

show of desertion when I had least expected it, I said to them that I needed not their assistance; and, turning towards the Indians who accompanied me, exposed to them the necessity we lay under of using the most strenuous exertions to reach the other side, for if this point were not effected we should all perish from hunger. I then pointed in the opposite direction, in which the province of Acalan lay, and cheered their spirits with the prospect of there obtaining provisions in abundance, without taking into consideration the ample supply which would be afforded us by the caravels. I also promised them, in the name of your Majesty, that they should be recompensed to the fullest extent of their wishes, and that not a person who contributed his assistance should go unrewarded. My little oration had the best possible effect with the Indians, who promised, to a man, that their exertions should only terminate with their lives. The Spaniards, ashamed of their previous conduct, surrounded me and requested that I would pardon their late act; alleging, in extenuation of their offence, the miserable position in which they were placed, obliged to support themselves with the unsavory roots which the earth supplied, and which were scarcely sufficient to keep them alive. They immediately proceeded to work, and, though frequently ready to fall from fatigue, never made another complaint. After four days' incessant labor the bridge was completed, and both horse and man passed without the slightest accident. The bridge was constructed in so solid a manner that it would be impossible to destroy it otherwise than by fire. More than one thousand beams were united for its completion, and every one of them was thicker than a man's body, and sixty feet long.

* * * * *

At two leagues' distance from this place, the mountains commenced. From no words of mine, nor of a more gifted man, can your Majesty form an adequate idea of the asperity and unevenness of the place which we were now ascending. He alone who has experienced the hardships of the route, and who himself has been an eye-witness, can be fully sensible of its difficulty. It will be sufficient for me to say, in order that your Majesty may have some notion of the labor which we had to undergo, that we were twelve days before we got entirely free of it,—a distance altogether of eight leagues! Sixty-eight horses died on the passage, the greater part having fallen down the precipices which abounded on every side; and the few that escaped seemed so overcome that we thought not a single one would ever afterwards prove serviceable. More than three months elapsed before they re-

covered from the effects of the journey. It never ceased to rain, day or night, from the time we entered the mountain until we left it; and the rock was of such a nature that the water passed away without collecting in any place in sufficient quantity to allow us to drink. Thus, in addition to the other hardships which we had to encounter, was that most pressing of all, thirst. Some of the horses suffered considerably from the want of this truly necessary article, and but for the culinary and other vessels which we had with us, and which served to receive some of the rain, neither man nor horse could possibly have escaped. A nephew of mine had a fall upon a piece of sharp rock, and fractured his leg in three or four places; thus was our labor increased, as the men had to carry him by turns. We had now but a league to journey before we could arrive at Tenas, the place which I mentioned as belonging to the chief of Tayco; but here a formidable obstacle presented itself, in a very wide and very large river, which was swollen by the continued rains. After searching for some time, one of the most surprising fords ever heard of was discovered. Some huge jutting cliffs arrest the progress of the river, in consequence of which it extends for a considerable space around. Between these cliffs are narrow channels, through which the water rushes with an impetuosity which baffles description. From one of these rocks to another we threw large trunks of trees, which had been felled with much labor. Ropes of bass-weed were affixed to these trunks; and thus, though at imminent risk of our lives, we crossed the river. If anybody had become giddy in the transit, he must unavoidably have perished. Of these passes there were upwards of twenty, and we took two whole days to get clear, by this extraordinary way.

