

THE CONQUERORS OF CENTRAL AMERICA.

I.

Hojeda — Americus Vespucius — The New World named after him — Juan de la Cosa — Vincent Yañez Pinzon — Bastidas — Diego de Lepe — Diaz de Solis — Ponce de Leon and Florida — Balboa discovers the Pacific Ocean — Grijalva explores the coast of Mexico.

The letters and narratives of Columbus and his companions, especially those dwelling upon the large quantity of gold and pearls found in the recently discovered countries, had inflamed the imagination of eager traders, and of numbers of gentlemen who loved adventure. On the 10th of April, 1495, the Spanish government had issued an order allowing any one who might wish to do so, to go and discover new countries; but this privilege was so much abused, and Columbus complained so bitterly of its trenching upon established rights, that the permission was withdrawn on the 2nd of June, 1497, and four years later it became necessary to repeat the prohibition with more severe penalties attached to its infringement. The effect of the royal decree was at once to produce a kind of general rush to the Indies, and this was favoured by Bishop Fonseca of Badajoz, through whose hands passed all business connected with the Indies, and of whom Columbus had had so much reason to complain.

The admiral had but just left San-Lucar on his third voyage, when four expeditions of discovery were fitted out almost at the same moment, at the cost of some rich ship-owners, foremost among whom we find the Pinzons and Americus Vespucius. The first of these expeditions, which left the port of Santa-Maria on the 20th of May, 1499, consisted of four vessels, and was commanded by Alonzo Hojeda. Juan de la Cosa sailed with him as pilot; Americus Vespucius was also on board, without any very clearly defined duties, but he would seem to have been astronomer to the fleet.

Americus Vespucius.

Fac-simile of an old print.

Before entering on a brief account of this voyage, we will glance for a few moments at the three men whom we have just named; the last of the three especially, plays a most important part in the discovery of the New World, which received its name from him.

Hojeda, born at Cuença about 1465, and brought up in the household of the Duke of Medina-Celi, had gained his first experience in arms in the wars against the Moors. Columbus enrolled him amongst the adventurers whom he recruited for his second voyage, when Hojeda distinguished himself alike by his cool courage and his readiness in surmounting all difficulties. What caused his complete rupture with Columbus remains a mystery; it appears still more inexplicable when we think of the distinguished services that Hojeda had rendered, especially in 1495, at the battle of La Vega, when the Caribbean Confederation was annihilated. All we know is, that on Hojeda's return to Spain he found shelter and protection with Bishop Fonseca. It is said even that the Indian minister supplied him with the journal of the admiral's last voyage, and the map of the countries which Columbus had discovered.

The first pilot employed by Hojeda was Juan de la Cosa, born probably at Santona, in the Biscayan country. He had often sailed along the coast of Africa before accompanying Columbus on his first voyage, while in the second expedition he filled the post of hydrographer (*maestro de hacer cartas*).

As specimens of La Cosa's talent in drawing maps may be mentioned two very curious ones still extant; one showing all the territory that had been acquired in Africa in 1500, the other on vellum, and enriched with colour like the first, giving the discoveries made by Columbus and his successors. The second pilot was Bartholomew Roldan, who had likewise sailed with Columbus on his voyage to Paria.

As to Americus Vespucius, his duties were not, as we have said, very clearly defined, he was there to aid in making discoveries (*per ajutare a scoprire*, says the Italian text of his letter to Soderini). Born at Florence on the 9th of March, 1451, Amerigo Vespucci belonged to a family of distinction and wealth. He had made mathematics, natural philosophy, and astrology (as it was then called) his special studies. His knowledge of history and literature, judging from his letters, appears to have been somewhat vague and ill-digested. He left Florence in 1492 without any special aim in view, and went to Spain, where he occupied himself at first in commercial pursuits. We hear of him in Seville acting as factor in the powerful trading house of his fellow countryman, Juanoto Berardi. As this house had advanced money to Columbus for his second voyage, it is not unlikely that Vespucius had become acquainted with the admiral at this period of his career. On Juanoto's death in 1495, Vespucius was placed by his heirs at the head of the financial department of the house. Whether he may have been tired of a situation that he thought below his powers, or been seized in his turn with the fever for making new discoveries, or whether he hoped to make his fortune rapidly in the new countries reputed to be so rich; whatever in short may have been the motive that actuated him, at least this we know, that he joined Hojeda's expedition in 1499, this fact being so stated in Hojeda's deposition in the law-suit instituted by the Treasury with the heirs of Columbus.

The flotilla, consisting of four vessels, set sail on the 20th of May from Santa-Maria, taking a south-westerly course, and in twenty-seven days the American continent was sighted at the place which was named Venezuela, because the houses being built upon piles reminded the beholders of Venice. Hojeda, after some ineffectual attempts to hold intercourse with the natives, with whom he had several skirmishes, next saw the Island of Margarita; after sailing about 250 miles to the east of the river Orinoco he reached the Gulf of Paria, and entered a bay called the Bay of *Las Perlas*, from the natives of that part being employed in the pearl fisheries.

Guided by the maps of Columbus, Hojeda passed by the Dragon's-Mouth, which separates Trinidad from the continent, and returned westward to Cape *La Vela*. Then, after touching at the Caribbee Islands, where he made a number of prisoners, whom he hoped to sell for slaves in Spain, he was obliged to cast anchor at Yaquimo, in Hispaniola, on the 5th of September, 1499.

Columbus, knowing Hojeda's courage and his restless spirit only too well, feared that he would introduce a new element of discord into the colony. He therefore despatched Francesco Roldan with two caravels to inquire into his motives in coming to the island, and if necessary to prevent his landing. The admiral's fears were but too well grounded; Hojeda had scarcely landed before he had an interview with some of the malcontents, inciting them to a rising at Xaragua, and to a determination to expel Columbus. After some skirmishes, which had not ended to Hojeda's advantage, a meeting was arranged for him with Roldan, Diego d'Escobar, and Juan de la Cosa, when they prevailed upon him to leave the island. "He took with him," says Las Casas, "a prodigious cargo of slaves, whom he sold in the market at Cadiz for enormous sums of money." He returned to Spain in February, 1500, where he had been preceded by Americus Vesputius and B. Roldan on the 18th of October, 1499.

The most southerly point that Hojeda had reached in this voyage was 4° north latitude, and he had only spent fourteen weeks on the voyage of discovery, properly so called. If we appear to have dwelt at some length upon this voyage, it is because it was the first one made by Vesputius. Some authors, Varnhagen for instance, and quite recently, Mr. H. Major, in his history of Prince Henry the Navigator, assert that Vesputius' first voyage was in 1497, and consequently that he must have seen the American continent before Columbus, but we prefer to follow Humboldt, who spent so many years in studying the history of the discovery of America, in his opinion that 1499 was the right date, also M. Ed. Charton and M. Jules Codine, the latter of whom discussed this question in the Report of the Geographical Society for 1873, *apropos* of Mr. Major's book.

"If it were true," says Voltaire, "that Vesputius had discovered the American Continent, yet the glory would not be his; it belongs undoubtedly to the man who had the genius and courage to undertake the first voyage, to Columbus." As Newton says in his argument with Leibnitz, "the glory is due only to the inventor." But we agree with M. Codine when he says, "How can we allow that there was an expedition in 1497 which resulted in the discovery of above 2500 miles of the coast-line of the mainland, when there is no trace of it left either among the great historians of that time, or in the legal depositions in connexion with the claims made by the heir of Columbus against the Spanish Government, in which the priority of the discoveries of each leader of an expedition is carefully mentioned, with the part of the coast explored by each?" Finally, the authentic documents extracted from the archives of the *Casa de contratacion* make it evident that Vesputius was entrusted with the preparation of the vessels destined for the third voyage of Columbus at Seville and at San Lucar from the middle of August, 1497, till the departure of Columbus on the 30th of May, 1498. The narratives of the voyages of Vesputius are very diffuse and wanting in precision and order; the information they give upon the places he visited is so vague, that it might apply to one part of the coast as well as to another; as to the localities treated of, as well as of the companions of Vesputius, there are no indications given of a nature to aid the historian. Not a single name is given of any well-known person, and the dates are contradictory in those famous letters which have given endless work to commentators. Humboldt says of them "There is an element of discord in the most authentic documents relating to the Florentine navigator." We have given an account of Hojeda's first voyage, which coincides with that of Vesputius according to Humboldt, who has compared the principal incidents of the two narratives. Varnhagen asserts that Vesputius, having started on the 10th of May, 1497, entered the Gulf of Honduras on the 10th of June, coasted by Yucatan and Mexico, sailed up the Mississippi, and at the end of February, 1498, doubled the Cape of Florida. After anchoring for thirty-seven days at the mouth of the St. Lawrence, he returned to Cadiz in October, 1498.

If Vesputius had really made this marvellous voyage, he would have far outstripped all the navigators of his time, and would have fully deserved that his name should be given to the newly-discovered continent, whose coast-line he had explored for so great a distance. But nothing is less certain, and Humboldt's opinion has hitherto appeared to the best writers to offer the largest amount of probability.

Americus Vesputius made three other voyages. Humboldt identifies the first with that of Vincent Yañez Pinzon, and M. d'Avezac with that of Diego de Lepe (1499-1500). At the close of this latter year, Giuliano Bartholomeo di Giocondo induced Vesputius to enter the service of Emmanuel, King of Portugal, and he accomplished two more voyages at the expense of his new master. On the first of these two voyages, he was no higher in command than he had been in his earlier ones, and only accompanied the expedition as one whose intimate acquaintance with all nautical matters might prove of service under certain circumstances. During this voyage the ships coasted along the American shores from Cape St. Augustine to 52° of south latitude. The fourth voyage of Vesputius was marked by the wreck of the flag-ship off the Island of Fernando de Noronha, which prevented the other vessels from continuing their voyage towards Malacca by way of the Cape of Good Hope, and obliged the crews to land at All Saints' Bay, in Brazil.

This fourth voyage was unquestionably made with Gonzalo Coelho, but we are quite ignorant as to who was in command on the third voyage. These various expeditions had not tended to enrich Vesputius, while his position at the Portuguese court was so far from satisfactory that he determined to re-enter the service of the King of Spain. By him he was made *Piloto Mayor* on the 22nd of March, 1508. There were some valuable emoluments attached for his advantage to this appointment, which enabled him to end his

days, if not as a rich man, at least as one far removed from want. He died at Seville on the 22nd of February, 1512, with the same conviction as Columbus, that he had reached the shores of Asia. Americus Vesputius is especially famous from the New World having been named after him, instead of being called Columbia, as in all justice it should have been, but with this Vesputius had nothing to do. He was for a long time charged, though most unjustly, with impudence, falsehood, and deceit, it being alleged that he wished to veil the glory of Columbus and to arrogate to himself the honour of a discovery which did not belong to him. This was an utterly unfounded accusation, for Vesputius was both loved and esteemed by Columbus and his contemporaries, and there is nothing in his writings to justify this calumnious assertion. Seven printed documents exist which are attributed to Vesputius; they are — the abridged accounts of his four voyages, two narratives of his third and fourth voyages, in the form of letters, addressed to Lorenzo de Pier Francesco de Medici, and a letter addressed to the same nobleman, relative to the Portuguese discoveries in the Indies. These documents, printed and bound up as small thin volumes, were soon translated into various languages and distributed throughout Europe.

It was in the year 1507 that a certain Hylacolymus, whose real name was Martin Waldzemuller, first proposed to give the name of America to the new part of the world. He did so in a book printed at Saint Dié and called *Cosmographia introductio*. In 1509 a small geographical treatise appeared at Strasburg adopting the proposal of Hylacolymus; and in 1520 an edition of Pomponius Mela was printed at Basle, giving a map of the New World with the name of America. From this time the number of works employing the denomination proposed by Waldzemuller increased perpetually.

