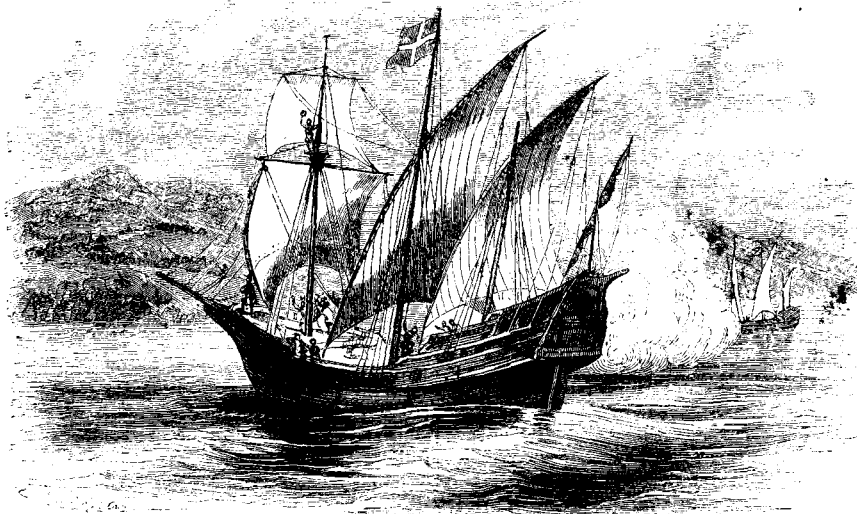


HARPER'S NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

No. LXVII.—DECEMBER, 1855.—VOL. XII.



AMERICA DISCOVERED, OCTOBER 12, 1492.

THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO BY HERNANDO CORTES.

BY JOHN S. C. ABBOTT.

THREE hundred and fifty years ago the ocean which washes the shores of America was one vast and silent solitude. No ship plowed its waves; no sail whitened its surface. On the 11th of October, 1492, three small vessels might have been seen invading, for the first time, these hitherto unknown waters. They were as specks on the bosom of infinity. The sky above, the ocean beneath, gave no promise of any land. Three hundred adventurers were in those ships. Ten weeks had already passed since they saw the hills of the Old World sink beneath the horizon. For weary days and weeks they had strained their eyes looking toward the west, hoping to see the mountains of a new world rising in the distance. But the blue sky still overarched them, and the heaving ocean still extended in all directions its unbroken and interminable expanse. Discouragement and alarm now pervaded nearly all hearts, and there was a general clamor for return to the shores of Europe. Christopher Columbus, who heroically guided this little squadron, sublime in the confidence which science and faith gave, was still firm and undaunted in his purpose.

The night of the 11th of October, 1492, darkened over these lonely adventurers. The stars came out in all the brilliance of tropical splendor. A fresh breeze drove the ships with increasing speed over the billows, and cooled, as with balmy zephyrs, brows heated through the day by the blaze of a meridian sun. Christopher Columbus could not sleep. He stood upon the deck of his ship silent and sad, yet indomitable in energy, gazing with intense and unintermitted watch into the dusky distance. Suddenly he saw a light as of a torch far off in the horizon. His heart throbbled with irrepressible tumult of excitement. Was it a meteor, or was it a light from the long-wished-for land? It disappeared, and all again was dark. But suddenly again it gleamed forth, feeble and dim in the distance, yet distinct. Soon again the exciting ray was quenched, and nothing disturbed the dark and sombre outline of the sea. The long hours of the night to Columbus seemed interminable, as he waited impatiently for the dawn. But even before any light appeared in the east the mountains of the New World rose towering to the clouds before the eyes of the entranced, the immortalized navigator. A cannon, the signal of the discovery, rolled its peal over the ocean, announcing to the two ves-

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sels in the rear the joyful tidings. A shout, excited by the heart's intensest emotions, rose over the waves, and with tears, with prayers, and embraces, these enthusiastic men accepted the discovery of the New World.

The bright autumnal morning dawned in richest glory, presenting to them the scene as of a celestial paradise. The luxuriance of tropical vegetation waved and bloomed enchantingly around them. The inhabitants, in the simple and innocent costume of Eden before the fall, crowded the shore, gazing with attitude and gesture of astonishment upon the strange phenomena of the ships. The adventurers landed, and were received as angels from heaven by the peaceful and friendly natives. Bitterly has the hospitality been requited. After cruising around for some time among the beautiful islands of the New World, Columbus returned to Spain, to astonish Europe with the tidings of his discovery. He had been absent but seven months.

A quarter of a century passed away, during which all the adventurers of Europe were busy exploring the waters which washed those newly-discovered islands and continents. Various colonies were established in the fertile valleys and upon the hillsides which emerged, in the utmost magnificence of vegetation, from the bosom of the Caribbean Sea. The eastern coast of North America had been, during this time, surveyed from Labrador to Florida. The bark of the navigator had crept along the winding shores of the Isthmus of Darien and of the South American continent, as far as the river La Plata. Bold explorers, guided by intelligence from the Indians, had even penetrated the interior of the Isthmus, and from the summit of the central mountain barrier, had gazed with delight upon the placid waves of the Pacific. But the vast indentation of the Mexican Gulf, sweeping far away in an apparently interminable circuit to the west, had not yet been penetrated. The field for romantic adventure which these unexplored realms presented, could not, however, long escape the eye of that chivalrous age.

Some exploring expeditions were soon fitted out from Cuba, and the shores of the Gulf were discovered, and the wonderful empire of Mexico was opened to European cupidity. Here every thing exhibited the traces of a far higher civilization than had hitherto been witnessed in the New World. There were villages, and even large cities, thickly planted throughout the country. Temples and other buildings, imposing in massive architecture, were reared of stone and lime. Armies, laws, and a symbolical form of writing, indicated a civilization far superior to any thing which had yet been found on this side of the Atlantic. Many of the arts were cultivated. Cloth was made of cotton and of skins nicely prepared. Astronomy was sufficiently understood for the accurate measurement of time in the divisions of the solar year. It is indeed a wonder, as yet unexplained, where these children of the New World acquired such

an accurate acquaintance with the movements of the heavenly bodies. Agriculture was practiced with much scientific skill, and a system of irrigation introduced, from which many a New England farmer might learn a profitable lesson. Mines of gold, silver, lead, and copper, were worked. Many articles of utility and of exquisite beauty were fabricated from these metals. Iron, the ore of which must pass through so many processes before it is prepared for use, was unknown to them. The Spanish goldsmiths, admiring the exquisite workmanship of the gold and silver ornaments of the Mexicans, bowed to their superiority.

Fairs were held in the great market-places of the principal cities every fifth day, where buyers and sellers in vast numbers thronged. They had public schools, courts of justice, a class of nobles, and a powerful monarch. The territory embraced by this wonderful kingdom was twice as large as the whole of New England. The population of the empire is not known; it must have consisted, however, of several millions. The city of Mexico, situated on islands in the bosom of a lake in the centre of a vast and magnificent valley in the interior, was the metropolis of this realm.

Montezuma was king; an aristocratic king, surrounded by nobles upon whom he conferred all the honors and emoluments of the state. His palace was very magnificent. He was served from plates and goblets of silver and gold. Six hundred feudatory nobles composed his daily retinue, paying him the most obsequious homage, and exacting the same from those beneath themselves. Montezuma claimed to be lord of the whole world, and exacted tribute from all whom his arm could reach. His triumphant legions had invaded and subjugated many adjacent states, as this *Roman Empire* of the New World extended in all directions its powerful sway.

It will thus be seen that the kingdom of Mexico, in point of civilization, was about on an equality with the Chinese empire of the present day. Its inhabitants were very decidedly elevated above the wandering hordes of North America. Montezuma had heard of the arrival, in the islands of the Caribbean Sea, of the strangers from another hemisphere. He had heard of their appalling power, their aggressions, and their pitiless cruelty. Wisely he resolved to exclude these dangerous visitors from his shores. As exploring expeditions entered his bays and rivers they were fiercely attacked and driven away. These expeditions, however, brought back to Cuba most alluring accounts of the rich empire of Mexico and of its golden opulence.

The Governor of Cuba now resolved to fit out an expedition sufficiently powerful to subjugate this country, and make it one of the vassals of Spain. It was a dark period of the world. Human rights were but feebly discerned. Superstition reigned over hearts and consciences with a fearfully despotic sway. Acts upon which

would now fall the reproach of unmitigated villainy, were then performed with prayers and thanksgivings honestly offered. We shall but tell the impartial story. God, the searcher of all hearts, can alone unravel the mazes of conscientiousness and depravity, and award the just meed of approval and condemnation.

The Governor looked around for a suitable agent to head this arduous expedition. He found exactly the man he wanted in Hernando Cortez. This man was a Spaniard, thirty-three years of age. He was of good birth, and had enjoyed more than ordinary advantages of education. From his earliest years he had manifested a great fondness for wild and perilous adventure. He wrote poetry, was an accomplished gallant, enjoyed an exuberant flow of spirits, and detested utterly all the ordinary routines of human industry.

For such a spirit this New World—so fresh, so strange, so Eden-like—presented irresistible attractions. When twenty-one years of age Cortez landed in Cuba. He immediately repaired to the house of the Governor, to whom he was personally known. The Governor chanced to be absent, but his secretary received the young cavalier kindly, and assured him that there was no doubt that he would obtain from the Governor a liberal grant of land to cultivate.

"I came to get gold," Cortez laughingly replied, "not to till the soil like a peasant."

He was, however, induced to accept from the Governor a plantation, to be cultivated by slaves. With his purse thus easily filled, he loitered through several years of an idle and voluptuous life, during which time he was involved in many disgraceful amours, and many quarrels. In one of these affairs of gallantry the Governor rebuked him. The hot blood of the young Castilian boiled over, and Cortez entered into a conspiracy to obtain the removal of the Governor. But the imprudent and reckless adventurer was arrested, manacled, and thrown into prison. He succeeded in breaking his fetters, forced open a window, dropped himself to the pavement, and sought refuge in the sanctuary of a neighboring church. Such a sanctuary, in that day, could not be violated.

A guard was secreted to watch him. He remained in the church for several days. As he then attempted to escape he was again seized, more strongly chained, and placed on board a ship to be sent to Hispaniola for trial. With extraordinary fortitude he endured the pain of drawing his feet through the irons which shackled them; cautiously, in the darkness of the night, crept upon deck, let himself down into the water, swam to the shore, and, half dead with pain and exhaustion, obtained again the sanctuary of the church.

He now consented to marry a young lady with whose affections he had cruelly trifled. Her powerful family espoused his cause. The Governor relented, and Cortez suddenly emerged from the storm into sunshine and calm. He returned to his estates a wiser, perhaps a better

man, and by devotion to agriculture, and by working a gold mine in which he was interested, soon acquired quite ample wealth. His wife, though not of high birth, was an amiable and beautiful woman. She won the love of her wayward and fickle husband.

"I lived as happily with her," said Cortez, "as if she had been the daughter of a duchess."

Such was the situation of Cortez when the tidings of the discovery of the wonderful kingdom of Mexico spread, with electric speed, through the island of Cuba. The adventurous spirit of Cortez was roused. His blood was fired. It was rumored that the Governor was about to fit out an expedition to invade, to conquer, to annex. Cortez applied earnestly to be intrusted with the expedition. He offered to contribute largely of his own wealth to fit out the naval armament, and liberally to disburse its proceeds of exaction and plunder to the government officials. The Governor was well instructed in the energy, capacity, and courage of the applicant, and without hesitation appointed him to the important post.