* * * * *

It were indeed an arduous task for me to describe to your Majesty the joy which pervaded every countenance when this truly inspiring account was received. To be near the termination of a journey so beset with hardships and labor as ours had been, was an event that could not but be hailed with rapture. Our last four days' march subjected us to innumerable trials; as, besides being without any certainty of our proceeding in the right direction, we were ever in the heart of mountains abounding with precipices on every side. Many horses dropped on the way; and a cousin of mine, Juan Davilos by name, fell down a precipice and broke an arm. Had it not been for the suit of armor which he wore, he would have been infallibly dashed to pieces. As it was, besides having his arm broken, he was dreadfully

lacerated. His horse, upon which he was mounted, having no protection, was so wounded by the fall that we were obliged to leave him behind. With much difficulty we succeeded in extricating my cousin from his perilous situation. It would be an endless task to relate to your Majesty the many sufferings which we endured; amongst which the chief was from hunger; for, although we had some swine which we had brought from Mexico, upwards of eight days had elapsed without our having tasted bread. The fruit of the palm-tree boiled with hogs' flesh, and without any salt, which we had exhausted some time previous, formed our only sustenance. They were alike destitute of provisions at the place at which we had now arrived, where they lived in constant dread of an attack from the adjoining Spanish settlement. They needed not to fear such an event; as, from the situation in which I found the Spaniards, they were incapable of doing the slightest mischief. So elated were we all with our neighborhood to Nico that all our past troubles were soon forgotten, as are the dangers of the sea by the weather-beaten sailor, who on his arrival in port thinks no more of the perils he has encountered. We still suffered greatly from hunger; for even the unsavory roots were procured with the greatest difficulty; and, after we had been occupied many hours in collecting them, they were devoured with the greatest eagerness, in the shortest space of time imaginable.

No. XV.—See vol. iii. p. 328.

LAST LETTER OF CORTÉS TO THE EMPEROR.

[I give this Letter of Cortés entire, *Ultima y sentidísima Carta*, his "Last and most touching Letter," as it is styled by Vargas Ponce, who has embraced it in his important collection from the archives of Seville.*

* [It has since been printed in the Col. de Doc. inéd. para la Hist. de España, tom. i., affording an opportunity for correcting the almost innumerable errors which disfigure the transcription of Vargas Ponce and render it scarcely intelligible.—ED.]

It may be called touching, when we consider the tone of it, as compared with the former correspondence of its author, and the gloomy circumstances under which it was written. Yet we are not to take the complaints contained in it of his poverty too literally; since at his death, but three years after, he left immense estates. But these estates were so much embarrassed by his expensive and disastrous expeditions in the South Sea that his income during the rest of his life seems to have been scarcely sufficient to meet his ordinary expenditure. The last days of Cortés, wasted in ineffectual attempts to obtain redress from the court whom he had so signally served, remind us of the similar fate of Columbus. The history of both may teach us that the most brilliant career too often leads only to sorrow and disappointment, as the clouds gather round the sun at his setting.]

Pensé que haber trabajado en la juventud me aprovechara para que en la vejez tubiera descanso, y así ha quarenta años que me he ocupado en no dormir, mal comer, y á las veces ni bien ni mal, traer las armas á cuestras, poner la persona en peligro, gastar mi hacienda y edad, todo en servicio de Dios, trayendo obejas en su corral muy remotas de nuestro hemisferio, ignotas, y no escriptas en nuestras Escrituras, y acrecentando y dilatando el nombre y patrimonio de mi Rey, ganándole y trayéndole á su yugo y Real cetro muchos y muy grandes reynos y señoríos de muchas bárbaras naciones y gentes, ganados por mi propia persona y espensas, sin ser ayudado de cosa alguna, hantes muy estorvado por muchos émulos y invidiosos, que como sanguijuelas han reventado de artos de mi sangre. De la parte que á Dios cupo de mis trabajos y vigiliass asaz estoy pagado, porque seyendo la obra suya, quiso tomarme por medio, y que las gentes me atribuyesen alguna parte, aunque quien conociere de mí lo que yo, beré claro que no sin causa la divina providencia quiso que una hobra tan grande se acavase por el mas flaco é inútil medio que se pudo hallar, porque á solo dios fuese el atributo. De lo que á mi rey quedó, la remuneracion siempre

