The army wrote a letter to accompany that of Cortés, in which they expatiated on his manifold services and besought the emperor to ratify his proceedings and confirm him in his present authority. The important mission was intrusted to two of the general's confidential officers, Quiñones and Avila. It proved to be unfortunate. The agents touched at the Azores, where Quiñones lost his life in a brawl. Avila, resuming his voyage, was captured by a French privateer, and the rich spoils of the Aztecs went into the treasury of his Most Christian Majesty. Francis the First gazed with pardonable envy on the treasures which his Imperial rival drew from his colonial domains; and he intimated his discontent by peevishly expressing a desire "to see the clause in Adam's testament which entitled his brothers of Castile and Portugal to divide the New World between them." Avila found means, through a private hand, of transmitting his letters, the most important part of his charge, to Spain, where they reached the court in safety.[10]

engaged. In a file endorsed *Papeles de Cortés* he met with a list, without date, but evidently belonging to the year 1522, of the gold, plumage, and ornaments sent by Cortés to the different persons and institutions in Spain. "The policy of Cortés and his clear-sightedness," Mr. Sumner justly remarks, "are well shown by this. Not a church, not a shrine of any fame, throughout Spain, has been forgotten. To Santa María del Antigua in Sevilla, a rich offering of gold and of plumage; to Santa María del Pilar in Zaragoza, the same; another again to San Jago de Compostella; and one to the Cartuja of Seville, in which the bones of Columbus were then lying. There are plumages and gold for every place of importance. Then the bishops and men of power are not forgotten; for to them also are rich presents sent. In a time when there were no gazettes to trumpet one's fame, what surer way to notoriety than this? What surer way, in Spain, for gaining that security which Cortés so much needed?"]

While these events were passing, affairs in Spain had been taking an unfavorable turn for Cortés. It may seem strange that the brilliant exploits of the Conqueror of Mexico should have attracted so little notice from the government at home. But the country was at that time distracted by the dismal feuds of the *comunidades*. The sovereign was in Germany, too much engrossed by the cares of the empire to allow leisure for those of his own kingdom. The reins of government were in the hands of Adrian, Charles's preceptor; a man whose ascetic and studious habits better qualified him to preside over a college of monks than to fill, as he successively did, the most important posts in Christendom,—first as Regent of Castile, afterwards as Head of the Church. Yet the slow and hesitating Adrian could not have so long passed over in silence the important services of Cortés, but for the hostile interference of Velasquez, the governor of Cuba, sustained by Fonseca, bishop of Burgos, the chief person in the Spanish colonial department. This prelate, from his elevated station, possessed paramount authority in all matters relating to the Indies, and he had exerted it from the first, as we have already seen, in a manner most prejudicial to the interests of Cortés. He had now the address to obtain a warrant from the regent, which was designed to ruin the Conqueror at the very moment when his great enterprise had been crowned with success. The instrument, after

[10] Peter Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec 8, cap. 4.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 169.

recapitulating the offences of Cortés in regard to Velasquez, appoints a commissioner with full power to visit the country, to institute an inquiry into the general's conduct, to suspend him from his functions, and even to seize his person and sequestrate his property, until the pleasure of the Castilian court could be known. The warrant was signed by Adrian, at Burgos, on the 11th of April, 1521, and countersigned by Fonseca.[11]

The individual selected for the delicate task of apprehending Cortés and bringing him to trial on the theatre of his own discoveries and in the heart of his own camp was named Cristóval de Tápia, *veedor*, or inspector, of the gold founderies in St. Domingo. He was a feeble, vacillating man, as little competent to cope with Cortés in civil matters as Narvaez had shown himself to be in military.

The commissioner, clothed in his brief authority, landed, in December, at Villa Rica. But he was coldly received by the magistrates of the city. His credentials were disputed, on the ground of some technical informality. It was objected, moreover, that his commission was founded on obvious misrepresentations to the government; and, notwithstanding a most courteous and complimentary epistle which he received from Cortés, congratulating him, as an old friend, on

[11] The instrument also conferred similar powers in respect to an inquiry into Narvaez's treatment of the licentiate Ayllon. The whole document is cited in a deposition drawn up by the notary, Alonso de Vergara, setting forth the proceedings of Tápia and the municipality of Villa Rica, dated at Cempoalla, December 24, 1521. The MS. forms part of the collection of Don Vargas Ponçe, in the archives of the Academy of History at Madrid.

his arrival, the *veedor* soon found that he was neither to be permitted to penetrate far into the country nor to exercise any control there. He loved money; and, as Cortés knew the weak side of his "old friend," he proposed to purchase his horses, slaves, and equipage, at a tempting price. The dreams of disappointed ambition were gradually succeeded by those of avarice; and the discomfited commissioner consented to reembark for Cuba, well freighted with gold, if not with glory, and provided with fresh matter of accusation against the high-handed measures of Cortés.[12]

Thus left in undisputed possession of authority, the Spanish commander went forward with vigor in his plans for the settlement of his conquests. The Panuchese, a fierce people on the borders of the Panuco, on the Atlantic coast, had taken up arms against the Spaniards. Cortés marched at the head of a considerable force into their country, defeated them in two pitched battles, and, after a severe campaign, reduced the warlike tribe to subjection.

