

He at once named a Municipal Council, founded the city of "Villa Rica de la Veracruz" and received from the same corporation the title of Captain General.

An embassy presented itself from the Cacique of Zempoala, bringing friendly propositions to the Spanish General, and an invitation to visit the cacique in his capital. Cortés accordingly marched his little army to Zempoala where he was well received, and with great inward satisfaction he acquired important information which was to be of great use to him in his future campaign. He there discovered the strained relations that subsisted between the tribes living under the despotic yoke of Motecuhzoma, and the vehement desire which animated them all to shake off this oppressive rule.

The prudent and far seeing Spaniard offered the cacique his friendship, and informed him at the same time that he had been commissioned by the great Emperor and powerful King of Spain to exterminate the oppressor and give liberty to the oppressed. The alliance with the Zempoaltecas was the first act of his political life, and made a profound impression on the envoys of Motecuhzoma who had been thrown into prison by the cacique of Quiahuiztlan, for having accused his people of treachery. They were at once placed at liberty by orders of Cortés, who sent them back to the Mexican Monarch, in order to reestablish his confidence.

The religious zeal of Cortés, which would not allow any delay in the destruction of the native altars, combined with the conspiracy got up in his own camp, would have entirely destroyed his magnificent plans if he had not arrested the evil by his energetic attitude with respect to the Indians, and his severity towards his own country-men, whom he punished in accordance with the heinousness of their crime. With the object of depriving the dissaffected and cowardly of all hopes of retroceding from the enterprise, he carried out one of the boldest and most heroic acts ever known; which was, to dismantle his ships and sink them in the harbor. This deed which gave

rise to the saying "He burnt his ships" is one of those that have made this great conqueror famous in history.

From Zempoala the Spanish army followed its march to Tlaxcala, by way of Xalapa, Xicochimalco, Xicotla and Iztacamaxtitlan. The Republic of Tlaxcala, which had preserved its independence in spite of the efforts of its powerful enemy, the Emperor of Mexico, incited by the valiant Xicotencatl, declared war against the Spaniards, who up to this time had been able to march through the country without meeting any serious difficulties. A few skirmishes in the frontier of the Republic, demonstrated the hostile attitude of the Tlaxcaltecas, but a pitched battle was soon fought, in which, owing to the superiority of their organisation and arms, the Spaniards remained victorious, although at the same time the Tlaxcaltecas discovered that their enemies were by no means immortal, nor the horses invincible monsters. The Tlaxcalteca priests having met in council after the battle, declared that the Spaniards were children of the sun, to whom they owed all their force, and therefore ought to be attacked by night to be defeated. In consequence of this council, the Tlaxcaltecas made a night attack on the Spaniards, but being again defeated with heavy loss, the Indians themselves, convinced of their own inferiority and of the falseness of the prophecies made by their augurs, sacrificed the latter to their gods and made propositions of peace and friendship to the Spaniards. These were accepted, and thus was formed the terrible alliance which was afterwards to bear such fatal consequences on the fortunes of the Mexican Empire. Cortés made his solemn entry into Tlaxcala, on the 23rd. of September, 1519. The valiant Xicotencatl, who could not bring himself to accept the pacific destruction of his Republic, continued to be the mortal enemy of the Spaniards.

From Tlaxcala, Cortés marched on to the great city of Cholollan, where under the pretext of castigating a conspiracy, the existence of which is by no means certain, he ordered a barbarous slaughter of the people, delivering up the temples and

dwelling to fire and pillage. History with its inflexible judgment, makes a distinction between the acts of necessary energy, however cruel they may appear, when required by the success of a great enterprise, and the useless crimes committed for the triumph of an idea.

Amongst the qualities which greatly distinguished the conqueror of Mexico, and to which Spain owes one of its richest triumphs; figure the valor, the audacity, the astuteness and perseverance, which characterized Cortés, but this glory is to a great extent clouded by a number of acts of cruelty such as that above mentioned.