As Cortez received the commission of Captain General of the expedition, all the glowing enthusiasm and tremendous energy of his nature were roused and concentrated upon this one magnificent object. His whole character seemed suddenly to experience a total change. He became serious, earnest, thoughtful, enthusiastic. Mighty destinies were in his hands. Deeds were to be accomplished at which the world was to marvel. Nay, strange as it may seem—for the heart of man is an inexplicable enigma—religion, perhaps we should say *religious superstition*, mingled the elements of her majestic power in the motives which inspired the soul of this strange man. He was to march—the apostle of Christianity—to overthrow the idols in the halls of Montezuma, and there to rear the cross of Christ. It was his heavenly mission to convert the benighted Indians to the religion of Jesus. With the energies of fire and sword, misery and blood, trampling horses and death-dealing artillery, he was to lead back these wandering victims of darkness and sin to those paths of piety which guide to heaven. Such was Hernando Cortez. Let philosophy explain the enigma as she may, no intelligent man will venture the assertion that Cortez was a *hypocrite*. He was a frank, fearless, deluded enthusiast.

The energy with which Cortez moved alarmed the Governor. He feared that the bold adventurer, with his commanding genius, having acquired wealth and fame, would become a formidable rival. He therefore despotically resolved to deprive Cortez of the command. The Captain General was informed of his peril. With the decision which marked his character, though the vessels were not prepared for sea, and the complement of men was not yet mustered, he resolved secretly to weigh anchor that very night. The moment the sun went down he called upon his officers and informed them of his purpose.



CORTÉZ TAKING LEAVE OF THE GOVERNOR.

Every man was instantly, and silently in motion. At midnight the little squadron, with all on board, dropped down the bay. Intelligence was promptly conveyed to the Governor, informing him of this sudden and unexpected departure. Mounting his horse he galloped to a point of the shore which commanded the fleet at anchor in the roads. Cortez, from the deck, saw the Governor surrounded by his retinue. He entered a boat and was rowed near to the shore. The Governor reproached him bitterly for his conduct.

"Pardon me," said Cortez, courteously. "Time presses, and there are some things which should be done before they are even thought of."

Then, with Castilian grace, waving an adieu to the Governor, he returned to his ship. The anchors were immediately raised, the sails spread, and the little fleet was wafted from the harbor of St. Jago, and ere long disappeared in the distant horizon of the sea.

Cortez directed his course from St. Jago, which was then the capital of Cuba, to the port of Macaca, about thirty miles distant. Collecting hastily such additional stores as the place would afford, he again weighed anchor, and proceeded to Trinidad. This was an important town on the southern shore of the island, where he would be able to obtain those reinforcements and supplies without which it would be madness to undertake the expedition. Volunteers crowded to the standard. All were animated by the enthusiasm which glowed in his own bosom, and he immediately acquired over all his followers that wonderful ascendancy which is so instinctively conceded to genius of a high order.

His men were generally armed with cross-bows, though he had several small cannon and some muskets. Jackets thickly wadded with

cotton, impervious to the javelins and arrows of the Mexicans, were provided as coats of mail for the soldiers. A black-velvet banner, embroidered with gold, and emblazoned with a cross, bore the characteristic device—"Let us follow the cross. Under this sign, with faith, we conquer."

A trading vessel appeared off the coast laden with provisions. Cortez seized both cargo and ship, and, by the combined energies of persuasion and compulsion, induced the captain to join the expedition. Another ship made its appearance. It was a gift from God to these fanatical enthusiasts. It was promptly seized with religious praises and thanksgivings.

Cortez now sailed around the western point of the island to Havana. While he was continuing his preparations here, Barba, the commander of the place, received dispatches from the Governor of St. Jago, ordering him to apprehend Cortez, and seize the vessels. But Cortez was now too strong to be approached by any power which Barba had at his command. Barba, accordingly, informed the Governor of the impracticability of the attempt, and also informed Cortez of the orders he had received. Cortez wrote an exceedingly courteous letter to the Governor, informing him that, with the blessing of God, the fleet would sail the next morning. As there was some danger that the Governor might send a force which would embarrass the expedition, the little squadron the next morning weighed anchor, and proceeded to Cape Antonio, an appointed place of rendezvous at the extreme western termination of the island.

Here Cortez completed his preparations, and collected all the force he desired. He had now eleven vessels, the largest of which was of but one hundred tons. His force consisted of one hundred and ten seamen, five hundred and fifty-

But the great object, in the estimation of Cortez, to be accomplished, was the conversion of the natives. He had with him several ecclesiastics, men whose sincerity and piety no candid man can doubt. The Indians were assembled, and urged, through an interpreter, to abandon their idols and turn to the living God. The simple natives were horror-stricken at the thought. They assured Cortez that were they to injure their gods, destruction, in every awful form, would immediately overwhelm them.

The bold warrior wielded bold arguments. With his mailed cavaliers he made a prompt onslaught upon the idols; hewed them down, smashed them to pieces, and tumbled the dishonored and mutilated fragments into the streets. He then constructed a Christian altar, reared a cross, and an image of the Virgin and Holy Child; and Mass, with all its pomp of robes, and chants, and incense, was for the first time performed in the temples of Yucatan.

The natives were, at first, overwhelmed with grief and terror, as they gazed upon their prostrate deities. But no earthquake shook the island. No lightning sped its angry bolt. No thunders broke down the skies. The sun still shone tranquilly; and ocean, earth, and sky smiled untroubled. The natives ceased to fear gods who could not protect themselves, and, without farther argument, consented to exchange their idols for the far prettier idols of the strangers. The heart of Cortez throbbed with enthusiasm and pride in contemplating his great and glorious achievement; an achievement far surpassing the miracles of Peter or of Paul. In one short week he had converted all these islanders from the service of Satan, and had secured their eternal salvation. The fanatic sincerity with which this feat was accomplished, does not, however, redeem it from the sub-

limity of absurdity. It is true that man is saved by *faith*; but it is that faith which *works by love*.

One of the ecclesiastics, Father Olmedo, a man of humble, unfeigned piety, recognizing in the religion of Christ the only power which can transform human character and prepare fallen man for heaven, was far from being satisfied with this purely external conversion. He did what he could to instruct and to purify. But it was a dark age, and the most honest minds groped in gloom.

In the mean time the parties returned from the exploration of the island, and Ordaz brought back his two ships from the main-land, having been unsuccessful in his attempts to find the shipwrecked Spaniards. Cortez had now been at Cozumel a fortnight. As he was on the point of taking his departure, a frail canoe was seen crossing the strait with three men in it, apparently Indians, and entirely naked. As soon as the canoe landed, one of the men ran frantically to the Spaniards, and informed them that he was a Christian and a countryman. His name was Aguilar. He had been wrecked upon the shores of Yucatan, and had passed seven years in captivity, encountering adventures more marvelous than the genius of romance can create. He was sincerely a good man, an ecclesiastic. He had acquired a perfect acquaintance with the language, and the manners and customs of the natives, and Cortez received him as a Heaven-sent acquisition to his enterprise.

On the 4th of March Cortez again set sail, and crossing the narrow strait, approached the shores of the continent. Sailing directly north some hundred miles, hugging the coast of Yucatan, he doubled Cape Catoche, and turning his prow to the west, boldly pressed forward into those unknown waters, which seemed to



THE FIRST MASS IN THE TEMPLES OF YUCATAN.



FIRST CAVALRY CHARGE, HEADED BY CORTÉZ.

extend interminably before him. The shores were densely covered with the luxuriant foliage of the tropics, and in many a bay, and on many a headland, could be discerned the thronged dwellings of the natives. After sailing west about two hundred miles the coast again turned abruptly to the south. Following the line of the land some three hundred miles farther, he came to the broad mouth of the river Tabasco, of which he had heard from previous explorers, and which he was seeking. A sand-bar at the mouth of the river prevented his vessels from entering. He therefore cast anchor, and taking a strong and well-armed party in the boats, ascended the shallow stream.

A forest of majestic trees, with underbrush, dense and impervious, lined the banks. The naked forms of the natives were seen gliding among the trees, following, in rapidly-accumulating numbers, the advance of the boats, and evincing, by tone and gesture, any thing but a friendly spirit. At last, arriving at an opening in the forest, where a smooth and grassy meadow extended from the stream, the boats drew near the shore, and Cortez, through his interpreter, Aguilar, asked permission to land, avowing his friendly intentions. The prompt answer was the clash of weapons and shouts of defiance. Cortez, deciding to postpone a forcible landing till the morning, retired to a small island in the river, which was uninhabited. Here, establishing vigilant sentinels, he passed the night.

In the early dawn of the next morning his party were in their boats, prepared for the assault. But the natives had been busy gathering force during the night. War-canoes lined the shore, and the banks were covered with native warriors in martial array. The battle soon commenced. It was fierce and bloody, but short.

The spears, stones, and arrows of the natives fell almost harmless upon the helmets and shields of the Spaniards. But the bullets from the guns of the invaders swept like hailstones through the crowded ranks of the natives. Appalled by the thunder and the lightning of these terrific discharges, they broke and fled, leaving the ground covered with their slain. The blood-stained adventurers, under the banner of the cross which they had so signally dishonored, now marched triumphantly to Tabasco, a large town upon the river, but a few miles above their place of landing. The inhabitants fled from it in dismay.

Cortez took formal possession of the town in the name of the sovereigns of Spain. But the whole surrounding country was now aroused. The natives, in numbers which could not be counted, gathered in the vicinity of Tabasco, to repel, if possible, the terrible foe. Cortez sent immediately to the ships for six cannon, his whole cavalry of sixteen horses, and every available man. Thus strengthened, he, with all his men, partook of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, earnestly implored the Divine blessing in extending the triumphs of the cross over the kingdom of Satan, and marched forth to the merciless slaughter of those valiant but powerless men, who were fighting only for their country and their homes.

A few miles from the city, on a level plain, the Spanish invaders encountered the Indians. The lines of their encampment were so extended and yet so crowded, that the Spaniards estimated their numbers at over forty thousand. Cortez had about six hundred men. The natives fought bravely. But the cannon, appalling their hearts with its terrific thunders, swept death and awful mutilation through their ranks.

The ground was covered with the dying and the dead. Still they remained firm, with an intrepidity which merited victory, as they discharged their javelins, arrows, and other powerless missiles, upon the impenetrable coats of mail which protected their foes.

At last the whole body of cavalry, sixteen strong, headed by Cortez, having taken a circuitous route, fell suddenly upon their rear. The Indians had never seen a horse before. They thought the rider and the steed one animal. As this terrific apparition came bounding over the plain, the horsemen, cased in steel, and uttering loud outcries, cutting down the naked natives on the right and on the left with their keen blades, while, at the same moment, the artillery and infantry made a charge with their thundering and death-dealing roar, the scene became too awful for mortal courage to endure. The natives, in utter dismay, fled from foes of such demoniac aspect and energy. The slaughter had been so awful before their flight, that the Span-

iards extravagantly estimated the number of the dead left upon the ground at thirty thousand.