A subsequent insurrection was punished with greater severity. They rose on the Spaniards, massacred five hundred of their oppressors, and menaced with destruction the neighboring settlement of San Estevan. Cortés ordered Sandoval to chastise the insurgents; and that officer, after a campaign of incredible hardship, com-

[12] Relacion de Vergara, MS.—Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 309–314.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 158.—The *regidores* of Mexico and other places remonstrated against Cortés' leaving the Valley to meet Tápia, on the ground that his presence was necessary to overawe the natives. (MS., Coyoacan, Dec. 12, 1521.) The general acquiesced in the force of a remonstrance which it is not improbable was made at his own suggestion.

pletely routed the barbarians, captured four hundred of their chiefs, and, after the affected formalities of a trial, sentenced every man of them to the stake or the gibbet. "By which means," says Cortés, "God be praised! the safety of the Spaniards was secured, and the province once more restored to tranquillity and peace."[13] He had omitted to mention in his letter his ungenerous treatment of Guatemozin. But the undisguised and *naïve* manner, so to speak, in which he details these circumstances to the emperor, shows that he attached no discredit to the deed. It was the just recompense of *rebellion;* a word that has been made the apology for more atrocities than any other word,—save *religion.*

During this interval the great question in respect to Cortés and the colony had been brought to a decisive issue. The general must have succumbed under the insidious and implacable attacks of his enemies, but for the sturdy opposition of a few powerful friends zealously devoted to his interests. Among them may be mentioned his own father, Don Martin Cortés, a discreet and efficient person,[14] and the duke de Bejar, a powerful nobleman, who from an early period had warmly espoused the cause of Cortés. By their representations the timid regent was at length convinced that the measures of Fonseca were prejudicial to the interests of the crown, and an order was issued inter-

[13] "Como ya (loado nuestro Señor) estaba toda la Provincia muy pacífica, y segura." Rel. Quarta de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 367.

[14] The Muñoz collection of MSS. contains a power of attorney given by Cortés to his father, authorizing him to manage all negotiations with the emperor and with private persons, to conduct all lawsuits on his behalf, to pay over and receive money, etc.

dicting him from further interference in any matters in which Cortés was concerned.

While the exasperated prelate was chafing under this affront, both the commissioners Tápia and Narvaez arrived in Castile. The latter had been ordered to Cojohuacan after the surrender of the capital, where his cringing demeanor formed a striking contrast to the swaggering port which he had assumed on first entering the country. When brought into the presence of Cortés, he knelt down, and would have kissed his hand, but the latter raised him from the ground, and, during his residence in his quarters, treated him with every mark of respect. The general soon afterwards permitted his unfortunate rival to return to Spain, where he proved, as might have been anticipated, a most bitter and implacable enemy.[15]

These two personages, reinforced by the discontented prelate, brought forward their several charges against Cortés with all the acrimony which mortified vanity and the thirst of vengeance could inspire. Adrian was no longer in Spain, having been called to the chair of St. Peter; but Charles the Fifth, after his long absence, had returned to his dominions, in July, 1522. The royal ear was instantly assailed with accusations of Cortés on the one hand and his vindication on the other, till the young monarch, perplexed, and unable to decide on the merits of the question, referred the whole subject to the decision of a board selected for the purpose. It was drawn partly from the members of his privy council, and partly from the Indian depart-

[15] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 158.

ment, with the Grand Chancellor of Naples as its president, and constituted altogether a tribunal of the highest respectability for integrity and wisdom.[16]

By this learned body a patient and temperate hearing was given to the parties. The enemies of Cortés accused him of having seized and finally destroyed the fleet intrusted to him by Velasquez and fitted out at the governor's expense; of having afterwards usurped powers in contempt of the royal prerogative; of the unjustifiable treatment of Narvaez and Tápia, when they had been lawfully commissioned to supersede him; of cruelty to the natives, and especially to Guatemozin; of embezzling the royal treasures, and remitting but a small part of its dues to the crown; of squandering the revenues of the conquered countries in useless and wasteful schemes, and particularly in rebuilding the capital on a plan of unprecedented extravagance; of pursuing, in short, a system of violence and extortion, without respect to the public interest or any other end than his own selfish aggrandizement.