Cortés boldly continued the march on Mexico, starting on the first of November, his army being largely increased by the presence of troops furnished by the Tlaxcaltecas, Huexotzinca and Totonacos, and crossing over the saddle between the two snowy mountains, he found himself at the head of large army on the borders of the wide and picturesque valley of Anahuac, with its immense lake, from whose waters arose the great Tenochtitlan, object of the Spaniard's ambition.

Motecuhzoma, the irresolute Mexican monarch, had allowed the Spanish army to approach the capital, merely contenting himself by sending emissaries to Cortés with weakly worded demands that he should retire. Far from attending to any such demands, but rather, still more excited by the spectacle which the panorama of the valley presented to his avaricious eyes, Cortés continued advancing by way of Ameca, Culhuacan and Iztapalapan, until he arrived at the very suburbs of the Aztec capital. There he was received by 4,000 courtiers richly dressed, who came out to meet the Spanish army as far as the first break in the causeway of Iztapalapan, and afterwards, Motecuhzoma himself, surrounded by his Court, issued forth to meet them at the place called Huitzilian, where at a later date the Church and Hospital of the Immaculate Conception was built, at present known by the name of Jesus Nazareno. On the 8th of November 1519, Cortés made a solemn and pompous

entry into the city in company with the Emperor Motecuhzoma, and the Spaniards were astonished at the spectacle offered by this city with its twenty thousand houses, wide and well formed streets, some of which were on land and some on water, its gardens, temples, markets, squares, and dense population.

In spite of the attention lavished on Cortés, he determined to make the Mexican Monarch a prisoner, moved thereto by the distrust which he felt for Motecuhzoma and his people, and by the suggestions of the Tlaxcaltecas; by the invasion of the territory of the Allies which had just been carried out by the Mexican general Quauhpopoca, who attacked the small Spanish garrison of Veracruz and wounded the Governor Escalante, and lastly because the head of a Spanish soldier was carried around from town to town in order to prove to the people that the invaders were but mortal. Motecuhzoma remained in the Spanish quarters, and the fetters were not taken off him until Quauhpopoca and fifteen other Mexicans had been burned alive by the Spaniards themselves. A short time after this event, Cortés imprisoned the Kings of Culhuacan and Tlacopan, obliging Motecuhzoma to render homage to the King of Spain and to deliver him a large amount of gold.

Once the Spanish General found himself in full possession of the city, he began to collect the taxes and to agitate the abolition of the sanguinary rites of the Mexicans, a suggestion that again placed his enterprise in serious danger of failure. Such a profanation as this excited the priests and the people to such a degree, that Motecuhzoma himself spoke seriously to Cortés, giving it as his opinion, that seeing he had already fulfilled the mission confided to him by his Monarch, he should at once return to his country. With his usual political astuteness, Cortés declared that he was quite willing to comply with the wishes of the Mexicans, as soon as the ships which he required to replace those destroyed in the waters of Veracruz, should have been built.

As a fact, Cortés was having these vessels built at the time, but for purposes of his own, he was delaying the construction as long as possible, when he received news of the arrival of Panfilo de Narvaez on the Mexican coast at the head of 1,400 men; having been sent by Diego Velázquez to deprive Cortés of his conquest, make him a prisoner, and take him to Cuba for trial. In this difficult situation Cortés showed all his usual activity and boldness, leaving on the pages of history, one of the most brilliant events of his life. Leaving Pedro de Alvarado in command of the city, with only a small garrison of 80 soldiers, he made an arrangement with Gonzalo de Sandoval, the new Governor of Veracruz; started hurriedly with a force of 250 men, and took Narvaez by surprise on a dark and stormy night. Having taken Narvaez prisoner, he returned to Mexico on the 24th. of June 1520, with his army re-inforced by the soldiers he had taken from Narvaez and some fresh Indian allies, forming a total of 1,300 soldiers, 100 horses, 18 cannon and 2,000 Tlaxcaltecas allies.