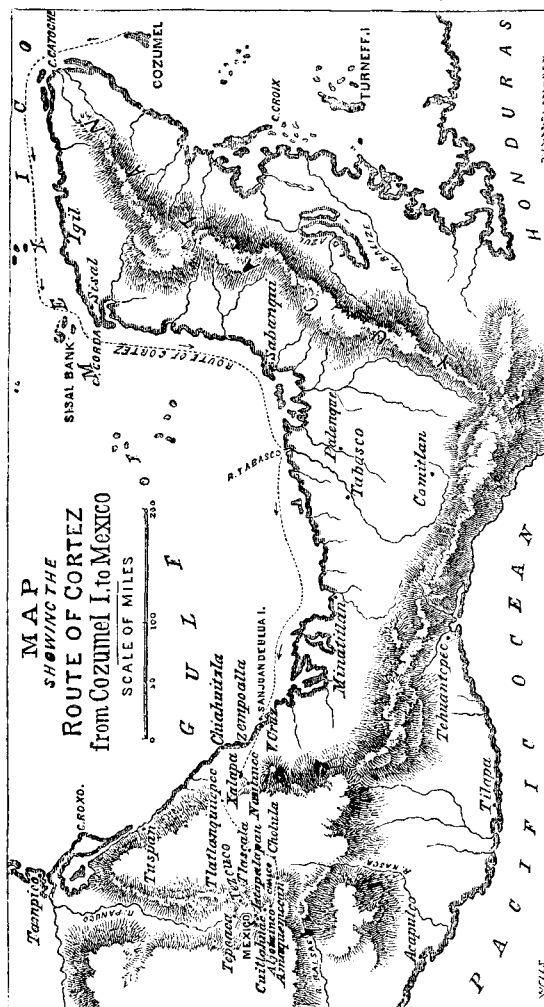
Cortez immediately assembled his soldiers around him, and, like Nelson at Aboukir, ordered prayers. He then sent a message to the natives that he would *forgive them* if they would send in their entire submission. But he threatened, if they refused, "that he would ride over the land, and put every living thing in it, man, woman, and child, to the sword." The spirit of resistance was utterly crushed. The natives were reduced to abject helplessness. They were now in a suitable frame of mind for conversion. Cortez recommended that they should exchange their idols for the gods of Papal Rome. They made no objections. Their images were dashed in pieces, and, with very imposing religious ceremonies, the Christianity of Cortez—a pitiful burlesque upon the religion of Jesus Christ—was instituted in the temples of Yucatan.

In all this tremendous crime there was apparently no hypocrisy. It requires Infinite wisdom to award judgment to mortals.

The two Catholic priests, Olmedo and Diaz, were probably sincere Christians, truly desiring the spiritual renovation of the Indians. They felt deeply the worth of the soul, and did all they could, rightly to instruct these unhappy and deeply-wronged natives. They sincerely pitied their sufferings; but deemed it wise that the right eye should be plucked out, and that the right arm should be cut off, rather than that the soul should perish. "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are but dust."

Cortez having thus, in the campaign of a week, annexed the whole of these new provinces, of unknown extent, to Spain, and having converted the natives to the Christianity of Rome, prepared for his departure. Decorating his war-boats with palm-leaves—the symbols of peace—he descended the river to his ships, which were anchored at the mouth. Again spreading his sails and catching a favorable breeze, he passed rejoicingly on toward the shores of Mexico. The newly-converted natives were left to bury their dead, to heal, as they could, their splintered bones and gory wounds, and to wait the dirge of the widow and the orphan. How long they continued to prize a religion forced upon them by such arguments of blood and woe we are not informed.

The sun shone brightly on the broad Mexican Gulf, and zephyrs, laden with fragrance from the luxuriant shores, swelled the flowing sheets. The temples and houses



of the natives, and their waving fields of Indian corn, were distinctly visible from the decks. Many of the promontories and headlands were covered with multitudes of tawny figures, decorated with all the attractions of barbaric splendor, gazing upon the fearful phenomenon of the passing ships. Cortez continued his course several hundred miles, sweeping around the shores of this magnificent gulf, until he arrived at the island of San Juan de Ulua. A previous explorer had touched at this spot.

It was the afternoon of a lovely day. Earth, sea, and sky smiled serenely, and all the elements of trouble were lulled to repose. As the ships entered the spacious bay, a scene as of enchantment opened around the voyagers. In the distance, on grassy slopes and in the midst of luxuriant groves, the villages and rural dwellings of the natives were thickly scattered. The shores were covered with an eager multitude, contemplating with wonder and awe the sublime spectacle of the fleet. Cortez selected a sheltered spot, dropped his anchors, and furled his sails. Soon a light canoe, filled with natives, shot from the shore. The ship which conveyed Cortez was more imposing than the rest, and the banner of Spain floated proudly from its topmast. The Mexicans steered for this vessel, and with the most confiding frankness ascended its sides. They were Government officials, and brought presents of fruits, flowers, and golden ornaments. Cortez, to his great chagrin, found that his interpreter, Aguilar, though perfectly familiar with the language of Yucatan, did not understand the language of Mexico. But from this dilemma he was singularly extricated.

After the terrible battle of Tabasco, Cortez had received, as a propitiatory offering, twenty beautiful native females. Cortez guiltily allowed himself to take one of the most beautiful of these, Marina, for his wife. It is true that Cortez had a worthy spouse upon his plantation at Cuba—it is true that no civil or religious rites sanctioned this unhallowed union—it is true that Cortez was sufficiently enlightened to know that he was sinning against the law of God; but the conscience of this extraordinary man was strangely seared. Intense devotion and unblushing sin were marvelously blended in his character. It must be admitted that the Romish faith he cherished favored these inconsistencies. For the *Church* he toiled, and the *Church* could forgive sin.

But Marina was a noble woman. The relation which she sustained to Cortez did no violence to her conscience or to her instincts. She had never been instructed in the school of Christ. Polygamy was the religion of her land. She deemed herself the honored wife of Cortez, and dreamed not of wrong. She was the daughter of a rich and powerful cacique, who had died when she was young. Her career had been romantic in the extreme. Like Joseph, she had been sold, and had passed many years in Mexico. She was thus familiar with the language and customs of the Mexicans.

Marina was in all respects an extraordinary woman, and she figures largely in the scenes which we are about to relate. Nature had done much for her. In person she was exceedingly beautiful. She had winning manners, and a warm and loving heart. Her mind was of a superior order. She very quickly mastered the difficulties of the Castilian tongue, and thus spoke three languages with native fluency—that of Mexico, of Yucatan, and of Spain. She was bound to Cortez by the tenderest ties, and soon became the mother of his son.

Through her interpretation, Cortez ascertained the most important facts respecting the great Empire of Mexico. He learned that two hundred miles in the interior was situated the capital of the empire; and that a monarch, named Montezuma, beloved and revered by his subjects, reigned over the extended realm. The country was divided into provinces, over each of which a governor presided. The province in which Cortez had landed was under the sway of Teuhtlile, who resided about twenty miles in the interior.

Cortez immediately and boldly landed his whole force upon the beach, and constructed a fortified camp, which was protected by his heavy cannon planted upon the hillocks. The kind natives aided the strangers in rearing their huts, brought them food and presents, and entered into the most friendly traffic. Thus they warned the vipers which were to sting them. It was, indeed, a novel scene, worthy of the pencil of the painter, which that beach presented day after day. Men, women, and children, boys and girls, in every variety of barbaric costume, thronged the encampment, presenting the peaceful and joyful confusion of a fair. The rumor of the strange arrival spread far and wide, and each day accumulating multitudes were gathered. Governor Teuhtlile heard the astounding tidings, and, with an imposing retinue, set out from his palace to visit his uninvited guests. The interview was conducted with all the splendor of Castilian etiquette and Mexican pomp. The pageant was concluded by a military display of the Spaniards, drawn out upon the beach, cavalry, artillery, and infantry, in battle array. No words can describe the amazement of the awe-stricken Mexicans, as they witnessed the rapid evolutions of the troops, their burnished armor gleaming in the rays of the sun, and the terrible war-horses, animals which they had never before seen, with their mounted riders, careering over the sands. But when the cannons uttered their tremendous roar, and the balls were sent crashing through the trees of the forest, their wonder was lost in unspeakable terror.

Cortez informed the governor that he was the subject of a powerful monarch beyond the seas, and that he brought valuable presents for the Emperor of Mexico, which he must deliver in person. Teuhtlile promised to send immediate word to the capital of the arrival of the Spaniards, and to communicate to Cortez Montezuma's will as soon as it should be ascertained.



INTERVIEW BETWEEN CORTEZ AND THE EMBASSADORS OF MONTEZUMA.

A week passed while Cortez remained in his encampment awaiting the return of the courier. The friendly natives supplied the Spaniards abundantly with every thing they could need. By the command of the Governor more than a thousand huts, of branches and matting, were reared in the vicinity for the accommodation of the Mexicans, who, without recompense, were supplying the table of Cortez and his men.

At the expiration of eight days an embassy arrived at the camp from the Mexican capital. Two nobles of the court, accompanied by a retinue of a hundred soldiers, bearing magnificent gifts from Montezuma, presented themselves before the pavilion of Cortez. The ambassadors saluted the Spanish chieftain with the greatest reverence, bowing before him, and enveloping him in clouds of incense which arose from waving censers borne by their attendants. The presents which they brought—in silver, in gold, in works of art, of beauty, and of utility—excited the rapture and the amazement of the Spaniards. There were specimens of workmanship in the precious metals which no artists in Europe could rival. A Spanish helmet, which had been sent to the capital, was returned filled with grains of pure gold. These costly gifts were opened before Cortez in lavish abundance, and they gave indications of opulence hitherto undreamed of. After they had been sufficiently examined and admired, one of the ambassadors very courteously said:

“Our master is happy to send these tokens of his respect to the King of Spain. He regrets that he can not enjoy an interview with the Spaniards. But the distance of his capital is too great, and the perils of the journey are too imminent, to allow of this pleasure. The strangers are therefore requested to return to their

own homes with these proofs of the friendly feelings of Montezuma.”

Cortez was much chagrined. He earnestly, however, renewed his application for permission to visit the Emperor. But the ambassadors, as they retired, assured him that another application would be unavailing. They, however, took a few meagre presents of shirts and toys, which alone remained to Cortez, and departed on their journey of two hundred miles with the reiterated application to the Emperor. It was now evident that the Mexicans had received instructions from the court, and that all were anxious that the Spaniards should leave the country. Though the natives manifested no hostility, they were cold and reserved, and ceased to supply the camp with food. The charm of novelty was over. Insects annoyed the Spaniards. They were blistered by the rays of a meridian sun reflected from the sands of the beach. Sickness entered the camp, and thirty died.

But the treasures which had been received from Montezuma, so rich and so abundant, inspired Cortez and his gold-loving companions with the most intense desire to penetrate an empire of so much opulence. They, however, waited patiently ten days, when the ambassadors again returned. As before, they came laden with truly imperial gifts. The gold alone of the ornaments which they brought was valued by the Spaniards at more than fifty thousand dollars. The message from Montezuma was, however, still more peremptory than the first. He declared that he could not permit the Spaniards to approach his capital. Cortez, though excessively vexed, endeavored to smother the outward expression of his irritation. He gave the ambassadors a courteous response, but turning to his officers, he said:

"This is truly a rich and a powerful prince. Yet it shall go hard but we will one day pay him a visit in his capital."

The ambassadors again retired, with dignity and with courtesy. That night every hut of the natives was abandoned. Cortez and his companions were left to themselves in entire solitude. No more supplies were brought to their camp. After a few days of perplexity, and when murmurs of discontent began to arise, Cortez decided to establish a colony upon the coast. A city was founded, called the Rich City of the True Cross; *Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz*.

A government was organized, and Cortez accepted the appointment of chief magistrate. He thus assumed the high position of the governor of a new colony, responsible only to the monarch in Spain. By this bold act he renounced all subjection to the Governor of Cuba. He immediately dispatched a strong party into the interior to forage for provisions. Just then five Indians came to the camp, as delegates from a neighboring rebellious province, to solicit the alliance of the Spaniards to aid them in breaking from the yoke of Montezuma. They belonged to the powerful nation of the Totonacs, which had been conquered by the Mexican empire. The capital of their country, Zempoalla, was an important city of thirty thousand inhabitants, but a few days' march from Vera Cruz. Cortez listened eagerly to this statement. It presented just the opportunity he desired, as it opened the way for a quarrel with Montezuma. He immediately put his heavy guns on board the fleet, and ordered it to coast along the shore to an appointed rendezvous at Chiahuitzla. Then heading his troops, he set out on a bold march across the country to the capital of his new-found allies, which was near the spot to which he had sent his fleet.

