues distant, had done neither.

This consideration weighed more with the General than either of the preceding ones, and he promptly despatched a summons to the city de-

manding a formal tender of its submission. It was not long before deputies arrived from Cholula profuse in expressions of goodwill and invitations to visit their city. But the Tlascalans pointed out that these messengers were below the usual rank of ambassadors, which Cortés regarded as a fresh indignity.

He therefore sent a new summons, declaring that if they did not at once send a deputation of their principal men he would treat them as rebels to his own sovereign, the rightful lord of these realms. This soon brought some of the highest nobles to the camp, who excused their tardy appearance, by saying that they had feared for their personal safety in the capital of their enemies.

The Tlascalans were now more than ever averse to the projected visit. A strong Aztec force was known to be near Cholula, and the city was being actively prepared for defence. Cortés, too, was disturbed by these circumstances, but he had gone too far to recede without showing fear, which could not fail to have a bad effect on his own men, as well as on the natives. Therefore, after a

short consultation with his officers, he decided finally to take the road to Cholula.

This ancient city lay six leagues to the south of Tlascala, and was most populous and flourishing. The inhabitants excelled in the art of working in metals and manufacturing cotton cloth and delicate pottery, but were indisposed to war, and less distinguished for courage than for cunning.

You will remember that it was in this place that the god Quetzalcoatl had paused on his way to the coast, and in his honor a tremendous pyramid had been erected, probably by building over a natural hill, and on the top of this rose a gorgeous temple, in which stood an image of the god bedecked with gold and jewels. To this temple pilgrims flocked from every corner of the empire, and many were the terrible sacrifices offered there, as, indeed, in all the other teocallis, of which there were about four hundred in the city.

On the day appointed, the Spanish army set out for Cholula, followed by crowds of citizens, who admired the courage displayed by this little handful of men in proposing to brave the mighty Mon-

tezuma in his own territory. An immense body of warriors had offered to join the expedition, but Cortés thought it wise to accept only six thousand, and even these he left encamped at some distance from Cholula, because the caciques of that city, who came out to meet the Spaniards, objected to having their mortal enemies brought within its walls.

As the troops drew near the town they were met by swarms of men, women, and children, all eager to catch a glimpse of the strangers, whose persons, horses, and weapons were equally objects of intense curiosity to them. They in their turn were struck by the noble aspect of the Cholulans, who were much superior in dress and general appearance to the other tribes they had encountered. An immense number of priests swinging censers mingled with the crowd, and, as before, they were decorated with garlands and bunches of flowers, and accompanied by gay music from various instruments.

The Spaniards were also struck by the width and cleanliness of the streets and the solidity of the

houses. They were lodged in the court of one of the many teocallis, and visited by the great nobles of the city, who supplied them plentifully with all they needed, and at first paid them such attentions as caused them to believe that the evil apprehensions of the Tlascalans had been merely suspicion and prejudice.

But very soon the scene changed. Messengers came from Montezuma, who shortly and pleasantly told Cortés that his approach occasioned much disquietude to their master, and then conferred apart with the Mexicans who were still in the Spanish camp, presently departing, and taking one of them away with them.

From this time the Cholulans visited the Spanish quarters no more, and when invited to do so excused themselves, saying they were ill. Also the supply of provisions ran short, and they said it was because maize was scarce.

Naturally, Cortés became very uneasy at this change. And his alarm was increased by the reports of the Cempoallans, who told him that in

wandering about the city they had seen several streets barricaded, and in some places holes had been dug, and a sharp stake planted upright in each, and branches strewn to conceal them, while the flat roofs of the houses were being stored with stones and other missiles.

Some Tlascalans also came in from their camp to inform him that a great sacrifice, mostly of children, had been held in a distant quarter of the town, to secure the aid of the gods in some intended enterprise, and numbers of the people had taken their wives and children out of the city. These tidings confirmed the worst suspicions of Cortés, but just then the Lady Marina made a discovery which changed his doubts into certainty.

The wife of one of the Cholulan caciques had taken a great fancy to the Mexican girl, and continually urged her to visit her house, hinting mysteriously that she would in this way escape a great danger which threatened the Spaniards. Marina pretended to be delighted with this proposal, and glad of the chance of escaping from the white

men, and by degrees she thus won the confidence of the Cholulan, who presently revealed the whole plot to her.

It originated, she said, with the Aztec Emperor, who had bribed the caciques of Cholula, her husband among the number, to assault the Spaniards as they marched out of the city, and to throw them into confusion all sorts of obstacles had been placed in their way. A force of twenty thousand Mexicans was already quartered near the city to support the Cholulans, and the Spaniards would, it was confidently expected, fall an easy prey to their united enemies. A sufficient number of them were to be reserved to be sacrificed in Cholula, and the rest led in fetters to the Capital of Montezuma.

While this conversation was taking place, Marina was making a show of collecting and packing up such dresses and jewels as she was to take with her to the house of her new friend. But after a while she managed to slip away without exciting her suspicion, and, rushing to the General, told him all.

Cortés at once caused the cacique's wife to be seized, and she repeated to him the same story that she had told to Marina. He was most anxious to gain further particulars of the conspiracy, and accordingly induced two priests, one of them a person of much influence, to visit his quarters, where by courteous treatment and rich presents he got from them a complete confirmation of the report.

The Emperor had been in a state of pitiable vacillation since the arrival of the Spaniards. His first orders had been that they should be kindly received, but on consulting his oracles anew he had obtained for answer that Cholula would be the grave of his enemies. And so positive of success were the Aztecs, that they had already sent into the city numbers of the poles with thongs attached to them with which to bind the prisoners.

Cortés now dismissed the priests, bidding them observe the strictest secrecy, which, indeed they were likely to do for their own sakes. He also requested that they would induce some of the princi-

pal caciques to grant him an interview in his quarters.

When they came he gently rebuked them for their want of hospitality, and said that the Spaniards would burden them no longer, but would leave the city early the next morning. He also asked that they would supply him with two thousand men to carry his artillery and baggage. The chiefs, after some consultation, agreed to this as being likely to favor their own plans.

Then he sent for the Mexican ambassadors, and acquainted them with his discovery of the plot, saying that it grieved him much to find Montezuma mixed up in so treacherous an affair, and that the Spaniards must now march as enemies against a monarch they had hoped to visit as a friend. The ambassadors, however, asserted their entire ignorance of the conspiracy, and their belief that Montezuma also knew nothing of it.

The night that followed was one of intense anxiety; every soldier lay down fully armed, and the number of sentinels was doubled. But all remained quiet in the populous city, and the only

sounds which reached their ears were the hoarse cries of the priests who, from the turrets of the teocallis, proclaimed through their trumpets the watches of the night.

With the first streak of morning light Cortés was on horseback, directing the movements of his little band, part of which he posted in the great square court. A strong guard was placed at each of the three gates, and the rest had charge of the great guns which were outside the enclosure, and so placed as to command the roads which led to the teocalli.

The arrangements were hardly completed before the Cholulan caciques appeared, bringing a larger body of porters than had been demanded. They were marched at once into the square, which was, as we have seen, completely lined by the Spanish troops.

Cortés then took the caciques aside, and sternly and abruptly charged them with the conspiracy, taking care to show that he knew every detail. The Cholulans were thunderstruck, and gazed with awe upon the strangers who seemed to have

the power of reading their most secret thoughts. They made no attempt to deny the accusation, but tried to excuse themselves by throwing the blame on Montezuma.

Cortés, however, declared with still more indignation that such a pretence would not serve them, and that he would now make such an example of them as should be a warning to the cities far and near. Then the fatal signal, the firing of a gun, was given, and in an instant every musket and crossbow was levelled at the unhappy Cholulans as they stood crowded together in the centre.

They were completely taken by surprise, having heard nothing of what was going forward, and offered hardly any resistance to the Spanish soldiers, who followed up the discharge of their pieces by rushing upon them with their swords and mowing them down in ranks as they stood.

While this dreadful massacre was going on, the Cholulans from outside, attracted by the noise, began a furious assault upon the Spaniards. But the heavy guns opened fire upon them and swept them off in files as they rushed on, and in the in-

tervals of reloading, the cavalry charged into their midst. By this time the Tlascalans had come up, having by order of Cortés bound wreaths of sedge about their heads that they might be the more easily distinguished from the Cholulans, and they fell upon the rear of the wretched townsmen, who, thus harassed on all sides, could no longer maintain their ground.

They fled, some to the near buildings, which were speedily set on fire, others to the temples. One strong body headed by the priests got possession of the great teocalli. There was, as you remember, a tradition that if part of the wall was removed the god would send a flood to overwhelm his enemies. Now the Cholulans strove with might and main, and at last succeeded in wrenching away a few stones, but dust, not water, followed.

In despair they crowded into the wooden turrets which surmounted the temple, and poured down stones, javelins, and burning arrows upon the Spaniards as they came swarming up the steps. But the fiery shower fell harmlessly upon the steel

head-pieces of the soldiers; and they used the blazing shafts to set fire to the wooden towers, so that the wretched natives either perished in the flames or threw themselves headlong from the parapet.

In the fair city, lately so peaceful and prosperous, all was confusion and slaughter, burning and plundering. The division of spoil was greatly simplified by the fact that the Tlascalans desired wearing-apparel and provisions far more than gold or jewels. They also took hundreds of prisoners, but these Cortés afterwards induced them to release.

The work of destruction had gone on for some hours before the General yielded to the entreaties of the Cholulan chiefs who had been saved from the massacre, and of the Mexican envoys, and called off his men, putting a stop as well as he could to further violence. Two of the caciques were also permitted to go to their countrymen with offers of pardon and protection to all who would return to their obedience, and so by degrees the tumult was appeased.

Presently Cortés helped the Cholulans to choose a successor to their principal cacique, who was among the slain. Confidence being thus restored the people from the country round began to flock in, the markets were again opened, and the ordinary life of the city resumed, though the black and smouldering ruins remained to tell the sad tale of the massacre of Cholula. This terrible vengeance made a great impression upon the natives, and none trembled more than the Mexican monarch upon his throne among the mountains.

He felt his empire melting away from him like a morning mist, for some of the most important cities, overawed by the fate of Cholula, now sent envoys to the Spanish camp tendering their allegiance, and trying to secure the favor of the conqueror by rich gifts of gold and slaves. Again did Montezuma seek counsel from his gods, but the answers he obtained were far from reassuring, and he determined to send another embassy to Cortés to declare that he had nothing to do with the conspiracy at Cholula.

As usual the envoys were charged with a splendid present of golden vessels and ornaments, and among other things were artificial birds, made in imitation of turkeys with plumage of worked gold; there were also fifteen hundred robes of delicate cotton cloth. The Emperor's message expressed regret for the late catastrophe, and denied all knowledge of the plot which had, he said, brought a retribution upon its authors which they richly deserved. And he explained the presence of the Aztec force in the neighborhood by saying that there was a disturbance that had to be quelled.

More than a fortnight had passed since the Spaniards entered Cholula, and the General had, after the city was once more restored to order, tried to induce the people to give up their false gods, but this they would not do willingly. However, he seized upon the great teocalli of which all the woodwork had been burned, and built a church of the stone that remained. He opened the cages in which the wretched victims about to be sacrificed were imprisoned, and restored them

to liberty, and then he thought it time to begin once more the march to Mexico.

So the allied army of Spaniards and Tlascalans set out upon their journey through luxuriant plains and flourishing plantations. Occasionally they met embassies from different towns, anxious to claim the protection of the white men, and bringing rich gifts of gold to propitiate them. They passed between the two enormous mountain peaks, Popocatapetl, "the hill that smokes," and Iztaccihuatl, "the white woman," and presently encountered a blinding snow-storm, from which they found shelter in one of the large stone buildings, put up by the Mexicans for the use of travellers and couriers. Here they encamped for the night.

The next morning they reached the top of a range of hills where progress was comparatively easy. They had not gone far when, turning sharply round the shoulder of a hill, they saw spread out before them the lovely Mexican valley. The clearness of the air enabled them to see

distinctly the shining cities, the lakes, woods, fields and gardens. And in the midst of all the fair City of Mexico rose as it were from the waters of the great lake, with its towers and temples white and gleaming. Behind it the royal hill of Chapoltepec, the residence of the Mexican kings, crowned with the very same gigantic cypress trees which to this day fling their broad shadows across the land. The Spaniards gazed in rapture over the gay scene, exclaiming, "It is the promised land!"

But presently the evidences of a power and civilization so far superior to anything they had yet encountered disheartened the more timid among them, they shrank from the unequal contest, and begged to be led back again to Vera Cruz. But this was not the effect produced upon Cortés by the glorious prospect.

His desire for treasure and love of adventure were sharpened by the sight of the dazzling spoil at his very feet, and with threats, arguments, and entreaties he revived the drooping spirits of his soldiers. And by the aid of his brave captains he succeeded in once more rousing them to enthu-

siasm, and the march down the slope of the hill was gaily resumed.

With every step of their progress the woods became thinner. Villages were seen in green and sheltered nooks, the inhabitants of which came out to meet and welcome the Spaniards. Everywhere Cortés heard with satisfaction complaints of the cruelty and injustice of Montezuma, and he encouraged the natives to rely on his protection, as he had come to redress their wrongs.

The army advanced but slowly, and was soon met by another embassy from the Emperor, consisting of several Aztec lords bringing a rich gift of gold, and robes of delicate furs and feathers, and offering four loads of gold to the General, and one to each of his captains, with a yearly tribute to the Spanish sovereign, if they would even then turn back from Mexico.

But Cortés replied that he could not answer to his sovereign if he were to return without visiting the Emperor in his capital. The Spaniards came in the spirit of peace as Montezuma would see for himself. But should their presence prove burden-

some to him, it would be very easy for them to relieve him of it.

This embassy had been intended to reach the Spaniards before they crossed the mountains, and the dismay of the Aztec Emperor was great when he learned that it had failed, and that the dreaded strangers were actually on their march across the valley. They were so utterly unlike anything he had ever known before, these strange beings, who seemed to have dropped from another planet, and by their superior knowledge and more deadly weapons had overcome the hitherto unconquerable nations, though a mere handful of men in comparison to the swarms of his own countrymen.

He felt himself to be the victim of a destiny from which nothing could save him. All peace, power, and security seemed to be gone from him, and in despair he shut himself up in his palace, refusing food, and trying by prayers and sacrifices to wring some favor from his gods. But the oracles were dumb.