Some years later, when Waldzemuller was better informed as to the real discoverer of America and of the value to be placed upon the voyages of Vesputius, he eliminated from his book all that related to the latter, and substituted everywhere the name of Columbus for that of Vesputius, but it was too late, the same error has prevailed ever since.

As to Vesputius himself, it seems very unlikely that he was at all aware of the excitement which prevailed in Europe, nor of what was passing at St. Dié. The testimony that has been unanimously borne to his honourable and upright conduct should surely clear him from the unmerited accusations which have for too long a time clouded his memory.

Three other expeditions left Spain almost at the same time as that of Hojeda. The first of these, consisting of but one vessel, sailed from Barra Saltez in June 1499. Pier Alonzo Nino, who had served under Columbus in his two last voyages, was its commander, and he was accompanied by Christoval Guerra, a merchant of Seville, who probably defrayed the expenses of the expedition. This voyage to the coast of Paria seems to have been dictated more by the hope of lucrative commerce than by the interests of science. No new discoveries were made, but the two voyagers returned to Spain in April, 1500, bringing with them so large a quantity of valuable pearls as to excite the cupidity of their countrymen, who became anxious to try their own fortunes in the same direction.

The second expedition was commanded by Vincent Yañez Pinzon, the younger brother of Alonzo Pinzon who had been captain of the *Pinta* and had shown so much jealousy of Columbus, even adopting the following mendacious device: —

*A Castilla, y a Leon
Nuevo Mundo dio Pinzon.*

Yañez Pinzon, whose devotion to the admiral equalled his brother's jealousy, had advanced an eighth part of the funds required for the expedition of 1492, and had on that occasion been in command of the *Nina*.

He set out in December, 1499, with four vessels, of which only two returned to Palos at the end of September, 1500. He touched the coast of the newly discovered continent at a point near the shore visited by Hojeda some months before, and explored the coast for some 2400 miles, discovering Cape St. Augustine at 8° 20' south latitude, following the coast-line in a north-westerly direction to *Rio Grande*, which he named *Santa-Maria de la Mar dulce*, and continuing in the same direction as far as Cape St. Vincent. Diego de Lepe explored the same coasts with two caravels from January to June, 1500; there is nothing particular to record of this voyage beyond the very important observation that was made on the direction of the coast-line of the continent starting from Cape St. Augustine. Lepe had but just returned to Spain when two vessels left Cadiz, equipped by Rodrigo M. Bastidas, a wealthy and highly respectable man, with the view of making some fresh discoveries, but above all with the object of collecting as large a quantity of gold and pearls as possible, for which were to be bartered glass beads and other worthless trifles. Juan de la Cosa, whose talents as a navigator were proverbial, and who knew these coasts well from having explored them, was really at the head of this expedition. The sailors went on shore and saw the Rio Sinu, the Gulf of Urabia, and reached the *Puerto del Retrete* or *de los Escribanos*, in the Isthmus of Panama. This harbour was not visited by Columbus till the 26th of November, 1502; it is situated about seventeen miles from the once celebrated, but now destroyed town of *Nombre de Dios*. In fact this expedition, which had been organized by a merchant, became, thanks to Juan de la Cosa, one of the voyages the most fertile in discoveries; but alas! it came to a sad termination; the vessels were lost in the Gulf of Xaragua, and Bastidas and La Cosa were obliged to make their way by land to St. Domingo. When they arrived there, Bovadilla, the upright man and model governor, whose infamous conduct to Columbus we have already mentioned, had them arrested, on the plea that they had bought some gold from the Indians of Xaragua; he sent them off to Spain, which was only reached after a fearfully stormy voyage, some of the vessels being lost on the way.

After this expedition, so fruitful in results, voyages of discovery became rather less frequent for some years; the Spaniards being occupied in asserting their supremacy in the countries in which they had already founded colonies.

Indians devoured by Dogs.

From an old print.

The colonization of Hispaniola had commenced in 1493, when the town of Isabella was built. Two years afterwards Christopher Columbus had travelled over the island and had subjugated the poor savages, by means of those terrible dogs which had been trained to hunt Indians, and unaccustomed as the natives were to any hard work, he had forced them to toil in the mines. Both Bovadilla and Ovando treating the Indians as a herd of cattle, had divided them among the colonists as slaves. The cruelty with which this unfortunate people was treated became more and more unbearable. By means of a despicable ambush, Ovando seized the Queen of Xaragua and 300 of her principal subjects, and at a given signal they were all put to the sword without there being any crime adduced against them. "For some years," says Robertson, "the gold brought into the royal treasury of Spain amounted to about 460,000 *pesos* (2,400,000 livres of the currency of Tours) an enormous sum if we take into consideration the great increase in the value of money since the beginning of the sixteenth century." In 1511 Diego Velasquez conquered Cuba with 300 men, and here again were enacted the terrible scenes of bloodshed and pillage which have rendered the Spanish name so sadly notorious. They cut off the thumbs of the natives, put out their eyes, and poured boiling oil or melted lead into their wounds, even when they did not torture them by burning them over a slow fire to extract from them the secret of the treasures of which they were believed to be the possessors. It was only natural under these circumstances that the population rapidly decreased, and the day was not far off when it would be wholly exterminated. To understand fully the sufferings of this race thus odiously persecuted, the touching and horrible narrative of Las Casas must be read, himself the indefatigable defender of the Indians.

Indians burnt alive.

From an old print.

In Cuba, the Cacique Hattuey was made prisoner and condemned to be burnt. When he was tied to the stake, a Franciscan monk tried to convert him, promising him that if he would only embrace the Christian faith, he would be at once admitted to all the joys of Paradise. "Are there any Spaniards in that land of happiness and joy of which you speak?" asked Hattuey. "Yes," replied the monk, "but only those who have been just and good in their lives." "The very best among them can have neither justice nor mercy!" said the poor cacique, "I do not wish to go to any place where I should meet a single man of that accursed race."

Does not this fact suffice to paint the degree of exasperation to which these unfortunate people had been driven? And these horrors were repeated wherever the Spaniards set foot! We will throw a veil over these atrocities practised by men who thought themselves civilized, and who pretended that they wished to convert to Christianity, the religion pre-eminently of love and mercy, a race who were in reality less savage than themselves.

In 1504 and 1505 four vessels explored the Gulf of Urabia. This was the first voyage in which Juan de la Cosa had the supreme command. This seems, too, to have been about the date of Hojeda's third voyage, when he went to the territory of Coquibacoa, a voyage that certainly was made, as Humboldt says, but of which we have no clear account.

In 1509 Juan Diaz de Solis, in concert with Vincent Yañez Pinzon, discovered a vast province, since known by the name of Yucatan.

"Though this expedition was not a very remarkable one in itself," says Robertson, "it deserves to be noticed as it led to discoveries of the utmost importance." For the same reason we must mention the voyage of Diego d'Ocampo, who being charged to sail round Cuba, was the first to ascertain the fact that it was a large island, Columbus having always regarded it as part of the continent. Two years later Juan Diaz de Solis and Vincent Pinzon sailing southwards towards the equinoctial line, advanced as far as the 40° of south latitude, and found, to their surprise, that the continent extended on their right hand even to this immense distance. They landed several times, and took formal possession of the country, but could not find any colonies there, on account of the small resources they had at their command. The principal result of this voyage was the more exact knowledge which it gave of the extent of this part of the globe.

Alonzo de Hojeda, whose adventures we have narrated above, was the first to think of founding a colony on the mainland; although he had no means of his own, his courage and enterprising spirit soon gained him associates, who furnished him with the funds needed for carrying out his plans.

With the same object Diego de Nicuessa, a rich colonist of Hispaniola, organized an expedition in 1509.

King Ferdinand, who was always lavish of encouragements which cost little, gave both Hojeda and Nicuessa honourable titles and patents of nobility, but not a single *maravédis* (a Spanish coin). He also divided the newly-discovered continent into two governments, of which one was to extend from Cape *La Vela* to the Gulf of Darien, and the other from the Gulf of Darien to Cape *Gracias a Dios*. The first was given to Hojeda, the second to Nicuessa. These two "conquistadores" had to deal with a population

far less easy to manage than that of the Antilles. Determined to resist to the utmost the invasion of their country, they adopted means of resistance hitherto unknown to the Spaniards. Thus the strife became deadly. In a single engagement seventy of Hojeda's companions fell under the arrows of the savages, fearful weapons steeped in "curare," so fatal a poison that the slightest wound was followed by death. Nicuessa on his side, had much difficulty in defending himself, and in spite of two considerable reinforcements from Cuba, the greater number of his followers perished during the year from wounds, fatigue, privations, or sickness. The survivors founded the small colony of Santa-Maria el Antigua upon the Gulf of Darien, and placed it under the command of Balboa.

Before we speak of Balboa's wonderful expedition, we must notice the discovery of a country that forms the most northerly side of that arc, cut so deeply into the continent, and which bears the name of the Gulf of Mexico. In 1502 Juan Ponce de Leon, a member of one of the oldest families in Spain, had arrived in Hispaniola with Ovando. He had assisted in its subjugation, and in 1508 had conquered the island of San Juan de Porto Rico. Having learnt from the Indians that there existed a fountain in the island of Bimini which possessed the miraculous power of restoring youth to all who drank of its waters, Ponce de Leon resolved to go in search of it. Infirmities must have been already creeping on him at fifty years of age, or he would scarcely have felt the need of trying this fountain. Ponce de Leon equipped three vessels at his own expense, and set out from St. Germain in Porto Rico on the 1st of March, 1512. He went first to the Lucayan Islands, which he searched in vain, and then to the Bahamas. If he did not succeed in finding the fountain of youth which he sought so credulously, at least he had the satisfaction of discovering an apparently fertile tract of country, which he named Florida, either from his landing there on Palm Sunday, (Pâques-Fleuries), or perhaps from its delightful aspect. Such a discovery would have contented many a traveller, but Ponce de Leon went from one island to another, tasting the water of every stream that he met with, without the satisfaction of seeing his white hair again becoming black or his wrinkles disappearing. After spending six months in this fruitless search, he was tired of playing the dupe, so giving up the business he returned to Porto Rico on the 5th of October, leaving Perez de Ortubia and the pilot Antonio de Alaminos to continue the search. Père Charlevoix says, "He was the object of great ridicule when he returned in much suffering, and looking older than when he set out."

This voyage, so absurd in its motive but so fertile in its results, might well be considered to be simply imaginary, were it not vouched for by historians of such high repute as Peter Martyr, Oviedo, Herrera, and Garcilasso de la Vega.

Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, who was fifteen years younger than Ponce de Leon, had come to America with Bastidas and had settled in Hispaniola. He was only anxious for a safe refuge from his numerous creditors, being, as were so many of his fellow-countrymen, deeply in debt, in spite of the *repartimiento* of Indians which had been allotted to him. Unfortunately for Balboa a law had been passed forbidding any vessels bound for the mainland taking insolvent debtors on board, but his ingenuity was equal to this emergency, for he had himself rolled in an empty barrel to the vessel which was to carry Encisco to Darien. The chief of the expedition had no choice but to receive the brave adventurer who had joined him in this singular manner, and who never fled except from duns, as he soon proved on landing. The Spaniards, accustomed to find but little resistance from the natives of the Antilles, could not subjugate the fierce inhabitants of the mainland. On account of the dissensions that had arisen among themselves, they were obliged to take refuge at Santa-Maria el Antigua, a settlement which Balboa, now elected commandant in place of Encisco, founded in Darien.

If the personal bravery of Balboa, or the ferocity of Leoncillo his blood-hound — who was more dreaded than twenty armed men and received the same pay as a soldier, — could have awed the Indians, Balboa would have also won their respect by his justice and comparative moderation, for he allowed no unnecessary cruelty. In the course of some years he collected a great mass of most useful information with regard to that El Dorado, that land of gold, which he was destined never to reach himself, but the acquisition of which he did much to facilitate for his successors.

