

an army sometimes of superior numbers, hovering about us, and often assuming a menacing attitude; but always ready for flight the moment they saw that we were under arms. On these occasions it was painful to restrain the ardor of the troops. But I steadily held to the policy not to wear out patience and sole leather by running to the right or left in the pursuit of small game. I played for the big stakes. Keeping the army massed and the mind fixed upon the capital, I meant to content myself with beating whatever force that might stand directly in the way of that conquest—being morally sure that all smaller objects would soon follow that crowning event.

The city of Puebla, washed by a fine, flowing stream, is near the centre of a valley of uncommon fertility and beauty, producing, annually, two abundant crops for the subsistence of men and animals—one by rains, and the other by artificial irrigation. All the cereals—wheat, barley, maize and rye; all the grasses, including clover, lucerne, and timothy, and all the fruit-trees—the apple, peach, apricot and pear, grow here as well as in the region of Frederic, Maryland—the elevation (near seven thousand feet above the ocean) making a difference in climate, equal to

eighteen or twenty degrees of latitude. Many objects within the horizon of Puebla are among the sublimest features of nature. The white peak of Orizaba, the most distant, may always be seen in bright weather. The Malinche mountain, near by, is generally capped with snow; Popocatepetl and his white sister, always, since the first snow fell after the creation. The city itself, with her hundred steeples and cathedral, in majestic repose—seen from a certain elevation, is itself a magnificent object in the general landscape.

During this halt, every corps of the army in succession, made a most interesting excursion of six miles, to the ruins of the ancient city of Cholula, long, in point of civilization and art, the Etruria of this continent, and in respect to religion, the Mecca of many of the earliest tribes known to tradition. Down to the time of Cortes, a little more than three hundred years before the Americans, Cholula, containing an ingenious and peaceable population of perhaps one hundred and fifty thousand souls, impressed with a *unique* type of civilization, had fallen off, in 1547, to a miserable hamlet, its towers and dwellings of sun-baked bricks and stucco, in heaps of ruins. From these melancholy wrecks are yet disinterred productions of art of great



beauty and delicacy, in metals and porcelain, both for ornament and use. The same people also manufactured cloths of cotton and the fibre of the agave plant.

One grand feature, denoting the ancient grandeur of Cholula, stands but little affected by the lapse of perhaps thousands of years—a pyramid built of alternate layers of brick and clay, some two hundred feet in height, with a square basis of more than forty acres, running up to a plateau of seventy yards square. There stood in the time of Cortes, the great pagan temple of the Cholulans, with a perpetual blazing fire on its altar, seen in the night many miles around. This the Spaniards soon replaced by a *bijou* of a church, something larger than the *Casa Santa* at Loretto, with a beautiful altar and many pictures. The ascent to this plateau is by a flight of some hundred and forty steps.

The prosperity of Cholula, in 1520, was already on the decline, having recently fallen under the harsh rule of the Montezumas, and it now sustained a heavy blow at the hands of Cortes, an invited guest, who, to punish a detected conspiracy, that was intended to compass the destruction of his entire army, massacred more than six thousand of the inhabitants, including most of the chiefs, besides destroying entire streets of houses.

An admirer of scenery, and curious to view the ruins of Cholula, the autobiographer, one bright morning in June, suddenly determined to overtake a fine brigade of regulars that had advanced on that excursion, half an hour before. Even escorted by a squadron of cavalry this was an enterprise not without some danger, considering that he could make no movement without causing several citizens to fly off at full speed, on fine Andalusian horses, to report the fact to detachments of cavalry lurking in the vicinity.

Coming up with the brigade marching at ease,\* all intoxicated with the fine air and splendid scenery, he was, as usual, received with hearty and protracted cheers. The group of officers who surrounded him, differed widely in the objects of their admiration—some preferring this or that snow-capped mountain, others the city, and several the pyramid of Cholula, that was now opening upon the view. An appeal from all was made to the general-in-chief. He emphatically replied: "I differ from you all. My greatest

\* Troops, marching at ease, bear their arms on either shoulder or in either hand, always keeping the muzzles of their arms up, and are at liberty to talk, laugh, sing or crack their jokes to their heart's content—only taking care not to wound their ranks.



delight is in this fine body of troops, without whom, we can never sleep in the Halls of the Montezumas, or in our own homes." The word was caught up by some of the rank and file, marching abreast, and passed rapidly to the front and rear of the column, each platoon, in succession, rending the air with its acclamation.

## CHAPTER XXX.

ADVANCE ON THE CAPITAL—HALT AT AYOTLA—RECON-  
NAISSANCES—SAN AUGUSTIN—CONTRERAS.

AT length reinforcements began to approach. Lieutenant-Colonel McIntosh with some eight hundred men, escorting a large train, was checked and delayed by the enemy in the march near Jalapa; but being soon joined by Brigadier-General Cadwallader, with a portion of his brigade and a field battery, the enemy was swept away and the two detachments arrived in safety at Puebla. Major-General Pillow followed with another detachment of a thousand men, and finally came Brigadier-General Pierce (August the 6th) with a brigade of two thousand five hundred.