Then he called a council of his chief nobles, but a great difference of opinion arose amongst them.

Oacama, the Emperor's nephew, King of Tezcuco, counselled him to receive the Spaniards courteously as ambassadors of a foreign prince, while Cuitlahua, his brother, urged him to muster his forces and then and there drive back the invaders, or die in the defence of his Capital. But Montezuma could not rouse himself for this struggle. He exclaimed in deep dejection:

"Of what avail is resistance when the gods have declared themselves against us? Yet I mourn for the old and infirm, the women and children, too feeble to fight or fly. For myself and the brave men around me, we must face the storm as best we may!"

And he straightway sent off a last embassy, with his nephew at its head, to meet the Spaniards and welcome them to Mexico. By this time the army had reached the first of the towns built on piles driven into the lake. They were delighted with its fine stone houses, with canals between them instead of streets, up and down which boats passed continually, laden with all kinds of merchandise.

Though received with great hospitality, Cortés

still was strictly on his guard, and neglected no precaution for the security of his men. Before he left this place a messenger came, requesting him to wait for the arrival of the King of Tezcuco, who very soon afterwards appeared, borne in a palanquin richly decorated with plates of gold and precious stones, having pillars curiously wrought which supported a canopy of green plumes. He was accompanied by a numerous retinue of nobles and attendants. When he came into the presence of Cortés he descended from his palanquin and advanced towards him, his officers sweeping the ground before him as he did so.

The prince was a handsome young man, erect and dignified. He made the usual Mexican salutation to people of high rank, touching the earth with his right hand and raising it to his head. He said that he came as the representative of Montezuma to bid the Spaniards welcome to Mexico, and presented the General with three pearls of uncommon size and lustre.

Cortés embraced him, and in return threw over his neck a chain of cut glass. After this exchange

of courtesies, and the most friendly and respectful assurances on the part of Cortés, the Indian prince withdrew, leaving the Spaniards much impressed by his superiority in state, and bearing to anything they had before seen in the country.

Resuming their march along the southern shore of Lake Chalco, through splendid woods, and orchards glowing with unknown fruits, the army came at length to a great dyke or causeway four or five miles long, which divided the Lake Chalco from Xochicalco on the west. It was a lance in breadth at the narrowest part, and in some places wide enough for eight horsemen to ride abreast, and was solidly built of stone and lime.

As they passed along it they saw multitudes of Indians darting up and down the lake in their light pirogues, eager to catch a glimpse of the strangers, and they were amazed at the sight of the floating islands, covered with flowers and vegetables and moving like rafts over the waters. All round the margin, and occasionally far out in the lake, they saw little towns and villages half buried in foliage. The whole scene seemed to

them so new and wonderful that they could only compare it to the magical pictures of the old romances.

Midway across the lake the army halted at the town of Cuitlahuae, which was not large, but was remarkable for the beauty of its buildings. The curiosity of the Indians increased as the Spaniards proceeded, and they clambered up the causeway and lined the sides of the road. The troops were quite embarrassed by them, and Cortés was obliged to resort to commands, and even menaces, to clear a passage.

He found, as he neared the Capital, a considerable change in the feeling shown towards the government, and heard only of the pomp and magnificence of Montezuma, and nothing of his oppression. From the causeway the army descended on a narrow point of land which lay between the two lakes, and crossing it reached the royal residence of Iztapalapan.

This place was governed by the Emperor's brother, who, to do greater honor to Cortés, had invited the neighboring lords to be present at his

reception, and at the banquet which followed. The Spaniards were struck with admiration, when, after the usual ceremonies had been gone through, and a gift of gold and costly stuffs had been presented, they were led into one of the gorgeous halls of the palace, the roof of which was of odorous cedar-wood, and the stone walls tapestried with brilliant hangings.

But, indeed, this was only one of the many beautiful things which they saw in this fairy city. There were gardens cunningly planted, and watered in every part by means of canals and aqueducts, in which grew gorgeous flowers and luscious fruits. There was an aviary filled with all kinds of birds, remarkable for the brilliance of their plumage and the sweetness of their songs. But the most elaborate piece of work was a huge reservoir of stone full of water and stocked with all kinds of fish, and by this all the fountains and aqueducts were supplied.

In this city of enchantment the army rested for the night, within sight of the capital into which Cortés intended to lead them on the morrow.

CHAPTER V

THE OCCUPATION OF MEXICO

WITH the first faint streak of dawn, on the morning of November 8, 1519, the Spanish general was astir and mustering his followers. And as the sun rose above the eastern mountains he set forth with his little troop of horsemen as a sort of advanced guard. The Spanish infantry followed, then the baggage, and finally the dark files of the Tlascalan warriors. The whole number cannot have amounted to seven thousand, of which less than four hundred were Spaniards.

For a short distance the army kept along the narrow tongue of land between the lakes, and then

entered upon the great dyke which crosses the salt waters of Lake Tezcuco to the very gates of the Capital. It was wide enough all the way for ten horsemen to ride abreast. And from it the Spaniards could see many towns and villages, some upon the shores of the lake, some built upon piles running far out into its waters. These cities were evidently crowded with a thriving population, and contained many temples and other important buildings which were covered with a hard white stucco glistening like enamel in the sunshine.

The lake was darkened with a swarm of canoes filled with Indians who were eager to gaze upon the strangers. Here and there floated those fairy islands of flowers which rose and fell with every undulation of the water, and yet were substantial enough to support trees of a considerable size.

At the distance of half a league from the Capital they encountered a solid fortification, like a curtain of stone, which was built across the dyke. It was twelve feet high, and had a tower at each end, and in the centre a battlemented gateway through which the troops passed. This place was

called the Fort of Xoloc, and was afterwards occupied by Cortés in the famous siege of Mexico.

Here they were met by several hundred Aztec chiefs in their gay and fanciful costume. Some of them wore broad mantles of delicate feather embroidery, and collars and bracelets of turquoise mosaic with which fine plumage was curiously mingled, while their ears, underlips, and sometimes even their noses, were adorned with pendants of precious stones, or crescents of fine gold.

After the usual formal salutations, which caused some delay, the march was resumed. Presently the army reached a wooden drawbridge which crossed an opening in the dyke, meant to serve as an outlet for the water, should it for any reason rise beyond its usual height. As they left this bridge behind them the Spaniards felt that they were indeed committing themselves to the mercy of Montezuma, who might, by means of it, cut them off from communication with the country, and hold them prisoners in his Capital.

They now beheld the glittering retinue of the Emperor emerging from the great street which led

through the heart of the city. Amidst a crowd of Indian nobles, preceded by three officers of state bearing golden wands, they saw the royal palanquin, blazing with burnished gold. It was borne on the shoulders of nobles, and over it a canopy of gorgeous feather-work, powdered with jewels and fringed with silver, was supported by four attendants, also of high rank, who were barefooted and walked with a slow, measured pace, with their eyes bent upon the ground.

As soon as the procession had come within a short distance of the Spaniards the Emperor descended from his palanquin, and advanced under the canopy, leaning upon the arms of his nephew and his brother. The ground before him was strewn with cotton tapestry by his attendants, and the natives who lined the sides of the causeway bent forward with their eyes fixed upon the ground as he passed, whilst some of the humbler class prostrated themselves before him.

Montezuma wore the usual broad girdle and square cloak of the finest cotton, on his feet were sandals with soles of gold, and leathern thongs or-

namented with the same metal. Both cloak and sandals were sprinkled with pearls and precious stones, principally emeralds, and the green "chalchivitl," which was more highly esteemed by the Aztecs than any jewel. On his head he wore only a plume of royal green feathers, a badge of his military rank. He was at this time about forty years of age, and was tall and thin, and of a lighter complexion than is usual among his countrymen. He moved with dignity, and there was a benignity in his whole demeanor which was not to have been anticipated from the reports of his character which had reached the Spaniards.

The army halted as Montezuma drew near, and Cortés dismounted and advanced to meet him with a few of the principal cavaliers. The Emperor received him with princely courtesy, and expressed his satisfaction at seeing him in his Capital. Cortés responded by the most profound expressions of respect and gratitude for all Montezuma's munificence to the Spaniards. He then hung round the Emperor's neck a chain of colored crystal, making at the same time a movement as if

MONTEZUMA GREETS THE SPANIARDS

to embrace him, but was restrained by the two Aztec lords, who were shocked at the idea of such presumption.

Montezuma then appointed his brother to conduct the Spaniards to their quarters in the city, and again entering his litter was borne off amid prostrate crowds in the same state in which he had come. The Spaniards quickly followed, and with colors flying and music playing entered the southern portion of the city of Mexico. The great wide street facing the causeway stretched for some miles in nearly a straight line through the centre of the city.

In the clear atmosphere of the tableland it was easy to see the blue mountains in the distance beyond the temples, houses, and gardens which stood on either side of it. But what most impressed the Spaniards was the swarm of people who thronged every street, canal, and roof, and filled every window and doorway.

To the Aztecs it must indeed have been a strange sensation when they beheld the fair-faced strangers, and for the first time heard their well-paved

streets ringing under the iron tramp of the horses, those unknown animals which they regarded with superstitious terror. But their wonder changed to anger when they saw their detested enemies, the Tlascalans, stalking through their city with looks of ferocity and defiance.

As they passed along the troops frequently crossed bridges which spanned some of the numerous canals, and at length they halted in a wide open space, near the centre of the city, close to the huge temple of the war-god. Facing the western gate of the temple enclosure stood a range of low stone buildings, spreading over a large extent of ground, once a palace belonging to the Emperor's father. This was to be the lodging of the Spaniards.

Montezuma himself was waiting in the courtyard to receive them. Approaching Cortés he took from one of his slaves a massive collar, made of the shells of a kind of crawfish much prized by the Indians, set in gold, and connected by heavy golden links; from this hung eight finely-worked ornaments, each a span long, made to resemble the

crawfish, but of fine gold. This gorgeous collar he hung round the neck of the General, saying:

"This palace belongs to you, Malinche"—this was the name by which he always addressed him—"and your brethren. Rest after your fatigues, for you have much need to do so; in a little while I will visit you again."

So saying, he withdrew with his attendants.

The General's first care was to inspect his new quarters. The rooms were of great size, and afforded accommodation for the whole army, the Tlascalans probably encamping in the outer courts. The best apartments were hung with draperies of gaily colored cotton, and the floors were covered with mats or rushes. There were also low stools carved from single pieces of wood, and most of the rooms had beds made of the palm-leaf, woven into a thick mat, with coverlets, and sometimes canopies of cotton.

The General, after a rapid survey, assigned his troops their respective quarters, and took as vigilant precautions for security as if he expected a siege. He planted his cannon so as to command

the approaches to the palace, stationed sentinels along the walls, and gave orders that no soldier should leave his quarters under pain of death. After all these precautions he allowed his men to enjoy the banquet prepared for them.

This over, the Emperor came again, attended by a few nobles. He was received with great deference by Cortés, and with Marina's aid they conversed, while the Aztecs and the cavaliers stood around in respectful silence. Montezuma made many inquiries concerning the country of the Spaniards, its sovereign, and its government, and especially asked their reasons for visiting Mexico. Cortés replied that they had desired to see its great monarch, and to declare to him the true faith professed by the Christians.

The Emperor showed himself to be fully acquainted with all the doings of the Spaniards since their landing, and was curious as to their rank in their own country. He also learned the names of the principal cavaliers, and their position in the army. At the conclusion of the interview the Aztecs brought forward a gift of cotton robes, enough

to supply every man, even including the Tlascalans, and gold chains and ornaments, which were distributed in profusion among the Spaniards.

That evening Cortés ordered a general discharge of artillery, and the noise of the guns and the volumes of smoke filled the superstitious Aztecs with dismay, reminding them of the explosions of the great volcano.

On the following morning he asked permission to return the Emperor's visit, and Montezuma sent officers to conduct the Spaniards to his presence.

On reaching the hall of audience the Mexican officers took off their sandals, and covered their gay attire with mantles of "nequen," a coarse stuff made from the fibres of the aloe, and worn only by the poorest classes. For it was thus humbly that all, excepting the members of his own family, approached the sovereign. Then with downcast eyes and formal obeisance they ushered the Spaniards into the royal presence.

They found Montezuma surrounded by a few of his favorite chiefs, and were kindly received by him. Cortés soon began upon the subject upper-

most in his thoughts, setting forth as clearly as he could the mysteries of his faith, and assuring Montezuma his idols would sink him in perdition. But the Emperor only listened calmly, and showed no sign of being convinced.

He had no doubt, he said, that the god of the Spaniards was good, but his own gods were good also; what Cortés told him of the creation of the world was like what he had been taught to believe. It was not worth while to discuss the matter farther. He added that his ancestors were not the original possessors of his land, but had been led there by the great Being, who, after giving them laws, and ruling over them for a time, had withdrawn to the region where the sun rises, declaring on his departure that he or his descendants would some day come again and reign.

The wonderful deeds of the Spaniards, their fair faces, and the quarter whence they came all showed that they were his descendants. If Montezuma had resisted their visit to his capital, it was because he had heard that they were cruel, that they sent the lightning to consume his people,

or crushed them to pieces under the hard feet of the ferocious animals on which they rode. He was now convinced that these were idle tales, that the Spaniards were kind and generous, mortals indeed, but of a different race from the Aztecs, wiser, and more valiant.

"You, too," he added with a smile, "have perhaps been told that I am a god and dwell in palaces of gold and silver. But you see it is false: my houses, though large, are of wood and stone; and as to my body," he said, baring his tawny arm, "you see it is flesh and bone like yours. It is true that I have a great empire inherited from my ancestors, lands, and gold and silver, but your sovereign beyond the waters is, I know, the rightful lord of all. I rule in his name. You, Malinche, are his ambassador; you and your brethren shall share these things with me. Rest now from your labors. You are here in your own dwellings, and everything shall be provided for your subsistence. I will see that your wishes shall be obeyed in the same way as my own."

Cortés, while he encouraged the idea that his

own sovereign was the great Being, as Montezuma believed, assured him that his master had no desire to interfere with his authority otherwise than, out of concern for his welfare, to effect his conversion, and that of his people, to Christianity. Before the Emperor dismissed his visitors, rich stuffs and ornaments of gold were distributed among them, so that the poorest soldier received at least two heavy collars of gold, and on their homeward way they could talk of nothing but the generosity and courtesy of the Indian monarch.