It was in this way that he learnt the existence six suns away (six days' journey), of another sea, the Pacific Ocean, which washed the shores of Peru, a country where gold was found in large quantities. Balboa's character, which was as grand as those of Cortès and Pizarro, but who had not, as they, the time or opportunity to show the extraordinary qualities which he possessed, felt convinced that this information was most valuable, and that if he could carry out such a discovery, it would shed great lustre on his name.

He assembled a body of 190 volunteers, all valiant soldiers, and like himself, accustomed to all the chances of war, as well as acclimatised to the unhealthy effluvia of a marshy country, where fever, dysentery, and complaints of the liver were constantly present.

Though the Isthmus of Darien is only sixty miles in width, it is divided into two parts by a chain of high mountains; at the foot of these the alluvial soil is marvellously fertile, and the vegetation far more luxuriant than any European can imagine. It consists of an inextricable mass of tropical plants, creepers, and ferns, among trees of gigantic size which completely hide the sun, a truly virgin forest, interspersed here and there with patches of stagnant water, where live multitudes of birds, insects, and animals, never disturbed by the foot of man. A warm, moist atmosphere exists here which exhausts the strength and speedily saps the energy of any man, even the most robust.

With all these obstacles which Nature seemed to have rejoiced in placing in Balboa's path, there was yet another no less formidable, and this was the resistance which the savage inhabitants of this inhospitable shore would offer to his progress. Balboa set out without caring for the risk he ran in the event of the guides and native auxiliaries proving faithless; he was escorted by a thousand Indians as porters, and accompanied by a troop of those terrible bloodhounds which had acquired the taste for human

flesh in Hispaniola.

Of the tribes that he met with on his route, some fled into the mountains carrying their provisions with them, and others, taking advantage of the difficulties the land presented, tried to fight. Balboa marching in the midst of his men, never sparing himself, sharing in their privations and rousing their courage, which would have failed more than once, was able to inspire them with so much enthusiasm for the object that was before them, that after twenty-five days of marching and fighting, they could see from the top of a mountain that vast Pacific Ocean, of which, four days later, Balboa, his drawn sword in one hand and the banner of Castille in the other, took possession in the name of the King of Spain. The part of the Pacific Ocean which he had reached is situated to the east of Panama, and still bears the name of the Gulf of San Miguel, given to it by Balboa. The information he obtained from the neighbouring caciques, whom he subjugated by force of arms, and from whom he obtained a considerable booty, agreed in every particular with what he had heard before he set out.

A vast empire lay to the south, they said, "so rich in gold, that even the commonest instruments were made of it," where the domestic animals were llamas that had been tamed and trained to carry heavy burdens, and whose appearance in the native drawings resembled that of the camel. These interesting details, and the great quantity of pearls offered to Balboa, confirmed him in his idea, that he must have reached the Asiatic countries described by Marco Polo, and that he could not be far from the empire of Cipango or Japan, of which the Venetian traveller had described the marvellous riches which were perpetually dazzling the eyes of these avaricious adventurers.

Balboa discovering the Pacific Ocean.

Balboa several times crossed the Isthmus of Darien, and always in some fresh direction. Humboldt might well say that this country was better known in the beginning of the sixteenth century than in his own day. Beyond this Balboa had launched some vessels built under his orders on the newly-discovered ocean, and he was preparing a formidable armament, with which he hoped to conquer Peru, when he was odiously and judicially murdered by the orders of Pedrarias Davila, the governor of Darien, who was jealous of the reputation Balboa had already gained, and of the glory which would doubtless recompense his bravery if he carried out the expedition which he had arranged. Thus the conquest of Peru was retarded by at least twenty-five years, owing to the culpable jealousy of a man whose name has acquired, by Balboa's assassination, almost as wretched a celebrity as that of Erostratus.

If we owe to Balboa the first authentic documents regarding Peru, another explorer was destined to furnish some not less important touching that vast Mexican Empire, which had extended its sway over almost the whole of Central America. In 1518, Juan de Grijalva had been placed in command of a flotilla, consisting of four vessels, armed by Diego Velasquez, the conqueror of Cuba, which were destined to collect information upon Yucatan, sighted the year before by Hernandez de Cordova. Grijalva, accompanied by the pilot Alaminos, who had made the voyage to Florida with Ponce de Leon, had two hundred men under his command; amongst the volunteers was Bernal Diaz del Castillo, the clever author of a very interesting history of the conquest of Mexico, from which we shall borrow freely.

After thirteen days' sailing, Grijalva reached the Island of Cozumel on the coast of Yucatan, doubled the Cape of Cotoche, and entered the Bay of Campeachy. He disembarked on the 10th of May at Potonchan, of which the inhabitants defended the town and citadel vigorously, in spite of their astonishment at the vessels, which they took for some kind of marine monsters, and their fear of the pale-faced men who hurled thunderbolts. Fifty-seven Spaniards were killed in the engagement, and many were wounded. This warm reception did not encourage Grijalva to make any long stay amongst this warlike people. He set sail again after anchoring for four days, took a westerly course along the coast of Mexico, and on the 19th of May entered a river named by the natives the Tabasco, where he soon found himself surrounded by a fleet of fifty native boats filled with warriors ready for the conflict, but thanks to Grijalva's prudence and the amicable demonstrations which he made, peace was not disturbed.

"We made them understand," writes Bernal Diaz, "that we were the subjects of a powerful emperor called Don Carlos, and that it would be greatly to their advantage if they also would acknowledge him as their master. They replied that they had a sovereign already, and were at a loss to understand why we, who had only just arrived, and who knew so little of them, should offer them another king." This reply was scarcely that of a savage!

In exchange for some worthless European trinkets, the Spaniards obtained some Yucca bread, copal gum, pieces of gold worked into the shape of fishes or birds, and garments made of cotton, which had been woven in the country. As the natives who had been taken on board at Cape Cotoche did not perfectly understand the language spoken by the inhabitants of Tabasco, the stay here was but of short duration, and the ships again put to sea. They passed the mouth of the Rio Guatzacoalco, the snowy peaks of the San Martin mountains being seen in the distance, and they anchored at the mouth of a river which was called *Rio de las Banderas*, from the number of white banners displayed by the natives to show their friendly feeling towards the new comers.

When Grijalva landed, he was received with the same honour as the Indians paid to their gods; they burnt copal incense before him, and laid at his feet more than 1500 piastres' worth of small gold jewels, as well as green pearls and copper hatchets. After taking formal possession of the country, the Spaniards landed on an island called *Los Sacrificios* Island, from a sort of altar which

they found there placed at the top of several steps, upon which lay the bodies of five Indians sacrificed since the preceding evening; their bodies were cut open, their hearts torn out, and both legs and arms cut off. Leaving this revolting spectacle, they went to another small island, which received the name of San Juan, being discovered on St. John's Day; to this they added the word *Culua*, which they heard used by the natives of these shores. But *Culua* was the ancient name for Mexico, and this Island of San-Juan de *Culua* is now known as St. John d'Ulloa.

Grijalva put all the gold which he had collected on board one of the ships and despatched it to Cuba, while he continued his exploration of the coast, discovered the Sierras of Tusta and Tuspa, and collected a large amount of useful information regarding this populous country; on arriving at the *Rio Panuco*, he was attacked by a flotilla of native vessels, and had much difficulty in defending himself against their attacks.

This expedition was nearly over, for provisions were running short, and the vessels were in a very bad state, the volunteers were many of them sick and wounded, and even had they been in good health their numbers were too small to make it safe to leave them among these warlike people, even under the shelter of fortifications. Besides, the leaders of the expedition no longer acted in concert, so after repairing the largest of the vessels in the Rio Tonalá, where Bernal Diaz boasts of having sown the first orange-pips which were ever brought to Mexico, the Spaniards set out for Santiago in Cuba, where they arrived on the 15th of November, after a cruise of seven months, not forty-five days, as M. Ferdinand Denis asserts in the *Biographie Didot*, and as M. Ed. Charton repeats in his *Voyageurs Anciens et Modernes*.

The results obtained from this voyage were considerable. For the first time the long line of coast which forms the peninsula of Yucatan, the Bay of Campeachy, and the base of the Gulf of Mexico, had been explored continuously from cape to cape. Not only had it been proved beyond doubt that Yucatan was not an island as they had believed, but much and reliable information had been collected with regard to the existence of the rich and powerful empire of Mexico. The explorers had been much struck with the marks of a more advanced civilization than that existing in the Antilles, with the superiority of the architecture, the skilful cultivation of the land, the fine texture of the cotton garments, and the delicacy of finish of the golden ornaments worn by the Indians. All this combined to increase the thirst for riches among the Spaniards of Cuba, and to urge them on like modern Argonauts to the conquest of this new golden fleece. Grijalva was not destined to reap the fruits of his perilous and at the same time intelligent voyage, which threw so new a light on Indian civilization. The *sic vos, non vobis* of the poet was once again to find an exemplification in this circumstance.

II.

THE CONQUERORS OF CENTRAL AMERICA.

Ferdinand Cortès — His character — His appointment — Preparations for the expedition, and attempts of Velasquez to stop it — Landing at Vera-Cruz — Mexico and the Emperor Montezuma — The republic of Tlascalá — March upon Mexico — The Emperor is made prisoner — Narvaez defeated — The *Noche Triste* — Battle of Otumba — The second siege and taking of Mexico — Expedition to Honduras — Voyage to Spain — Expeditions on the Pacific Ocean — Second Voyage of Cortès to Spain — His death.

Velasquez had not waited for Grijalva's return before sending off to Spain the rich products of the countries discovered by the latter, and at the same time soliciting from the council of the Indies, as well as from the Bishop of Burgos, an addition to his authority, that he might attempt the conquest of these countries. At the same time he fitted out a new armament proportioned to the dangers and importance of the undertaking that he proposed. But though it was comparatively easy for Velasquez to collect the necessary material and men, it was far more difficult for him — whom an old writer describes as niggardly, credulous, and suspicious in disposition — to choose a fit leader. He wished indeed, to find one who should combine qualities nearly always incompatible, high courage and great talent, without which there was no chance of success, with at the same time sufficient docility and submissiveness, to do nothing without orders, and to leave to him who incurred no risk, any glory and success which might attend the enterprise. Some who were brave and enterprising would not be treated as mere machines; others who were more docile or more cunning lacked the qualities required to insure the success of so vast an enterprise; among the former were some of Grijalva's companions who wished that he should be made commander, while the latter preferred Augustin Bermudez or Bernardino Velasquez. While this was pending, the governor's secretary, Andrès de Duero, and Amador de Larez, the Controller of Cuba, both favourites of Velasquez, made an arrangement with a Spanish nobleman named Ferdinand Cortès, that if they could obtain the appointment for him, they should be allowed a share in his gains.

Bernal Diaz says, "They praised Cortès so highly, and pointed him out in such flattering terms as the very man fitted to fill the vacant post, adding that he was brave and certainly very faithful to Velasquez (to whom he was son-in-law), that he allowed himself to be persuaded, and Cortès was nominated captain-general. As Andrès de Duero was the governor's secretary, he hastened to formulate the powers in a deed, making them very ample, as Cortès desired, and brought it to him duly signed." Had Velasquez been gifted with the power of looking into the future, Cortès was certainly not the man he would have chosen.

Ferdinand Cortès.
From an old print.

Cortès was born at Medellín in Estramadura in 1485, of an ancient, but slenderly-endowed family; after studying at Salamanca for some time, he returned to his native town, but the quiet monotonous life there was little suited to his restless and capricious temper, and he soon started for America, reckoning upon the protection of his relation Ovando, the Governor of Hispaniola.

His expectations were fully realized, and he held several honourable and lucrative posts, without counting that between times he joined in several expeditions against the natives. If he became in this manner initiated into the Indian system of tactics, so also, unfortunately, did he grow familiar with those acts of cruelty which have too often stained the Castilian name. He accompanied Diego de Velasquez in his Cuban expedition in 1511, and here he distinguished himself so highly, that notwithstanding certain disagreements with his chief, a large grant of land as well as of Indians was made to him as a recognition of his services.