In answer to these grave charges, the friends of Cortés adduced evidence to show that he had defrayed with his own funds two-thirds of the cost of the expedition. The powers of Velasquez extended only to traffic, not to establish a colony. Yet the interest of the crown required the latter. The army had therefore necessarily assumed this power to themselves; but, having done so, they had sent intelligence of their proceedings to the emperor and solicited his confirmation of them. The rupture with Narvaez was that commander's own fault; since Cortés would have met him amicably, had not the violent measures of his rival, threatening the ruin of the expedition, compelled him to an opposite course. The treatment of Tápia was vindicated on the grounds alleged to that officer by the municipality at Cempoalla. The violence to Guatemozin was laid at the door of Alderete, the royal treasurer, who had instigated the soldiers to demand it. The remittances to the crown, it was clearly proved, so far from falling short of the legitimate fifth, had considerably exceeded it. If the general had expended the revenues of the country on costly enterprises and public works, it was for the interest of the country that he did so, and he had incurred a heavy debt by straining his own credit to the utmost for the same great objects. Neither did they deny that, in the same spirit, he was now rebuilding Mexico on a scale suited to the metropolis of a vast and opulent empire.

[16] Sayas, Annales de Aragon (Zaragoza, 1666), cap. 63, 78.—It is a sufficient voucher for the respectability of this court that we find in it the name of Dr. Galindez de Carbajal, an eminent Castilian jurist, grown gray in the service of Ferdinand and Isabella, whose confidence he enjoyed to the highest degree.

They enlarged on the opposition he had experienced throughout his whole career from the governor of Cuba, and still more from the bishop of Burgos, which latter functionary, instead of affording him the aid to have been expected, had discouraged recruits, stopped his supplies, sequestered such property as from time to time he had sent to Spain, and falsely represented his remittances to the crown as coming from the governor of Cuba. In short, such and so numerous were the obstacles thrown in his path that Cortés had been heard to say "he had found it more difficult to contend against his own countrymen than against the

Aztecs." They concluded with expatiating on the brilliant results of his expedition, and asked if the council were prepared to dishonor the man who, in the face of such obstacles and with scarcely other resources than what he found in himself, had won an empire for Castile such as was possessed by no European potentate![17]

This last appeal was irresistible. However irregular had been the manner of proceeding, no one could deny the grandeur of the results. There was not a Spaniard that could be insensible to such services, or that would not have cried out "Shame!" at an ungenerous requital of them. There were three Flemings in the council; but there seems to have been no difference of opinion in the body. It was decided that neither Velasquez nor Fonseca should interfere further in the concerns of New Spain. The difficulties of the former with Cortés were regarded in the nature of a private suit; and, as such, redress must be sought by the regular course of law. The acts of Cortés were confirmed in their full extent. He was constituted Governor, Captain-General, and Chief Justice of New Spain, with power to appoint to all offices, civil and military, and to order any person to leave the country whose residence there he might deem prejudicial to the interests of the crown. This judgment of the council was ratified by Charles the Fifth, and the commission investing Cortés with these ample powers was signed by the emperor at Valladolid, October 15th, 1522. A liberal salary was provided, to enable the governor of

[17] Sayas, Annales de Aragon, cap. 78.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 4, cap. 3.—Probanza en la Villa Segura, MS.—Declaraciones de Puertocarrero y de Montejo, MS.

New Spain to maintain his office with suitable dignity. The favor of his sovereign was rendered still more welcome by a letter of the same date, written by him to the general, in which, after expatiating on the services of Cortés, he declares it to be his intention to make him such a requital as they well deserve.[18] The principal officers were recompensed with honors and substantial emoluments; and the troops, together with some privileges grateful to the vanity of the soldier, received the promise of liberal grants of land. The emperor still further complimented them by a letter written to the army with his own hand, in which he acknowledged its services in the fullest manner.[19]

From this hour the influence of Fonseca in the Indian department was at an end. He did not long survive his chagrin, as he died in the following year. No man was in a situation to do more for the prosperity of his country than the bishop of Burgos. For more than thirty years, ever since the first dawn of discovery under Columbus, he had held supreme control over colonial affairs; and it lay with him, therefore, in an especial degree, to give ardor to enterprise, and to foster the youthful fortunes of the colonies. But he lay like a

[18] ["E porque soy certificado de lo mucho que vos en ese descubrimiento é conquista y en tornar á ganar la dicha ciudad é provincias habeis fecho é trabajado, de que me he tenido é tengo por muy servido, é tengo la voluntad que es razon para vos favorecer y hacer la merced que vuestros servicios y trabajos merecen."—The whole letter is inserted by Alaman in his Disertaciones históricas, tom. i. apénd. 2, p. 144, et seq.]