But the General was harassed by many anxious thoughts. He had not been prepared to find so much luxury, civilization, and power. He was in the heart of a great Capital which seemed like an extensive fortification, with its dykes and drawbridges, where every house might be converted into a castle. At a nod from the sovereign all communication with the rest of the country might be cut off, and the whole warlike population be at once hurled upon himself and his handful of followers. And against such odds of what avail would be his superior science?

As to the conquest of the empire, now he had seen the Capital, it must have seemed to him a more doubtful enterprise than ever. But at any rate his best policy was to foster the superstitious reverence in which he was held by both prince and people, and to find out all he could about the city and its inhabitants.

To this end he asked the Emperor's permission to visit the principal public buildings, which was readily granted, Montezuma even arranging to meet him at the great temple. Cortés put himself at the head of his cavalry, and, followed by nearly all the Spanish foot, set out under the guidance of several caciques sent by Montezuma. They led him to the great teocalli near their own quarters.

It stood in the midst of a vast space which was surrounded by a wall of stone and lime about eight feet high, ornamented on the outer side by raised figures of serpents, which gave it the name of the Coatepantli, or "wall of serpents." This wall was pierced by huge battlemented gateways, opening upon the four principal streets of the city, and

over each gate was a kind of arsenal filled with arms and warlike gear.

The teocalli itself was of the usual pyramidal shape, and five stories high, coated on the outside with hewn stones. The ascent was by flights of steps on the outside, and Cortés found two priests and several caciques waiting to carry him up them as they had just carried the Emperor. But the General declined this compliment, preferring to march up at the head of his men.

On reaching the great paved space at the summit, the first thing they saw was the stone on which the unhappy victims were stretched for sacrifice. At the other end of the platform stood two towers, each three stories high, the lower story being of stone, the two upper of carved wood.

In these stood the images of the gods, and before each stood an altar upon which blazed the undying fires, the putting out of which was supposed to portend so much woe to the nation. Here also was the huge drum, made of serpents' skins. It was struck only on extraordinary occasions, when it sent forth a melancholy sound that

CORTÉS IN THE TEMPLE OF HUITZILOPOCHTLI

could be heard for miles—a sound of woe to the Spaniards in after times.

Montezuma, attended by a high priest, came forward to receive Cortés. After conferring with the priests the Emperor conducted the Spaniards into the building, which was adorned with sculptured figures. At one end was a recess, with a roof of timber richly carved and gilt, and here stood a colossal image of Huitzilopochtli, the war-god.

His countenance was hideous; in his right hand he held a bow, and in his left a bunch of golden arrows, which a mystic legend connected with the victories of his people. A huge serpent of pearls and precious stones was coiled about his waist, and costly jewels were profusely sprinkled over his person. On his left foot were the delicate feathers of the humming-bird, from which, singularly enough, he took his name. Around his neck hung a chain of gold and silver hearts, as an emblem of the sacrifice in which he most delighted. Indeed, even at that moment three bleeding human hearts lay upon the altar before him.

The next sanctuary was dedicated to Tezcatlipoca, who, they believed, had created the earth and watched over it. He was represented as a young man, and his image of polished black stone was garnished with gold plates and ornaments, among which was a shield burnished like a mirror, in which he was supposed to see reflected all the doings of the world. Before this shrine also lay five hearts in a golden platter. From the horrors of this place the Spaniards gladly escaped into the open air, and Cortés said, turning to Montezuma:

"I do not understand how a great and wise prince like you can put faith in such evil spirits as these idols. If you will but permit us to erect here the true cross, and place the images of the Blessed Virgin and her Son in your sanctuaries, you will soon see how your false gods will shrink before them."

Montezuma was greatly shocked at this speech.

"These," said he, "are the gods who have led the Aztecs on to victory since they were a nation, and who send us the seed-time and harvest. Had I

thought you would have offered them this outrage I would not have admitted you into their presence."

Cortés then took his leave, expressing concern for having wounded the feelings of the Emperor, who remained to expiate, if possible, the crime of having exposed the shrines of his gods to such profanation by the strangers. On descending into the court the Spaniards took a leisurely survey of the other buildings in the enclosure.

There were several other teocallis, but much smaller ones, in which the Spaniards saw implements of sacrifice and many other horrors. And there was also a great mound with a timber framework upon its summit, upon which were strung hundreds of thousands of skulls, those of the victims who had been sacrificed. Schools, granaries, gardens, and fountains filled up the remainder of the enclosed space, which seemed a complete city in itself, containing a mixture of barbarism and civilization altogether characteristic of the Aztec nation.

The next day the Spaniards asked permission to

convert one of the halls in their palace into a chapel where they might hold the services of their church. The request was granted, and while the work was in progress some of them discovered what seemed to be a door recently plastered over.

As there was a rumor that Montezuma kept the treasures of his father in this palace, they did not scruple to gratify their curiosity by removing the Plaster and forcing open the door which it concealed, when they beheld a great hall filled with rich and beautiful stuffs, articles of curious workmanship of various kinds, gold and silver in bars or just as it had been dug from the earth, and many jewels of great value.

"I was a young man," says one of the Spaniards who was allowed a sight of the treasure, "and it seemed to me that all the riches of the world were in that room."

By Cortés' order the wall was built up again, and strict injunctions were given that the discovery should be kept a profound secret. The Spaniards had now been a week in Mexico, and the General's

anxieties increased daily. Cortés resolved upon a bold stroke.

Calling a council of his officers, he laid his difficulties before them, and, ignoring the opinion of some who advised an immediate retreat, he proposed to march to the royal palace and by persuasion or force to induce Montezuma to take up his abode in the Spanish quarters. Once having obtained possession of his person, it would be easy to rule in his name by allowing him a show of sovereignty, until they had taken measures to secure their own safety and the success of their enterprise.

A pretext for the seizure of the Emperor was afforded by a circumstance which had come to the ears of Cortés while he was still in Cholula. Don Juan de Escalante, who had been left in charge of the Spanish settlement at Vera Cruz, had received a message from an Aztec chief called Quanhpopoca declaring his desire to come in person and tender his allegiance to the Spaniards, and requesting that four soldiers might be sent to pro-

tect him through the country of an unfriendly tribe.

This was not an uncommon request, and the soldiers were sent, but on their arrival two of them were treacherously murdered by the Aztec. The others escaped, and made their way back to the garrison. The commander at once marched with fifty of his men and some thousands of Indians to take vengeance upon the cacique, and though his allies fled before the Mexicans, the few Spaniards stood firm, and by the aid of their firearms made good the field against the enemy.

Unfortunately, seven or eight of them were killed, including Escalante himself, and the Indians who were taken prisoners declared that the whole proceeding had been by Montezuma's orders. One of the Spaniards fell into the hands of the enemy, but soon died from his wounds.

He happened to be a very big man of ferocious appearance, and when his head was sent to Montezuma, the Aztec Emperor gazed upon it with a shudder, and commanded that it should be taken out of the city, and not offered at the shrine of

any of his gods. He seemed to see in those terrible features a prophecy of his sure destruction.

The bolder spirits among the cavaliers approved of the General's plan, and the next day, having asked an audience of Montezuma, Cortés made the necessary arrangements for his enterprise. The principal part of his force was drawn up in the courtyard. One detachment was stationed in the avenue leading to the palace, to prevent any attempt at rescue by the citizens. Twenty-five or thirty soldiers were ordered to drop in at the palace by twos and threes, as if accidentally, and he took with him five cavaliers on whose coolness and courage he could rely.

That they should all be in full armor excited no suspicion; it was too common an occurrence. The Spaniards were graciously received by the Emperor, who by the aid of interpreters held a gay conversation with them, and as usual presented them with gold and jewels. He paid Cortés the compliment of offering him one of his daughters in marriage, an honor which was respectfully declined, on the ground that he already had one wife.

But as soon as the general saw that his soldiers had all come upon the scene he abruptly changed his tone, and accused the Emperor of being the author of the treacherous proceedings on the coast. Montezuma listened in surprise, and declared that such an act could only have been imputed to him by his enemies. Cortés pretended to believe him, but said that Quanhpopoca and his accomplices must be sent for that they might be dealt with after their deserts.

Montezuma agreed. Taking his royal signet from his wrist he gave it to one of his nobles, with orders to show it to the Aztec governor and require his immediate presence in the Capital, and in case of his resistance to call in the aid of the neighboring towns. When the messenger had gone, Cortés assured the Emperor that he was now convinced of his innocence in the matter, but that it was necessary that his own sovereign should be equally convinced of it.

Nothing would promote this so much as for Montezuma to transfer his residence to the palace occupied by the Spaniards, as this would show a

condescension and personal regard for them which would absolve him from all suspicion. The Emperor listened to this proposal with profound amazement, exclaiming with resentment and offended dignity:

"When was it ever heard that a great prince like myself willingly left his own palace to become a prisoner in the hands of strangers?"

Cortés declared that he would not go as a prisoner, but would be simply changing his residence.

"If I should consent to such degradation," cried Montezuma, "my subjects never would."

When further pressed, he offered one of his sons and two of his daughters as hostages, so that he might be spared this disgrace. Two hours passed in this fruitless discussion, till Velasquez de Leon, impatient of the long delay, and seeing that to fail in the attempt must ruin them, cried out:

"Why do we waste words on this barbarian? Let us seize him, and if he resists plunge our swords into his body!"

The fierce tone and menacing gesture alarmed

the Emperor, who asked Marina what the angry Spaniard said. She explained as gently as she could, beseeching him to accompany the white men, who would treat him with all respect and kindness. If he refused he would but expose himself to violence, perhaps to death.

This last appeal shook the resolution of Montezuma. Looking round for support and sympathy, he saw only the stern faces and mail-clad forms of the Spaniards, and felt that his hour had indeed come. In a scarcely audible voice he consented to accompany them, and orders were given for the royal litter to be brought. The nobles who bore and attended it could hardly credit their senses, but now that Montezuma had consented to go, pride made him wish to appear to go willingly.

As the royal retinue marched dejectedly down the avenue, escorted by the Spaniards, the people ran together in crowds, declaring that thè Emperor had been carried off by force. And a tumult would have arisen had not he himself called out to them to disperse, since he was of his own accord visiting his friends, and on reaching the

Spanish quarters he sent out his nobles to the mob with similar assurances, bidding them all return to their homes.

He was received with ostentatious respect by the Spaniards, and chose the apartments which pleased him best, which were speedily furnished with tapestry, feather-work, and all other Indian luxuries. He was attended by his own household, and his meals were served with the usual pomp and ceremony, while not even the General himself approached him without due obeisance, or sat down in his presence uninvited.

Nevertheless it was but too clear to his people that he was a prisoner. For day and night the palace was guarded by sixty sentinels in front and sixty in the rear, while another body was stationed in the royal antechamber. This was the state of affairs when Quanhpopoca arrived from the coast.

Montezuma received him coldly, and referred the matter to Cortés, who speedily made an end of it by condemning the unhappy chief and his followers to be burnt to death. The funeral piles were erected in the courtyard before the palace,

and were made of arrows, javelins, and other weapons drawn by the Emperor's permission from those stored round the great teocalli.

To crown these extraordinary proceedings, Cortés, just before the executions took place, entered the Emperor's apartments, followed by a soldier bearing fetters in his hands. Sternly he again accused Montezuma of having been the original contriver of the treacherous deed, and said that a crime which merited death in a subject must in some way be atoned for even by a king. Whereupon he ordered the soldier to fasten the fetters upon Montezuma's ankles, and after coolly waiting until it was done turned his back and quitted the room.

The Emperor was speechless under this last insult, like one struck down by a heavy blow. But though he offered no resistance, low moans broke from him, which showed the anguish of his spirit. His faithful attendants did their utmost to console him, holding his feet in their arms, and trying to keep the irons from touching him by inserting their own robes.

THE SOLDIER FASTENED THE FETTERS

But it was not the bodily discomfort that so afflicted him, but the feeling that he was no more a king. And so utterly broken in spirit was he that when Cortés came after the execution had taken place, and with his own hands unclasped the irons, Montezuma actually thanked him as if for some great and unmerited favor.

Not long after the Spanish general expressed his willingness that the Emperor should if he wished return to his own palace. But Montezuma declined the offer, doubtless fearing to trust himself again to the haughty and ferocious chieftains, who could not but despise the cowardly proceedings of their master, so unlike the usual conduct of an Aztec monarch.

Montezuma often amused himself with seeing the Spanish troops go through their exercises, or with playing at some of the national games with Cortés and his officers. A favorite one was called "totoloque," played with golden balls, which were thrown at a golden target. The Emperor always staked precious stones or ingots of gold, and won or lost with equal good-humor. And indeed it did

not much matter to him, since if he did win he gave away his gains to his attendants.

But while Montezuma thus resigned himself without a struggle to a life of captivity, some of his kinsmen were feeling very differently about the matter, and especially his nephew Cacama, Lord of the Tezcuco, and second in power to Montezuma himself. This prince saw with alarm and indignation his uncle's abject submission to the Spaniards, and endeavored to form a league with the other chiefs to rescue him out of their hands. But they, from jealousy, declined to join him, declaring themselves unwilling to do anything without the Emperor's sanction.

These plots came to the ears of Cortés, who wished at once to march upon Tezcuco and stamp out this spark of rebellion, but Montezuma dissuaded him. He therefore sent a friendly message of expostulation, which met with a haughty response, and to a second message asserting the supremacy of the King of Spain Cacama replied that he acknowledged no such authority. He knew nothing of the Spanish sovereign or his peo-

ple, nor did he wish to know anything of them.

When Montezuma sent to him to come to Mexico that this difference might be adjusted, he answered that he understood the position of his uncle, and that when he did visit the Capital it would be to rescue it, as well as the Emperor himself and their common gods from bondage, and to drive out the detested strangers who had brought such dishonor on their country.

This reply made Cortés very angry. But Montezuma, anxious to prevent bloodshed, begged him still to refrain from declaring war against Cacama, saying that it would be better to obtain possession of him personally, which he could easily do by means of several Tezcucan nobles who were in his own pay. So Cacama was enticed by these faithless chiefs into a villa overhanging the lake, where he was easily overpowered and forced into a boat, which speedily brought him to Mexico.

Cortés promptly fettered and imprisoned him, while Montezuma declared that he had by his rebellion forfeited his kingdom and appointed his brother, a mere boy, to reign in his stead. Now

Cortés felt himself powerful enough to demand that Montezuma and all his nobles should formally swear allegiance to the Spanish sovereigns, and accordingly the Emperor assembled his principal caciques and briefly stated to them the object for which he had summoned them.