Cortès amassed the sum of 3000 castellanos in the course of a few years by his industry and frugality, a large sum for one in his position, but his chief recommendations in the eyes of Andrés de Duero and Amador de Sarès his two patrons, were his activity, his well-known prudence, his decision of character, and the power of gaining the confidence of all with whom he was brought into contact. In addition to all this, he was of imposing stature and appearance, very athletic, and possessed powers of endurance, remarkable even among the hardy adventurers who were accustomed to brave all kinds of hardships.

As soon as Cortès had received his commission, which he did with every mark of respectful gratitude, he set up a banner at the door of his house, made of black velvet embroidered in gold, bearing the device of a red cross in the midst of blue and white flames, and below, this motto in Latin, "Friends, let us follow the Cross, and if we have faith, we shall overcome by this sign." He concentrated the whole force of his powerful mind upon the means to make the enterprise a success; even his most intimate friends were astonished at his enthusiasm in preparing for it. He not only gave the whole of the money which he possessed towards arming the fleet, but he charged part on his estate, and borrowed considerable sums from his friends to purchase vessels, provisions, munitions of war, and horses. In a few days 300 volunteers had enrolled themselves, attracted by the fame of the general, the daring nature of the enterprise, and the profit that would probably accrue from it. Velasquez, always suspicious, and doubtless instigated by some who were jealous of Cortès, tried to put a stop to the expedition at its outset. Cortès being warned by his two patrons that Velasquez would probably try to take the command from him, acted with his customary decision; he collected his men and, in spite of the vessels not being completed and of an insufficient armament, he weighed anchor and sailed during the night. When Velasquez discovered that his plans had been check-mated he concealed his indignation, but at the same time, he made every arrangement to stop the man who could thus throw off all dependence upon him with such consummate coolness. Cortès anchored at Macaca, to complete his stores, and found many of those who had accompanied Grijalva now hasten to serve under his banner: Pedro de Alvarado and his brothers, Christoval de Olid, Alonzo de Avila, Hernandez de Puerto-Carrero, Gonzalo de Sandoval, and Bernal Diaz del Castillo, who was to write a valuable account of these events "*quorum pars magna fuit.*" Trinity Harbour, on the south coast of Cuba was the next resting-place, and here a further supply of provisions was taken on board, but while Cortès lay at anchor for this purpose, Verdugo the governor, received letters from Velasquez, desiring him to arrest the captain-general, the command of the fleet having been just taken from him. This bold step would have endangered the safety of the town, so Verdugo refrained from executing the order. Cortès sailed away to Havana in order to enlist some new adherents, while his lieutenant Alvarado went over land to the port where the last preparations were made. Although Velasquez was unsuccessful in his first attempt, he again sent an order to arrest Cortès, but Pedro Barba the governor, felt the impossibility of executing the order in the midst of soldiers who, as Bernal Diaz says, "would willingly have given their lives to save Cortès."

At length, having recalled the volunteers by beat of drum, and taken on board all that appeared necessary, Cortès set sail on the 18th February, 1519, with eleven ships (the largest being of 100 tons), 110 sailors, 553 soldiers, — 13 of whom were arquebusiers, — 200 Indians from the island, and some women for domestic work. The real strength of the armament lay in the ten pieces of artillery, the four falconets provided with an ample supply of ammunition, and the sixteen horses which had been obtained at great expense. It was with these almost miserable means, which, however, had given Cortès much trouble to collect, that he prepared to wage war with a sovereign whose dominions were of greater extent than those appertaining to the King of Spain — an enterprise from which he would have turned back if he had foreseen half its difficulties. But long ago a poet said, "Fortune smiles on those who dare."

After encountering a very severe storm, the fleet touched at the island of Cozumel, where they found that the inhabitants had embraced Christianity, either from fear of the Spaniards, or from finding the inability of their gods to help them. Just as the fleet was about to leave the island, Cortès had the good fortune to meet with a Spaniard named Jeronimo d'Aguilar, who had been kept a prisoner by the Indians for eight years. During that time he had learnt the Indian language perfectly; he was as prudent as he was clever, and when he joined the expedition he was of the greatest use as an interpreter.

After doubling Cape Catoche, Cortès sailed down the Bay of Campeachy, passed Potonchan, and entered the Rio Tabasco, hoping to meet with as friendly a reception there as Grijalva had done, and also to collect an equally large quantity of gold; but he found a great change had taken place in the feelings of the natives, and he was obliged to employ force. In spite of the bravery and numerical superiority of the Indians, the Spaniards overcame them in several engagements, thanks to the terror caused by the reports of their fire-arms and the sight of the cavalry, whom the Indians took for supernatural beings. The Indians lost a large number of men in these engagements, while among the Spaniards two were killed, and fourteen men and several horses

wounded; the wounds of the latter were dressed with fat taken from the dead bodies of the Indians. At last peace was made, and the natives gave Cortès provisions, some cotton clothing, a small quantity of gold, and twenty female slaves, among whom was the celebrated Marina, who rendered such signal services to the Spaniards as an interpreter, and who is mentioned by all the historians of the conquest of the New World.

Cortès receives provisions, clothing, a little gold, and twenty female slaves.

Cortès continued on a westerly course, seeking a suitable place for landing, but he could find none until he reached St. John d'Ulloa. The fleet had scarcely cast anchor before a canoe made its way fearlessly to the admiral's vessel, and here Marina (who was of Aztec origin) was of the greatest use, in telling Cortès that the Indians of this part of the country were the subjects of a great empire, and that their province was one recently added to it by conquest. Their monarch, named Moctheuzoma, better known under the name of Montezuma, lived in Tenochtitlan, or Mexico, nearly 210 miles away in the interior. Cortès offered the Indians some presents, assuring them of his pacific intentions, and then disembarked upon the torrid and unhealthy shore of Vera-Cruz. Provisions flowed in immediately, but the day after the landing, Teutile, governor of the province, and ambassador of Montezuma to the Spaniards, had much difficulty in answering Cortès when he asked him to conduct him to his master without delay, knowing as he did all the anxiety and fears which had haunted the mind of the Emperor since the arrival of the Spaniards. However, he caused some cotton stuffs, feather cloaks, and some articles made of gold to be laid at the feet of the general, a sight which simply excited the cupidity of the Europeans. To give these poor Indians an adequate idea of his power, Cortès called out his soldiers, and put them through their drill, he also ordered the discharge of some pieces of artillery, the noise of which froze the hearts of the savages with terror. During the whole time of the interview, some painters had been employed in sketching upon pieces of white cotton, the ships, the troops, and everything which had struck their fancy. These drawings very cleverly executed, were to be sent to Montezuma.

Before beginning the history of the heroic struggles which shortly commenced, it will be useful to give some details as to that Mexican empire which, powerful as it appeared, nevertheless contained within itself numerous elements of decay and dissolution, which fact explains the cause of its conquest by a mere handful of adventurers. That part of America which was under the dominion of Montezuma was called Anahuac and lay between 14° and 20° north latitude. This region presents great varieties of climate on account of its difference of altitude; towards the centre, and rather nearer to the Pacific than to the Atlantic, there is a huge basin at an elevation of 7500 feet above the sea, and about 200 miles in circumference, in the hollow of which there were at that time several lakes; this depression is called the valley of Mexico, taking its name from the capital of the empire. As may be easily supposed, we possess very few authentic details about a people whose written annals were burnt by the ignorant "conquistadores" and by fanatical monks, who jealously suppressed everything which might remind the conquered race of their ancient religious and political traditions.

Arriving from the north in the seventh century the Toltecs had overspread the plateau of Anahuac. They were an intelligent race of people, addicted to agriculture and the mechanical arts, understanding the working in metals, and to whom is due the construction of the greater part of the sumptuous and gigantic edifices of which the ruins are found in every direction in New Spain. After four centuries of power, the Toltecs disappeared from the country as mysteriously as they had come. A century later they were replaced by a savage tribe from the north-west, who were soon followed by more civilized races, speaking apparently the Toltec language. The most celebrated of these tribes were the Aztecs, and the Alcolhuès or Tezcucans, who assimilated themselves easily with the tincture of civilization which remained in the country with the last of the Toltecs. The Aztecs, after a series of migrations and wars, settled themselves in 1326 in the valley of Mexico, where they built their capital Tenochtitlan. A treaty of alliance both offensive and defensive was entered into between the states of Mexico, Tezcucan, and Tlacopan, and was rigorously observed for a whole century; in consequence of this the Aztec civilization, which had been at first bounded by the extent of the valley, spread on all sides, and soon was limited only by the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. In a short time these people had reached a higher degree of civilization than any other tribe in the New World. The rights of property were recognized in Mexico, commerce flourished there, and three kinds of coin in circulation provided the ordinary mechanism of exchange. There was a well-organized police, and a system of relays which worked with perfect regularity, and enabled the sovereign to transmit his orders with rapidity from one end of the empire to the other. The number and beauty of the towns, the great size of the palaces, temples, and fortresses indicated an advanced civilization, which presented a singular contrast to the ferocious manners of the Aztecs. Their polytheistic religion was in the highest degree barbarous and sanguinary; the priests formed a very numerous body, and exercised great influence even over political affairs. Side by side with rites similar to those of Christians, such as baptism and confession, the religion presented a tissue of the most absurd and bloody superstitions. The offering up of human sacrifices, adopted at the beginning of the 14th century, and used at first very sparingly, had soon become so frequent, that the number of victims immolated each year, and drawn chiefly from the conquered nations, amounted to 20,000, while under certain circumstances the number was much larger. Thus in 1486, at the inauguration of the temple of Huitzilopchit, 70,000 captives perished in a single day.

The Government of Mexico was monarchical; at first the imperial power had been carefully limited, but it had increased with the various conquests, and had become despotic. The sovereign was always chosen out of the same family, and his accession was marked by the offering up of numerous human sacrifices. The Emperor Montezuma belonged to the sacerdotal caste, and in consequence his power received some unwonted development. The result of his numerous wars had been the extension of his

frontiers, and the subjugation of various nations; these latter welcomed the Spaniards with eagerness, thinking that their dominion must surely be less oppressive and less cruel than that of the Aztecs.

It is certain that if Montezuma, with the large force which he had at his disposal, had fallen upon the Spaniards when they were occupying the hot and unhealthy shore of Vera-Cruz, they would have been unable, in spite of the superiority of their arms and discipline, to resist such a shock; they must all have perished, or been obliged to re-embark, and the fate of the New World would have been completely changed. But the decision which formed the most salient point in the character of Cortès, was completely wanting in that of Montezuma, a prince who never could at any time adopt a resolute policy.

Fresh ambassadors from the emperor had arrived at the Spanish camp, bringing to Cortès an order to quit the country, and upon his refusal all intercourse between the natives and the invaders had immediately ceased. The situation was becoming critical, and this Cortès felt. After having overcome some hesitation which had been shown by the troops, he laid the foundations of Vera-Cruz, a fortress designed to serve as a basis of operations, and a shelter in case of a possible re-embarkation. He next organized a kind of civil government, a *junta*, as it would be called in the present day, to which he resigned the commission which had been revoked by Velasquez, and then he made the junta give him one with new provisions and more extended powers. After this he received the envoys from the town of Zempoalla, who were come to solicit his alliance, and his protection against Montezuma, whose dominion they bore with impatience. Cortès was indeed fortunate in meeting with such allies so soon after landing, and not wishing to allow so golden an opportunity to slip, he welcomed the Totonacs kindly, went with them to their capital, and after having caused a fortress to be constructed at Quiabiskan on the sea-shore, he persuaded his new friends to refuse the payment of tribute to Montezuma. He took advantage of his stay at Zempoalla to exhort these people to embrace Christianity, and he threw down their idols, as he had already done at Cozumel, to prove to them the powerlessness of their gods.