The beauty of the country through which they passed entranced the hearts even of these stern warriors. They were never weary of expressing their delight in view of the terrestrial paradise which they had discovered. A delegation soon met them from the Indian city, large parties of men and women with courteous words, and winning smiles, and gifts of gold, and food, and flowers. The natives had many attractions of person and manners; and a peculiar degree of mental refinement was to be seen in their passionate love of flowers, which adorned their persons, and which bloomed in the utmost profusion around all their dwellings. Cortez and his steed were almost covered with wreaths of roses woven by the fair hands of his new-found friends.

The narrow streets of Zempoalla were thronged with admiring and applauding thousands as the stern soldiers of Cortez, headed by the cavalry of sixteen horses, and followed by the lumbering artillery, instruments which with thunder roar sped lightning bolts, marched, with floating banners and pealing music, to the spacious court-yard of the temple appointed for

their accommodation. The adventurers were amazed in meeting such indications of wealth, of civilization, and of refinement, as they encountered on every side. The Cazique, with much barbaric pomp, received his formidable guest and ally.

The next morning Cortez, with an imposing retinue of fifty men and with all the accompaniments of Castilian pomp, paid a return visit to the Cazique of Zempoalla in his own palace. He there learned, to his almost unutterable delight, that it would not be difficult to excite one half of the Mexican nation against the other; and that he, by joining either part with his terrible artillery and cavalry, could easily turn the scale of victory.

Cortez now continued his march some sixteen miles farther to the bay of Chiahuitzla, where his fleet had already cast anchor. The Cazique supplied his troops with abundant food, and with four hundred men to carry their baggage. They found a pleasant town, on an abrupt headland, which commanded the Gulf, and they were received with great kindness. They were still within the ancient limits of the Totonacs, and the Cazique of Zempoalla had followed the Spaniards, borne on a gorgeous palanquin. Many other chiefs were now assembled, and very important deliberations began to arise.

In the midst of this state of things a singular commotion was witnessed in the crowd, and both people and chiefs gave indications of great terror. Five strangers appeared, tall, imposing men, with bouquets of flowers in their hands, and followed by obsequious attendants. Haughtily these strangers passed through the place, looking sternly upon the Spaniards, without deigning to address them either by a word or a gesture. They were lords from the court of Montezuma. Their power was invincible and terrible. They had witnessed, with their own eyes, these rebellious indications. The chiefs of the Totonacs turned pale with consternation. All this was fully explained by Marina to the astonished Spanish chieftain.

The Totonac chiefs were summoned to appear immediately before the lords of Montezuma. Like terrified children they obeyed. Soon they returned trembling to Cortez, and informed him that the lords were indignant at the support which they had afforded the Spaniards, contrary to the express will of their Emperor, and that they demanded, as the penalty, twenty young men and twenty young women of the Totonacs to be offered in sacrifice to their gods. Cortez assumed an air of indignation and of authority. He declared that he should never permit any such abominable practices of heathenism. And he imperiously ordered the Totonacs immediately to arrest the lords of Montezuma and put them in prison. The poor Totonacs were appalled at the very idea. Montezuma swayed the sceptre of a Cæsar, and bold indeed must he be who would dare thus to brave his wrath. But Cortez was inexorable. The chiefs were in his power. Should he abandon them now,

they were ruined hopelessly. It was possible that, with the thunder and the lightning at his command, he might protect them even from the wrath of Montezuma. Thus compelled, the chiefs tremblingly arrested the lords.

Cortez then condescended to perform a deed of indelible dishonor. In the night he promoted the escape of two of the Mexican lords; had them brought before him, and expressed his sincere regret at the insult and the outrage which they had received from the Totonacs. He assured them that he would do every thing in his power to aid in the escape of the others, and requested them to return to the court of their monarch, and assure him of the friendly spirit of the Spaniards, of which this act of their liberation was to be a conspicuous proof. The next morning the rest were liberated in the same way. With a similar message they were sent to the capital of Mexico. Such was the treachery with which Cortez rewarded his friendly allies. History has no language sufficiently severe to condemn an action so revolting to the instincts of honor.

Cortez now informed the Totonacs that matters had gone so far that no possible mercy could be expected from Montezuma. He told them, and with truth which was undeniable, that their only possible hope consisted now in uniting cordially with him. This was manifest. The terrified chiefs took the oath of allegiance to Cortez, and with all their people became his obsequious vassals.

Here the spot was selected for the new city, the capital of the Spanish colony. A fort was constructed, public buildings raised, and, all hands being eagerly employed, with the cordial co-operation of the natives, a town rose as by magic. This was the citadel of the Spaniards,

where they could form their plans, and from whence they could move forward in their enterprises. While thus busily employed a new embassy from the court of Montezuma appeared in the unfinished streets of Vera Cruz. Montezuma, alarmed by the tidings he received of the appalling and supernatural power of the Spaniards, deemed it wise to accept the courtesy which had been offered in the liberation of his imprisoned lords, and to adopt a conciliatory policy. The Totonacs were amazed that the power of the Spaniards was such as thus to intimidate even the mighty Montezuma. This greatly increased the veneration of the Totonacs for their European allies.

Cortez now made very strenuous efforts to induce the Cazique of Zempoalla to abandon his idols and the cruel rites of heathenism, among which were human sacrifices, and to accept in their stead the symbols of the true faith. But upon this point the Cazique was inflexible. He declared that his gods were good enough for him, and that inevitable destruction would overwhelm him and his people were he to incur their displeasure. Cortez finding argument utterly in vain, then assembled his warriors, and thus addressed them:

"Heaven will never smile on our enterprise if we countenance the atrocities of heathenism. For my part, I am resolved that the idols of the Indians shall be destroyed this very hour, even if it cost me my life."

The fanatic warriors now marched for one of the most imposing of the Totonac temples. The alarm spread widely through the thronged streets of Zempoalla. The whole population seized their arms to defend their gods, and a scene of fearful confusion ensued. Sternly the inflexible Spaniard strode on. Fifty men climbed to



CORTES DESTROYING THE IDOLS AT ZEMPOALLA.

the summit of the pyramidal temple, tore down the massive wooden idols, and tumbled them into the streets. They then collected the mutilated fragments and burned them to ashes. The heathen temple was then emptied, swept, and garnished. The Totonac chiefs, passively yielding, were dressed in the white robes of the Catholic priesthood, and, with lighted candles in their hands, aided in installing an image of the Virgin in this shrine which had been polluted by all the horrid orgies of pagan abominations. It was a blessed change. The very lowest and most corrupt form of Christianity is infinitely above the most refined creations of paganism. Mass, with all its pomp, was then performed. The Indians were pleased. It is said that their emotions were so much excited that they wept. They made no farther resistance, and cheerfully exchanged the hideous idols of Mexico for the more attractive and the more merciful idols of Rome. Let no one here accuse us of want of candor; for no one can deny that, to these poor natives, it was merely an exchange of idols.

Cortez having accomplished this all-important work of converting his allies into fellow-Christians, returned to Vera Cruz. Some of the companions of Cortez were alarmed by the bold movements of their leader, and a conspiracy was formed to seize one of the vessels and escape to Cuba. The conspiracy was detected. The offenders were punished inexorably; and Cortez resolved to prevent the possible repetition of such an attempt by *destroying his fleet!* Most of the troops were in Zempoalla. All the ships but one, after having been dismantled of every movable article, were scuttled and sunk.

When the soldiers heard of the deed they were struck with consternation. Escape was now impossible. Murmurs of indignation, loud and deep, began to rise against Cortez. He immediately assembled the troops around him, and by his peculiar tact soothed their anger, and won them to his cause. They could not be blind to the fact that their destiny was now depending entirely upon their obedience to their leader. The least insubordination would lead to inevitable ruin. Cortez closed his speech with the following forcible words:

"As for me, I have chosen my part. I will remain here while there is one to bear me company. If there be any so craven as to shrink from sharing the danger of our glorious enterprise, let them go home. There is still one vessel left. Let them take that and return to Cuba. They can tell there how they have deserted their commander, and can patiently wait till we return loaded with the spoils of the Mexicans."

Universal enthusiasm was excited by this appeal, and one general shout arose—"To Mexico! to Mexico!" Cortez now made vigorous preparations for his march uninvited, and even forbidden, to the capital of Montezuma. He took with him four hundred Spaniards, fifteen horses, and seven pieces of artillery. His allies, the Totonacs, also furnished him with two thousand three hundred men. His whole army

of invasion amounted to but twenty-eight hundred. Cortez made a very devout speech to his companions at the moment of his departure.

"The blessed Saviour," said he, "will give us victory. We have now no other refuge than the kind providence of God and our own stout hearts."

It was a bright and beautiful morning in August, 1519, when this merciless army of fanatics commenced their march of piracy and blood. For two days they moved gayly along through an enchanting country of luxuriance, flowers, and perfume, encountering no opposition. Indian villages were thickly scattered around, and scenery of surpassing magnificence and loveliness was continually opening before their eyes. On the evening of the second day they arrived at the beautiful town of Xalapa, which was filled with the country residences of the wealthy natives, and which commanded a prospect in which the beautiful and the sublime were lavishly blended. Still continuing their march through a well-settled country, as they ascended the gradual slope of the Cordilleras, on the fourth day they arrived at Naulinco. This was a large and populous town. The adventurers were received with great kindness. Cortez was very zealous, as in all cases, to convert the natives to Christianity. He succeeded so far as to raise a cross in the market-place, which it was hoped would excite the adoration of the untutored spectators.

They now entered into the defiles of the mountains, where they encountered rugged paths and fierce storms of wind and sleet. A weary march of three days brought them to the high table-lands of the Cordilleras, seven thousand feet above the level of the sea, and extending, a fertile and flowery savanna, before them for many leagues. It was a temperate region beneath a tropical sun. The country was highly cultivated, and luxuriantly adorned with hedges, with groves, with waving fields of maize, and with picturesque towns and villages. God did indeed seem to smile upon these reckless adventurers. Thus far their march had been as a delightful holiday excursion.

They soon entered a large city, Tlatlanquitepec. It was even more populous and more imposing in its architecture than Zempoalla. But here they witnessed appalling indications of the horrid atrocities of pagan idolatry. They found, it is stated, piled in order, a hundred thousand skulls of human victims who had been offered in sacrifice to their gods. There was a Mexican garrison stationed in this place, but not sufficiently strong to resist the invaders. They, however, gave Cortez a very cold reception, and incited rather than discouraged his zeal by glowing descriptions of the wealth and the power of the monarch whose court he was approaching. Cortez again made a vigorous but an unavailing effort to introduce among these benighted pagans, in exchange for their cruel superstitions, the infinitely more harmless and mild idolatry of Rome. In his zeal he was just

about ordering an onslaught upon the hideous idols with sword and hatchet, when the sincerely pious Father Olmedo dissuaded him.

"By thus violently introducing our religion," said this good man, "we shall but expose the sacred symbol of the cross and the image of the sacred Virgin to insult as soon as we shall have departed. We must wait till we can instruct their dark minds."

The Roman Catholic Church has sent out into the world as self-denying and as devoted Christians as the world has ever seen. Let the truth be fully and cordially admitted.