Meanwhile the imprudence of Pedro de Alvarado, who shortly before the return of Cortés, had ordered a barbarous slaughter of Mexicans, whom he had surprised in a festivity, produced a great conflict in the city, which Cortes found in a state of insurrection with the Spaniards besieged in their own quarters. The presence of Cortez by no means intimidated the Mexicans, but neither did the terrible position of matters frighten the Spanish Chief, and he penetrated into the city to protect his own men against the fury of the people who were fighting for their liberty. A terrible struggle commenced which lasted for several days, until Motecuhzoma, found himself obliged to offer his services as mediator between his own subjects and the Spaniards, for which object, having put on his royal robes, he appeared on the roof of the building in which he was imprisoned and from thence addressed his people. Hardly had he pronounced the first word, when he fell mortally wounded under a shower of stones and arrows thrown by the Mexicans

themselves, and after suffering for three days, he died on the 30th. of June 1520.

CUITLAHUAC. 1520.

Motecuhzoma was accompanied in his imprisonment by some of his nobles, amongst whom was found the valiant and astute Cuitlahuac, a worthy rival of Cortés, and who owed his liberty to the necessity the Spaniards were under of obtaining provisions, for which purpose they had sent him forth to have the markets opened. Once he found himself free from the power of the Spaniards, he improved the unexpected opportunity to take back his command in the army, and to place himself at the head of the defenders of their country.

Having passed the first moment of stupor, caused by the melancholy events above related, and animated the Mexicans by the presence of their intrepid Chief, he renewed the attack with fresh vigor, and the struggle became every day more violent and bloody, until the Spaniards found themselves obliged to determine on a retreat, which was carried out on the night following the first of July 1520. The stormy weather and the innumerable breaks which had been made in the causeways, rendered this retreat both dangerous and difficult, but by the force of the astonishing prodiges of valor, the Spaniards and Tlaxcaltecas fought their way under a perfect storm of arrows and darts, from section to section of causeway and from break to break, some perishing under the terrible arms of their enemies, others saving themselves by swimming and all in the midst of the most frightful disorder. Cortés himself, had many narrow escapes, and he suffered the pain of seeing one of his best captains, Juan Velázquez de Leon succumb at his side under the arrows of the enemy.

The dispersed Spanish army at last gained the causeway outside of the city limits, and as well as I can understand it, halted at the foot of the Teocalli of Tlacopan, which formed a good strategic point for their defense and reorganisation. I believe this to be the real point of their halt, and not the well

known tradition that it was at the foot of the tree in Popotla which was only a witness of that famous retreat, known in history under the name of the Noche Triste.

Once the city was free of its tyrant through the heroic efforts of Cuiclahuac, this valiant chief was proclaimed Emperor and displayed in his new position the same bravery and activity which he had before shown. He had the Spaniards closely pursued, as they continued their retreat in the direction of Tlaxcala, and he reinforced his army and improved their arms with the object of continuing the campaign. On the sixth day after commencing the retreat, and after a painful march full of privations and hampered by their wounded, the Spaniards were taken by surprise in the neighborhood of Otompan, by an army of 40,000 Indians.

In this painful situation, Cortés with his usual courage, determined to conquer or die and after a short and vigorous address to his soldiers he launched himself at their head against the enemy. His military education had shown him that the weakest point was precisely where the imperial standard was elevated, and he well understood that for the Mexicans the result of the campaign entirely depended on the preservation or loss of this important emblem.

Once he formed this plan, Cortés, accompanied by his principal captains, attacked with extraordinary impetus the formidable group that escorted the imperial standard, and at once got possession of it killing the general who had it in his grasp. The superstitious Indians immediately fled in all directions, abandoning an abundant booty to their enemies. This battle of Otumba took place on the 18th. of July 1520.

Once the Spaniards reached Tlaxcala, they were tenderly cared for by their allies.

Meanwhile Cuiclahuac, did not limit his actions to the reparation of the disasters already suffered, but actively engaged in the fortification of the city. He sent presents to the different provinces of the Empire, to which he offered many de-

sired privileges, and made great efforts to arrange an alliance with the people of Tlaxcala, which he nearly carried out and which would doubtless have still further hampered the Spaniards. He died after a heroic reign of 80 days, a victim to the epidemic of small-pox which was introduced by a negro belonging to the expedition of Narvaez.