estuve satisfecho, que ceteris paribus no fuera menor por ser en tiempo de V. M., que nunca estos reynos de España, donde yo soy natural y á quien cupo este beneficio, fuéron poseydos de tan grande y Católico príncipe, magnánimo y poderoso Rey; y así V. M., la primera vez que vesé las manos y entregué los frutos de mis servicios, mostró reconocimiento dellos y comenzó á mostrar voluntad de me hacer gratificación, honrrando mi persona con palabras y hobras, que pareciéndome á mí que no se equiparaban á mis méritos, V. M. sabe que rehusé yo de recibir. V. M. me dijo y mandó que las aceptase, porque pareciese que me comenzaba á hacer alguna merced, y que no las recibiese por pago de mis servicios; porque V. M. se queria haber con migo, como se han los que se muestran á tirar la ballesta, que los primeros tiros dan fuera del terrero, y enmendando dan en él y en el blanco y fiel; que la merced que V. M. me hacia hera dar fuera del terrero, y que iria enmendando hasta dar en el fiel de lo que yo merecia; y pues que no se me quitava nada de lo que tenia, ni se me habia de quitar, que recibiese lo que me dava; y así vesé las manos á V. M. por ello, y enbolviendo las espaldas quitóseme lo que tenia todo, y no se me cumplió la merced que V. M. me hizo. Y demas destas palabras que V. M. me dijo, y obras que me prometió, que, pues tiene tan buena memoria, no se le habrán olvidado, por cartas de V. M. firmadas de su real nombre tengo otras muy mayores. Y pues mis servicios hechos hasta allí son beneméritos de las obras y promesas que V. M. me hizo, y despues acá no lo han desmerecido; antes nunca he cesado de servir y acrecentar el Patrimonio de estos reynos, con mil estorvos, que si no oiera tenido no fuera menos lo acrecentado, despues que la merced se me hizo, que lo hecho porque la merecí, no sé porque no se me cumple la promesa de las merecedes ofrecidas, y se me quitan las hechas. Y si quisieren decir que no se me quitan, pues poseo algo; cierto es que nada é inútil son una mesma cosa, y lo que tengo es tan sin fruto, que me fuera arto mejor no tenerlo, porque obiera entendido en mis grangerías, y no gastado el fruto de ellas por defenderme del fiscal de V. M., que a sido y es mas dificultoso que ganar la tierra de los enemigos; así que mi trabajo aprovechó para mi contentamiento de haber hecho el dever, y no para conseguir el efecto dél, pues no solo no se me siguió reposo á la vejez, mas trabajo hasta la muerte; y pluguiese á Dios que no pasase adelante, sino que con la corporal se acabase, y no se estendiese á la perpetua, porque quien tanto trabajo tiene en defender el cuerpo no puede dejar de ofender al ánima. Suplico á V. M. no permita que á tan notorios servicios haya tan poco mi-