"You all know," said he, "our ancient tradition, how the great Being, who once ruled over the land, declared that he would one day return and reign again. That time has now arrived. The white men have come from the land beyond the ocean, where the sun rises, sent by their master to reclaim the obedience of his ancient subjects. I am ready, for my part, to acknowledge his authority. You have been faithful vassals of mine all the years that I have sat upon the throne of my fathers. Now I expect that you will show me a last act of obedience, by acknowledging the great king beyond the waters to be your lord also, and that you will pay him tribute as you have hitherto done to me."

As he spoke the tears fell fast down his cheeks, and his nobles were deeply affected by the sight of

his distress. Many of them, coming from a distance, and not having realized what was taking place in the Capital, were filled with astonishment on beholding the voluntary abasement of their master, whom they had reverenced as the all-powerful lord of the whole country.

His will, they told him, was their law now as ever, and if he thought the sovereign of the strangers was the ancient lord of their country, they were willing to swear allegiance to him as such. Accordingly the oaths were administered with all due solemnity, and a full record of the proceedings was drawn up by the royal notary to be sent to Spain.

Cortés now seemed to have accomplished most of the great objects of his expedition. But towards the conversion of the natives he had made no progress, and still the horrible sacrifices took place day by day. The General could bear it no longer, but told the Emperor that the Christians could not consent to hold the services of their religion shut in within the narrow walls of the garrison.

They wished to spread its light abroad and share its blessings with the people. To this end they requested that the great teocalli should be given up to them as a fit place where their worship might be conducted in the presence of the whole city. Montezuma listened in consternation.

"Malinche," said he, "why will you push matters to an extremity that must surely bring down the vengeance of our gods and stir up an insurrection among my people, who will never endure this profanation of their temple?"

Cortés, seeing that he was much agitated, pretended that the demand had come from his followers, and that he would endeavor to persuade them to be contented with one of the sanctuaries of the teocalli. If that were not granted, they should be obliged to take it by force and to throw down the idols in the face of the city.

Montezuma, still greatly disturbed, promised to confer with the priests, and in the end the Spaniards were allowed to take possession of one of the sanctuaries, in which, when it had been purified, an altar was raised, surmounted by a crucifix and

the image of the Virgin. Its walls were decorated with garlands of fresh flowers, and an old soldier was stationed to watch over it.

Then the whole army moved in solemn procession up the winding ascent of the pyramid, and mass was celebrated by Father Olmedo and another priest, while the Aztecs looked on with mingled curiosity and repugnance. For a nation will endure any outrage sooner than that which attacks its religion, and this profanation touched a feeling in the natives which the priests were not slow to take advantage of.

Soon the Spaniards noticed a change in Montezuma. He was grave instead of cheerful, and avoided their society. Many conferences went on between him and the priests and nobles, at which even Orteguilla, his favorite page, was not allowed to be present. Presently Cortés received a summons to appear before the Emperor, who told him that his predictions had come to pass, his gods were offended, and threatened to forsake the city if the sacrilegious strangers were not driven from it, or sacrificed on their altars as an expiation.

"If you have any regard for your safety," he continued, "you will leave the country without delay. I have only to raise my finger, and every Aztec in the land will rise against you."

Cortés knew well enough that this was true, but, concealing his dismay, he replied that he should much regret to leave the capital so precipitately, especially when he had no ships to take him back to his own country. He should also regret that if he quitted it under these circumstances he should be driven to taking the Emperor with him.

Montezuma was evidently troubled by this last suggestion, and finally offered to send workmen to the coast to build ships under the direction of the Spaniards, while he restrained the impatience of his people with the assurance that the white men would leave their land as soon as they were ready. This was accordingly done, and the work went forward at Vera Cruz with great apparent alacrity. But those who directed it took care to interpose as many delays as possible, while Cortés hoped in the meantime to receive such reinforce-

ments from Spain as should enable him to hold his ground.

Nevertheless the whole aspect of affairs in the Spanish quarters was utterly changed. Apprehension had taken the place of security, and as many precautions were observed as if the garrison was actually in a state of siege. Such was the unpleasant state of affairs when, in May 1520, six months after his arrival in the capital, Cortés received tidings from the coast which caused him greater alarm than even the threatened insurrection of the Aztecs. The jealous Governor of Cuba was sending an expedition to attack Cortés.

It was the news of the arrival of this fleet at the place where he had himself landed at first that had caused Cortés so much consternation, for he at once suspected that it was sent by his bitter enemy the governor. The commander of this second expedition, who was called Narvaez, having landed, soon met with a Spaniard from one of the exploring parties sent out by Cortés.

This man related all that had occurred since the

Spanish envoys left Vera Cruz, the march into the interior, the furious battles with the Tlascalans, the occupation of Mexico, the rich treasures found in it, and the seizure of Montezuma.

"Whereby," said the soldier, "Cortés rules over the land like its own sovereign, so that a Spaniard may travel unarmed from one end of the country to the other without insult or injury."

Narvaez and his followers listened in speechless amazement to this marvellous report, and the leader waxed more and more indignant at the thought of all that had been snatched from Velasquez, whose adherent he was. He now openly proclaimed his intention of marching against Cortés and punishing him, so that even the natives who had flocked to this new camp comprehended that these white men were enemies of those who had come before.

Narvaez proposed to establish a colony in the barren, sandy spot which Cortés had abandoned, and when informed of the existence of Villa Rica, he sent to demand the submission of the garrison. Sandoval had kept a sharp eye upon the move-

ments of Narvaez from the time that his ships had first appeared upon the horizon, and when he heard of his having landed he prepared to defend his post to the last extremity.

But the only invaders of Villa Rica were a priest named Guevara and four other Spaniards, who formally addressed Sandoval, pompously enumerating the services and claims of Velasquez, taxing Cortés with rebellion, and finally demanding that Sandoval should tender his submission to Narvaez.

That officer, greatly exasperated, promptly seized the unlucky priest and his companions, and, remarking that they might read the obnoxious proclamation to the General himself in Mexico, ordered them to be bound like bales of goods upon the backs of sturdy porters and placed under a guard of twenty Spaniards. And in this way, travelling day and night, only stopping to obtain relays of carriers, they came within sight of the Capital at the end of the fourth day.

Its inhabitants were already aware of the fresh arrival of white men upon the coast. Indeed

Montezuma had sent for Cortés and told him there was no longer any obstacle to his leaving the country, as a fleet was ready for him. And in answer to his astonished inquiries, Montezuma had shown him a picture map sent him from the coast, whereon the Spaniards, with their ships and equipments, were minutely depicted.

Cortés pretended to be vastly pleased by this intelligence, and the tidings were received in the camp with firing of cannon and other demonstrations of joy, for the soldiers took the newcomers for a reinforcement from Spain. Not so Cortés, who guessed from the first that they came from the Governor of Cuba. He told his suspicions to his officers, who in turn informed the men; but, though alarm succeeded their joy, they resolved to stand by their leader come what might.

When Sandoval's letter acquainting him with all particulars was brought to Cortés, he instantly sent and released the bewildered prisoners from their ignominious position, and furnished them with horses to make their entry into the Capital, where, by treating them with the utmost courtesy

and loading them with gifts, he speedily converted them from enemies into friends, and obtained from them much important information respecting the designs of Narvaez and the feelings of his army.

He gathered that gold was the great object of the soldiers, who were evidently willing to co-operate with Cortés if by so doing they could obtain it. Indeed, they had no particular regard for their own leader, who was arrogant, and by no means liberal.

Profiting by these important hints, the General sent a conciliatory letter to Narvaez, beseeching him not to unsettle the natives by a show of animosity, when it was only by union they could hope for success, and declaring that for his part he was ready to greet Narvaez as a brother in arms, to share with him the fruits of conquest, and, if he could produce a royal commission, to submit to his authority. Of course Cortés knew well enough that he had no such commission to show.

Soon after the departure of Guevara he resolved to send a special envoy of his own, and chose Father Olmedo for the task, with instructions to

converse privately with as many of the officers and soldiers as he could with a view to securing their goodwill; and to this end he was also provided with a liberal supply of gold. During this time Narvaez had abandoned his idea of planting a colony on the sea-coast, and had marched inland and taken up his quarters at Cempoalla.

He received the letter of Cortés with scorn, which changed to stern displeasure when Guevara enlarged upon the power of his rival and urged him to accept his friendly offers. But the troops, on the other hand, listened with greedy ears to the accounts of Cortés, his frank and liberal manners, and the wealth of his camp, where the meanest soldier could stake his ingot and his chain of gold at play, and where all revelled in plenty.

And when Father Olmedo arrived, his eloquence and his gifts soon created a party in the interest of Cortés. This could not go on so secretly as not to excite the suspicions of Narvaez, and the worthy priest was sent back to his master, but the seed which he had sown was left to grow.

Narvaez continued to speak of Cortés as a

traitor whom he intended to punish, and he also declared he would release Montezuma from captivity and restore him to his throne. It was rumored that the Aztec monarch had sent him a rich gift, and entered into correspondence with him.

All this was observed by the watchful eye of Sandoval, whose spies frequented his enemy's camp. And presently he sent to Cortés saying that something must speedily be done to prevent Villa Rica from falling into the hands of the enemy, and pointing out that many of the Indians, from sheer perplexity, were no longer to be relied upon.

The General felt that it was indeed time to act, but the situation was one of great difficulty. However, he marched against Narvaez, defeated and captured him, embodied his forces, and set out on his return to Mexico, where he had left Alvarado in command.

On his march he received a letter from Alvarado, which conveyed the startling news that the Mexicans were up in arms and had assaulted the Spanish quarters. They had overwhelmed the garrison with a torrent of missiles, which had

killed some and wounded many, and had burned some brigantines which Cortés had built to secure a means of retreat. It ended by imploring him to hasten to the relief of his men if he would save them or keep his hold on the Capital.

This was a heavy blow to Cortés, but there was no time for hesitation. He laid the matter fully before his soldiers, and all declared their readiness to follow him.

On June 24, 1520, the army reached the same causeway by which they had before entered the Capital. But now no crowds lined the roads, and no pirogues swarmed upon the lake. A death-like stillness brooded over the scene. As they marched across Cortés ordered the trumpets to sound, and their shrill notes were answered by a joyful peal of artillery from the beleaguered fortress.

The soldiers quickened their pace, and all were soon in the city once more. But here the appearance of things was far from reassuring. In many places they saw the smaller bridges had been taken away; the town seemed deserted, and the tramp

of the horses awakened melancholy echoes in the deserted streets.

When they reached the palace the great gates were speedily thrown open, and Cortés and his party were eagerly welcomed by the garrison, who had much to tell and to hear. Of course the General's first inquiry was as to the origin of the tumult, and this was the story he heard.

The Aztec festival called "The incensing of Huitzilopochtli" was about to be celebrated, in which, as it was an important one, nearly all the nobles took part. The caciques asked the permission of Alvarado to perform their rites in the teocalli which contained the chapel of the Spaniards, and to be allowed the presence of Montezuma. This latter request was refused, but he consented to their using the teocalli provided they came unarmed and held no human sacrifice.

Accordingly, on the day appointed the Aztecs assembled to the number of at least six hundred. They wore their magnificent gala costumes, with mantles of feather-work sprinkled with precious

stones, and collars, bracelets, and ornaments of gold.

Alvarado and his men, fully armed, attended as spectators, and when the hapless natives were engaged in one of their ceremonial dances, they fell upon them suddenly, sword in hand. Then followed a great and dreadful slaughter.

Unarmed, and taken unawares, the Aztecs were hewn down without resistance. Those who attempted to escape by climbing the wall of serpents were speared ruthlessly, till presently not one of that gay company remained alive. Then the Spaniards added the crowning horror to their dreadful deed by plundering the bodies of their murdered victims.

The tidings of the massacre flew like wildfire through the Capital, and every long-smothered feeling of hostility burst forth in the cry that arose for vengeance. The city rose in arms to a man and almost before the Spaniards could secure themselves in their defences, they were assaulted with desperate fury. Some of the assailants attempted to scale the walls, others succeeded in par-

tially undermining and setting fire to the works.

It is impossible to say how the attack would have ended, but the Spaniards entreated Montezuma to interfere, and he, mounting the battlements, conjured the furious people to desist from storming the fortress out of regard for his safety. They so far respected him that they changed their operations into a regular blockade, throwing up works round the palace to prevent the egress of the Spaniards, and suspending the market so that they might not obtain any supplies. Then they sat down to wait sullenly till famine should throw their enemies into their hands.

The condition of the besieged was gloomy enough. True their provisions still held out, but they suffered greatly from want of water, that within the enclosure being quite brackish, until a fresh spring was suddenly discovered in the courtyard. Even then the fact that scarcely a man had escaped unwounded, and that they had no prospect before them but a lingering death by famine, or one more dreadful still upon the altar of sacrifice, made their situation a very trying one.

The coming of their comrades was therefore doubly welcome. As an explanation of his atrocious act, Alvarado declared that he had but struck the blow to intimidate the natives and crush an intended rising of the people, of which he had received information through his spies.

Cortés listened calmly till the story was finished, then exclaimed with undisguised displeasure, "You have done badly. You have been false to your trust. Your conduct has been that of a madman!"

And so saying, he turned and left him abruptly, no doubt bitterly regretting that he had entrusted so important a command to one whose frank and captivating exterior was but the mask for a rash and cruel nature. Vexed with his faithless lieutenant, and embarrassed by the disastrous consequences of his actions, Cortés for the first time lost his self-control, and allowed his disgust and irritation to be plainly seen.

He treated Montezuma with haughty coldness, even speaking of him as "this dog of a king" in the presence of his chiefs, and bidding them fiercely go tell their master and his people to open the mar-

kets, or he would do it for them to their cost. The chiefs retired in deep resentment at the insult, which they comprehended well enough from his look and gesture, and the message lost nothing of its effect in transmission.

By the suggestion of Montezuma, Cortés now released his brother Cuitlahua, thinking he might allay the tumult and bring about a better state of things. But this failed utterly, for the prince, who was bold and ambitious, was bitterly incensed by the injuries he had received from the Spaniards. Moreover, he was the heir presumptive to the crown, and was welcomed by the people as a substitute for the captive Montezuma. So being an experienced warrior, he set himself to arrange a more efficient plan of operations against the Spaniards, and the effect was soon visible.