After a rest of five days the route was again commenced. Their road wound along the banks of a broad and tranquil stream, fringed with an unbroken line of Indian villages. Some twenty leagues of travel brought them to the large town of Xalacingo. Here they met with friendly treatment, and made another halt of several days. Again resuming their march, they soon entered the country of a powerful people called the Tlascalans. This nation had successfully resisted for many years the assailing legions of Montezuma. The adventurers here met with fortifications of stone of immense strength and magnitude, constructed with much scientific skill. After pressing along some dozen miles in this new country they met a large hostile force of Indians, who attacked them with the fiercest fury. Cortez and his band were nearly overpowered, when the artillery came up and opened a dreadful fire. The thunder of the guns, which the Indians had never heard before, and the horrid carnage of the grape-shot sweeping through their ranks, compelled the warlike natives at last, though slowly and sullenly, to retire. Two of the horses were killed in this conflict, a loss which Cortez deeply deplored.

It was now the 2d of September. Cortez had added some recruits from the natives to his army, so that he now numbered about three thousand men. Prayers and thanksgiving were here offered for the success of the enterprise thus far, and this whole band of blood-stained warriors partook of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in accordance with the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. The army now advanced firmly, but with the utmost possible vigilance. They were drilled to the most perfect discipline, and inspired with the highest fanatic zeal.

As they were emerging from a valley into a wide-spread plain they again encountered the enemy, drawn up in battle array, in numbers apparently overwhelming. With plumes and banners, and gilded helmets glittering in the morning sun, the Indian host presented an aspect truly appalling. Cortez estimated their numbers at one hundred thousand. The battle was fierce in the extreme. Cortez arranged his men in a square. The natives came pouring upon them like ocean billows, rending the heavens with their shouts, and deafening the ear with the clangor of gongs and drums. But soon the terrific cannon uttered its roar. Ball and grape-shot swept through the dense ranks,

mowing down, in hideous mutilation, whole platoons at a discharge. Immense multitudes of the dead now covered the plain, and eight of the chiefs had fallen. The commander of the native army finding it in vain to contend against these new and apparently unearthly weapons, ordered a retreat. The natives retired in as highly disciplined order as would have been displayed by French or Austrian troops. The exhausted victors, many of them wounded and bleeding, encamped upon the ground. The darkness and the silence of the night again overshadowed them. Cortez devoted the next day to the repose and the refreshment of his army, and sent an embassy to the camp of the Tlascalans proposing an armistice, and stating that he wished to visit their capital, Tlascala, as a friend. But in the mean time, to intimidate the natives, he headed a party of cavalry and infantry, and set out on a foraging expedition. Wherever he encountered any resistance he inflicted condign punishment with fire and sword. The embassy soon returned from the camp of the natives with the following defiant response:

"The Spaniards may pass on, as soon as they choose, to Tlascala. When they reach it, their flesh will be hewn from their bones for sacrifice to the gods. If they prefer to remain where they are, we shall visit them to-morrow."

It was a terrible hour. The Tlascalans had recruited their forces, and were prepared for a decisive battle. The stoutest hearts in the Spanish army felt and admitted the magnitude of the peril. Their only hope was in the energies of despair. Every man confessed himself that night to good Father Olmedo, and obtained absolution. Then, lulled to peace of spirit by the delusion that they were the accepted soldiers of the cross of Christ, they fell asleep.

The morning of the 5th of September, 1519, dawned cloudless and brilliant upon the adventurers encamped upon these high table-lands of the Cordilleras. Cortez made energetic arrangements for the conflict, addressed a few glowing words to his troops, and advanced to meet the foe. They had marched about a mile and a half when they met the Tlascalan army, filling a vast plain, six miles square, with their thronging multitudes. They were decorated with the highest appliances of barbaric taste. Their weapons were slings, arrows, javelins, clubs, and rude swords. The moment the Spaniards appeared the Tlascalans, uttering hideous yells, and with all the inconceivable clangor of their military bands, rushed upon them. For four hours the dreadful battle raged. Again and again it appeared as if the Spaniards would be overwhelmed and utterly destroyed by overpowering numbers. Every horse was wounded. The sky was actually darkened with the shower of arrows and javelins. Nearly every man in the Spanish ranks was bleeding, and several were killed. But at last the terrific energies of gunpowder triumphed. The Indians, leaving the hard-fought field covered with their

dead, in confusion retired. The cavalry plunged into the retreating ranks, and cut down the poor natives until weary with slaughter.

Cortez now sent an imperious command to the chief of the Tlascalcan army, demanding peace and friendship.

"If this proposition is rejected," said he, "I will enter the capital as a conqueror. I will raze every house to the ground. I will put every inhabitant to the sword."

To inspire the natives with more terror, Cortez placed himself at the head of a detachment of cavalry and light troops, and scoured the adjacent country, taking fearful vengeance upon all who manifested any spirit of resistance. The Tlascalans, alarmed, sent an embassy to the Spanish camp, proposing terms of peace. More than fifty persons, bearing rich presents, composed the embassy. Cortez suspected them, perhaps with good reason, of merely acting the part of spies. He immediately ordered their hands to be cut off. The cruel deed was promptly executed; and the sufferers, thus awfully mutilated, were sent to their countrymen with the defiant message:

"The Tlascalans may come by day or by night; the Spaniards are ready for them."

This atrocious act seemed to appall and crush the spirit of the Indians. All further idea of resistance was abandoned. The commander-in-chief of the Tlascalcan army, with a numerous retinue, entered the Spanish camp with proffers of submission. The brave and proud chieftain, subdued by the terrors of the thunder and the lightning of their strange assailants, addressed Cortez in language which will command universal respect and sympathy:

"I loved my country," said he, "and wished to preserve its independence. We have been beaten. I hope you will use your victory with moderation, and not trample upon our liberties. In the name of the nation I now tender obedience to the Spaniards. We will be as faithful in peace as we have been bold in war."

Cortez, who was aware of the great peril from which he had just escaped, with stern words, but with secret joy in his heart, accepted this submission, and entered into a cordial alliance with this bold and powerful nation. While these affairs were transpiring in the Spanish camp, an embassy arrived from Montezuma. It consisted of five of the most conspicuous nobles of the empire, accompanied by a retinue of two hundred attendants. Montezuma was alarmed by the terrible victories, and the resistless march of the invaders. He sent many most costly gifts of Mexican manufacture, and the value of about fifty thousand dollars in gold. The Emperor also urgently requested that Cortez would not attempt to approach the Mexican capital, since, as he alleged, the unruly disposition of the people on the route would greatly endanger his safety. Cortez returned an answer filled with expressions of Castilian courtesy, but declared that he must obey the commands of his sovereign, which required him to

visit the metropolis of the great empire. Cortez ever acted upon the principle that truth was too precious a commodity to be wasted upon the heathen.

After an encampment of three weeks upon the bloody and hard-earned field of Tzompach, Cortez again struck his tents and resumed his march. He no longer encountered any opposition. The route led over fertile hills and valleys, and through the villages and towns of a populous, and apparently a contented and happy people. The invading army was every where received with cordiality, and provisions in great abundance flowed into their camp. The march of a few days brought them to Tlascala, the capital of this strong nation.

It was, indeed, a magnificent city; larger, more populous, and of more imposing architecture, Cortez asserts, than the celebrated Moorish capital Granada, in old Spain. An immense throng flocked from the gates of the city to meet the troops, and the roofs of the houses were covered with spectators. Wild music, from semi-barbarian bands and voices, filled the air; banners floated in the breeze; plumed warriors hurried too and fro, and shouts of welcome seemed to rend the skies, as these hardy adventurers slowly defiled through the crowded gates and streets of the city. The police regulations of the city were extraordinarily effective, repressing all disorder. The Spaniards were surprised to find barbers' shops, and baths both for vapor and hot water. The river Zahuatel flowed through the heart of the city.

Cortez remained here several days, refreshing his troops, but maintaining the utmost vigilance of military discipline to guard against the possibility of any hostile attack. Promptly and earnestly he entered upon his favorite effort to convert the natives to Christianity. With his own voice he argued and exhorted, and he also called into requisition all the eloquence of Father Olmedo.

"The God of the Christians," they replied, "must be great and good. We will give him a place with our gods, who are also great and good."

Cortez could admit of no such compromise. Their obduracy excited his impatience. He was upon the point of ordering the soldiers to make an onslaught upon the gods of the Tlascalans, which would probably have led to the entire destruction of his army in the narrow streets of the thronged capital, when the judicious and kind-hearted Olmedo dissuaded him from the rash enterprise. With true Christian philosophy he plead that forced conversion was no conversion at all; that God's reign was only over willing minds and in the heart.

Cortez yielded to the pressure of circumstances rather than to the force of argument. "We can not," he said, "change the heart; but we can demolish these abominable idols, clamoring for their hecatombs of human victims; and we can introduce in their stead the blessed Virgin and her blessed Child. Shall

we not do a part because we can not do the whole?"

Though Cortez reluctantly yielded to argument enforced by apparent necessity, he insisted upon emptying the prisons of the victims destined to sacrifice. The Tlascalans consented to this. But as soon as the tramp of the Spaniards ceased to echo through their streets, the prisons were again filled, and human blood, in new torrents, crimsoned their altars.

The Indians, accustomed to polygamy, selected a number of their most beautiful young girls to be presented to the Spanish officers for wives.

"We can not marry heathen," said Cortez.

They were all immediately baptized, and received Christian names. Louisa, the daughter of Xicotencatl, the highest chief of the Tlascalans, was given by her father to the Spanish general Alvarado. Many of the descendants from this beautiful Indian maiden may now be found among the grandees of Spain.

Montezuma, finding that he could not dissuade Cortez from his march by words, and fearing to provoke the hostility of an enemy wielding such supernatural thunders, now endeavored to win his friendship. He accordingly sent another embassy with still richer presents, inviting Cortez to his capital, and assuring him of a warm welcome. He entreated him, however, not to enter into any alliance with his fierce foes the Tlascalans.

After spending three weeks in the city of Tlascala, Cortez again took up his march toward the capital of Mexico, by the way of the great city of Cholula. A hundred thousand soldiers, according to the representation of Cortez, volunteered to accompany him. He, however, considered this force as too unwieldy, and took but six thousand. The whole population of the city escorted the army some distance

from the gates. For several days they continued their march through a beautiful country, densely populated, and cultivated like a garden.

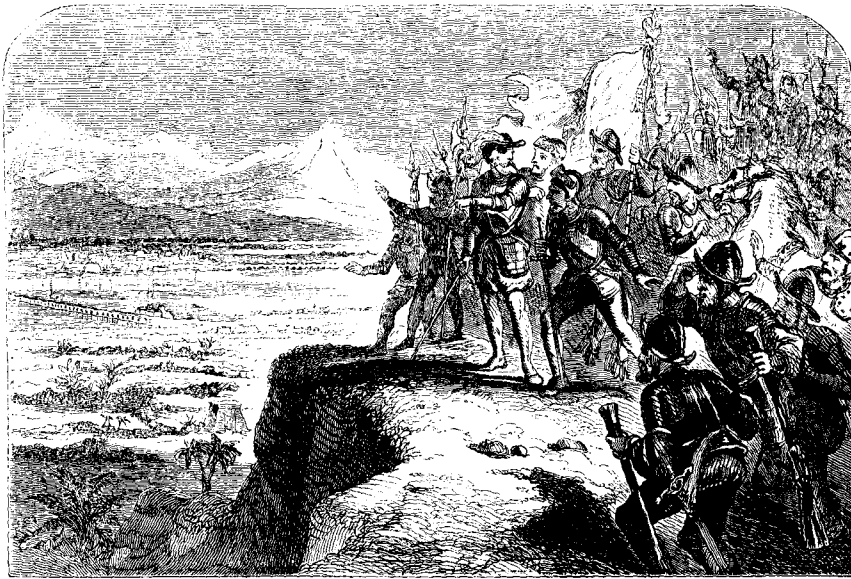
At length they arrived at Cholula. They were received with the warmest tokens of cordiality, in a beautiful city, containing one hundred thousand inhabitants, with wide, neatly arranged streets, and spacious stone houses. The more wealthy inhabitants were very gracefully dressed in garments richly embroidered. The aspect of luxury, of refinement, of high attainments in the arts of beauty and of utility, greatly surprised the Spaniards. In a few days, however, very striking indications of coldness, suspicion, and hostility were perceived. The faithful Marina, ever on the watch, detected, as was supposed, a terrible conspiracy for the destruction of the Spaniards. Cortez, with demoniac energy, crushed the attempt.

