

with his own countrymen that it has been printed and reprinted, with all the refinements of editorial luxury. It has been translated into the principal languages of Europe; and such is the charm of its composition, and its exquisite finish as a work of art, that it will doubtless be as imperishable as the language in which it is written, or the memory of the events which it records.

At this place also we are to take leave of Father Sahagun, who has accompanied us through our narrative. As his information was collected from the traditions of the natives, the contemporaries of the Conquest, it has been of considerable importance in corroborating or contradicting the statements of the Conquerors. Yet its value in this respect is much impaired by the wild and random character of many of the Aztec traditions,—so absurd, indeed, as to carry their own refutation with them. Where the passions are enlisted, what is too absurd to find credit?

The Twelfth Book—as it would appear from his Preface, the Ninth Book originally—of his *Historia de la Nueva-España* is devoted to the account of the Conquest. In 1585, thirty years after the first draft, he re-wrote this part of his great work, moved to it, as he tells us, “by the desire to correct the defects of the first account, in which some things had found their way that had better been omitted, and other things omitted which were well deserving of record.”\* It might be supposed that the obloquy which the missionary had brought on his head by his honest recital of the Aztec traditions would have made him more circumspect in this *rifacimento* of his former narrative. But I have not found it so, or that there has been any effort to mitigate the statements that bore hardest on his countrymen. As this manuscript copy must have been that which the author himself deemed the most correct, since it is his last revision, and as it is more copious than the printed narrative, I have been usually guided by it.

Señor Bustamante is mistaken in supposing that the edition of this Twelfth Book which he published in Mexico in 1829 is from the reformed copy of Sahagun. The manuscript cited in these pages is undoubtedly a transcript of that copy. For in the Preface to it, as we have seen, the author himself declares it. In the intrinsic value of the two drafts there is, after all, but little difference.

\* “En el libro nono, donde se trata esta Conquista, se hicieron ciertos defectos; y fué, que algunas cosas se pusieron en la narracion de este Conquista que fueron mal puestas; y otras se callaron, que fueron mal calladas. Por ésta causa, este año de mil quinientos ochenta y cinco, enmende este Libro.” MS.

## BOOK SEVENTH.

(CONCLUSION.)

### SUBSEQUENT CAREER OF CORTÉS.

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## BOOK VII.

(CONCLUSION.)

### SUBSEQUENT CAREER OF CORTÉS.

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#### CHAPTER I.

TORTURE OF GUATEMOZIN.—SUBMISSION OF THE COUNTRY.—REBUILDING OF THE CAPITAL.—MISSION TO CASTILE.—COMPLAINTS AGAINST CORTÉS.—HE IS CONFIRMED IN HIS AUTHORITY.

1521-1522.

THE history of the Conquest of Mexico terminates with the surrender of the capital. But the history of the Conquest is so intimately blended with that of the extraordinary man who achieved it, that there would seem to be an incompleteness in the narrative if it were not continued to the close of his personal career. This part of the subject has been very imperfectly treated by preceding writers. I shall therefore avail myself of the authentic materials in my possession to give a brief sketch of the brilliant but checkered fortunes which marked the subsequent career of Cortés.

The first ebullition of triumph was succeeded in the army by very different feelings, as they beheld the

scanty spoil gleaned from the conquered city, and as they brooded over the inadequate compensation they were to receive for all their toils and sufferings. Some of the soldiers of Narvaez, with feelings of bitter disappointment, absolutely declined to accept their shares. Some murmured audibly against the general, and others against Guatemozin, who, they said, could reveal, if he chose, the place where the treasures were secreted. The white walls of the barracks were covered with epigrams and pasquinades levelled at Cortés, whom they accused of taking "one fifth of the booty as commander-in-chief, and another fifth as king." As Guatemozin refused to make any revelation in respect to the treasure, or rather declared there was none to make, the soldiers loudly insisted on his being put to the torture. But for this act of violence, so contrary to the promise of protection recently made to the Indian prince, Cortés was not prepared; and he resisted the demand, until the men, instigated, it is said, by the royal treasurer, Alderete, accused the general of a secret understanding with Guatemozin, and of a design to defraud the Spanish sovereigns and themselves. These unmerited taunts stung Cortés to the quick, and in an evil hour he delivered the Aztec prince into the hands of his enemies, to work their pleasure on him.