Meanwhile a plot had been forming in his own camp, and Cortès, feeling convinced that as long as there remained any way of returning to Cuba, there would be constant lukewarmness and discontent among his soldiers, caused all his ships to be run aground, under the pretext of their being in too shattered a condition to be of any further use. This was an unheard-of act of audacity, and one which forced his companions either to conquer or to die. Having no longer anything to fear from the want of discipline of his troops, Cortès set out for Zempoalla on the 16th of August, with five hundred soldiers, fifteen horses, and six field cannon, and also two hundred Indian porters, who were intended to perform all menial offices. The little army soon reached the frontiers of the small republic of Tlascalala, of which the fierce inhabitants, impatient of servitude, had long been engaged in strife with Montezuma. Cortès flattered himself that his oft-proclaimed intention of delivering the Indians from the Mexican yoke would induce the Tlascalans to become his allies and at once to make common cause with him. He therefore asked for leave to cross their territory on his way to Mexico; but his ambassadors were detained, and as he advanced into the interior of the country, he was harassed for fourteen consecutive days and nights by continual attacks from several bodies of Tlascalans, amounting in all to 30,000 men, who displayed a bravery and determination such as the Spaniards had never yet seen equalled in the New World. But the arms possessed by these brave men were very primitive. What could they effect with only arrows and lances tipped with obsidian or fish-bones, stakes hardened in the fire, wooden swords, and above all with an inferior system of tactics? When they found that each encounter cost them the lives of many of their bravest warriors, while not a single Spaniard had been killed, they imagined that these strangers must be of a superior order of beings, while they could not tell what opinion to form of men who sent back to them the spies taken in their camp, with their hands cut off, and who yet after each victory not only did not devour their prisoners, as the Aztecs would have done, but released them, loading them with presents and proposing peace.

Upon this the Tlascalans declared themselves vassals of the Spanish crown, and swore to assist Cortès in all his expeditions, while he on his side promised to protect them against their enemies. It was time that peace should be made, for many of the Spaniards were wounded or ill, and all were worn out with fatigue, but the entry in triumph into Tlascalala, where they were welcomed as supernatural beings, quickly made them forget their sufferings.

After twenty days of repose in this town, Cortès resumed his march towards Mexico, having with him an auxiliary army of six thousand Tlascalans. He went first to Cholula, a town regarded as sacred by the Indians, and as the sanctuary and favoured residence of their deities. Montezuma felt much satisfaction in the advance of the Spaniards to this town, either from the hope that the gods would themselves avenge the desecration of their temples, or that he thought a rising, and massacre of the Spaniards might be more easily organized in this populous and fanatical town. Cortès had been warned by the Tlascalans that he must place no trust in the protestations of friendship and devotion made by the Cholulans. However, he took up his quarters in the town, considering that he would lose his prestige if he showed any signs of fear, but upon being informed by the Tlascalans that the women and children were being sent away, and by Marina that a considerable body of troops was massed at the gates of the city, that pitfalls and trenches were dug in the streets, whilst the roofs of the houses were loaded with stones and missiles, Cortès anticipated the designs of his enemies, gave orders to make prisoners of all the principal men of the town, and then organized a general massacre of the population, thus taken by surprise and deprived of their leaders. For two whole days the unhappy Cholulans were subject to all the horrors which could be invented by the rage of the Spaniards, and the vengeance of their allies the Tlascalans. A terrible example was made, six thousand people being put to the sword, temples burned to the ground, and the town half destroyed, a work of destruction well calculated to strike terror into the hearts of Montezuma and his subjects.

Sixty miles now separated Cortès from the capital, and everywhere as he passed along he was received as a liberator. There was not a cacique who had not some cause of complaint against the imperial despotism, and Cortès felt confirmed in the hope that so divided an empire would prove an easy prey. As the Spaniards descended from the mountains of Chalco, they beheld with astonishment the valley of Mexico, with its enormous lake, deeply sunk and surrounded by large towns, the capital city built upon piles, and the well-cultivated fields of this fertile region.

Cortès did not trouble himself about the continued tergiversations of Montezuma, who could not make up his mind to the last moment whether he would receive the Spaniards as friends or enemies. The Spanish general advanced along the causeway which leads to Mexico across the lake, and was already within a mile of the town, when some Indians, who, from their magnificent costume were evidently of high rank, came to greet him and to announce to him the approach of the emperor. Montezuma soon appeared, borne upon the shoulders of his favourites in a kind of litter adorned with gold and feathers, while a magnificent canopy protected him from the rays of the sun. As he advanced the Indians prostrated themselves before him, with their heads downwards, as though unworthy even to look at their monarch. This first interview was cordial, and Montezuma himself conducted his guests to the abode which he had prepared for them. It was a vast palace, surrounded by a stone wall, and defended by high towers. Cortès immediately took measures of defence, and ordered the cannon to be pointed upon the roads leading to the palace. At the second interview, magnificent presents were offered both to the general and soldiers. Montezuma related that according to an old tradition, the ancestors of the Aztecs had arrived in the country under the leadership of a man of white complexion, and bearded like the Spaniards. After laying the foundations of their power, he had embarked upon the ocean, promising them that one day his descendants would come to visit them and to reform their laws — and if, as Montezuma said, he now received the Spaniards rather as fathers than as foreigners, it was because he felt convinced that in them he beheld the descendants of his people's ancient chief, and he begged them to regard themselves as the masters of his country.

The following days were employed in visiting the town, which appeared to the Spaniards as larger, more populous, and more beautiful than any city which they had hitherto seen in America. Its distinguishing peculiarity consisted in the causeways which formed a means of communication with the land, and which were cut through in various places to allow a free passage to vessels sailing on the waters of the lake. Across these openings were thrown bridges which could be easily destroyed. On the eastern side of the town there was no causeway and no means of communication with the land except by canoes. This arrangement of the town of Mexico caused some anxiety to Cortès, who saw that he might be at any moment blockaded in the town, without being able to find means of egress. He determined, therefore, to prevent any seditious attempt by securing the person of the emperor, and using him as a hostage. The following news which he had just received furnished him with an excellent pretext: Qualpopoca, a Mexican general, had attacked the provinces which had submitted to the Spaniards, and Escalante and seven of his soldiers had been mortally wounded; besides this, a prisoner had been beheaded and the head carried from town to town, thus proving that the invaders could be conquered, and were nothing more than ordinary mortals.

Cortès profited by these events to accuse the emperor of perfidy. He declared that although Montezuma appeared friendly to him and to his soldiers, it was only that he might wait for some favourable opportunity to treat them in the same manner as Escalante, a proceeding quite unworthy of a monarch, and very different from the confidence which Cortès had shown in coming, as he had done, to visit him. He went on to say that if the suspicions of the Spaniards were not justified, the emperor could easily exonerate himself by having Qualpopoca punished, and finally, to prevent the recurrence of aggressions which could but destroy the existing harmony, and to prove to the Mexicans that he harboured no ill-design against the Spaniards, Montezuma could not do otherwise than come to reside amongst them. It may be easily imagined that the emperor was not very ready to decide upon this course, but was at last obliged to give in to the violence and threats of the Spaniards. Upon announcing his resolution to his subjects, he was made to assure them several times over that he put himself into the hands of the Spaniards of his own free will; these words were needed to calm the Mexicans, who threatened to make an attack upon the foreigners.

The success of Cortès in this bold scheme was quite beyond his expectations. Qualpopoca, with his son and five of the chief ringleaders in the revolt, were seized by the Mexicans, and brought before a Spanish tribunal, which was at the same time judge and prosecutor; the Indians were condemned and burnt alive. Not content with having punished men who had committed no crime but that of executing the orders of their emperor, and of opposing an armed resistance to the invasion of their country, Cortès imposed a new humiliation upon Montezuma, in placing fetters upon his feet, under the pretext that the culprits in their last moments had made accusations against him. For six months the "Conquistador" exercised the supreme government in the name of the emperor, now reduced to a puppet-show of authority. Cortès changed the governors who displeased him, collected the taxes, presided over all the details of the administration, and sent Spaniards into the various provinces of the empire with orders to examine their productions, and to take particular notice of the mining districts and the processes in use for collecting gold.

Cortès also turned to account the curiosity evinced by Montezuma to see European ships, to have rigging and other appurtenances brought from Vera-Cruz, and to order the construction of two brigantines destined to ensure his communications with terra-firma by the waters of the lake.

Emboldened by receiving so many proofs of submission and humility, Cortès took another step in advance, and required that Montezuma should declare himself the vassal and tributary of Spain. The act of fidelity and homage was accompanied, as may be easily imagined, with presents both rich and numerous, as well as by a heavy tax which was levied without much difficulty. The opportunity was now taken to gather together everything in gold and silver, which had been extorted from the Indians, and to melt them down, except certain pieces which were kept as they were, on account of the beauty of the workmanship. The whole did not

amount to more than 600,000 pesos, or 100,000*l*. Thus, although the Spaniards had made use of all their power, and Montezuma had exhausted his treasures to satisfy them, the whole product amounted to an absurdly small sum, very little in accordance with the idea which the conquerors had formed of the riches of the country. After reserving one-fifth of the treasure for the king, and one-fifth for Cortès and subtracting enough to reimburse the sums which had been advanced for the expenses of the expedition, the share of each soldier did not amount to 100 *pesos*, and they considered that it would have been more worth their while to have remained in Hispaniola, than to have experienced such fatigues, encountered such great dangers, and suffered so many privations, all for the reward of 100 *pesos*! If the promises of Cortès ended in this beggarly result, and if the partition had been made with fairness, of which they did not feel certain, they argued that it was absurd to remain longer in so poor a country, while under a chief less prodigal in promises, but more generous, they might go to countries rich in gold and precious stones, where brave warriors would find an adequate compensation for their toils. So murmured these greedy adventurers; some accepting what fell to their share while fuming over its small amount, others disdainfully refusing it.

Cortès had succeeded in persuading Montezuma to conform to his will in everything which concerned politics, but it was otherwise in regard to religion. He could not persuade him to change his creed, and when Cortès wished to throw down the idols, as he had done at Zempoalla, a tumult arose which would have become very serious, had he not immediately abandoned his project. From that time the Mexicans, who had offered scarcely any resistance to the subjugation and imprisonment of their monarch, resolved to avenge their outraged deities, and they prepared a simultaneous rising against the invaders. It was at this juncture, when the affairs in the interior seemed to be taking a less favourable turn, that Cortès received news from Vera-Cruz, that several ships were cruising off the harbour. At first he thought this must be a fleet sent to his aid by Charles V. in answer to a letter which he had sent to him on the 16th of July, 1519, by Puerto Carrero and Montejo. But he was soon undeceived, and learnt that this expedition was organized by Diego Velasquez, who knew by experience how lightly his lieutenant could shake off all dependence upon him; he had sent this armament with the object of deposing Cortès from his command, of making him a prisoner, and of carrying him off to Cuba, where he would be speedily placed upon his trial. The fleet thus sent was under the command of Pamphilo de Narvaez; it consisted of eighteen vessels, and carried eighty horse-soldiers, and 100 infantry (of whom eighty were musketeers), 120 cross-bowmen, and twelve cannons.

Narvaez disembarked without opposition, near to the fort of San Juan d'Ulloa, but upon summoning the Governor of Vera-Cruz, Sandoval, to give up the town to him, Sandoval seized the men who were charged with the insolent message, and sent them off to Mexico, where Cortès at once released them, and then gained from them circumstantial information as to the forces, and the projects of Narvaez. The personal danger of Cortès at this moment was great; the troops sent by Velasquez were more numerous and better furnished with arms and ammunition than were his own, but his deepest cause of anxiety was not the possibility of his own condemnation and death, it was the fear lest all fruit of his efforts might be lost, and the knowledge of the hurtfulness of these dissensions to his country's cause. The situation was a critical one, but after mature reflection and the careful weighing of arguments for and against the course he meditated, Cortès determined to fight, even at a disadvantage, rather than to sacrifice his conquests and the interests of Spain. Before proceeding to this last extremity, he sent his chaplain Olmedo to Narvaez, but he was very ill-received, and saw all his proposals for an accommodation disdainfully rejected. Olmedo met with more success amongst the soldiers, who most of them knew him, and to whom he distributed a number of chains, gold rings, and other jewels, which were well calculated to give them a high idea of the riches of the conqueror. But when Narvaez heard of what was going on, he determined not to leave his troops any longer exposed to temptation; he set a price upon the heads of Cortès and his principal officers, and advanced to the encounter.