He contrived to assemble an enormous multitude of the Cholulans, with their high dignitaries, in the public square. At an appointed signal every musket and every cannon was discharged into their midst, and a shower of arrows and javelins pierced their thinly-clad bodies. A storm of destruction was swept through the helpless throng, which instantly covered the pavements with the dying and the dead. They were taken by surprise, unarmed, without leaders. They were surrounded, hemmed in; there was no escape. Helpless and frantic, they turned in terror and distraction this way and that, but the terrible missiles of lead and iron met them in every direction, and the slaughter was indiscriminate and awful. No quarter was given.

The mailed cavaliers on horseback rushed through the streets, cutting down with their dripping sabres, on the right hand and on the left, the unarmed and distracted fugitives. The Tlascalans, lapping their tongues in blood, re-



MASSACRE AT CHOLULA.



FIRST VIEW OF THE MEXICAN CAPITAL.

joined in the most horrid atrocities perpetrated over their ancient foes. The dwellings were sacked pitilessly, and the city every where kindled into flame. The women and children were seized by the semi-barbarian Tlascalans as prisoners, to grace their triumph, and to bleed upon their altars of human sacrifice. At last, from exhaustion, the carnage ceased. The city was reduced to smouldering ruins, and pools of blood and mutilated carcasses polluted the streets. The wail of the wretched survivors, homeless and friendless, rose to the ear of Heaven more dismal than the shriek and the moan of death. The defense of Cortez is very laconic :

"Had I not done this to them, they would have done the same to me."

'Tis true. Such is war. Accursed be the man who unleashes its hell-hounds !

This terrible retribution accomplished its end. City after city, appalled by the tidings of the merciless vengeance of those foes who wielded the thunder and the lightning of heaven, and who, with the dreadful war-horse, could overtake the swiftest foe, sent in to the Spanish camp the most humble messages of submission, with accompanying presents to propitiate favor. Montezuma trembled in every fibre. Cortez thought that the natives were now in a very suitable frame of mind for conversion. Public thanksgivings were offered to God for the victory he had vouchsafed, and mass was celebrated by the whole army. The natives were very pliant. They offered no resistance while the Spanish soldiers tumbled the idols out of their temples, and reared in their stead the cross and images of the Virgin.

A fortnight had now elapsed, and Cortez resumed his march. The country through which they passed still continued populous, luxuriant, and beautiful. They were continually met by

embassies from different places, endeavoring to propitiate their favor by gifts of gold. Day after day they toiled resolutely along, until from the height of land they looked down upon the majestic, the enchanting valley of Mexico. A more perfectly lovely scene has rarely greeted human eyes. In the far distance the dim blue outline of mountains encircled the almost boundless plain. Forests and rivers, orchards and lakes, cultivated fields and beautiful villages, adorned the landscape. The magnificent city of Mexico was seated, in queenly splendor, upon islands in the bosom of a series of lakes, more than a hundred miles in length. Innumerable towns, with their white pictureque dwellings, studded the blue outline of the water. The Spaniards all gazed upon the enchanting scene with amazement, and many with alarm. They saw indications of civilization and power far above what they had anticipated.

Cortez, however, relying upon the efficiency of gunpowder and the cross, marched boldly on. The love of plunder was a latent motive omnipotent in his soul ; and he saw undreamed of wealth lavishly spread before him. At every step vast crowds met him, and gazed with wonder and awe upon his army. The spirit of Montezuma was now so crushed, that he sent an embassy to Cortez, offering four loads of gold for himself, and one for each of his captains, and a yearly tribute to the King of Spain, if he would turn back. With delight Cortez listened to this message. It was an indication of the weakness and fear of Montezuma. With more eagerness he pressed on his way.

"Of what avail," the unhappy monarch is reported to have said, "is resistance, when the gods have declared themselves against us. Yet I mourn most for the old and infirm, the women

and children, too feeble to fight or to fly. For myself, and the brave men around me, we must bare our breasts to the storm, and meet it as we may."

The Spaniards were now at Amaquemecan. They were lodged in large, commodious stone buildings, with the hospitality which terror extorted. After a rest of two days, they resumed their march through smiling villages, and waving fields of maize, and innumerable flowers, which the natives cultivated with almost passionate devotion. At last they arrived at Ayotzingo—the Venice of the New World—an important town, built on piles in the waters of Lake Chalco. Gondolas of very tasteful structure glided through the liquid streets. After a rest of two days, in which the Spaniards requited the hospitality they had received by shooting down in their camp fifteen or twenty of the harmless natives, whom they suspected as spies, the march was continued along the southern shores of Lake Chalco. Clusters of towns, embowered in luxuriant foliage, and crimson with flowers, fringed the lake. The waters were covered with the light boats of the inhabitants gliding in every direction. At last they came to a dike, five miles long, and where but two or three horsemen could ride abreast. In the middle of this causeway, which separated Lake Chalco from Lake Xochicalco, they arrived at the town of Cuiclahuac, which Cortez described as the most beautiful he had yet seen.

As the Spaniards advanced, the throng became so immense that Cortez was compelled to resort to threats of violence to force his way. They arrived at Iztapalapan, a city of fifteen thousand houses, and embellished with public gardens of vast magnitude, blooming with flowers of every variety of splendor. An aviary was filled with birds of gorgeous plumage and sweet song. A vast reservoir of stone contained

water to irrigate the grounds, and was stored with fish. Many of the chiefs of the neighboring cities had assembled here to meet Cortez. They received him with courtesy, with hospitality, but with reserve. He was now but a few miles from the renowned metropolis of Montezuma, and the turrets of the lofty temples of idolatry glittered in the sunlight before him.

Another night passed away and another morning dawned. It was the 8th of November, 1519. As Cortez approached the city, several hundred Aztec chiefs announced that Montezuma was advancing to welcome him. The glittering train of the Emperor soon appeared. Crowds, which could not be numbered, thronged the long causeway which led to the island city, and the lake was darkened with boats. Montezuma was accompanied by the highest possible pomp of semi-barbarian etiquette and splendor. He was borne on a palanquin waving with plumes and glittering with gold. As he alighted, obsequious attendants spread carpets for his feet. The monarch was dressed in imperial robes. The soles of his shoes were of gold. Embroidered garments gracefully draped his person, decorated with pearls and precious stones. A rich head-dress of plumes rested upon his ample brow. His countenance was serious and pensive in its expression. He was tall, well formed, and moved with grace and dignity. The Mexican monarch and the proud Spanish marauder met in the studied interchange of all Mexican and Castilian courtesies.

Cortez and his companions were conducted to their provided quarters in the imperial city. Cortez found himself and his army abundantly supplied with all comforts in a range of large stone buildings. With vigilance which never slept he immediately fortified his quarters, and planted his cannon to sweep every avenue by which they could be approached. In the evening he decided to let the astounded and appalled capital hear his voice. Several volleys of artillery roared like thunder-peals through the streets of the capital, while dense volumes of suffocating smoke, scarcely moved by the tranquil air, settled down over the city. All hearts in Tenochtitlan—for that was then the name of the Mexican capital—were filled with dismay. Few slept that night. Supernatural beings, with demoniac energies, were in the bosom of the proud metropolis of the ancient Aztecs, and the fate of the empire was doomed.

The population of this city was probably about five hundred thousand. The houses of the common people were small but comfortable cottages, built of reeds or of bricks baked in the sun. The dwellings of the nobles, lining long, spa-



THE CITY OF MEXICO AND ENVIRONS.



THE MEETING OF CORTES AND MONTEZUMA.

cious, and well-paved streets, were of stone. They were extensive on the ground-floor, generally but one story high, and surrounded by gardens blooming with flowers. Fountains of cool water, brought through aqueducts of earthen pipe, played in the court-yards. The police regulations were admirable. A thousand persons were continually employed in sweeping and watering the streets. So clean were the well-cemented pavements kept, upon which no hoof had trod until the cavalry of Cortez clattered into the city, that "a man could walk," says one of the Spaniards, "through the streets with as little danger of soiling his feet as his hands."

Day after day was passed in the interchange of visits, and in the careful examination, by Cortez, of the strength and the resources of the city. He, however, never for one moment forgot his great object of converting the heathen. He was truly instant, in season and out of season, in urging his cause. No hour was deemed inappropriate. But Montezuma manifested no disposition to abandon the cruel idolatry of his fathers. One day the idolatrous monarch led the war-girt, blood-stained propagandist into the shrine of the great god of Mexico. Three human hearts, just cut from their victims, were smoking and almost palpitating upon the altar. The chapel was stained with human gore. The soul of Cortez was roused. Turning to Montezuma, he exclaimed,

"How can you, wise and powerful as you are, put trust in such a representative of the Devil. Let me place here the cross, and the image of the blessed Virgin and her Son, and these detestable gods will vanish.

Montezuma was shocked, and hurried his irreverent guest away. The zeal of the Spaniards

was roused by the horrid spectacle of pagan idols polluted with blood, and they immediately converted one of the halls of their residence into a Christian chapel. Here the rites of the Roman Catholic Church were introduced, and the whole army of Cortez, with soldierly devotion, attended mass every day. Good Father Olmedo, with a clouded mind, but with a sincere and devout heart, prayed fervently for God's blessing upon his frail creatures of every name and nation. Notwithstanding all delusions and all counterfeits, there is such a thing as spiritual Christianity. So far as man can judge, Father Olmedo was a Christian.

Cortez had now been a week in the capital. He was perplexed what step next to take. He was treated with such hospitality that there was no possible ground for war. To remain inactive, merely receiving hospitality, was accomplishing nothing. It was also to be apprehended that the Mexicans would gradually lose their fears, and fall upon the invaders with resistless numbers. In this dilemma the bold Spaniard resolved to seize the person of Montezuma, who was regarded by his subjects with almost religious adoration, and hold him as a hostage. By the commingling of treachery and force he succeeded, and the unhappy monarch found himself a captive in his own capital, in the entrenched camp of the Spaniards.

He was magnificently imprisoned. A body-guard of stern veterans, with all external indications of obsequiousness and homage, watched him by day and by night. The heart sickens at the recital of the outrages inflicted upon this amiable and hospitable prince. Cortez had alleged, as a reason for arresting Montezuma, the senseless pretext that two soldiers of the company left at Vera Cruz had been waylaid by the natives and

slain. The Indian governor in whose province the violence had occurred, was sent for by the humiliated and powerless monarch. Obediently he came, with fifteen chiefs. Cortez doomed them all to be burnt alive in the great court of the city. He gathered from the public arsenals the arrows, javelins, and other martial weapons, to form the immense funeral piles. Thus the city was disarmed. While these atrocities were in progress, Cortez entered the presence of his captive, Montezuma, accused him of being an accomplice in the death of the Spaniards, and pitilessly ordered the manacles of a felon to be fastened on his hands and his feet. The cruel fires were then kindled. Thousands gazed with awe upon the appalling spectacle, and the Indian chieftains, without a remonstrance or a groan, were burned to ashes.