Cortés, meanwhile, had so little doubt of his ability to quench the insurrection that he said as much in the letter that he wrote to the garrison of Villa Rica informing them of his safe arrival in the Capital. But his messenger had not been gone half-an-hour before he returned breathless with

terror, and covered with wounds, saying that the city was in arms, the drawbridges were raised, and the enemy would soon be upon them.

Surely enough before long a hoarse, sullen roar arose, becoming louder and louder. From the parapet surrounding the enclosure the great avenues that led to it could be seen dark with masses of warriors rolling on in a confused tide towards the fortress. At the same time the flat roofs of the neighboring houses were suddenly covered, as if by magic, with swarms of menacing figures, brandishing their weapons—a sight to appall the stoutest heart.

CHAPTER VI

FIGHTING IN MEXICO

WHEN notice was given of the approach of the Aztecs, each man was soon at his post, and prepared to give them a warm reception. On they came, rushing forward in dense columns, each with its gay banner. And as they neared the enclosure they set up the hideous yell or shrill whistle used in fight, which rose high above the sound of their

rude musical instruments. They followed this by a tempest of stones, darts, and arrows, which fell thick as rain on the besieged, and at the same time those upon the roofs also discharged a blinding volley.

The Spaniards waited until the foremost column was within fire, and then, with a general discharge of artillery, swept the ranks of their assailants, mowing them down by hundreds. The Mexicans for a moment stood aghast, but soon rallying swept boldly forward over the prostrate bodies of their comrades. A second and third volley checked them and threw their ranks into disorder. But still they pressed on, letting off clouds of arrows, while those on the house-tops took deliberate aim at the soldiers in the courtyard.

Soon some of the Aztecs succeeded in getting close enough to the wall to be sheltered by it from the fire of the Spaniards, and they made gallant efforts to scale the parapet, but only to be shot down, one after another, as soon as their heads appeared above the rampart. Defeated here, they tried to effect a breach by battering the wall with

heavy pieces of timber. But it proved too strong for them, and then they shot burning arrows among the temporary buildings in the courtyard.

Several of these took fire, and soon a fierce conflagration was raging, which was only to be checked by throwing down part of the wall itself, and thus laying open a formidable breach. This was protected by a battery of heavy guns, and a file of arquebusiers, who kept up an incessant volley through the opening.

All day the fight raged with fury, and even when night came, and the Aztecs suspended operations according to their usual custom, the Spaniards found but little repose, being in hourly expectation of an assault.

Early the next morning the combatants returned to the charge. Cortés did not yet realize the ferocity and determination of the Mexicans, and thought by a vigorous sortie he would reduce them to order. And, indeed, when the gates were thrown open, and he sallied out, followed by his cavalry, supported by a large body of infantry and Tlascalans, they were taken by surprise and re-

treated in some confusion behind a barricade which they had thrown up across the street.

But by the time Cortés had ordered up his heavy guns and demolished the barrier they had rallied again, and though, when the fight had raged all day, Cortés was, on the whole, victorious, he had been so harassed on all sides by the battalions of natives who swarmed in from every side street and lane, by those in canoes upon the canal, and by the showers of huge stones from those upon the house-tops, that his losses had been severe.

Earlier in the day he had caused a number of houses to be burned to rid himself of some of his tormentors. But the Aztecs could probably better afford to lose a hundred men than the Spaniards one, and the Mexican ranks showed no signs of thinning.

At length, exhausted by toil and hunger, the Spanish commander drew off his men, and retreated into his quarters, pursued to the last by showers of darts and arrows. And when the Spaniards re-entered their fortress, the Indians once more encamped round it; and though through

the night they were inactive, still they frequently broke the stillness with menacing cries and insults.

"The gods have delivered you into our hands at last!" they said. "Huitzilopochtli has long cried for his victims. The stone of sacrifice is ready, the knives are sharpened. The wild beasts in the palace are roaring for their feast."

These taunts, which sounded dismally in the ears of the besieged, were mingled with piteous lamentations for Montezuma, whom they entreated the Spaniards to deliver up to them. Cortés was suffering much from a severe wound and from his many anxieties, and he determined to induce Montezuma to exert his authority to allay the tumult.

In order to give greater effect to his appearance he put on his imperial robes. His mantle of blue and white was held by a rich clasp of the precious "chalchivitl," which with emeralds of uncommon size, set in gold, also ornamented other portions of his dress. His feet were shod with golden sandals, and upon his head he wore the Mexican diadem.

Surrounded by a guard of Spaniards and pre-

ceded by a golden wand, the symbol of sovereignty, the Indian monarch ascended the central turret of the palace. His presence was instantly recognized by the people, and a magical change came over the scene. The clang of the instruments and the fierce cries of the assailants ceased, and many in the hushed throng knelt or prostrated themselves, while all eyes were turned with eager expectation upon the monarch whom they had been taught to regard with slavish awe.

Montezuma saw his advantage, and in the presence of his awe-struck people felt once more a king. With his former calm authority and confidence he addressed them:

"Why do I see my people here in arms against the palace of my fathers? Is it that you think your sovereign a prisoner, and wish to release him? If so you have done well; but you are mistaken. I am no prisoner. The strangers are my guests. I remain with them only from choice, and can leave them when I will. Have you come to drive them from the city? That is unnecessary; they will depart of their own accord if you will open a

way for them. Return to your homes then. Lay down your arms. Show your obedience to me, whose right it is. The white men shall go back to their land, and all shall be well again within the walls of Mexico."

As Montezuma declared himself the friend of the detested strangers a murmur of contempt ran through the multitude. Their rage and desire for vengeance made them forget their ancient reverence, and turned them against their unfortunate monarch.

"Base Aztec," they cried, "woman, coward! The white men have made you a woman, fit only to weave and spin."

A chief of high rank brandished a javelin at Montezuma, as these taunts were uttered, and in an instant the place where he stood was assailed with a cloud of stones and arrows. The Spaniards, who had been thrown off their guard by the respect shown by the people on their lord's appearance, now hastily interposed their shields, but it was too late.

Montezuma was wounded by three of the mis-

siles, one of which, a stone, struck him on the head with such violence that he fell senseless to the ground. The Mexicans, shocked at their own sacrilegious act, set up a dismal cry, and dispersed panic-stricken until not one of all the host remained in the great square before the palace.

Meanwhile, the unhappy king was borne to his own apartments, and as soon as he recovered from his insensibility, the full misery of his situation broke upon him. He had tasted the last bitterness of degradation. He had been reviled and rejected by his people. Even the meanest of the rabble had raised their hands against him, and he had nothing left to live for

In vain did Cortés and his officers endeavor to soothe the anguish of his spirit and encourage him to hope for better things. Montezuma answered not a word. His wounds, though dangerous, need not have proved fatal had he not refused all remedies, tearing off the bandages as often as they were applied, and maintaining all the while a determined silence.

He sat motionless, with downcast eyes, brooding

over his humiliation; but from this painful scene the Spanish general was soon called away by the new dangers which threatened the garrison.

Opposite to the Spanish quarters stood the great teocalli of Huitzilopochtli, rising to a height of nearly a hundred and fifty feet, and thus completely commanding the palace occupied by the Spaniards. A body of five or six hundred Mexicans, many of them nobles and warriors of the highest rank, now took possession of the teocalli.

They discharged such a tempest of arrows upon the garrison that it was impossible for any soldier to show himself for an instant outside his defences without great danger, while the Mexicans themselves were completely sheltered. It was absolutely necessary that they should be dislodged, and Cortés entrusted the task to his chamberlain Escobar, giving him a hundred men for the purpose.

But after making three desperate attempts, in which he was repulsed with considerable loss, this officer returned unsuccessful, and Cortés determined to lead the storming party himself, though

he was suffering much from a wound which disabled his left hand. He made the arm serviceable, however, by strapping his shield to it, and thus prepared sallied forth at the head of three hundred chosen cavaliers and several thousand of the Indian allies.

In the courtyard of the temple a body of Mexicans was drawn up to oppose him, and he charged them briskly, but the horses could not keep their footing on the slippery pavement, and many of them fell. Hastily dismounting the Spaniards sent the animals back to their quarters, and then, renewing the assault, had little difficulty in dispersing the Indians and securing a passage to the teocalli. And now began a great and terrible struggle.

You will remember that the huge pyramid-shaped teocalli was built in five divisions, growing smaller and smaller, till at the top you came out upon a square platform, crowned only by the two sanctuaries in which stood the images of the Aztec gods. You will also remember that the only ascent was by flights of stone steps on the outside, one

above another, and that it was necessary between each flight to pass by a kind of terrace, right round the building, so that a distance of nearly a mile had to be traversed before reaching the top.

Cortés sprang up the lower stairway, followed by Alvarado, Sandoval, Ordaz, and the other gallant cavaliers, leaving a strong detachment to hold the enemy in check at the foot of the temple. On every terrace as well as on the topmost platform the Aztec warriors were drawn up to dispute his passage. From their elevated position they showered down heavy stones, beams, and burning rafters, which thundering along the stairway overturned the ascending Spaniards and carried desolation through their ranks.

The more fortunate, eluding or springing over these obstacles, succeeded in gaining the first terrace, where they fell upon their enemies and compelled them to give way. Then, aided by a brisk fire from the musketeers below, they pressed on, forcing their opponents to retreat higher and higher, until at last they were glad to take shelter on the broad summit of the teocalli.

Cortés and his companions were close behind them, and the two parties soon found themselves face to face upon this strange battle-field, engaged in mortal combat in the presence of the whole city. Even the troops in the courtyard ceased hostilities, as if by mutual consent, and watched with breathless interest the issue of the struggle.

The Spaniards and Mexicans closed with the desperate fury of men who have no hope but in victory. Quarter was neither asked nor given, and to fly was impossible. The edge of the platform was unprotected by parapet or battlement, and many of the combatants, as they struggled together, were seen to roll over the edge of the precipice, locked in a death-grip.

Cortés himself but narrowly escaped this frightful fate. Two powerful warriors had seized upon him, and were dragging him violently towards the side of the pyramid, when, by sheer strength, he tore himself from their grasp and hurled one of them over the brink with his own arm.

The battle raged unceasingly for three hours. The number of the Mexicans was double that of

CORTÉS HURLED ONE OF THEM OVER THE BRINK

the Spaniards, but the armor of the latter and their skill as swordsmen outweighed the odds against them. Resistance grew fainter and fainter on the side of the Aztecs. The priests, who had run to and fro among them with streaming hair and wild gestures, encouraging and urging them on, were all slain or captured.

One by one the warriors fell dead upon the blood-drenched pavement, or were hurled from the dizzy height, until at last the wild struggle ceased, and the Spaniards stood alone upon the field of battle. Their victory had cost them dear, for forty-five of their comrades lay dead, and nearly all the remainder were more or less seriously wounded; but there was no time for regrets.

The victorious cavaliers rushed to the sanctuaries to find that the cross and the image of the Virgin had disappeared from the one they had appropriated. In the other, before the grim figure of Huitzilopochtli, lay the usual offering of human hearts, possibly those of their own countrymen! With shouts of triumph the Spaniards tore the hideous idol from its niche, and in the sight of

the horror-stricken Aztecs hurled it down the steps of the teocalli. And, after having set fire to the sanctuaries, descended joyfully into the courtyard.

Passing through the ranks of the Mexicans, who were too much dismayed by all they had witnessed to offer any resistance, they reached their own quarters in safety. And that very night they followed up the blow they had struck by sallying forth into the sleeping town and burning three hundred houses.

Cortés now hoped that the natives were sufficiently subdued to be willing to come to terms with him. He therefore invited them to a parley, and addressed the principal chiefs, who had assembled in the great square, from the turret before occupied by Montezuma. As usual, Marina interpreted for him, and the Indians gazed curiously at their countrywoman, whose influence with the Spanish general was well known.

Cortés told them that they must now know how little they had to hope from their opposition to the Spaniards. They had seen their gods trampled in the dust, their altars destroyed, their dwellings

burned, and their warriors falling on all sides.

"All this," he continued, "you have brought upon yourselves by your rebellion. Yet, for the sake of the affection felt for you by the sovereign you have treated so unworthily, I would willingly stay my hand if you will lay down your arms and return once more to your obedience. But if you do not," he concluded, "I will make your city a heap of ruins, and leave not a soul alive to mourn over it."

But the Spanish commander did not yet understand the character of the Aztecs if he thought to intimidate them by menaces. It was true, they replied, that he had destroyed their temples, broken in pieces their gods, and massacred their countrymen. Many more doubtless were yet to fall under their terrible swords. But they were content so long as for every thousand Mexicans they could shed the blood of a single white man.

"Look out," they said, "upon our streets and terraces. See them still thronged with warriors as far as your eyes can reach. Our numbers are scarcely diminished by our losses. Yours, on the

contrary, are lessening hour by hour. Your provisions and water are failing. You are perishing from hunger and sickness; you must soon fall into our hands. The bridges are broken down and you cannot escape! There will be too few of you left to glut the vengeance of our gods."

With this they discharged a volley of arrows, which compelled the Spaniards to beat a speedy retreat from the turret. The fierce answer of the Aztecs filled the besieged with dismay.

The General himself, pressed by enemies without and factions within, was, as usual, only roused to more energetic action by a situation which would have paralyzed any ordinary mind. He calmly surveyed his position before deciding what course he would pursue. To retreat was hazardous, and it mortified him cruelly to abandon the city in which he had so long been master and the rich treasure which he had secured, with which he had hoped to propitiate the King of Spain.

To fly now was to acknowledge himself further than ever from the conquest and to give great opportunity to his enemy, the Governor of Cuba, to

triumph over him. On the other hand, with his men daily diminishing in strength and numbers, with the stock of provisions so nearly exhausted that one small daily ration of bread was all the soldiers had, with the breaches in his fortifications widening every day and his ammunition nearly gone, it was manifestly impossible to hold the place much longer against the enemy.

Having reached this conclusion, the next difficulty was to decide how and when it would be well to evacuate the city. He tried to fight his way out, but he failed, and when night fell the Mexicans dispersed as usual, and the Spaniards, tired, famished, and weak from their wounds, slowly re-entered the citadel, only to receive tidings of a fresh misfortune. Montezuma was dead.

"The tidings of his death," says the old Spanish chronicler, "were received with real grief by every cavalier and soldier in the army who had had access to his person, for we all loved him as a father, and no wonder, seeing how good he was."