Cortès, however, was too skilful to be enticed into giving battle under unfavourable circumstances. He temporized and succeeded in tiring out Narvaez and his troops, who retired to Zempoalla. Then Cortès, having taken his measures with consummate prudence, and the surprise and terror of a nocturnal attack which he organized compensating for the inferiority of his troops, he made prisoners of his enemy and all his soldiers, his own loss amounting to but two men. The conqueror treated the vanquished well, and gave them the choice between returning to Cuba, or remaining to share his fortune. This latter proposal, backed up as it was by gifts and promises, appeared so seductive to the new arrivals, that Cortès found himself at the head of 1000 soldiers, the day after he had been in danger of falling into the hands of Narvaez. This rapid change of fortune was turned to the greatest advantage by the skilful diplomacy of Cortès, who hastened to return to Mexico. The troops whom he had left there under the command of Alvarado, to guard the emperor and the treasure, were reduced to the last extremity by the natives, who had killed or wounded a great number of soldiers, and who kept the rest in a state of close blockade, while threatening them constantly with a general assault. It must be confessed that the imprudent and criminal conduct of the Spaniards, and notably the massacre of the most distinguished citizens of the empire during a fête, had brought about the rising which they dreaded, and which they had hoped to prevent. After having been joined by 2000 Tlascalans, Cortès pressed forward by forced marches towards the capital, where he arrived in safety, and found that the Indians had not destroyed the bridges belonging to the causeways and dikes which joined Mexico to the land. In spite of the arrival of this reinforcement, the situation did not improve. Each day it was necessary to engage in new combats, and to make sorties to clear the avenues leading to the palace occupied by the Spaniards.

Cortès now saw but too plainly the mistake which he had made in shutting himself up in a town where his position might be stormed at any moment, and from which it was so difficult to extricate himself. In this difficulty he had recourse to Montezuma, who, by virtue of his authority and of the prestige which still clung to him, could appease the tumult, give the Spaniards some respite, and enable them to prepare for their retreat. But when the unfortunate emperor, now become a mere toy in the hands of the Spaniards, appeared upon the walls decked out with regal ornaments, and implored his subjects to cease from hostilities, murmurs of discontent arose, and threats were freely uttered. Hostilities began afresh, and before the soldiers had time to protect him with their shields, Montezuma was pierced with arrows, and hit upon the head by a stone which knocked him down. At this sight the

Indians, horrified at the crime which they had just committed, at once ceased fighting, and fled in all directions, while the emperor, understanding but too late all the baseness of the part which Cortès had forced him to play, tore off the bandages which had been applied to his wounds, and refusing all nourishment, he died cursing the Spaniards.

Death of Montezuma.

After so fatal an event, there was no more room to hope for peace with the Mexicans, and it became necessary to retire in haste, and at whatever cost, from a town in which the Spaniards were threatened with blockade and starvation. For this retreat Cortès was preparing in secret. He saw his troops each day more and more closely hemmed in, whilst several times he was forced himself to take his sword in his hand and to fight like a common soldier. Solis even relates, but upon what authority is not known, that during an assault which was made upon one of the edifices commanding the Spanish quarter, two young Mexicans, recognizing Cortès, who was cheering on his soldiers, resolved to sacrifice themselves in the hope of killing the man who had been the author of their country's calamities. They approached him in a suppliant attitude, as though they would ask for quarter, then seizing him round the waist they dragged him towards the battlements, over which they threw themselves, hoping to drag him over with them. But thanks to his exceptional strength and agility Cortès managed to escape from their embrace, and these two brave Mexicans perished in their generous but vain attempt to save their country.

The retreat being determined upon, it was necessary to decide upon whether it should be carried out by night or by day. If in the daytime the enemy would be more easily resisted, any ambuscades which might be prepared would be more easily avoided, while they could better take precautions to repair any bridges broken by the Mexicans. On the other hand, it was known that the Indians will seldom attack an enemy after sunset, but what really decided Cortès in favour of a nocturnal retreat was, that a soldier who dabbled in astrology had declared to his comrades that success was certain if they acted in the night.

They therefore began their march at midnight. Besides the Spanish troops, Cortès had under his orders detachments from Tlascala, Zempoalla, and Cholula, which, notwithstanding the serious losses which had been sustained, still numbered 7000 men. Sandoval commanded the vanguard, and Cortès the centre, where were the cannon, baggage, and prisoners, amongst whom were a son and two daughters of Montezuma; Alvarado and Velasquez de León led the rearguard. With the army was carried a flying bridge, which had been constructed to throw over any gaps there might be in the causeway. Scarcely had the Spaniards debouched upon the dike leading to Tacuba, which was the shortest of all, when they were attacked in front, flank, and rear by solid masses of the enemy, whilst from a fleet of numberless canoes, a perfect hailstorm of stones and missiles fell upon them. Blinded and amazed, the allies knew not against whom to defend themselves first. The wooden bridge sank under the weight of the artillery and fighting men. Crowded together upon a narrow causeway where they could not use their fire-arms, deprived of their cavalry who had not room to act, mingled with the Indians in a hand-to-hand combat, not having strength to kill, and surrounded on all sides, the Spaniards and their allies gave way under the ever renewed numbers of the assailants. Officers and soldiers, infantry and cavalry, Spaniards and Tlascalans were confounded together, each defended himself to the best of his ability, without caring about discipline or the common safety.

All seemed lost, when Cortès with one hundred men succeeded in crossing the breach in the dike upon the mass of corpses which filled it up. He drew up his soldiers in order as they arrived, and putting himself at the head of those least severely wounded, plunged wedge-fashion into the mêlée, and succeeded in disengaging from it a portion of his men. Before day dawned all those who had succeeded in escaping from the massacre of the *noche triste*, as this terrible night was called, found themselves reunited at Tacuba. It was with eyes full of tears that Cortès passed in review his remaining soldiers, all covered with wounds, and took account of the losses which he had sustained; 4000 Indians, Tlascalans, and Cholulans, and nearly all the horses were killed, all the artillery and ammunition, as well as the greatest part of the baggage, were lost, and amongst the dead were several officers of distinction — Velasquez de León, Salcedo, Morla, Larès, and many others; one of those most dangerously hurt was Alvarado, but not one man, whether officer or soldier, was without a wound.

The fugitives did not delay at Tacuba, and by accident they took the road to Tlascala, where they did not know what reception might await them. Ever harassed by the Mexicans, the Spaniards were again obliged to give battle upon the plains of Otumba to a number of warriors, whom some historians reckon at two hundred thousand. Thanks to the presence of some cavalry soldiers who still remained to him, Cortès was able to overthrow all who were in front of him, and to reach a troop of persons whose high rank was easily discerned by their gilded plumes and luxurious costumes, amongst whom was the general bearing the standard. Accompanied by some horsemen, Cortès threw himself upon this group and was fortunate enough, or skilful enough, to overturn by a lance-thrust the Mexican general, who was then despatched by the sword by a soldier named Juan de Salamanca. From the moment when the standard disappeared the battle was gained, and the Mexicans, panic-stricken, fled hastily from the field of battle. "Never had the Spaniards incurred greater danger," says Prescott, "and had it not been for the lucky star of Cortès, not one would have survived to transmit to posterity the history of the sanguinary battle of Otumba." The booty was considerable, and sufficed in part, to indemnify the Spaniards for the loss they had sustained in leaving Mexico, for this army which they had just defeated was composed of the principal warriors of the nation, who, having been quite confident of success, had adorned themselves with their richest ornaments.

Cortès at the Battle of Otumba.

The day after the battle the Spaniards entered the territory of Tlascalala. Bernal Diaz says, "I shall now call the attention of curious readers to the fact that when we returned to Mexico to the relief of Alvarado, we were in all 1300 men, including in that number ninety-seven horsemen, eighty cross-bowmen, and the same number armed with carbines; besides, we had more than 2000 Tlascalans, and much artillery. Our second entry into Mexico took place on St. John's Day, 1520; our flight from the city was on the 10th day of the month of July following, and we fought the memorable battle of Otumba on the 14th day of this same month of July. And now I would draw attention to the number of men who were killed at Mexico during the passage of the causeways and bridges, in the battle of Otumba, and in the other encounters upon the route. I declare that in the space of five days 860 of our men were massacred, including ten of our soldiers and five Castilian women, who were killed in the village of Rustepèque; we lost besides 1200 Tlascalans during the same time. It is to be noticed also that if the number of dead in the troop of Narvaez were greater than in the troop of Cortès, it was because the former soldiers set out on the march laden with a quantity of gold, the weight of which hindered them from swimming, and from getting out of the trenches."

The troops with Cortès were reduced to four hundred and forty men, with twenty horses, twelve cross-bowmen, and seven carabineers; they had not a single charge of gunpowder, they were all wounded, lame, or maimed in the arms. It was the same number of men that had followed Cortès when he first entered Mexico, but how great a difference was there between that conquering troop, and the vanquished soldiers who now quitted the capital.

As they entered the Tlascalan territory Cortès recommended his men, and especially those of Narvaez, not to do anything which could vex the natives, the common safety depending upon not irritating the only allies which remained to them. Happily the fears which had arisen as to the fidelity of the Tlascalans proved groundless. They gave the Spaniards a most sympathizing welcome, and their thoughts seemed to be wholly bent upon avenging the death of their brothers massacred by the Mexicans. While in their capital Cortès heard of the loss of two more detachments, but these reverses, grave as they were, did not discourage him; he had under his orders troops inured to war and faithful allies, Vera-Cruz was intact, he might once more reckon upon his good fortune. But before undertaking a new campaign or entering upon another siege, help must be sought and preparations made, and with these objects in view the general set to work. He sent four ships to Hispaniola to enrol volunteers and purchase powder and ammunition, and meanwhile he caused trees to be cut down in the mountains of Tlascalala, and with the wood thus obtained twelve brigantines were constructed, which were to be carried in pieces to the Lake of Mexico, to be launched there at the moment when needed.

After suppressing some attempts at mutiny amongst the soldiers, in which those who had come with Narvaez were the most to blame, Cortès again marched forwards, and, with the help of the Tlascalans, first attacked the people of Tepeaca and of other neighbouring provinces, a measure which had the advantage of exercising anew his own troops in war, and of training his allies. While this was going on, two brigantines bringing ammunition and reinforcements fell into the hands of Cortès; these ships had been sent to Narvaez by Velasquez, in ignorance of his misadventures; at this time also some Spaniards sent by Francis de Garay, governor of Jamaica, joined the army. In consequence of these reinforcements the troops with Cortès, after he had rid himself of several partisans of Narvaez with whom he was dissatisfied, amounted to five hundred infantry, of whom eighty carried muskets, and forty horse-soldiers. With this small army, and with one thousand Tlascalans, Cortès set out once more for Mexico on the 28th of December, 1520, six months after he had been forced to abandon the city. This campaign had for its theatre countries already described, and must therefore be passed over somewhat rapidly here, notwithstanding the interest attaching to it; to enter fully into the history of the conquest of Mexico would not be in accordance with the primary object of this work.

After the death of Montezuma his brother Quetlavaca was raised to the throne, and he adopted all the measures of precaution compatible with Aztec strategic science. But he died of the smallpox, the sad gift of the Spaniards to the New World, at the very moment when his brilliant qualities of foresight and bravery were the most needed by his country. His successor was Guatimozin, the nephew of Montezuma, a man distinguished by his talents and courage.