Step after step of violence succeeded, until Montezuma was humiliated to the dust. The helpless and bewildered monarch was thus compelled, with tears of anguish rolling down his cheeks, to take the oath of allegiance to the King of Spain. Cortez then extorted from him, as presents to the Spanish monarch, more than six millions of dollars in silver and gold. The conquest of Mexico seemed achieved.

Six months had now passed since Cortez had landed on the coast. The Governor of Cuba, indignant in view of the haughty assumptions of Cortez, fitted out a strong expedition to take possession of Mexico and bring Cortez home a prisoner for punishment. Cortez was informed that these, his formidable enemies, had landed in the vicinity of Vera Cruz. The indomitable Spaniard, leaving Alvarado in command of the strongly intrenched camp in the heart of the metropolis, took seventy picked men and marched rapidly and secretly to meet his Spanish foes. The journey was long and perilous. He moved with great celerity, gathered some recruits by the way, fell upon the Spaniards by surprise in a midnight attack, in the midst of a black careering tempest, took their commander, Narvaez, sorely wounded, a prisoner; and having compelled the whole body to surrender, induced them all, by munificent presents and persuasive speech, to enlist under his alluring banner.

But in the flush of this wonderful victory, the alarming news reached Cortez that a terrible insurrection had broken out in the capital; that his troops were besieged and assailed by almost resistless numbers, and that several of his men were already killed and many wounded. Collecting his whole force, now greatly augmented by the accession of the conquered Spaniards with their cavalry and artillery, he hastened back from Zempoalla to the rescue of his beleaguered camp. He had now, with this strangely-acquired reinforcement, about a thousand infantry and a hundred cavalry, besides several thousands of the native allies. By forced marches they pressed along. The natives, however, in the region through which they passed, no longer greeted them with courtesy, but turned coldly and silently away.

The Spaniards arrived at length at the causeway which led to the city. It was a solitude. No one was there to welcome or to oppose. Fiercely these stern men strode on through the now deserted streets, till they entered into the encampment of their comrades.

The insurrection had been excited by a most atrocious massacre on the part of Alvarado. He suspected, but had no proof, that a conspiracy was formed by the Mexican nobles for the extermination of the invaders. He took occasion, while six hundred of the flower of the Mexican nobility were assembled in the performance of some religious rites, in a totally defenseless state, to fall upon them with sword and musket. The massacre was horrible. Not one escaped. This infamous butchery was too much even for the crushed spirit of the natives to endure. Notwithstanding all the terror of horses, steel, and gunpowder, the city rose to arms.

Even Cortez was indignant when he heard this story from his lieutenant.

"Your conduct," he exclaimed, "has been that of a madman."

Cortez had now, with the efficiency of his European weapons of war, truly a formidable force. In the stone buildings which protected and encircled his encampment he could marshal in battle array twelve hundred Spaniards and eight thousand Tlascalans. But all were in danger of perishing from starvation. A terrible battle soon ensued. The Mexicans, roused by despair, came rushing upon the invaders in numbers which could not be counted. Never did mortal men display more bravery than these exasperated Mexicans exhibited struggling for their homes and their rights. But the batteries of the Spaniards mowed them down like grass before the scythe. The conflict was continued late into the hours of the night. The ground was covered with the dead, when darkness and exhaustion for a time stopped the carnage.

In the early dawn of the morning the contest was renewed, and was continued with the most demoniac fury by both parties through the whole of another day. The Spaniards fired the city wherever they could. And though the walls of the houses were mostly of stone, the inflammable interior and roofs caught the flame, and the horrors of conflagration were added to the misery and the blood of the conflict. All the day long the dreadful battle raged. The streets ran red with blood. The natives cheerfully sacrificed a hundred of their own lives to take that of one of their foes.

Another night darkened over the blood-stained and smouldering city. The Spaniards were driven back into their fortress, while the natives, in continually increasing numbers, surrounded them, filling the night air with shrieks of defiance and rage. Cortez had displayed the most extraordinary heroism during the protracted strife. His situation now seemed desperate. Though many thousands of the Mexicans had been slaughtered during the day, re-



THE FALL OF MONTEZUMA.

cruits flocked in so rapidly that their numbers remained undiminished. Cortez was suffering anguish from a sorely wounded hand. His men were utterly exhausted. Large numbers were wounded and many slain. The maddened roar of countless thousands of the fiercest warriors almost deafened the ear. Every moment it was feared that the walls would be scaled, and the inundation of maddened foes pour in resistlessly upon them.

In this extremity Cortez appealed to his captive, Montezuma. Cortez was a fearless soldier. He could also stoop to any measures of fraud and perfidy. Assuming the tone of humanity, deploring the awful carnage which had taken place, and affirming his wish to save the nation from utter destruction, he, by such representations, influenced Montezuma to interpose. Reluctantly the amiable, beloved, perplexed monarch at last consented. He was adored by his people. The morning had again dawned. The battle was again renewed with increasing fury. No pen can describe the tumult of this wild war. The yell of countless thousands of assailants, the clang of their trumpets and drums, the clash of arms, the rattle of musketry, and the roar of artillery presented a scene which had never before found a parallel in the New World.

Suddenly all was hushed as the venerated Emperor, dressed in his imperial robes, appeared upon the wall, and waved his hand to command the attention of his people. For a few moments they listened patiently to his appeal. But as he plead for the detested Spaniards their indignation burst all bounds. One ventured to assail him with an exclamation of reproach and contempt. It was the signal for a universal outbreak of vituperation against the

pusillanimity of the captive King. A shower of stones and arrows fell upon him. Notwithstanding the efforts of his body-guard of Spaniards to protect him with their bucklers, a stone struck his temple which brought him senseless to the ground, and three javelins pierced his flesh. The wounded monarch was conveyed to his apartment, crushed in spirit, and utterly broken-hearted. He firmly refused to live. He tore the bandages from his wounds and would take no nourishment. Silent, and brooding over his terrible calamities, he sat the picture of dejection and woe for a few days, until he died.

In the mean time the battle was resumed with all its fury. All the day long it continued without intermission. The wretched city was the crater of a volcano where a demoniac strife was raging. The energies of both parties seemed to redouble with despair. At last another night spread its vail over the infuriated combatants. In the darkest watches of midnight the Spaniards made a sortie and set three hundred buildings in flames. The lurid fire, crackling to the skies, illumined the tranquil lake, and gleamed upon the most distant villages in the vast mountain-girdled valley. The tumult of the midnight assault, the shrieks of women and children, and the groans of the wounded and the dying, blended with the roar of the conflagration.

Cortez now summoned the chiefs to a parley. He stood upon the wall. The beautiful Marina, as interpreter, stood at his side. The Mexican chiefs were upon the ground before him. The inflexible and merciless Spaniard endeavored to intimidate them by threats.

"If you do not immediately submit," said he, "I will lay the whole city in ashes, and

every man, woman, and child shall be put to the sword."

They answered defiantly: "The bridges are broken down, and you can not escape. You have better weapons of war, but we have greater numbers. If we must offer a thousand lives for one, we will continue the battle till you are destroyed."

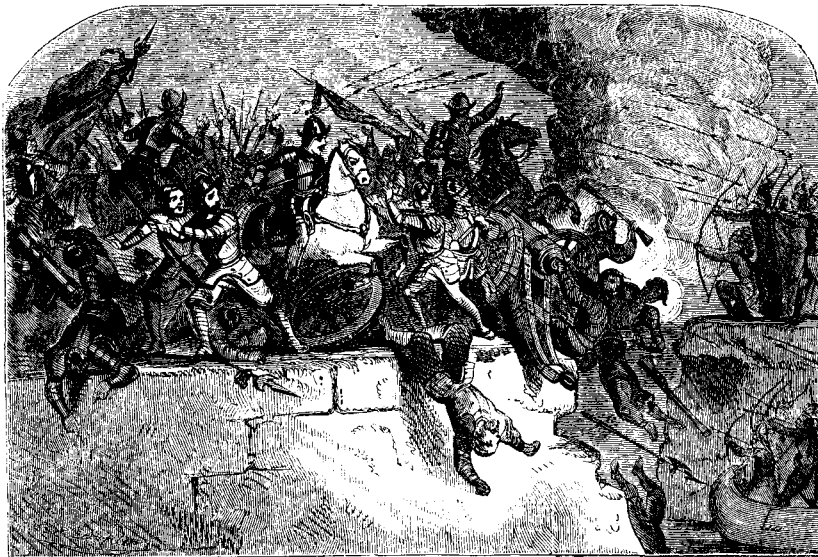
Saying this, they gave the signal for attack, and a storm of arrows and javelins darkened the sky and fell into the beleaguered fortress. Notwithstanding the bold tone assumed by Cortez the Spaniards were in great dismay. A mutiny now broke out in the camp. They murmured bitterly, and demanded permission to cut their way through their foes and escape from the city. The extraordinary energies of this iron fanatic still remained unshaken. Calmly he reflected upon his position, examined his resources, and formed his plans.

He immediately constructed moving forts or towers to be pushed through the streets on wheels, under the protection of which his soldiers could make every bullet accomplish its mission. A platform on the top could be let down, affording a bridge to the roofs of the houses. The army thus commenced its perilous march through the smoking, gory streets. Every inch of the way was contested. The advance was slow but resistless, the cannon and the musketry sweeping down all obstacles. At last they arrived at one of the numerous canals which every where intersected the city. The bridge was destroyed, and the deep waters of the canal cut off all retreat. Planting the cannon so as to keep the natives at bay, every available hand was employed in filling the chasm with stones and timber torn from the ruined city. Still stones, arrows, and javelins fell thickly among the workmen.

For two days this terrific strife raged. Seven canals the Spaniards were thus compelled to bridge. But the natives could present no effectual resistance. The Spaniards advance sternly over the mutilated bodies of the dying and of the dead. Still, at the close of this day the condition of the Spaniards was more desperate than ever.

As the gloom of night again descended, a deeper, heavier gloom rested upon the hearts of all in the Spanish camp. A wailing storm arose of wind and rain, and nature moaned and wept as if in sympathy with the woes of man. An immediate retreat was decided upon. At midnight all were on the march. In the darkness and the storm they passed through the war-scathed streets of the city without opposition. But when they reached one of the long causeways, two miles in length and but twenty feet wide, which connected the island city with the main-land, they found the lake alive with the fleets of the natives, and the Spaniards were assailed on both sides by swarming multitudes who, in the fierce and maddened strife, set all danger at defiance. War never exhibited a more demoniac aspect. There were three chasms in the causeway, broken by the Mexicans, which the Spaniards, in the darkness and assailed by innumerable foes, were compelled to bridge. The imagination can not compass the horrors of that night. When the first gray of the lurid morning dawned, the whole length of the causeway was covered with the bodies of the slain. The chasms were clogged up with the fragments of artillery, baggage wagons, dead horses, and the corpses of Spaniards and natives with features distorted by all the hateful passions of the strife.

A few only had escaped. Nearly all the horses, all the plundered gold, all the baggage



THE BATTLE UPON THE CAUSEWAY.

wagons, all the cannon, were either sunk in the lake or floating upon its surface, which was blackened with the canoes of the Mexicans. Not even a musket remained. As Cortez gazed upon the feeble band of exhausted, torn, and bleeding soldiers which now alone remained to him, even his stern heart was moved, and he sat down and wept bitterly. Is it revenge which leads us to rejoice that some drops of retributive woe were wrung from the heart of that guilty conqueror? He had overwhelmed a benighted nation with misery. Such a crime must not go unpunished. There is a day of final judgment.