CUAUHTEMOC (Descending Eagle) 1520-1621.

Cuauhtemoc was the son of Ahuizotl, and had reached the age of twenty five when he ascended the throne. His valor, his great patriotism and his indomitable character were revealed from the first moment in which he gave his orders for steps to be taken with a view to opposing a most formidable resistance to the Spaniards. He fortified the city, organized his army and displayed great activity in providing for all the necessities which could present themselves in the difficult circumstances under which his nation found itself.

Meanwhile Cortés, in Tlaxcala, continued his preparations with the object of renewing his operations for the final conquest of the Aztec capital. For this purpose he renewed his alliance with the Tlaxcaltecas, and improving the lesson taught by the disaster of the Noche Triste, he ordered the brigantines to be built under the direction of the master carpenter Martin López.

On the 28th. of December 1520, he left Tlaxcala at the head of an army composed of 750 infantry, 120 arquebusiers and more than 150,000 Indian allies from Tlaxcala, Cholollan and Huetzotzingo, and following the road by way of Tezmelucan and Coatepec, he reached Texcoco on the 31st. of the same month.

During his stay in this city he increased his forces with a contingent of new allies, he had the valiant Tlaxcalteca Chief, Xicotencatl, hung on account of his hostility to the Spaniards, and he repressed a conspiracy which had been got up amongst his own men, against his life and against his best captains. He had the brigantines which had been constructed in Tlaxcala, taken

to pieces and transported to Texcoco on the shoulders of Indians, and after launching them he put the artillery on board and completed their fitting out, after which they sailed from Texcoco, in the direction of the capital of the Aztec Empire.

In the different reconnaissances which he made around the city, he subjected several provinces which formerly were vassals of the Mexican Monarch, and was continually obliged to fight small parties of Indians in skirmishes of more or less consequence. On the 30th. of May, 1521, he established the siege of the great city, first occupying the Fort of Xoloc at the point where the causeways from Iztapalapan and Coyoacan met and covering those from Tlacopan and Tepeyac with the divisions commanded by Alvarado and Olid.

From this moment, the skirmishes between outposts were substituted by pitched battles which became general all round the city. The roar of the pieces of artillery and of the arquebusses fired by the Spaniards, united with the shouts with which the Mexicans advanced to the combat, launching clouds of spears and arrows. These battles were continually renewed: the Spaniards would attack with the greatest valor and be defeated with an energy as great as their own; they would again advance to the attack, and again be obliged to retire by the unexampled bravery of the Mexicans, and these assaults would be repeated day by day with the same heroic attack and defense on their respective sides.

Seeing the necessity of putting an end to this situation, Cortés gave orders for a general assault, and himself advanced at the head of a column attacking one of the most dangerous points, leaping over ditches and earthworks, at the moment when the Indians charged with the greatest impetuosity, until he was personally attacked, thrown down and wounded, and was only saved by the bravery of the Captain Olea, who unfortunately paid for this brave act with his own life.

The difficult and dangerous situation of the Spanish army, was greatly aggravated by the knowledge which the Indian al-

lies had obtained of the prophecies made by Mexican priests touching the complete destruction of the Spaniards within a period of eight days, a prophecy which was supposed to be inspired by their god Huitzilopochtli, and so discouraged them that they attempted to desert and leave the Spaniards to their own fate. With his usual sagacity Cortés prevented this fatal desertion by saying to his allies: "Let us wait without fighting for eight days, and you will then be convinced that the oracles are an imposture." The time having expired, the Indians were convinced of the falsity of the prophecy made by the Mexican priests and renewed their alliance with the Spanish conqueror with greater heartiness than ever.