ramiento, y pues es de creer que no es á culpa de V. M. que las gentes lo sepan; porque como esta obra que Dios hizo por mi medio es tan grande y maravillosa, y se ha estendido la fama de ella por todos los reynos de V. M. y de los otros reyes cristianos y aun por algunos infieles, en estos donde hay noticia del pleito de entre el fiscal y mí, no se trata de cosa mas; y unos atribuyen la culpa al fiscal, otros á culpas mias; y estas no las hallan tan grandes, que si bastasen para por ellas negárseme el premio, no bastasen tambien para quitarme la vida, honrra, y hacienda; y que pues esto no se hace que no deve ser mia la culpa. Á V. M. ninguna se atribuye; porque si V. M. quisiese quitarme lo que me dió, poder tiene para ejecutarlo, pues al que quiere y puede nada hay imposible; decir que se vuscan formas para colorar la obra, y que no se sienta el intento, ni cavén ni pueden caber en los reyes unjidos por Dios tales medios, porque para con él no hay color que no sea transparente, para con el mundo no hay para que colorarlo, por que así lo quiero, así lo mando, es el descargo de lo que los reyes hacen. Yo supliqué á V. M. en Madrid fuese servido de aclarar la boluntad que tubo de hacerme merced en pago de mis servicios, y le traje á la memoria algunos de ellos; díjome V. M. que mandaria á los del su consejo que me despachasen; pensé que se les dejava mandado lo que abian de hacer, porque V. M. me dijo que no queria que trajese pleyto con el fiscal: cuando quise saberlo, dijéronme que me defendiese de la demanda del fiscal, porque havia de ir por tela de justicia, y por ella se habia de sentenciar: sentílo por grave, y escribí á V. M. á Barcelona, suplicándole que pues era servido de entrar en juicio de su siervo, lo fuese en que obiese Juezes sin sospecha y V. M. mandase que con los del Consejo de las Indias se juntasen algunos de los otros, pues todos son criados de V. M., y que juntos lo determinasen; no fué V. M. servido, que no puedo alcanzar la causa, pues quantos mas lo viesén mejor alcanzarian lo que se devia hacer. Véome viejo y pobre y empeñado en este reyno en mas de veinte mil ducados, sin mas de ciento otros, que he gastado de los que traje é me han enviado, que algunos de ellos debo tambien que los an tomado prestados para enviarme, y todos corren cambios; y en cinco años poco menos que ha que salí de mi casa, no es mucho lo que he gastado, pues nunca ha salido de la Corte, con tres hijos que traygo en ella, con letrados, procuradores, y solicitadores; que todo fuera mejor empleado que V. M. se sirviera de ello y de lo que yo mas hoviera adquirido en este tiempo; ha ayudado tambien la ida de Árgel. Pareceme que al cojer del fruto de is trabajos no devia hecharlo en basijas rotas, y dejarlo en juicio de

pocos, sino tornar á suplicar á V. M. sea servido que todos quantos jueces V. M. tiene en sus Consejos conozcan de esta causa, y conforme á justicia la sentenciase.—Yo he sentido del obispo de Cuenca que desea que obiese para esto otros jueces demas de los que hay; porque él y el licenciado Salmeron, nuebo Oidor en este Consejo de Indias, son los que me despojaron sin hoyrme de hecho, siendo jueces en la nueva España, como lo tengo provado, y con quien yo traigo pleito sobre el dicho despojo, y les pido cantidad de dineros de los intereses y rentas de lo que me despojaron; y está claro que no han de sentenciar contra sí. No les he querido recusar en este caso, porque siempre crey que V. M. fuera servido que no llegara á estos términos; y no seyendo V. M. servido que hayan mas jueces que determinen esta causa, serme ha forzado recusar al Obispo de Cuenca y á Salmeron, y pesar meha en el ánima porque no podrá ser sin alguna dilacion; que para mí no puede ser cosa mas dañosa, porque he sesenta años, y anda en cinco que salí de mi casa, y no tengo mas de un hijo Varon que me suceda; y aunque tengo la muger moza para poder tener mas, mi edad no sufre esperar mucho; y si no tubiera otro, y dios dispusiera de este sin dejar sucesion, ¿que me habria aprovechado lo adquirido? pues subcediendo hijas se pierde la memoria. Otra y otra vez torno á suplicar á V. M. sea servido que con los Jueces del Consejo de Indias se junten otros jueces de estos otros Consejos; pues todos son criados de V. M., y les fia la governacion de sus reynos y su real conciencia, no es inconveniente fiarles que determinen sobre una escriptura de merced, que V. M. hizo á un su vasallo de una partecica de un gran todo con que el sirvió á V. M., sin costar trabajo ni peligro en su real persona, ni cuidado de espíritu de proveer como se hiciese, ni costa de dineros para pagar la gente que lo hizo, y que tan limpia y lealmente sirvió, no solo en la tierra que ganó, pero con mucha cantidad de oro y plata y piedra de los despojos que en ella ubo; y que V. M. mande à los jueces que fuere servido que entiendan en ello, que en un cierto tiempo, que V. M. les señale, lo determinen y sentencien sin que haya esta dilacion; y esta será para mí muy gran merced; porque á dilatarse, dejarlo hé perder y volvermehé á mi casa: porque no tengo ya edad para andar por mesones, sino para recogerme á aclarar mi cuenta con Dios, pues la tengo larga, y poca vida para dar los descargos, y será mejor dejar perder la acienda que el ánima. Sacra Magestad: Dios Nuestro Señor guarde la muy Real persona de V. M. con el acrecentamiento de Reynos y estados que V. M. desea. De Valladolid, á tres de Febrero de quinientos quarenta y quatro años. De