But the hero who had braved death in its most awful forms was not to be intimidated by bodily suffering. When his companion, the cacique of Tacuba, who was put to the torture with him, testified his anguish by his groans, Guatemozin coldly rebuked him by exclaiming, "And do you think I, then, am taking my pleasure in

my bath?"<sup>1</sup> At length Cortés, ashamed of the base part he was led to play, rescued the Aztec prince from his tormentors before it was too late,—not, however, before it was too late for his own honor, which has suffered an indelible stain from this treatment of his royal prisoner.

All that could be wrung from Guatemozin by the extremity of his sufferings was the confession that much gold had been thrown into the water. But, although the best divers were employed, under the eye of Cortés himself, to search the oozy bed of the lake, only a few articles of inconsiderable value were drawn from it. They had better fortune in searching a pond in Guatemozin's gardens, where a sun, as it is called, probably one of the Aztec calendar wheels, made of pure gold, of great size and thickness, was discovered. The cacique of Tacuba had confessed that a quantity of treasure was buried in the ground at one of his own villas. But when the Spaniards carried him to the spot he alleged that "his only motive for saying so was the hope of dying on the road!" The soldiers, disappointed in their expectations, now, with the usual caprice of an unlicensed mob, changed their tone, and openly accused their commander of cruelty to his captive. The charge was well deserved,—but not from them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "¿Estoi yo en algun deleite, ó baño?" (Gomara, Crónica, cap. 145.) The literal version is not so poetical as "the bed of flowers," into which this exclamation of Guatemozin is usually rendered.

<sup>2</sup> The most particular account of this disgraceful transaction is given by Bernal Diaz, one of those selected to accompany the lord of Tacuba to his villa. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 157.) He notices the affair with becoming indignation, but excuses Cortés from a voluntary part in it.

The tidings of the fall of Mexico were borne on the wings of the wind over the plateau, and down the broad sides of the Cordilleras. Many envoys made their appearance from the remote Indian tribes, anxious to learn the truth of the astounding intelligence and to gaze with their own eyes on the ruins of the detested city. Among these were ambassadors from the kingdom of Michoacán, a powerful and independent state, inhabited by one of the kindred Nahuatlac races, and lying between the Mexican Valley and the Pacific. The embassy was soon followed by the king of the country in person, who came in great state to the Castilian quarters. Cortés received him with equal parade, astonished him by the brilliant evolutions of his cavalry and by the thunders of his ordnance, and escorted him in one of the brigantines round the fallen city, whose pile of smouldering palaces and temples was all that now remained of the once dread capital of Anahuac. The Indian monarch gazed with silent awe on the scene of desolation, and eagerly craved the protection of the invincible beings who had caused it.<sup>3</sup> His example was followed by ambassadors from the remote regions which had never yet had intercourse

<sup>3</sup> Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 308.—The simple statement of the Conqueror contrasts strongly with the pompous narrative of Herrera (Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 3, cap. 3), and with that of Father Cavo, who may have drawn a little on his own imagination. "Cortés en una canoa ricamente entapizada, llevó á el Rey Vehichilze, y á los nobles de Michoacan á México. Este es uno de los palacios de Mochtezoma (les decia); allí está el gran templo de Huitzilopuctli; estas ruinas son del grande edificio de Quauhtemoc, aquellos de la gran plaza del mercado. Conmovido Vehichilze de este espectáculo se le saltaron las lágrimas." Los tres Siglos de México (México, 1836), tom. i. p. 13.

with the Spaniards. Cortés, who saw the boundaries of his empire thus rapidly enlarging, availed himself of the favorable dispositions of the natives to ascertain the products and resources of their several countries.