Montezuma's death was a real misfortune for the Spaniards. While he lived there was still a

possibility of his influence with the natives being of use to them. Now that hope was gone. The Spanish commander showed all respect for his memory.

His body, arrayed in its royal robes, was laid upon a bier, and borne on the shoulders of those nobles who had remained with him to the last to his subjects in the city, whose wailings over it were distinctly heard by the Spaniards. But where he was buried, and with what honors, they never knew.

The Spanish general now called a council to decide as speedily as possible the all-important question of the retreat. It was his intention to fall back upon Tlascala, and once there to arrange according to circumstances his future operations. There was some difference of opinion as to the hour of departure.

But owing to the predictions of a soldier named Botello, who pretended to be able to read the stars, and who announced that to leave the city at night would be for the good of his comrades, though he himself would meet his death through it, it was

decided that the fortress should be abandoned that very night. After events proved that Botello's prophecy was unfortunately only true as far as he himself was concerned.

The General's first care was to provide for the safe conveyance of the treasure. The soldiers had most of them converted their share into gold chains or collars which could be easily carried about their persons. But the royal fifth, with that of Cortés himself and his principal officers, was in bars and wedges of solid gold.

That belonging to the crown was now given in charge to the royal officers, with the strongest horse to carry it, and a special guard for its protection. But much treasure belonging to the crown and to private individuals was necessarily abandoned, and the precious metal lay in shining heaps upon the floors of the palace.

"Take what you will of it," said Cortés to the soldiers; "better you should have it than those Mexican hounds. But be careful not to overload yourselves: he travels safest who travels lightest."

His own wary soldiers took heed to his counsel,

taking few treasures, and those of the smallest size. But the troops of Narvaez thought that the very mines of Mexico lay open before them, and the riches for which they had risked so much were within their reach at last. Rushing upon the spoil, they loaded themselves with all they could possibly carry or stow away.

Cortés next arranged the order of march. The van consisted of two hundred Spanish foot, commanded by Sandoval, with twenty other cavaliers. The rest of the infantry formed the rear-guard under Alvarado and De Leon, while the General himself took charge of the centre, some of the heavy guns, the baggage, the treasure, and the prisoners, among whom were a son and two daughters of Montezuma, Cacama, and several nobles. The Tlascalans were pretty equally divided among the three divisions.

Cortés had previously superintended the construction of a portable bridge to be laid across the open canals. This was entrusted to the care of an officer named Magarino and forty men, all pledged to defend the passage to the last extremity. Well

would it have been if three such bridges had been made, but the labor would have been great and the time was short.

At midnight all was ready, and after a solemn mass had been celebrated by Father Olmedo, the Spaniards for the last time sallied forth from the ancient fortress, the scene of so much suffering and of such great courage.

CHAPTER VII

THE NIGHT OF HORROR

THE night was dark, and a fine rain fell steadily. The vast square before the palace was deserted, as indeed it had been since the death of Montezuma, and the Spaniards made their way across it as noiselessly as possible, and entered the great street of Tlacopan.

Though to their anxious eyes every dark lane and alley seemed to swarm with the shadowy forms

of their enemies, it was not really so, and all went well until the van drew near the spot where the street opened upon the causeway. Before the bridge could be adjusted across the uncovered breach the Mexican sentinels stationed there fled, raising the alarm as they went.

The priests from the summits of the teocallis heard them, and sounded their shells, while the huge drum upon the desolate temple of the war-god sent forth its solemn sound, which, heard only in seasons of calamity, vibrated through every corner of the Capital.

The Spaniards saw that there was no time to be lost. The bridge was fitted with all speed, and Sandoval rode across first to try its strength, followed by the first division, then came Cortés with the baggage and artillery. But before he was well over, a sound was heard as of a stormy wind rising in a forest. Nearer and nearer it came, and from the dark waters of the lake rose the plashing noise of many oars.

Then a few stones and arrows fell at random among the hurrying troops, to be followed by more

and more, ever thicker and faster, till they became a terrible blinding storm. The air was rent with the yells and war-cries of the enemy, who seemed to be swarming in myriads over land and lake.

The Spaniards pushed on steadily, though the Mexicans, dashing their canoes against the sides of the causeway, clambered up and broke in upon their ranks. The soldiers, anxious only to make their escape, simply shook them off, or rode over them, or with their guns and swords drove them headlong down the sides of the dyke again.

The advance of such a body of men necessarily took time, and the leading files had already reached the second gap in the causeway before those in the rear had cleared the first. They were forced to halt, though severely harassed by the fire from the canoes, which clustered thickly round this opening. Many were the urgent messages which were sent to the rear, to hurry up the bridge.

But when it was at length clear, and Magarino and his sturdy followers endeavored to raise it, they found to their horror that the weight of the artillery and the horses passing over it had jammed

it firmly into the sides of the dyke, and it was absolutely immovable. Not till many of his men were slain and all wounded did Magarino abandon the attempt, and then the dreadful tidings spread rapidly from man to man, and a cry of despair arose.

All means of retreat were cut off; they were held as in a trap. Order and discipline were at an end, for no one could hope to escape except by his own desperate exertions. Those behind pressed forward, trampling the weak and wounded under foot, heeding not friend or foe.

Those in front were forced over the edge of the gulf, across which some of the cavaliers succeeded in swimming their horses, but many failed, or rolled back into the lake in attempting to ascend the opposite bank. The infantry followed pell-mell, heaped one upon the other, frequently pierced by the Aztec arrows, or struck down by their clubs, and dragged into the canoes to be reserved for a more dreadful death. All along the causeway the battle raged fiercely.

The Mexicans clambered continually up the sides of the dyke, and grappled with the Spaniards,

till they rolled together down into the canoes. But while the Aztec fell among friends, his unhappy antagonist was secured, and borne away in triumph to the sacrifice.

The struggle was long and deadly, but by degrees the opening in the causeway was filled up by the wreck of the wagons, guns, rich bales of stuffs, chests of solid ingots, and bodies of men and horses which had fallen into it. And over this dismal ruin those in the rear were able to reach the other side. Cortés had found a place that was fordable, and, halting halfway across, had vainly endeavored to check the confusion, and lead his followers safely to the opposite bank.

But his voice was lost in the wild uproar; and at length, attended by a few trusty cavaliers, he pushed forward to the front. Here he found Sandoval and his companions, halting before the last breach, trying to cheer on the soldiers to attempt the crossing. But, though not so beset with enemies as the last, it was wide and deep, and the men's resolution failed them.

Again the cavaliers set the example, by plunging

into the lake. Horse and foot followed, swimming or clinging to the manes and tails of the horses. Those fared best, as the General had predicted, who travelled lightest. Many were the unfortunate wretches, who, weighed down by the fatal treasure, were buried with it at the bottom of the lake. Cortés, with a few others, still kept in advance, leading the miserable remnant off the causeway.

The din of battle was growing faint in the distance, when the rumor reached them that, without speedy succor, the rearguard must be utterly overwhelmed. It seemed a desperate venture, but the cavaliers, without thinking of the danger, turned their horses, and galloped back to the relief of their comrades. Swimming the canal again, they threw themselves into the thick of the fray.

The first gleam of morning light showed the hideous confusion of the scene. Masses of combatants upon the dyke were struggling till the very causeway seemed to rock, while as far as the eye could see, the lake was covered with a dense crowd of canoes full of warriors.

The cavaliers found Alvarado unhorsed, and, with a mere handful of followers, defending himself against an overwhelming tide of the enemy, who by this time possessed the whole rear of the causeway, and received constant reinforcements from the city. The Spanish artillery, which had done good service at first, had been overthrown, and utterly confounded by the rush from the back.

In the general ruin, Cortés strove by a resolute charge to give his countrymen time to rally, but it was only for a moment. They were speedily borne down by the returning rush. The General and his companions were forced to plunge into the lake once more, though with their numbers reduced this time, and Alvarado stood for an instant upon the brink, uncertain what to do.

There was no time to be lost. He was a tall and powerful man. Setting his long lance firmly on the wreck which strewed the lake, he gave a mighty leap which landed him in safety upon the opposite bank.

Aztecs and Tlascalans looked on in amazement at this almost incredible feat, and a general shout

arose. "This is truly the Tonatiuh—the Child of the Sun." To this day, the place is called "Alvarado's Leap."

Cortés now rode to the front, where the troops were straggling miserably off the fatal causeway. Most fortunately, the attention of the Aztecs was diverted by the rich spoil that strewed the ground, and their pursuit ceased, so that the Spaniards passed unmolested through the village of Popotla.

There the Spanish commander dismounted from his weary steed, and sitting down on the steps of an Indian temple, looked mournfully on while the broken files dragged slowly past. It was a piteous spectacle. The cavalry, many of them dismounted, were mingled with the infantry, their shattered mail dripping with the salt ooze, and showing through its rents many a ghastly wound. Their firearms, banners, baggage, artillery, everything was gone.

Cortés, as he looked sadly on their thin, disordered ranks, sought in vain many a familiar face, and missed more than one trusty comrade who had stood by his side through all the perils of the con-

quest. And accustomed as he was to conceal his emotions, he could bear it no longer, but covered his face with his hands, while he wept tears of anguish.

It was, however, some consolation to him that Marina had been carried safely through the awful night by her faithful guards. Aguilar was also alive, and Martin Lopez, who had built two boats for him in Mexico, as well as Alavarado, Avila, Sandoval, Olid, and Ordaz.

But this was no time to give way to vain regrets. Cortés hastily mounted again and led his men as speedily as possible through Tlacopan, and, as soon as he reached the open country, endeavored to bring his disorganized battalions into something like order. The broken army, half-starved, moved slowly towards the coast. On the seventh morning the army reached the mountain range which overlooks the plains of Otumba.

All the day before, parties of the enemy had hovered round, crying vindictively, "Hasten on. You will soon find yourselves where you cannot escape!"

THE BROKEN FILES DRAGGED SLOWLY PAST

Now, as they climbed the steep hillside, Cortés realized what this meant, for his scouts came back reporting that a powerful body of Aztecs was encamped upon the other side waiting for them. And truly enough, when they looked down into the valley, they saw it filled with a mighty host of warriors who had been gathered together by Cuitlahua, and stationed at this point to dispute the passage of the Spaniards.

Every chief of importance had taken the field with his whole array. As far as the eye could reach extended a moving mass of glittering shields and spears, mingled with the banners and bright feather-mail of the caciques, and the white cotton robes of their followers. It was a sight to dismay the stoutest heart among the Spaniards, and even Cortés felt that his last hour was come.

But since to escape was impossible, he disposed his little army to the best advantage, and prepared to cut his way through the enemy or perish in the attempt. He gave his force as broad a front as possible, protecting it on each flank with his cavalry, now reduced to twenty horsemen, who were

instructed to direct their long lances at the faces of the enemy, and on no account to lose their hold of them.

The infantry were to thrust, not strike, with their swords, and above all to make for the leaders of the enemy. Then, after a few brave words of encouragement, he and his little band began to descend the hill, rushing, as it seemed, to certain destruction. The enemy met them with the usual storm of stones and arrows, but when the Spaniards closed with them, their superiority became apparent, and the natives were thrown into confusion by their own numbers as they fell back from the charge.

The infantry followed up their advantage, and a wide lane was opened in the ranks of the enemy, who receded on all sides as if to allow them a free passage. But it was only to return with fresh fury, and soon the little army was entirely surrounded, standing firmly, protected on all sides by its bristling swords and lances, like an island in the midst of a raging sea. In spite of many gallant deeds and desperate struggles, the Spaniards found

themselves, at the end of several hours, only more deeply wedged in by the dense masses of the enemy.

Cortés had received another wound, in the head. His horse had fallen under him, and he had been obliged to mount one taken from the baggage train. The fiery rays of the sun poured down upon the nearly exhausted soldiers, who were beginning to despair and give way, while the enemy, constantly reinforced from the rear, pressed on with redoubled fury.

At this critical moment the eagle eye of Cortés, ever on the watch for any chance of arresting the coming ruin, descried in the distance a chief, who, from his dress and surroundings, he knew must be the commander of the Aztec forces. He wore a rich surcoat of feather-work, and a gorgeous plume of jewelled feathers floated from his helmet, while above this, and attached to his back between the shoulders, showed a golden net fastened to a short staff—the customary symbol of authority for an Aztec commander.

Turning quickly round to Sandoval, Olid, Al-

varado, and Avila who surrounded him, he cried, pointing to the chief, "There is our mark! Follow and support me!" And shouting his war-cry he plunged into the thickest of the press. Taken by surprise the enemy fell back. Those who could not escape were trampled under his horse's feet, or pierced by his long lance. The cavaliers followed him closely.

In a few minutes they were close to the Aztec chief, and Cortés hurled him to the ground with one stroke from his lance. A young cavalier named Juan de Salamanca hastily dismounted and slew him where he lay, and tearing away his banner presented it to the Spanish general.

The cacique's guard, overpowered by this sudden onset, fled precipitately, and their panic spread to the other Indians, who, on hearing of the death of their chief, fought no more, but thought only of escape. In their blind terror they impeded and trampled down their own comrades. And the Spaniards, availing themselves fully of the marvellous turn affairs had taken, pursued them off the

field, and then returned to secure the rich booty they had left behind them.

Cortés reached Tlascala in safety. He at once began to prepare his revenge on the Mexicans, aided by reinforcements of a few Spaniards from Vera Cruz. Gunpowder had also to be manufactured, and a cavalier named Francio Montaño undertook the perilous task of obtaining sulphur for the purpose from the terrible volcano of Popocateptl.

He set out with four comrades and, after some days' journeying, they reached the dense forest which covered the base of the mountain. Forcing their way upward they came by degrees to a more open region. As they neared the top the track ended. They had to climb as best they could over the black glazed surface of the lava, which, having issued from the crater in a boiling flood, had risen into a thousand odd forms wherever it met with any obstacle, and continually impeded their progress.

After this they arrived at the region of perpetual

snow, which increased their difficulties. The treacherous ice gave way at every step, so that many times they narrowly escaped falling into the frozen chasms that yawned all round them. At last, however, they reached the mouth of the crater, and, crawling cautiously to the very edge, peered down into its gloomy depths.

At the bottom of the abyss, which seemed to them to go down into the very heart of the earth, a lurid flame burned sullenly, sending up a sulphureous steam, which cooling as it rose, fell again in showers upon the sides of the cavity. Into this one of the brave explorers had to descend, and when they had cast lots the choice fell upon Montaño himself.