In order to bring this disastrous war to an end, which was already too far prolonged, and finding that the indomitable character of Cuauhtemoc would not give way to the Spanish demands that he should give up the city, notwithstanding the offer that his authority should be confirmed, Cortés ordered the complete destruction of all the houses as fast as they fell into the power of the assaulting parties, thus reducing the lines of defense to ever narrowing limits. Thanks to this new plan of operations, the defendants did not possess at the beginning of August, more than the Northern part of the city, and a few canals which were navigated by numerous canoes full of armed Indians.

The situation of the Mexicans had now become insupportable, both for the vigorous siege maintained by the "conquistadores," as well as through the horrors of the epidemic and famine which reigned throughout the city, and the valiant Cuauhtemoc determined to issue from the city so as to carry on the war with greater freedom on the Northern causeway. For this purpose he embarked with his family in a canoe in the direction of that causeway, followed by many other canoes full of people, but the whole expedition was pursued and overtaken by the best sailing vessel in the squadron, which was under the command of Gonzalo de Sandoval. On seeing the

guns pointed in his direction, the arrogant young monarch exclaimed: "I am Cuauhtemoc; take me before your General, and all I ask is that you shall not harm my wife or those who accompany me."

When this unhappy monarch, whose heroic deeds made him worthy of a better fate, was taken before the Spanish General, he spoke as follows to his conqueror: "I have fulfilled my duty defending my people, until I could do no more; I come before you by force, and now that I am in your power do with me as you please;" and drawing the dagger that Cortés carried in his belt, he added: "Seeing that I have not been able to die in defense of my people, take this dagger and kill me." The conqueror tried to console him, praising his valor and extraordinary efforts in defense of his country, he made him many promises and gave orders that his wife and the other persons who accompanied him in his flight should be taken to him.

As soon as the Mexicans heard of the capture of their sovereign, they gave up the struggle and the Spaniards took complete possession of the city on the 13th. of August, 1521, after a siege which lasted seventy five days.

The capitulation of the capital was shortly afterwards followed by the submission of all the provinces of the Empire, and at a later date, by that of all the other nations of Anahuac, whose origin was buried under the ruins of the Mexican Empire. The consideration with which Cuauhtemoc was treated in the first days of his captivity and which certainly was due to him for his excellent qualities was very soon forgotten in the covetousness of the conquerors, who were never satisfied with the prizes that fell into their hands. Hernando Cortés left a new and indelible stain on his fame, when he allowed himself to be persuaded to submit the illustrious Mexican Emperor to torture, as well as the king of Tlacopan, Tellepanquetzal. He had the feet of both sovereigns burnt in order to draw from them a confession of the place in which the royal treasure was hidden. Whilst they were suffering these torments the king

of Tlacopan directed a supplicating glance towards the Emperor as if asking permission to reveal the secret, but Cuauhtemoc, with a haughty gesture said to him: "Am I by chance on a bed of roses?" This wonderful endurance filled Cortés with horror of his own act, and he gave orders for the torture to cease.

The complete destruction of the city in order to raise on its ruins what was to be the capital of New Spain; the distribution of land amongst the conquerors, assigning to each one of them a certain number of Indians, under the name of "repartimientos;" the destruction of the idols and other objects of worship; the distribution of the treasure, to collect which, nothing had been omitted as I have above shown; the election of an Alcalde and members of the City Council; the division of the City between Spaniards and Indians; the construction of a Catholic temple on the ruins of the Teocalli and the sending of expeditions for the conquest of distant countries, such as Oaxaca and Tehuantepec, were the first tasks undertaken by Cortés, and were followed by an expedition under his own command to Hibueras, with the object of suppressing the rebellion raised by Olid. On this expedition he carried the two captive kings of Mexico and Acolhuacan with him; but tired with the care of his illustrious prisoners during such a long and painful journey, he had them hung in Izancanac on the 26th. of February, 1525, adding another stain to his escutcheon with this useless double crime, and putting an end to the Mexican dynasty which had been founded in 1376 by Acamapictli, in the person of the illustrious Cuauhtemoc.

UNDER SPANISH GOVERNMENT.—1521 TO 1821.