Two small detachments were sent into the friendly state of Michoacán, through which country they penetrated to the borders of the great Southern ocean. No European had as yet descended on its shores so far north of the equator. The Spaniards eagerly advanced into its waters, erected a cross on the sandy margin, and took possession of it, with all the usual formalities, in the name of their Catholic Majesties. On their return, they visited some of the rich districts towards the north, since celebrated for their mineral treasures, and brought back samples of gold and Californian pearls, with an account of their discovery of the ocean. The imagination of Cortés was kindled, and his soul swelled with exultation, at the splendid prospects which their discoveries unfolded. "Most of all," he writes to the emperor, "do I exult in the tidings brought me of the Great Ocean. For in it, as cosmographers, and those learned men who know most about the Indies, inform us, are scattered the rich isles teeming with gold and spices and precious stones."<sup>4</sup> He at once sought a favorable spot for a colony on the shores of the Pacific, and made arrangements for the construction of four vessels to explore the mysteries

<sup>4</sup> "Que todos los que tienen alguna ciencia, y experiencia en la Navegacion de las Indias, han tenido por muy cierto, que descubriendo por estas Partes la Mar del Sur, se habian de hallar muchas Islas ricas de Oro, y Perlas, y Piedras preciosas, y Especeria, y se habian de descubrir y hallar otros muchos secretos y cosas admirables." Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 302, 303.

of these unknown seas. This was the beginning of his noble enterprises for discovery in the Gulf of California.

Although the greater part of Anahuac, overawed by the successes of the Spaniards, had tendered their allegiance, there were some, especially on the southern slopes of the Cordilleras, who showed a less submissive disposition. Cortés instantly sent out strong detachments under Sandoval and Alvarado to reduce the enemy and establish colonies in the conquered provinces. The highly colored reports which Alvarado, who had a quick scent for gold, gave of the mineral wealth of Oaxaca, no doubt operated with Cortés in determining him to select this region for his own particular domain.

The commander-in-chief, with his little band of Spaniards, now daily recruited by reinforcements from the Islands, still occupied the quarters of Cojohuacan, which they had taken up at the termination of the siege. Cortés did not immediately decide in what quarter of the Valley to establish the new capital which was to take the place of the ancient Tenochtitlan. The situation of the latter, surrounded by water and exposed to occasional inundations, had some obvious disadvantages. But there was no doubt that in some part of the elevated and central plateau of the Valley the new metropolis should be built, to which both European and Indian might look up as to the head of the colonial empire of Spain. At length he decided on retaining the site of the ancient city, moved to it, as he says, "by its past renown, and the memory"—not an enviable one, surely—"in which it was held among the nations;" and he made preparations for the recon-

struction of the capital on a scale of magnificence which should, in his own language, "raise her to the rank of Queen of the surrounding provinces, in the same manner as she had been of yore."<sup>5</sup>

The labor was to be performed by the Indian population, drawn from all quarters of the Valley, and including the Mexicans themselves, great numbers of whom still lingered in the neighborhood of their ancient residence. At first they showed reluctance, and even symptoms of hostility, when called to this work of humiliation by their conquerors. But Cortés had the address to secure some of the principal chiefs in his interests, and under their authority and direction the labor of their countrymen was conducted. The deep groves of the Valley and the forests of the neighboring hills supplied cedar, cypress, and other durable woods for the interior of the buildings, and the quarries of *tetzontli* and the ruins of the ancient edifices furnished abundance of stone. As there were no beasts of draught employed by the Aztecs, an immense number of hands was necessarily required for the work. All within the immediate control of Cortés were pressed into the service. The spot so recently deserted now swarmed with multitudes of Indians of various tribes, and with Europeans, the latter directing, while the others labored. The prophecy of the Aztecs was accomplished.<sup>6</sup> And the work of reconstruction went

<sup>5</sup> "Y crea Vuestra Magestad, que cada día se irá ennobleciendo en tal manera, que como antes fué Principal, y Señora de todas estas Provincias, que lo será también de aquí adelante." Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 307.