His preparations were soon made, and his companions lowered him in a basket into the horrible chasm to a depth of four hundred feet. And there as he hung, he scraped the sulphur from the sides of the crater, descending again and again until he had procured enough for the wants of the army, with which they returned triumphantly to Tlascala.

HE WAS LOWERED INTO THE HORRIBLE CHASM

Meanwhile the construction of the ships went forward prosperously, and by Christmas, in the year 1520, there was no longer any reason to delay the march to Mexico.

While all these preparations were being made, some changes had taken place among the Aztecs. Cuitlahua had suddenly died after reigning four months, and Guatemozin, his nephew, had been chosen in his stead. This young prince had married one of Montezuma's daughters.

He was handsome and valiant, and so terrible that his followers trembled in his presence. He had a sort of religious hatred of the Spaniards, and prepared manfully to meet the perils which he saw threatening his country. By means of spies he had kept a watch upon the movements of the Spaniards, and had discovered their intention of besieging the Capital.

Cortés, upon reviewing his army, found that his whole force fell little short of six hundred men, of whom forty were cavalry, and eighty arquebusiers and cross-bowmen. The rest were armed with sword, target, and the long copper-headed

pikes, which had been made specially by the General's directions. There were also nine cannons of moderate size, but the supply of powder was but indifferent.

Cortés published a code of strict regulations for the guidance of his men before they set out, and addressed them as usual with stirring words, touching all the springs of devotion, honor, and ambition in their hearts, and rousing their enthusiasm as only he could have done. His plan of action was to establish his headquarters at some place upon the Tezcucan lake, whence he could cut off the supplies from the surrounding country, and place Mexico in a state of blockade until the completion of his ships should enable him to begin a direct assault.

The most difficult of the three ways into the valley was the one Cortés chose. It led right across the mountain chain, and he judged wisely that he would be less likely to be annoyed by the enemy in that direction. Before long the army halted within three leagues of Tezcuco, which you will

remember was upon the opposite shore of the lake to Mexico, and somewhat further north.

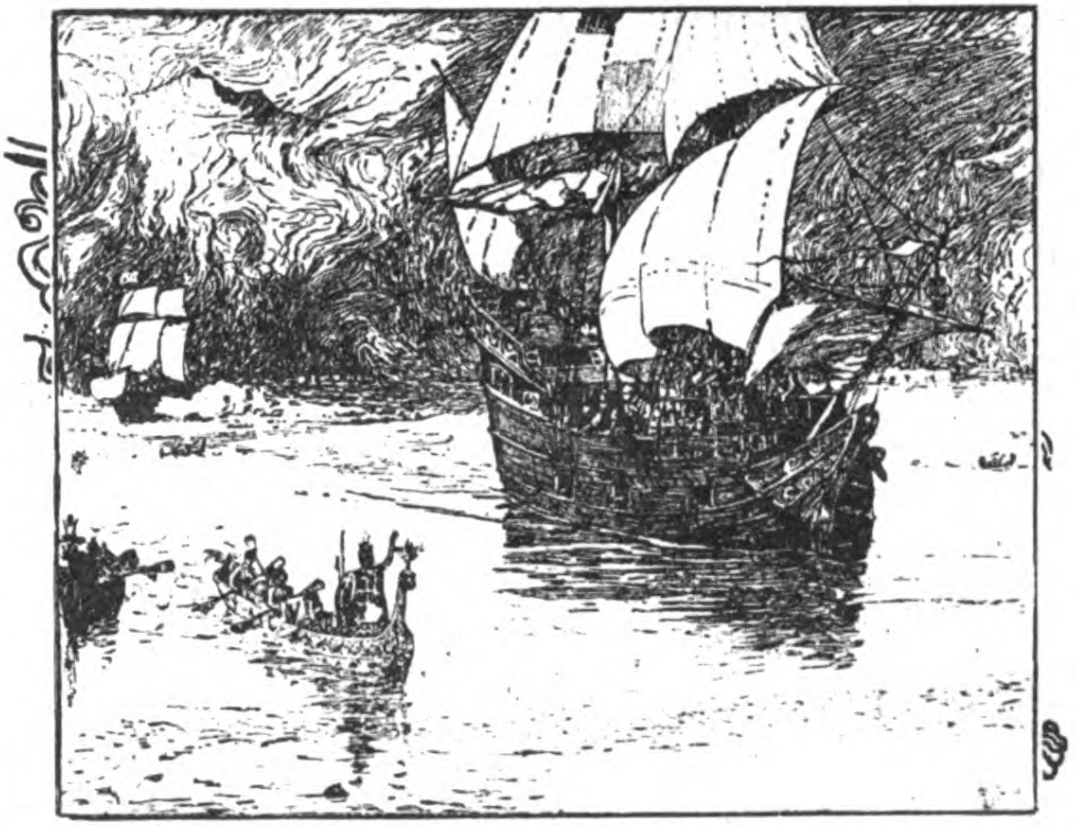
Up to this time they had had only a few slight skirmishes with the Aztecs, though beacon fires had blazed upon every hill-top, showing that the country was roused. Cortés thought it very unlikely that he would be allowed to enter Tezcuco, which was now reigned over by Coanaco, the friend and ally of Guatemozin.

But the next morning, before the troops were well under arms, came an embassy bearing a golden flag, and a gift for Cortés, and imploring him to spare Coanaco's territories, and to take up his quarters in his Capital. Cortés first sternly demanded an account of the Spaniards who, while convoying treasure to the coast, had been slain by Coanaco just when Cortés himself was retreating to Tlascala.

The envoys declared at once that the Emperor alone was to blame. He had ordered it to be done, and had received the gold and the prisoners. They then urged that to give them time to prepare

suitable accommodation for him, Cortés should not enter Tezcuco until the next day. But disregarding this he marched in at once, only to find the place deserted, and Coanaco well on his way across the lake to Mexico.

The General, however, turned this to his own advantage by assembling the few persons left in the city, and then and there electing a brother of the late sovereign to be ruler in his place. When a few months later he died, he was succeeded by Ixtlilxochitl, son of Negahualpilli, who, always a friend of the Spaniards, now became their most valuable ally. By the support of his personal authority and all his military resources, Ixtlilxochitl did more than any other Aztec chieftain to rivet the chains of the strangers round the necks of his own countrymen.



CHAPTER VIII

THE SIEGE AND SURRENDER OF MEXICO

THE city of Tezcuco, which lay about half a league from the shore of the lake, was probably the best position Cortés could have chosen for the head-quarters of the army. His first care was to strengthen the defences of the palace in which they were lodged. His next to employ eight thousand Indian laborers in widening a stream, which ran

towards the lake, so that when the ships arrived they might be put together in Tezcuco, and floated safely down to be launched upon it.

Meanwhile many of the places in the neighborhood sent in their submission to Cortés, and several noble Aztecs fell into his hands. These men he employed to bear a message to Guatemozin, in which he deprecated the necessity of the present hostilities. He declared himself willing to forget the past, inviting the Mexicans by a timely submission to save their Capital from the horrors of a siege. But every man in Mexico was determined to defend it to the uttermost, and this appeal produced no effect.

The General now turned his attention to securing all the strong places upon the lake. Iztapalapan was the first. The attacking party, after a sharp struggle, succeeded in entering the town. Many of the inhabitants fled in their canoes, but those who remained were massacred by the Tlascalans in spite of all Cortés could do to restrain them. Darkness set in while the soldiers were eagerly loading themselves with plunder. Some

of the houses had been set on fire, and the flames lighted up the scene of ruin and desolation.

Suddenly a sound was heard as of the rush of the incoming tide—and Cortés with great alarm realized that the Indians had broken down the dykes, and that before long the low-lying ground upon which the town stood would be under water. He hastily called off his men and retreated, the soldiers, heavily laden, wading with difficulty through the flood which gained fast upon them.

As they left the burning city behind them they could no longer find their way, and sometimes plunged into deep water where many of the allies, unable to swim, were carried away and drowned. When morning dawned they were harassed by the enemy, who hovered round and discharged volleys of arrows and stones, so that it was with no small satisfaction that they presently found themselves once more within the walls of Tezcuco.

Cortés was greatly disappointed at this disastrous end of an expedition which had begun so well, but after all the fate of Iztapalapan produced a good effect. Many more towns sent to

tender their allegiance, amongst others Otumba and Chalco, which was a place of great importance. Cortés also managed to induce the tribes, who though friendly to him were hostile to one another, to forget their feuds and combine against Mexico, and to this wise policy he owed much of his future success.

News now came from Tlascala that the ships were ready. Sandoval was despatched with a considerable guard to bring them to Tezcuco. On his way he was to stop at Zoltepec, where the massacre of the Spaniards had taken place, to find out and punish all who had had a hand in the matter. But when they got there the inhabitants had fled.

In the deserted temples they had the horror of finding many traces of the fate of their comrades; for beside their arms and clothing, and the hides of their horses, the heads of several soldiers were found suspended as trophies of victory. Traced in charcoal upon the wall in one building were the words, in the Spanish language, "In this place the unfortunate Juan Juste, with many others of his company, was imprisoned." It was fortunate that

the inhabitants had fled, for they would have met with but scant mercy from the Spaniards, who were full of indignation at the thought of the horrible doom which had overtaken their companions.

Sandoval now resumed his march to Tlascala, but before he could reach it, the convoy appeared transporting the ships through the mountain passes. Retaining twenty thousand of the warriors as a guard, the Spanish captain dismissed the rest, and after four laborious days Cortés and his garrison had the joy of welcoming them safe within the wall of Tezcuco.

It was not long before the General once more sallied forth to reconnoitre the capital, and by the way to chastise certain places which had sent him hostile messages. After an exciting struggle Xaltocan and three other towns were taken, and a considerable quantity of gold and food fell into the hands of the victors.

Marching on, the General found himself before Tlacopan, through whose streets he had hurried in consternation at the end of the night of horror. It was his intention to occupy the town, which he

did after a sharp fight, just before nightfall. The next morning, seeing the enemy in battle array on the open ground before the city, he marched out against them and routed them utterly.

The Aztecs fled into the town, but were driven through its streets at the point of the lance, and compelled once more to abandon it. Then the Tlascalans pillaged and set fire to the houses, much against the will of Cortés, but they were a fierce race, and sometimes dangerous to friends as well as foes.

After six days the General went back to Tezcuco, and for some time things went on as before, with many skirmishes and expeditions against the towns garrisoned by the Mexicans. Sandoval took several strongholds which threatened the security of Chalco. All the while the work upon the canal was going rapidly forward, and the ships were nearing completion in spite of three attempts made by the enemy to burn them.

Just at this time came the welcome news that three vessels had arrived at Villa Rica, with two hundred men on board well provided with arms

and ammunition, and with seventy or eighty horses. The newcomers soon made their way to Tezcuco, for the roads to the port were now safe and open.

In April 1521, Cortés started once more to scour the country with a large force, passing quite round the great lakes, and exploring the mountain regions to the south of them. Here he came upon Aztec forces intrenched in strong towns, often built like eagles' nests upon some rocky height, so that to take them was a work of great difficulty and danger.

Once he found himself before a city which it was absolutely necessary to subdue. But he was separated from it by a cleft in the solid rock of no great width, but going sheer down thousands of feet. The bridges which generally crossed it had been broken down at the approach of the Spaniards. As they stood there, unable to advance, the enemy's archers as usual kept up a steady fire, to which they were unavoidably exposed.

The General sent a party to seek a passage lower down. They met with no success until they came

to a spot where two large trees, growing one on either side of the ravine, interlaced their branches over head. By this unsteady and perilous bridge one of the Tlascalans ventured to cross. His example was soon followed, and one by one about thirty Spaniards and some more of the natives crawled across, swinging dizzily above the abyss.

Three lost their hold and fell, but the rest alighted in safety on the other side and attacked the Aztecs, who were as much amazed at their sudden appearance as if they had dropped from the clouds. Presently a temporary bridge was contrived by which the remainder of the force managed to cross also. Before long the town was taken, and the trembling caciques appeared before Cortés, throwing the blame of their resistance upon the Mexicans, and promising submission for the future.

The General then continued his march across the eastern shoulder of the mountain, descending finally upon Xochimilco, which was built partly upon the lake like Mexico itself, and was approached by causeways, which, however, were of

no great length. It was in the first attack upon this town that Cortés was as nearly as possible taken prisoner by the Aztecs.

He had thrown himself into the thick of the fight with his usual bravery, and was trying to resist an unexpected rush of the enemy, when his horse stumbled and fell. He himself received a severe blow upon the head before he could rise, and was seized and dragged off in triumph by several Indians. At this moment a Tlascalan saw his danger and sprang furiously upon his captors, trying to tear him from their grasp.

Two Spaniards also rushed to the rescue, and between them the Aztecs were forced to quit their hold of the General, who lost no time in regaining his saddle, and laying about him with his good sword as vigorously as before. After a terrible struggle the enemy was driven out, and Cortés took possession of the city.

As it was not yet dusk he ascended the principal teocalli to reconnoitre the surrounding country, and there beheld a sight which could but cause him grave anxiety. The lake was covered with

rapidly approaching canoes full of warriors, while inland Indian squadrons were marching up in dense columns.

Xochimilco was but four leagues from the Capital, and at the first tidings of the arrival of the Spaniards, Guatemozin had mustered a strong force and marched to its relief. Cortés made all possible preparations for the defence of his quarters. But not until the next day did the Mexicans attack him, and then the battle raged long and with varying success. In the end Spanish discipline prevailed, and the natives were routed with such dreadful slaughter that they made no further attempt to renew the conflict.

The city yielded a rich hoard of plunder, being well stored with gold and feather-work, and many other articles of use or luxury. When the General mustered his men upon the neighboring plain before resuming his march, many of them came staggering under the weight of their spoil. This caused him much uneasiness, since their way would be through a hostile country.

But seeing that the soldiers were determined to

keep what they had so hardly won, he contented himself with ordering the baggage to be placed in the centre guarded by part of the cavalry. Then having disposed the rest to the best advantage, they once more set forth, at the last moment setting fire to the wooden buildings of Zochimilco, which blazed furiously, the glare upon the water telling far and wide the fate that had befallen it.