But this was no time for tears. By night and by day the discomfited and imperiled Spaniards continued their long and precipitate retreat toward the sea-shore. They were often assailed; but with their few remaining horses, their steel swords, and the mental energies which European civilization confers, they beat off their assailants, and continued their flight. Cortez, who promptly recovered from his momentary weakness, manifested the utmost serenity and imperturbability of spirit, shared every hardship of the soldiers, and maintained their confidence in him by surpassing all in the gallantry and the magnanimity of his courage. Exhausted and wounded as they were, it required the toilsome march of a week to reach the mountain summits which encircle the great valley of Mexico.

Upon the other side of the ridge innumerable warriors had gathered from all the provinces to cut off the retreat. From an eminence the appalling spectacle suddenly burst upon the retreating Spaniards of a boundless, living ocean of armed men, with its crested billows of gleaming helmets and waving plumes. Even the heart of Cortez sank within him. It seemed certain that his last hour was now tolled. There was no possible hope but in the energies of utter despair. Cortez harangued his troops as angels of mercy, who might surely depend, in their holy mission against the heathen, on Divine protection. He succeeded, as usual, in rousing all their religious enthusiasm. Plunging upon the enemy in solid column, they cut their way through the dense, tumultuous, extended mass, as the steamer plows through opposing billows. The marvelous incidents of the fight would occupy pages. The Spanish historians record that the native army was two hundred thousand strong, and that twenty thousand fell on that bloody field. Though this is, of course, an exaggeration, it gives one an idea of the appearance of the multitude and of the carnage. At last Cortez arrived in the territory of his friendly allies, the Tlascalans. He was received with the utmost kindness, and was now safe from pursuit.

His followers were extremely anxious to return to Vera Cruz, send a vessel to Cuba for some transports, and abandon the enterprise. But this indomitable warrior, while lying upon the bed in a raging fever, while a surgeon was cutting off three of his mutilated and inflamed

fingers, and raising a portion of the bone of his skull, which had been splintered by the club of a native, was forming his plans to return to Mexico and reconquer what he had lost.

"I can not believe," he wrote to the Emperor, Charles V., "that the good and merciful God will thus suffer his cause to perish among the heathen."

Upon the death of Montezuma the crown of Mexico passed to his more warlike brother, Cuitlahua. He immediately, with great vigor, fortified the city anew, and recruited and drilled his armies, now familiar with the weapons of European warfare. He sent an embassy to the Tlascalans to incite them to rise against the defeated Spaniards, the common enemy of the whole Indian race. Cortez succeeded in inducing them to reject the proffered alliance of their ancient foes. He also succeeded in fomenting war among some of the rival provinces, and in thus turning the arms of the natives against each other.

He established his head-quarters at Tepeaca. The Spaniards, among other woes, had introduced the small-pox into Mexico. The terrible scourge now swept like a blast of destruction through the land. The natives perished by thousands. Many cities and villages were almost depopulated. It reached the Mexican capital, and the Emperor Cuitlahua fell a victim. Recruits soon arrived at the Spanish camp from Vera Cruz, with twenty horses and an abundant supply of arms and ammunition. With indefatigable diligence Cortez prepared for a new campaign. Five months had passed since the disasters of the *Dismal Night*, as the Spaniards ever called the midnight strife upon the causeway of the city of Mexico.

It was now December. Cortez, with a new army, well appointed and disciplined, with the hardy valor of the natives, guided by the skill of the Spaniards, commenced again his march for the conquest of Mexico. Guatemozin was now the monarch, a bold, energetic young man, of twenty-five years of age. The army of Cortez consisted of six hundred Spaniards, many of whom had recently arrived from Cuba. He had also nine cannon. The allied army of the natives marching under his banner was estimated at over one hundred thousand. In an address to the army, Cortez exhorted the Spaniards to punish the *rebels*. He also declared that it was his great object to promote the glory of God by converting the heathen to the cross of Christ. Prayer was offered, mass was celebrated, and the army recommenced its crusade. Day after day they pressed unimpeded on, till again they surmounted the heights which commanded the magnificent valley. Like an avalanche the combined host of Europeans and Tlascalans poured down upon the valley where the doomed city reposed.

A series of scenes of horror ensued, at the recital of which the heart sickens. Battle succeeded battle. Cities and villages were sacked and burned, and the soil and the rivers were red



THE CAPTURE OF GUATEMOZIN.

with blood. But no valor on the part of the natives could resist the demoniac energy of the invaders. They arrived upon the shores of the lake before the capital. Cortez soon obtained possession of Tezcuco, the second city of the empire, about twenty miles from the metropolis. Here he fortified himself, and commenced the construction of boats to transport his troops to the island city. Three months were spent in this work and in ravaging pitilessly the adjacent country. His arms were every where triumphant, and city after city became obsequious to his will. The siege of the capital ensued, with daily sanguinary assaults. The valor which the Mexicans displayed extorted the praise even of their foes.

For more than a month this incessant warfare was continued, and the Spaniards were every where thwarted by the devoted defenders of their own firesides. Cortez at last resolved upon a general assault. It was fiercely urged, but entirely unsuccessful. The Spaniards were driven back with great slaughter, and forty of their number were made prisoners, to be offered in bloody sacrifice to the heathen gods. This victory was celebrated at midnight in the city by the natives, with all the accompaniments of barbaric clangor.

The army of Cortez was now augmented to a hundred and fifty thousand, as the conquered cities had been compelled to furnish him with troops. Sternly he pressed the siege. Day after day he drew nearer. One obstacle after another was surmounted by military science and the terrible energy of his batteries. Guatemozin nobly rejected every overture for peace, resolved to perish, if perish he must, beneath the ruins of the monarchy. Famine began to consume the city. Gradually Cortez

forced his advance along the causeways. He got possession of a portion of the city, and leveled it with the ground. Every inch was disputed, and an incessant battle raged. At length Cortez had three-fourths of the city reduced to ashes. The Mexicans now decided that their revered Emperor Guatemozin should endeavor to escape in a boat and rouse the distant provinces. The unfortunate monarch was captured in the attempt. When led into the presence of Cortez he said, proudly,

"I have fought as became a king. I have defended my people to the last. Nothing remains but to die. Plunge this dagger into my bosom, and end a life which is henceforth useless."

The Emperor being a captive, the resistance of the Mexicans instantly ceased. Thus terminated this memorable and atrocious siege of seventy-five days of incessant battle. But the avarice of the Spaniards encountered a sad disappointment. Guatemozin had cast all the treasures of the capital into the lake. Cortez celebrated his awful victory with thanksgivings and masses. The terrible tidings of the fall of the capital and of the captivity of the monarch spread rapidly through the empire, and all the provinces hastened to give in their submission to the conqueror. To the eternal disgrace of Cortez, he allowed the monarch who had so nobly defended his people, and also his chief favorite, to be put to the torture, that he might wring from them the confession of hidden treasures. With invincible fortitude Guatemozin endured the torment; and when the chief who was suffering at his side groaned in agony, and turned an imploring look to his sovereign, Guatemozin replied, "Am I, then, reposing upon a bed of flowers?"

By such deeds of infamy the inhabitants of Mexico were robbed of their independence and of their country. For three hundred years the enslaved natives continued under the yoke of their conquerors. The idols of Mexico gave place to the idols of Rome. Three hundred years have passed away. The government of Spain and the religion of Spain have cursed the land. Mexico has made no progress. From all these dark storms of war and misery we can as yet see but little good which the providence of God has evolved. It is true that human sacrifices have ceased, but Mexico is still a land of darkness, ignorance, and crime. The curse has also fallen upon Spain and upon all her possessions. Is it thus that national sins are punished?

REMEMBRANCES OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

BY T. B. THORPE.

THE excitement that prevailed in Europe as the first-fruits of the discovery of America manifested themselves, can at this day be but dimly realized. The riches that seemed inexhaustible, the grandeur, the mystery, the strange people of the new continent inhabiting it, affected the imaginations of every class of society—the mind of the civilized world was suddenly startled into wild wakefulness at the prospect of a future which had no apparent limits in its promises of wealth, and in the traditions of the past no precedents for its unfolding magnificence. The man, however, who led the way sprung from obscurity; he had no patent of nobility from the existing sovereigns, and imperial as were admitted to be his triumphs, they were but grudgingly acknowledged, and were finally repaid by neglect and disgrace. Cortez and Pizarro, who followed Columbus in the path of glory, were also “adventurers,” and depended upon their genius alone for their success. When De Soto, therefore, announced his proposed expedition to Florida, his enormous wealth, his known valor and prudence, his high standing with Charles the Fifth, and his acknowledged connection with the aristocracy of the country, gave a personal interest to his expedition in circles not before affected.

Armed with vice-regal power, De Soto established a court at Seville, which, for splendor and the number of its attendants, rivaled that of the Emperor. Men of all conditions of life—many of noble birth and good estate—enrolled themselves as his followers. Houses and vineyards, gardens of olive-trees, and land devoted to tillage, were sacrificed in order to obtain military equipments. Portuguese hidalgos, famed for brilliant exploits in the wars with the Moors, volunteered their services. The port of San Lucea of Barrameda was crowded by those who wished to embark in the enterprise. A whole year being consumed in preparations for departure, each day was distinguished by a tournament, or some costly celebration, such as had never before been witnessed in the land. Spain, with the prolonged entertainment, became

“Florida mad,” and, forgetting what had already been accomplished, indulged in dreams of new discoveries under the lead of the “munificent Adelantado” that would sink into insignificance the already realized glories of Mexico and Peru.

De Soto remained some months in Cuba, where he assumed the reins of government, and indulged his followers in enacting over again the showy spectacles which had preceded his departure from Seville. At last, amidst salvoes of artillery, the waving of plumes, and a lavish display of the gorgeous ceremonies of his church, he departed for the “promised land.” From this time forward his history becomes one of melancholy interest, his life a display of fruitless bravery, joined with a courage that met with no adequate reward.

In his wanderings De Soto finally reached the banks of the Mississippi, and this seems to have been his last appearance surrounded by the peaceful possession of the pomp and circumstance of a Spanish cavalier. Unsuccessful as had been his enterprise, up to this moment he had never indulged the idea of failure. Stories of the existence of great cities and of untold treasures, somewhere in the wilderness, still allured him on, and these reports were always confirmed by the natives immediately around him, in order to hasten his departure from their midst. As the broad, unbroken river, “more than a mile wide, and filled with floating trees,” rolled in silent grandeur before his astonished eyes, he seemed to feel the mysterious influence of an important culminating era in his history. In the presence of thousands of gayly-dressed natives, attracted by curiosity, and for the time inspired by fear, he commemorated the event by the firing of cannon, the rejoicing of his followers, the erection of a gigantic cross, and the celebration of high mass by the attendant priests—a proper hallowing by Christianity of the flood-tides that drain the most remarkable and richest valley of the world. The exploration of the country westward of the Mississippi only increased De Soto’s misfortunes. After wandering for more than a year among interminable swamps, his followers thinned by disease and the weapons of an unrelenting foe, when again he reached the shores of the river his body was weakened by fever, and his great soul overcome with hopeless melancholy.

Some rude brigantines were constructed, in which De Soto and the remnant of his followers launched themselves on their way to the South. The deep mists of the river enveloped them as in a shroud, the overhanging moss of the trees waved as funeral palls, and the genial sunshine only lighted the way for the missiles of an exasperated and now triumphant foe. The hero despaired and died; and where the dark Red River mingles its “bloody-looking” waters with those of the Mississippi—where all was desolation and death—his body, amidst silence and tears, was consigned to its last resting-place, and the mighty river became at once his glory and his grave.