[19] Nombramiento de Governador y Capitan General y Justicia Mayor de Nueva-España, MS.—Also Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 168.

blight upon them. He looked with an evil eye on the most illustrious of the Spanish discoverers, and sought only to throw impediments in their career. Such had been his conduct towards Columbus, and such to Cortés. By a wise and generous policy, he might have placed his name among the great lights of his age. As it was, he only served to bring these into greater lustre by contrast with his own dark and malignant nature. His career shows the overweening ascendency which the ecclesiastical profession possessed in Castile in the sixteenth century; when it could raise a man to so important a station, for which he was totally unfit, and keep him there after he had proved himself to be so.[20]

The messengers who bore the commission of Cortés to Mexico touched on their way at Cuba, where the tidings were proclaimed by sound of trumpet. It was a death-blow to the hopes of Velasquez. Exasperated by the failure of his schemes, impoverished by the expense of expeditions of which others had reaped the fruits, he had still looked forward to eventual redress, and cherished the sweet hope of vengeance,—long delayed. That hope was now gone. There was slight chance of redress, he well knew, in the tedious and thorny litigation of the Castilian courts. Ruined in fortune, dishonored before the nation, the haughty spirit of the governor was humbled in the dust. He

[20] The character of Fonseca has been traced by the same hand which has traced that of Columbus. (Irving's Life and Voyages of Columbus, Appendix, No. 32.) Side by side they will go down to posterity in the beautiful page of the historian, though the characters of the two individuals have been inscribed with pens as different from each other as the golden and iron pen which Paolo Giovio tells us he employed in his compositions.

would take no comfort, but fell into a sullen melancholy, and in a few months died—if report be true—of a broken heart.[21]

The portrait usually given of Velasquez is not favorable. Yet Las Casas speaks kindly of him, and, when his prejudices are not involved, there can be no better authority. But Las Casas knew him when, in his earlier days, the missionary first landed in Cuba. The governor treated him with courtesy, and even confidence; and it was natural that the condescension of a man of high family and station should have made its impression on the feelings of the poor ecclesiastic. In most accounts he is depicted as a haughty, irascible person, jealous of authority and covetous of wealth. He quarrelled with Grijalva, Cortés' predecessor, apparently without cause. With as little reason, he broke with Cortés before he left the port. He proposed objects to himself in their nature incompatible. He proposed that others should fight his battles, and that he should win the laurels; that others should make discoveries, and that he should reap the fruits of them. None but a weak mind would have conformed to his conditions, and a weak mind could not have effected his objects. His appointment of Cortés put him in a false position for the rest of his life. His efforts to retrieve his position only made things worse. The appointment of Cortés to the command was scarcely a greater error than the subsequent appointment of Narvaez and of Tápia. The life of Velasquez was a series of errors.

Narvaez had no better fate than his friend the gov-

[21] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 158.

ernor of Cuba. In the hope of retrieving his fortunes, he continued to pursue his adventurous career, and embarked in an expedition to Honduras. It was his last; and Las Casas, who had little love for the Conquerors, and who had watched the acts of cruelty perpetrated by Narvaez, concludes the notice of his death with the assurance that the "devil took possession of his soul."

The announcement of the emperor's commission confirming Cortés in the supreme authority of New Spain was received there with general acclamation. The army rejoiced in having at last secured not merely an amnesty for their irregular proceedings, but a distinct acknowledgment of their services. The nomination of Cortés to the supreme command put his mind at ease as to the past, and opened to him a noble theatre for future enterprise. The soldiers congratulated themselves on the broad powers conferred on their commander, and, as they reckoned up their scars and their services, indulged in golden dreams and the most vague and visionary expectations. It is not strange that their expectations should have been disappointed.

CHAPTER II.

MODERN MEXICO. — SETTLEMENT OF THE COUNTRY. — CONDITION OF THE NATIVES. — CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES. — CULTIVATION OF THE SOIL. — VOYAGES AND EXPEDITIONS.

1522–1524.

In less than four years from the destruction of Mexico, a new city had risen on its ruins, which, if inferior to the ancient capital in extent, surpassed it in magnificence and strength. It occupied so exactly the same site as its predecessor, that the *plaza mayor*, or great square, was the same spot which had been covered by the huge *teocalli* and the palace of Montezuma; while the principal streets took their departure as before from this central point, and, passing through the whole length of the city, terminated at the principal causeways. Great alterations, however, took place in the fashion of the architecture. The streets were widened, many of the canals were filled up, and the edifices were constructed on a plan better accommodated to European taste and the wants of a European population.

On the site of the temple of the Aztec war-god rose the stately cathedral dedicated to St. Francis;[1] and, as

[1] [According to Señor Alaman, the cathedral, instead of being dedicated to Saint Francis, was consecrated to the Assumption of the Virgin. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. ii. p. 254.]