Resting here and there, and engaging in many skirmishes with the Aztecs who followed them up, furious at the sight of the plunder which was being carried away by the invaders, the army presently completed the circuit of the lakes, and reached Tezcuco. Here they were greeted with the news that the ships were fully rigged and the canal completed, so that there was no longer any reason to delay their operations against Mexico.

It was a triumphant moment when the vessels were launched, and reached the lake in good order. Cortés saw to their being properly armed and manned. Then he reviewed the rest of his forces, and summoned his native allies to furnish their promised levies at once.

The General's plan of action against Mexico was to send Sandoval with one division to take possession of Iztapalapan at the southern end of the lake, while Alvarado and Olid were to secure Tlacopan and Chapoltepec upon its western shore. At the latter place they were to destroy the aqueduct, and so cut off the supply of fresh water from Mexico.

This they did successfully. In several days of fierce fighting breach after breach was carried, and the Spaniards penetrated the city as far as the great teocalli, driving the natives before them, while the Tlascalans in the rear filled up the gaps in the dyke as well as they could, and brought up the heavy guns.

Cortés and his men now pushed their way into the enclosure of the temple. Some of them rushed to the top, so lately the scene of their terrible battle, and there found a fresh image of the war-god. Tearing away the gold and jewels with which it was bedecked, they hurled it and its attendant priests over the side of the pyramid. Then they hastened down to the assistance of their comrades,

who were by this time in a most perilous position, the Aztecs having rallied and attacked them furiously.

Indeed it seemed likely to go hard with them, for they were driven helplessly back down the great street in utter confusion and panic. But the timely arrival of a small body of cavalry created a diversion in their favor, and Cortés managed to turn them once more and drive the enemy back into the enclosure with much loss. As it was by this time evening, he retreated in good order to Xoloc.

Though this affair caused some consternation among the Mexicans, they speedily opened the canals and built up the ramparts again, so that when Cortés renewed the attack the whole scene had to be gone through as before. When they had once gained the street, however, they found it much easier to advance, the Tlascalans having on the last occasion pulled down many of the houses on either side.

This time Cortés had determined to destroy some of the cherished buildings of the Mexicans. He began by setting fire to his old quarters, the pal-

ace of Axayacatl, and then the palace of Montezuma on the other side of the great square. The sight so maddened the natives that the Spaniards had some ado to make good their retreat, and few reached their camp that night unwounded.

The Aztec Emperor for his part made frequent sallies against the Spaniards both by land and upon the lake, sometimes with considerable success. At first he managed to obtain supplies of food in canoes, under cover of the darkness. But by degrees the large towns on the mainland, seeing the Mexicans unable to defend themselves, gave their allegiance to the Spaniards, and then starvation began to be felt in the unhappy city. In spite of everything, however, all offers of terms from Cortés were steadily refused.

At this juncture, the General was persuaded by some of his officers that it would be well for two of the divisions to unite, and occupy the great market-place in the heart of the town. So at a given time they marched along their respective causeways and entered the city. Strict orders were given by Cortés that as they advanced every open-

ing in the causeways should be filled up and made secure.

The attack began, and the enemy, taken apparently by surprise, gave way and fell back. On rushed the Spaniards by every street, eager to reach the appointed meeting-place. Only the General suspected that the enemy might be purposely luring them on to turn upon them when they were hopelessly involved.

Taking a few men with him, he hastily proceeded to see for himself if the way was clear should a retreat become necessary. He found, as he had feared, that all had been too eager to be in the front to attend to this most important duty. In the first street he traversed was a huge gap, twelve feet wide, and at least as many deep, full of water, for it connected two canals. A feeble attempt had been made to fill this up with beams and rubbish, but it had been left before any good had been done.

Worse than all Cortés saw that this breach was freshly made, and that his officers had probably rushed headlong into a snare laid by the enemy.

Before his men could do anything towards filling up the trench, the distant sounds of the battle changed into an ever-increasing tumult. The mingled yells and war cries, and the trampling of many feet grew nearer, and at last, to his horror, Cortés beheld his men driven to the edge of the fatal gulf, confused, helpless, surrounded by their foes.

The foremost files were soon hurried over the edge, some trying to swim across, some beaten down by the struggles of their comrades, or pierced by the darts of the Indians. In vain with outstretched hands did Cortés try to rescue his soldiers from death, or worse still from capture. He was soon recognized, and six of the enemy tried to seize and drag him into a canoe.

It was only after a severe struggle, in which he was wounded in the leg, that he was rescued by his brave followers. Two were killed in the attempt, while another was taken alive as he held the General's horse for him to mount. In all, sixty Spaniards were captured on this fatal day, and it was only when the rest reached their guns in the open

space before the causeway that they were able to rally and beat back the Aztecs.

The other division had fared equally ill, and were moreover in great anxiety as to the fate of Cortés, who was reported to have been killed. When they once more reached their quarters, Sandoval, though badly wounded, rode into the camp of Cortés to learn the truth. He had a long and earnest consultation with him over the disaster, and what was next to be done.

As he returned to his camp he was startled by the sound of the great drum on the temple of the war-god, heard only once before, during the night of horror. Looking up he saw a long file of priests and warriors winding round the terraces of the teocalli. As they came out upon the platform at the top he perceived, with rage and despair, that his own countrymen were about to be sacrificed with the usual ghastly ceremonies.

The camp was near enough to the city for the white skins of the victims and their unavailing struggles to be distinctly seen by their comrades, who were nevertheless powerless to help them,

and their distress and fury may be imagined.

For five days the horrible scenes went on, the Mexicans feasting, singing, and dancing. Their priests predicted that in eight days the war-god, appeased by these sacrifices, would overwhelm their enemies and deliver them into their hands. These prophecies had a great effect upon the native allies of Cortés, who withdrew from him in immense numbers.

But the General treated their superstition with cheerful contempt, and only bargained with the deserters to remain close by and see what would happen. When the ninth day came, and the city was still seen to be beset on every side, they ceased to believe in the oracle, and returned. Their anger against the Mexicans was rekindled, and their confidence in the Spaniards greatly strengthened.

At this time another vessel loaded with stores and ammunition touched at Vera Cruz, and her cargo was seized and sent on to Cortés by the governor. With his strength thus renewed the Spanish general resumed active operations.

This time not a step was taken in advance with-

out securing the entire safety of the army, once and for all, by solidly building up the dykes, filling every canal, and pulling down every house. Slowly and by degrees a bare open space was made, which took in more and more of the town, till at last the unhappy Aztecs, after many desperate sallies, were shut into the portion of the city which lay between the northern and western causeways.

Here famine and pestilence did their awful work unchecked. The ordinary articles of food were long exhausted, and the wretched people ate moss, insects, grass, weeds, or the bark of trees. They had no fresh water. The dead were unburied, the wounded lay in misery, yet all the endeavors of Cortés to induce Guatemozin and his chiefs to submit were useless.

Though the two divisions of the army had proceeded with their work of destruction until they could join their forces, and seven-eighths of the city lay in ruins, though the banner of Castile floated undisturbed from the smouldering remains of the sanctuary on the teocalli of the war-god, still the

Aztecs defied the conquerors, and fiercely rejected their overtures of peace.

Hundreds of famishing wretches died every day, and lay where they fell, for there was no one to bury them. Familiarity with the spectacle made men indifferent to it. They looked on in dumb despair waiting for their own turn to come. There was no complaint or lamentation, but deep, unutterable woe.

In the midst of this appalling misery Guatemozin remained calm and courageous, and as firmly resolved not to capitulate as at the beginning of the siege. It is even said that when Cortés persuaded a noble Aztec prisoner to bear his proposals for a treaty to the emperor, Guatemozin instantly ordered him to be sacrificed.

The General, who had suspended hostilities for several days hoping for a favorable answer to his message, now resolved to drive him to submission by a general assault. For that purpose he led his men across the dreary waste of ruins to the narrow quarter of the city into which the wretched Mexicans had retreated. But he was met by several

chiefs, who, holding out their emaciated arms, exclaimed:

"Why do you delay so long to put an end to our miseries? Rather kill us at once that we may go to our god Huitzilopochtli, who waits to give us rest from our sufferings!"

Cortés, moved by the piteous sight, replied that he desired not their death but their submission.

"Why does your master refuse to treat with me," he said, "when in a single hour I can crush him and all his people?"

Then once more he sent to demand an interview with Guatemozin. This time the Emperor hesitated, and agreed that next day he would meet the Spanish general.

Cortés, well satisfied, withdrew his force. The next morning he presented himself at the appointed place in the great square, where a stone platform had been spread with mats and carpets and a banquet made ready. But after all Guatemozin, instead of coming himself, sent his nobles.

Cortés, though greatly disappointed, received them courteously, persuading them to partake of

the feast he had prepared. Then he dismissed them with a supply of provisions for their master and a renewed entreaty that he would next day come in person. But though he waited for three hours beyond the time appointed, neither the Emperor nor his chiefs appeared, and the General heard that the Mexicans were preparing to resist an assault.

He delayed no longer, but ordering Sandoval to support him by bringing up the ships and directing his big guns against the houses near the water, he marched at once into the enemy's quarters. The Mexicans set up a fierce war-cry, and with their usual spirit sent off clouds of arrows and darts. But the struggle soon became a hand-to-hand one; and weakened by starvation and hemmed in as they were the unhappy Aztecs had no chance against their foes.

After a scene of indescribable horror, which appalled even the soldiers of Cortés, used as they were to war and violence, the Spanish commander sounded a retreat and withdrew to his quarters,

leaving behind him forty thousand corpses and a smouldering ruin.

Through the long night that followed all was silent in the Mexican quarter. There was neither light nor movement. This last blow seemed to have utterly stunned them. They had nothing left to hope for. In the Spanish camp, however, all was rejoicing at the prospect of a speedy termination to the wearisome campaign.

The great object of Cortés was now to secure the person of Guatemozin, and the next day, which was August 13, 1521, he led his forces for the last time across the black and blasted ruin which was all that remained of the once beautiful city. In order to give the distressed garrison one more chance, he obtained an interview with the principal chiefs and reasoned with them about the conduct of their emperor.

"Surely," he said, "Guatemozin will not see you all perish when he can so easily save you."

But when he had with difficulty prevailed upon them to urge Guatemozin to confer with him, the

only answer they could bring was that he was ready to die where he was, but would hold no communication with the Spanish commander.

"Go then," replied the stern conqueror, "and prepare your countrymen for death. Their last moment is come."

Still, however, he postponed the attack for several hours. But the troops were impatient at the delay, and a rumor spread that Guatemozin was preparing to escape by the lake. It was useless to hesitate. The word was given, and the terrible scene that ensued repeated the horrors of the day before.

While this was going forward on shore numbers of canoes pushed off across the lake, most of them only to be intercepted and sunk by the Spanish ships, which beat down upon them, firing to right and left. Some few, however, under cover of the smoke, succeeded in getting into open water.

Sandoval had given particular orders that his captains should watch any boat that might contain Guatemozin. And now two or three large canoes together attracted the attention of one named

Garci Holguin, who instantly gave chase, and with a favorable wind soon overtook the fugitives, though they rowed with the energy of despair. As his men levelled their guns at the occupants of the boat one rose saying:

"I am Guatemozin. Lead me to Malinche, I am his prisoner. But let no harm come to my wife and followers."

Holguin took them on board, and then requested that the Emperor would order the people in the other canoes to surrender. "There is no need," he answered sadly, "they will fight no longer when they see their prince is taken."

And so it was, for when the news of his capture reached the shore the Mexicans at once ceased to defend themselves. It seemed as if they had only gone on so long to give their sovereign a better chance of escape.

Cortés, who had taken up his station on the flat roof of one of the houses, now sent command that Guatemozin should be brought before him. And he came, escorted by Sandoval and Holguin, who each claimed the honor of having captured

him. The Conqueror, who was, as usual, accompanied by the Lady Marina, came forward with dignified courtesy to receive his noble prisoner. The Aztec monarch broke the silence saying:

"I have done all I could to defend myself and my people. I am now reduced to this state. Deal with me, Malinche, as you will."

Then laying his hand on a dagger which hung from the belt of Cortés, he added, "Better despatch me at once with this and rid me of life."

"Fear not," answered the conqueror. "You shall be treated with honor. You have defended your Capital like a brave warrior, and a Spaniard knows how to respect valor even in an enemy."

He then sent for the Queen, who had remained on board the Spanish ship, and after ordering that the royal captives should be well cared for and supplied with all they needed, he proceeded to dispose of his troops. Olid and Alvarado drew off their divisions to their quarters, leaving only a small guard in the wasted suburbs of the pestilence-stricken city. The General himself, with Sando-

val and the prisoners, retired to a town at the end of the southern causeway.

That night a tremendous tempest arose, such as the Spaniards had never before witnessed, shaking to its foundations all that remained of the city of Mexico. The next day, at the request of Guatemozin, the Mexicans were allowed to leave the Capital. And for three days a mournful train of men, women, and children straggled feebly across the causeways, sick and wounded, wasted with famine and misery, turning often to take one more look at the spot which was once their pleasant home.

When they were gone the conquerors took possession of the place and purified it as speedily as possible, burying the dead and lighting huge bonfires in the deserted streets. The treasure of gold and jewels found in it fell far short of the expectations of the Spaniards. The Aztecs had probably buried their hoards or sunk them in the lake on purpose to disappoint the avarice of their enemies.

Cortés, therefore, to his eternal disgrace, caused Guatemozin to be tortured. But fire and cord

could not wring the secret of the treasure from this illustrious prince. In later days Cortés hanged Guatemozin, on pretence of a conspiracy.

Then having no further need for his native allies Cortés dismissed them with presents and flattering speeches. They departed well pleased, loaded with the plunder of the Mexican houses, which was despised by the Spanish soldiers.

Great was the satisfaction of the conquerors at having thus brought the long campaign successfully to an end. Cortés celebrated the event by a banquet as sumptuous as circumstances would permit. The next day, at the request of Father Olmedo, the whole army took part in a solemn service and procession in token of their thankfulness for victory.

Thus, after a siege of nearly three months, in which the beleaguered Mexicans showed a constancy and courage under their sufferings which is unmatched in history, fell the renowned capital of the Aztecs, and with its fall the story of the Nation comes to an end.

The Aztec Empire fell by its own sin. The

constant capture of men from neighboring states as victims for sacrifice had caused the Aztecs to be hated. Thus Cortés obtained the aid of the Tlascalans, but for which even his courage and energy would have been of no avail. He deserted Marina when she ceased to be useful and gave her as a wife to one of his followers.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