Cortès had no sooner entered the Mexican territory than fighting began. He speedily captured the town of Tezcucuo, which was situated at twenty miles' distance, upon the edge of the great central lake, that lake upon whose waters the Spaniards were to see an imposing flotilla floating three months later. At this time a fresh conspiracy, which had for its object the assassination of Cortès and his principal officers, was discovered, and the chief culprit executed. At this moment fate seemed in every way to smile upon Cortès; he had just received the news of the arrival of fresh reinforcements at Vera-Cruz, and the greater part of the towns under the dominion of Guatimozin had submitted to the force of his arms. The actual siege of Mexico began in the month of May, 1521, and continued with alternate success and reverse until the day when the brigantines were launched upon the water of the lake. The Mexicans did not hesitate to attack them; from four to five thousand canoes, each bearing two men, covered the lake and advanced to the assault of the Spanish vessels, which carried in all nearly three hundred men. These nine brigantines were provided with cannon, and soon dispersed or sunk the enemy's fleet, who thenceforth left them in undisputed possession of the water. But this success and certain other advantages gained by Cortès had no very marked consequences, and the siege dragged slowly on, until the general made up his mind to capture the town by force. Unfortunately the officer who was charged with protecting the line of retreat by the causeways while the Spaniards were making their way into the town, abandoned his post, thinking it unworthy of his valour, and went to join in the combat. Guatimozin was informed of the fault which had been committed,

and at once took advantage of it. His troops attacked the Spaniards on all sides with such fury that numbers of them were killed in a short time, while sixty-two of the soldiers fell alive into the hands of the Mexicans, a fate which Cortès, who was severely wounded in the thigh, narrowly escaped sharing. During the night following, the great temple of the war-god was illuminated in sign of triumph, and the Spaniards listened in profound sadness to the beating of the great drum. From the position they occupied they could witness the end of the prisoners, their unfortunate countrymen, whose breasts were opened and their hearts torn out, and whose dead bodies were hurled down the steps; they were then torn in pieces by the Aztecs, who quarrelled over the pieces with the object of using them for a horrible festival.

This terrible defeat caused the siege to go on slowly, until the day came when three parts of the city having been taken or destroyed, Guatimozin was obliged by his councillors to quit Mexico and to set out for the mainland, where he reckoned upon organizing his resistance, but the boat which carried him being seized he was made prisoner. In his captivity he was destined to display much greater dignity and strength of character than his uncle Montezuma had done. From this time all resistance ceased, and Cortès might take possession of the half-destroyed capital. After a heroic resistance, in which 120,000 Mexicans according to some accounts, but 240,000 according to others, had perished, after a siege which had lasted not less than seventy days, Mexico, and with the city all the rest of the empire, succumbed, less indeed to the blows dealt against it by the Spaniards than to the long-standing hatred and the revolts of the subjugated people, and to the jealousy of the neighbouring states, fated soon to regret the yoke which they had so deliberately shaken off.

Contempt and rage soon succeeded amongst the Spaniards to the intoxication of success; the immense riches upon which they had reckoned either had no existence, or they had been thrown into the lake. Cortès found it impossible to calm the malcontents, and was obliged to allow the emperor and his principal minister to be put to the torture. Some historians, and notably Gomara, report that whilst the Spaniards were stirring the fire which burnt below the gridiron upon which the two victims were extended, the minister turned his head towards his master and apparently begged him to speak, in order to put an end to their tortures; but that Guatimozin reproved this single moment of weakness by these words, "And I, am I assisting at some pleasure, or am I in the bath?" an answer which has been poetically changed into, "And I, do I lie upon roses?"

The Spaniards stir the fire burning below the gridiron.

The historians of the conquest of Mexico have usually stopped short at the taking of Mexico, but it remains for us to speak of some other expeditions undertaken by Cortès with different aims, but which resulted in casting quite a new light upon some portions of Central America; besides we could not leave this hero, who played so large a part in the history of the New World and in the development of its civilization, without giving some details of the end of his life.

With the fall of the capital was involved, properly speaking, that of the Mexican empire; if there were still some resistance, as notably there was in the province of Oaxaca, it was of an isolated character, and a few detachments of troops sufficed to reduce to submission the last remaining opponents of the Spaniards, terrified as the Mexicans were by the punishments which had been dealt out to the people of Panuco, who had revolted. At the same time ambassadors were sent by the people of the distant countries of the empire, to convince themselves of the reality of that wonderful event, the taking of Mexico, to behold the ruins of the abhorred town, and to tender their submission to the conquerors.

Cortès was at length confirmed in the position he held after incidents which would take too long to relate, and which caused him to say, "It has been harder for me to fight against my countrymen than against the Aztecs." It now remained to him to organize the conquered country, and he began by establishing the seat of government at Mexico, which he rebuilt. He attracted Spaniards to the city by granting them concessions of lands, and the Indians, by allowing them at first to remain under the authority of their native chiefs, although he speedily reduced them all, except the Tlascalans, to the condition of slaves, by the vicious system of *repartimientos*, in vogue in the Spanish colonies. But if it is justifiable to reproach Cortès with having held cheaply the political rights of the Indians, it must be conceded that he manifested the most laudable solicitude for their spiritual well-being. To further this object he brought over some Franciscans, who by their zeal and charity in a short time gained the veneration of the natives, and in a space of twenty years brought about the conversion of the whole population.

At the same time Cortès sent some troops into the state of Mechoacan, who penetrated as far as the Pacific Ocean, and as they returned visited some of the rich provinces situated in the north. Cortès founded settlements in all the parts of the country which appeared to him advantageous: at Zacatula upon the shores of the Pacific, at Coliman in Mechoacan, at Santesteban near Tampico, at Medellin near Vera-Cruz, &c.

Immediately after the pacification of the country, Cortès entrusted Christoval de Olid with the command of a considerable force, in order to establish a colony in Honduras, and at the same time Olid was to explore the southern coast of that province, and to seek for a strait which should form a communication between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. But, carried away by the pride of command, Olid had no sooner reached his destination than he declared himself independent, whereupon Cortès immediately despatched one of his relations to arrest the culprit, and set out himself, accompanied by Guatimozin, at the head of one hundred horsemen and fifty foot-soldiers, on the 12th of October, 1524. After crossing the provinces of Goatzacoalco, Tabasco, and Yucatan, and enduring all kinds of privations in the course of a most trying march over marshy and shifting ground, and across a

perfect ocean of undulating forests, the detachment was approaching the province of Aculan, where Cortès was told of the existence of a plot, formed, as was said, by Guatimozin and the principal Indian chiefs. Its aim was to seize the first opportunity to massacre both officers and soldiers, after which the march to Honduras was to be continued, the settlements were to be destroyed, and then there was to be a return to Mexico, where during a general rising there would doubtless be small difficulty experienced in getting rid of the invaders. Guatimozin in vain protested his innocence, in which there is every reason to believe; he was hung, as well as several of the Aztec nobles, upon the branches of a *Ceyba* tree, which shaded the road. Bernal Díaz del Castillo says, "The execution of Guatimozin was very unjust, and we were all agreed in condemning it." But Prescott says, "If Cortès had consulted but his own interest and his renown, he should have spared him, for he was the living trophy of his victory, as a man keeps gold in the lining of his coat."

At length the Spaniards reached Aculan, a flourishing town, where they refreshed themselves after their journey in excellent quarters; when they set out again, it was in the direction of the Lake of Peten, a part of the country where the population was easily converted to Christianity. We shall not dwell upon the sufferings and misery which tried the expedition in these sparsely-peopled countries, until it arrived at San Gil de Buena-Vista, upon the Golfo Dolce, where Cortès, after receiving the news of the execution of Olid and the re-establishment of the central authority, embarked upon his return to Mexico. At this time he entrusted to Alvarado the command of three hundred infantry, one hundred and sixty cavalry, and four cannon, with a body of Indian auxiliaries, with which he set out for the south of Mexico, to conquer Guatemala. He reduced to submission the provinces of Zacatulan, Tehuantepec, Soconusco, Utlatlan, and laid the foundations of the town of Guatemala la Vieja; when, some time afterwards he made a voyage to Spain, he was named by Charles V. governor of the countries which he had conquered.

Three years had not expired after the conquest, before a territory 1200 miles in length upon the sea-board of the Atlantic, and 1500 miles upon that of the Pacific, had submitted to the Castilian crown, and with but few exceptions, was in a state of perfect tranquillity.

The return of Cortès to Mexico from the useless expedition to Honduras — which had wasted so much time and caused almost as great sufferings to the Spaniards as the conquest of Mexico — had taken place but a few days, when he received the news that he was temporarily replaced by another commander, and was invited to repair to Spain to exculpate himself from certain charges. He was not in any haste to comply with this order, hoping that it might be revoked, but his indefatigable calumniators and his implacable enemies, both in Spain and Mexico, preferred accusations against him after such a manner, that he found himself obliged to go and make his defence, to state his wrongs, and boldly to claim the approval of his conduct. Cortès therefore started accompanied by his friend Sandoval, as well as by Tapia and several Aztec chiefs, amongst whom was a son of Montezuma. He disembarked at Palos, in May, 1528, at the same place where Columbus had landed thirty-five years before, and he was welcomed with the same enthusiasm and rejoicings as the discoverer of America had been; here Cortès met with Pizarro, then at the outset of his career, who was come to solicit the support of the Spanish government. Cortès afterwards set out for Toledo, where the court then was. The mere announcement of his return had produced a complete change in public opinion. His unexpected arrival at once contradicted the idea that he harboured any projects of revolt and independence. Charles V. saw that public feeling would be outraged at the thought of punishing a man who had added its greatest gem to the crown of Castille, and so the journey of Cortès became one continual triumph in the midst of crowds of people greater than had been ever known before. "The houses and streets of the large towns and of the villages," says Prescott, "were filled with spectators impatient to contemplate the hero whose single arm might be said, in some sort, to have conquered an empire for Spain, and who, to borrow the language of an old historian, marched in all the pomp and glory, not of a great vassal, but of an independent monarch."

Charles V. after having granted several audiences to Cortès, and bestowed upon him those particular marks of favour which are termed important by courtiers, deigned to accept from him the empire which he had conquered for him, and the magnificent presents which he brought. But he considered that he had fully recompensed him when he had given Cortès the title of Marquis della Valle de Oajaca, and the post of captain-general of New Spain, without, however, restoring to him the civil government, a power which had been formerly delegated to him by the junta of Vera-Cruz. Cortès, after his marriage with the niece of the Duke de Béjar, who belonged to one of the first families in Spain, accompanied the emperor, who was on his way to Italy, to the port of embarkation; but the general, soon becoming tired of the frivolities of a court, so little in accordance with the active habits of his past life, set out again for Mexico in 1530, and landed at Villa-Rica. After his arrival he underwent some annoyance caused by the Audiencia, which had exercised the power in his absence, and which had instituted law-suits against him, and he also found himself in conflict with the new civil junta on the subject of military affairs. The Marquis della Valle withdrew himself to Cuernavaca, where he had immense estates, and busied himself with agriculture. He was the means of introducing the sugar-cane and the mulberry into Mexico, he also encouraged the cultivation of hemp and flax, and the breeding, on a large scale, of merino sheep.

But this peaceable life without adventures could not long satisfy the enterprising spirit of Cortès. In 1532 and 1533, he equipped two squadrons destined to make voyages of discovery in the north-west of the Pacific. The latter expedition reached the southern extremity of the peninsula of California without attaining the object sought, namely the discovery of a strait uniting the Pacific with the Atlantic. Cortès himself met with no better success in 1536 in the Vermilion Sea (Gulf of California). Three years later a concluding expedition, of which Cortès gave the command to Ulloa, penetrated to the farthest extremity of the gulf, and then, sailing along the exterior side of the peninsula, reached the 29° of north latitude. From thence the chief of the expedition sent back one of his ships to Cortès, while the rest proceeded northwards, but from that time nothing more is heard of them. Such was the unhappy result of the expeditions of Cortès, which, while they did not bring him in a single ducat, cost him not less than 300,000 gold castellanos. But they at least had the result of making known the coast of the Pacific Ocean, from the Bay of Panama as far as Colorado. The tour of the Californian Peninsula was made, and it was thus discovered that what had been imagined to be an

island, was in reality a part of the continent. The whole of the Vermilion Sea, or Sea of Cortès, as the Spaniards justly named it, was carefully explored, and it was ascertained that, instead of having an outlet as was supposed to the north, it was in reality only a gulf deeply hollowed into the continent.