The immense territory which was occupied by the different nations conquered and subjected to the crown of Castille in this region of America, was known under the title of New Spain. These nations, which constituted one of the richest of the Spa-

nish colonies, were: 1st., the three crowns, that of México with its numerous provinces, that of Acolhuacan or Texcoco, and that of Tlacopan; all of which were free and independent but acting together in all important business, and above all in war; 2nd., many Republics, of which the principal were, those of Tlaxcala, Chollollan and Huejotzingo; 3rd., powerful kingdoms like of those of Michoacan, Tonallan and Jalisco to the West and North West; those of Mixtecapan, Zapotecapan, Tehuantepec and Mayapan (Yucatan) to the East and South East.

The successive expeditions undertaken by the conquerors, extended the Spanish dominions over the Northern regions inhabited by many other tribes, the peaceful conquest of the indomitable Tarascos being due to the spontaneous submission of the King of Michoacan.

The arrival in the country of the first Franciscan fathers in 1524, forms the most notable date in the history of the early years of the Spanish domination. These virtuous and worthy missionaries came to the country to put an end to the excesses of the conquerors, and to protect the Indians; to which object the fathers dedicated themselves with a zeal worthy of all praise, and to their instruction in letters besides several different arts. To them is due the construction of temples, schools, and hospitals, they were those who showed the Indians an example of humble, humane and true christianity, and persuaded them to abandon their ancient rites. They softened the rigor of the conquerors, and lastly, they completed the spiritual conquest of the people, thus securing in a spiritual manner the triumph which had been obtained by force of arms.

Unfortunately this evangelical conduct was not enough to prevent the crimes of the infamous Nuño de Guzman, who during his expedition to conquer Jalisco, ordered, in his passage through Michoacan, the burning of the King Caltzontzin alive.

These Friars whose names are worthy of a permanent fame, were Fray Martin de Valencia, the Provincial; Fr. Francisco de Soto, Fr. Martin de Coruña, Fr. Juan de Juarez, Fr. Anto-

nio de Ciudad Rodrigo, Fr. Toribio de Benavente, commonly known under the name of Motolinia; Fr. Garcia de Cisneros, Fr. Luis de Fuensalida, Fr. Juan Rivas, Fr. Francisco Ximenez and the lay brothers Andres Cordoba and Juan de Palos, who came in place of Bernardino de la Torre, who was not thought worthy of this apostolic mission. On their arrival in Mexico, these pious missionaries met five others of their own order, who had previously arrived, not under apostolic authority, but under a special permission from their own superiors. Two of these, were Fr. Juan Tecto and Fr. Juan de Aora. Many other monks have left illustrious names in this country, both for their personal virtues as well as for their great efforts to alleviate the unhappy condition of the Indians, and some of them have left us works which form real historical monuments, such as; Fr. Bernardino de Sahagun, Fr. Bartolomé de las Casas, Fr. Pedro de Gante, Fr. Jerónimo de Mendieta, Fr. Diego Duran, His Excellency Fr. Don Juan de Zumárraga, first Archbishop of Mexico; His Excellency, Don Vasco de Quiroga, first Bishop of Michoacan, through the resignation of this high dignity by Fr. Luis de Fuensalida, one of the first apostles to come to New Spain; Fr. Juan de Torquemada, Fr. Junipero Serra, Fr. Sebastian de Aparicio, Fr. Domingo de Betanzos, Fr. Diego Basalenque and many others too numerous to mention.

The country was at first placed under the administration of Governors and "Audiencias;" but such were the acts of despotism, the rivalries, the abuses and intrigues of the Spaniards, in the stormy times of the first "Audiencia" presided over by Nuño de Guzman, that the Spanish Court determined, notwithstanding the improved conduct of the second, to constitute the colony of New Spain into a Viceroyalty. Amongst the 61 Viceroys who governed the colony, the following are worthy of being remembered for the success of their government and for the improvements which they carried out:

Don Antonio de Mendoza, the first Viceroy, who put a stop to the abuses of the landed proprietors and to their ill treat-