<sup>6</sup> *Ante*, p. 160.

forward with a rapidity like that shown by an Asiatic despot, who concentrates the population of an empire on the erection of a favorite capital.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the condition of Cortés, notwithstanding the success of his arms, suggested many causes for anxiety. He had not received a word of encouragement from home,—not a word, indeed, of encouragement or censure. In what light his irregular course was regarded by the government or the nation was still matter of painful uncertainty. He now prepared another Letter to the emperor, the Third in the published series, written in the same simple and energetic style which has entitled his Commentaries, as they may be called, to a comparison with those of Cæsar. It was dated at Cojohuacan, May 15th, 1522, and in it he recapitulated the events of the final siege of the capital, and his subsequent operations, accompanied by many sagacious reflections, as usual, on the character and resources of the country. With this letter he purposed to send the royal fifth of the spoils of Mexico, and a rich collection of fabrics, especially of gold and jewelry wrought into many rare and fanciful forms. One of the jewels was an emerald, cut in a pyramidal shape,

<sup>7</sup> Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 4, cap. 8.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 32.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 162.—“En la cual (la edificación de la ciudad) los primeros años andaba mas gente que en la edificación del templo de Jerusalem, porque era tanta la gente que andaba en las obras, que apenas podía hombre romper por algunas calles y calzadas, aunque son muy anchas.” (Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 1.) Ixtlixochitl supplies any blank which the imagination might leave, by filling it up with 400,000, as the number of natives employed in this work by Cortés! Venida de los Españoles, p. 60.

of so extraordinary a size that the base was as broad as the palm of the hand!<sup>8</sup> The collection was still further augmented by specimens of many of the natural products, as well as of animals peculiar to the country.<sup>9</sup>

“Sirviéron al Emperador con muchas piedras, i entre ellas con na esmeralda fina, como la palma, pero quadrada, i que se remataba n punta como pirámide.” (Gomara, Crónica, cap. 146.) Martyr confirms the account of this wonderful emerald, which, he says, “was reported to the king and council to be nearly as broad as the palm of the hand, and which those who had seen it thought could not be procured for any sum.” De Orbe Novo, dec. 8, cap. 4.\*

<sup>9</sup> [Cortés availed himself of the same opportunity by which the royal fifth was despatched, to send costly or curious presents to numerous individuals and churches in Spain. For this fact I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. George Sumner, who, when in Spain, made a visit to the Archives of Simancas, from which he has furnished me with some interesting particulars for the period on which I am

\* [Alaman, however, denies that this stone was an emerald, or that any true emeralds were found by the Conquerors in Mexico, notwithstanding the frequent mention of them in contemporary relations. “There are no emeralds,” he says, “in our republic; and the stones mistaken for them at the time of the Conquest were jade or serpentine.” As an evidence of the ignorance on this subject common in Europe at a former period, he cites the famous instance of the *Sacro Catino* at Genoa, regarded for ages as an emerald of priceless value, but now proved to be an imitation. (Disertaciones históricas, tom. i. p. 161.) It is certain that no emeralds are now found in any part of North America. Yet the Conquerors would seem to have been more discriminating than Señor Alaman represents them. They distinguished the *chalchivill*, supposed to have been jade, from the emerald, and rejected as valueless other green stones prized by the natives. The case of the *Sacro Catino* does not apply, since it is not pretended that the Mexicans possessed the art of imitating precious stones by means of paste. The fact, therefore, that the emeralds sent and taken to Europe by Cortés were there recognized as genuine affords a presumptive proof in their favor, which has been generally accepted as sufficient by modern writers on the subject.—ED.]