V. C. M. muy humilde siervo y vasallo, que sus muy reales pies y manos besa.—El Marques de Valle.

Cuvierta á la S. C. C. M., El Emperador y Rey de las Españas.
Tiene este decreto:—Á su Mag. del Marques del Valle, 3 de Febrero de 44:—*Nay que responder*: parece letra de Covos.
Original. Archivo de Indias.

No. XVI.—See vol. iii. p. 335.

FUNERAL OBSEQUIES OF CORTÉS.

[The original of this document is in the Hospital of Jesus, at Mexico; and the following literal translation was made from a copy sent to me from that capital.]

THE INTERMENT OF THE MARQUIS OF THE VALLEY OF OAJACA, HERNAN CORTÉS, AND OF HIS DESCENDANT, DON PEDRO CORTÉS, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THIS CITY OF MEXICO, FEB. 24, 1629.

The remains of Don Hernan Cortés (the first Marquis of the Valley of Oajaca), which lay in the monastery of St. Francis for more than fifty years since they had been brought from Castilleja de la Cuesta, were carried in funeral procession. It also happened that Don Pedro Cortés, Marquis of the Valley, died at the court of Mexico, Jan. 30, 1629. The Lord Archbishop of Mexico, D. Francisco Manso de Zuñiga, and his Excellency the Viceroy, Marquis of Serralbo, agreed that the two funerals should be conducted together, paying the greatest honor to the ashes of Hernando Cortés. The place of interment was the church of St. Francis in Mexico. The procession set forth from the palace of the Marquis of the Valley. In the advance were carried the banners of the various associations; then followed the different orders of the religious fraternities, all the tribunals of Mexico, and the members of the Audience. Next came the Archbishop and the Chapter of the cathedral. Then was borne along the corpse of the Marquis Don Pedro Cortés in an open coffin, succeeded by the remains of Don Hernando Cortés, in a coffin covered with black velvet. A banner of pure white, with a crucifix, an image of

the Virgin and of St. John the Evangelist, embroidered in gold, was carried on one side. On the other were the armorial bearings of the King of Spain, also worked in gold. This standard was on the right hand of the body. On the left hand was carried another banner, of black velvet, with the arms of the Marquis of the Valley embroidered upon it in gold. The standard-bearers were armed. Next came the teachers of divinity, the mourners, and a horse with sable trappings, the whole procession being conducted with the greatest order. The members of the University followed. Behind them came the Viceroy with a large escort of cavaliers; then four armed captains with their plumes, and with pikes on their shoulders. These were succeeded by four companies of soldiers with their arquebuses, and some with lances. Behind them banners were trailed upon the ground, and muffled drums were struck at intervals. The coffin enclosing the remains of the Conqueror was borne by the Royal Judges, while the knights of the order of Santiago supported the body of the Marquis Don Pedro Cortés. The crowd was immense, and there were six stations where the coffins were exposed to view, and at each of these the responses were chanted by the members of the religious fraternities.

The bones of Cortés were secretly removed from the church of St. Francis, with the permission of his Excellency the Archbishop, on the 2d of July, 1794, at eight o'clock in the evening, in the carriage of the Governor, the Marques de Sierra Nevada, and were placed in a vault, made for this purpose, in the church of Jesus of Nazareth. The bones were deposited in a wooden coffin enclosed in one of lead, being the same in which they came from Castilleja de la Cuesta, near Seville. This was placed in another of crystal, with its cross-bars and plates of silver; and the remains were shrouded in a winding-sheet of cambrio embroidered with gold, with a fringe of black lace four inches deep.

INDEX.