Cortès had not been able to fit out these expeditions without coming into antagonism with the viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza, whom the emperor had sent to Mexico, an appointment which had wounded the feelings of the Marquis della Valle. Wearied with these continual annoyances, and indignant at finding his prerogative as captain-general, if not absolutely ignored, at least perpetually questioned, Cortès left Mexico, and once more set out for Spain. But this journey was not destined at all to resemble the first. Grown old, disgusted with life, and betrayed by fortune, the "conquistador" had no longer anything to expect from government. He had not to wait long before receiving proof of this; one day he pressed through the crowd which surrounded the emperor's coach, and mounted upon the step of the door. Charles V. pretended not to recognize him, and asked who this man was. Cortès answered proudly, "It is the man who has given you more States than your father left you Towns." By this time public interest was diverted from Mexico, which had not yielded as much as had been expected from it, and was centred upon the marvellous riches of Peru. Cortès was, however, received with honour by the supreme council of the Indies, and permitted to state his complaints before it, but the debates upon the subject were endlessly drawn out, and he could obtain no redress. In 1541, during the disastrous expedition of Charles V. against Algiers, Cortès, who was serving in it as a volunteer, but whose counsels had not been listened to, had the misfortune to lose three great carved emeralds, jewels which would have sufficed for the ransom of an empire. Upon his return he renewed his solicitations, but with the same want of success. His grief over this injustice and these repeated disappointments was so deep, that his health suffered severely; he died far from the scene of his exploits, on the 10th of November, 1547, at Castilleja de la Cuesta, at the very moment when he was making preparations to return to America.

"He was a true knight errant," says Prescott; "of all that glorious troop of adventurers which the Spain of the sixteenth century sent forth to a career of discovery and conquest, there was not one more deeply imbued with the spirit of romantic enterprise than Fernando Cortès. Strife was his delight, and he loved to attempt an enterprise by its most difficult side."...

This passion for the romantic might have reduced the conqueror of Mexico to the part of a common adventurer, but Cortès was certainly a profound politician and a great captain, if one is justified in giving this name to a man who accomplished great actions by his own unassisted genius. There is no other example in history of so great an enterprise having been carried to a successful end with such inadequate means. It may be said with truth that Cortès conquered Mexico with his own resources alone. His influence over the minds of his soldiers was the natural result of their confidence in his ability, but it must be attributed also to his popular manners, which rendered him eminently fit to lead a band of adventurers. When he had attained to a higher rank, if Cortès displayed more of pomp, his veterans at least continued on the same terms of intimacy with him as before. In finishing this portrait of the "conquistador," we shall quote the upright and veracious Bernal Diaz, with whose sentiments we fully agree. "He preferred his name of Cortès to all the titles by which he might be addressed, and he had good reasons for it, for the name of Cortès is as famous in our days as that of Cesar amongst the Romans, or Hannibal amongst the Carthaginians." The old chronicler ends by a touch which vividly depicts the religious spirit of the sixteenth century: "Perhaps he was destined to receive his reward only in a better world, and I fully believe it to be so; for he was an honest knight, very sincere in his devotions to the Virgin, to the Apostle St. Peter, and to all the saints."

III.

THE CONQUERORS OF CENTRAL AMERICA.

The triple alliance — Francisco Pizarro and his brothers — Don Diego d'Almagro — First attempts — Peru, its extent, people, and kings — Capture of Atahualpa, his ransom and death — Pedro d'Alvarado — Almagro in Chili — Strife among the conquerors — Trial and execution of Almagro — Expeditions of Gonzalo Pizarro and Orellana — Assassination of Francisco Pizarro — Rebellion and execution of his brother Gonzalo.

The information which had been gained by Balboa as to the riches of the countries situated to the south of Panama had scarcely become known to the Spaniards before several expeditions were organized to attempt the conquest of them. But all had failed, either from the means used being insufficient, or from the commanders not being equal to the greatness of the undertaking. It must be confessed also that the localities explored by these first adventurers — these pioneers, as they would be called now-a-days — did not at all come up to what Spanish greed had expected from them, and for this reason, that all the attempts had been hitherto made upon what was then called "Terra Firma," a country pre-eminently unhealthy, mountainous, marshy, and covered with forests; the inhabitants were few, but of so warlike a disposition that they had added another obstacle to all those which nature had strewn with so prodigal a hand in the path of the invaders. Little by little, therefore, the enthusiasm had cooled, and the wonderful narratives of Balboa were mentioned only to be turned into ridicule.

There lived, however, in Panama a man well able to weigh the truth of the reports which had been circulated concerning the richness of the countries bathed by the Pacific; this man was Francisco Pizarro, who had accompanied Muñoz de Balboa to the southern sea, and who now associated with himself two other adventurers, Diego de Almagro and Ferdinand de Luque. A few words must be said about the chiefs of the enterprise. Francisco Pizarro, born near Truxillo between the years 1471 and 1478, was the natural son of a certain Captain Gonzalo Pizarro, who had taught the boy nothing but to take care of pigs; he was soon tired of this occupation, and took advantage of his having allowed one of the animals who were in his charge to stray, not to return to the paternal roof, where he was accustomed to be cruelly beaten for the smallest peccadillo. The young Pizarro enlisted, and after passing some years amidst the Italian wars, he followed Christopher Columbus to Hispaniola in 1510. He served there with distinction, and also in Cuba; afterwards he accompanied Hojeda to Darien, discovered, as has been already mentioned, the Pacific, with Balboa, and after the execution of the latter, he assisted Pedrarias Davila, whose favourite he had become, in the conquest of all the country known as Castille d'Or.

While Pizarro was an illegitimate child, Diego de Almagro was a foundling, picked up according to some in 1475 at Aldea del Rey, but according to others at Almagro, from which circumstance, as they maintain, he derived his name. He was educated in the midst of soldiers, and while still young went to America, where he had succeeded in amassing a small fortune.

Ferdinand de Luque was a rich ecclesiastic of Tobago, who exercised the calling of a schoolmaster at Panama. The youngest of these adventurers was by this time more than fifty years of age, and Garcilasso de la Vega relates that upon their project being known, they became the objects of general derision; Ferdinand de Luque was the most laughed at, and was called by no other name than *Hernando el Loco*, Ferdinand the Fool. The terms of partnership were soon agreed upon between these three men, of whom two at least were without fear, if they were not all three without reproach. Luque furnished money needed for the armament of the vessels and the pay of the soldiers, and Almagro bore an equal part in the expense, but Pizarro, who possessed nothing but his sword, was to pay his contribution in another manner. It was he who took the command of the first attempt, upon which we shall dwell in some detail, because it was then that the perseverance and inflexible obstinacy of the "conquistador" first came fully into sight.

One of the historians of the conquest of Peru, Augustin de Zarate, relates as follows: — "Having then asked and obtained the permission of Pedro Arias d'Avila, Francisco Pizarro after much trouble equipped a vessel upon which he embarked with 140 men. At the distance of 150 miles from Panama he discovered a small and poor province named Peru, which caused the same name to be henceforward improperly bestowed upon all the country which was discovered along that coast for the space of more than 3600 miles in length. Passing onwards he discovered another country, which the Spaniards called *the burnt people*. The Indians slew so many of his men that he was constrained to retire in great disorder to the country of Chinchama, which is not far distant from the place whence he had started. Almagro, however, who had remained at Panama, fitted out a ship there, upon which he embarked with seventy Spaniards, and descended the coast as far as the River San Juan, 300 miles from Panama. Not having met with Pizarro, he went back northwards as far as *the burnt people*, where, having ascertained by certain indications that Pizarro had been there, he landed his men. But the Indians, puffed up by the victory which they had gained over Pizarro, resisted bravely, forced the entrenchments with which Almagro had covered his position, and obliged him to re-embark. He returned therefore, still following the coast-line until he arrived at Chinchama, where he found Francisco Pizarro. They were much rejoiced at meeting again, and having added to their followers some fresh soldiers whom they had levied, they found their troops amounted to 200 Spaniards, and once more they descended the coast. They suffered so much from scarcity of provisions and from the attacks of the Indians, that Don Diego returned to Panama to collect more recruits and to obtain provisions. He took back with him eighty men, with whom and with those who remained to them, they went as far as the country called Catamez, a country moderately peopled and where they found abundance of provisions. They noticed that the Indians of these parts who attacked them and made war against them, had their faces studded with nails of gold inserted in holes which they had made expressly for receiving these ornaments. Diego de Almagro returned once again to Panama, whilst his companion waited for him and for the reinforcements which he was to bring with him, in a small island called Cock Island, where he suffered much from the scarcity of all the necessaries of life."

The Indians kill many of the Spaniards.

Upon his arrival in Panama, Almagro could not obtain permission from Los Rios, the successor of Avila, to make new levies, for he had no right, Los Rios said, to allow a greater number of people to go and perish uselessly in a rash enterprise; he even sent a boat to Cock Island to bring away Pizarro and his companions. But such a decision could not be pleasing to Almagro and De Luque. It meant expense thrown away; and it meant the annihilation of the hopes which the sight of the ornaments of gold and silver of the inhabitants of Catamez had caused them to entertain. They sent therefore a trusty person to Pizarro, to recommend him to persevere in his resolution, and to refuse to obey the orders of the Governor of Panama. But Pizarro in vain held out the most seductive promises; the remembrance of the fatigues which had been endured was too recent, and all his companions except twelve abandoned him.

With these intrepid men, whose names have been preserved, and amongst whom was Garcia de Xerès, one of the historians of the expedition, Pizarro retired to an uninhabited island at a greater distance from the coast, to which he gave the name of Gorgona. There the Spaniards lived miserably on mangles, fish, and shell-fish, and awaited for five months the succour that Almagro and De Luque were to send them. At length, vanquished by the unanimous protestations of the whole colony, — who were indignant that people whose only crime was that they had not despaired of success, should be left to perish miserably and as though they were malefactors, — Los Rios sent to Pizarro a small vessel to bring him back. With the object of presenting no temptation to Pizarro to make use of this ship to renew his expedition, not a single soldier was placed on board of her. At the sight of the help which had arrived, and oblivious of all their privations, the thirteen adventurers thought of nothing but persuading the sailors who came to seek them to participate in their own hopes. Whereupon, instead of starting again on the route to Panama, they sailed all together, towards the south-east, in spite of contrary winds and currents, until, after having discovered the Island of St. Clara, they arrived at the port of Tumbez, situated beyond the 3° of south latitude, where they saw a magnificent temple and a palace belonging to the Incas, the sovereigns of the country.

The country was populous and fairly well-cultivated, but what proved beyond all else seductive to the Spaniards, and made them think that they had reached the marvellous countries of which so much had been said, was the sight of so great an abundance of gold and silver, that these metals were employed not only as finery and ornament by the inhabitants, but also for making vases and common utensils.

Pizarro caused the interior of the country to be explored by Pietro de Candia and Alonzo de Molina, who brought back an enthusiastic description of it, and he caused some gold vases to be given up to him, as well as some llamas, a quadruped domesticated by the Peruvians. He took two natives on board his vessel, to whom he proposed to teach the Spanish language, and to use them as interpreters when he should return to the country. He anchored successively at Payta, Saugarata, and in the Bay of Santa-Cruz, of which the sovereign, Capillana, received the strangers with such friendly demonstrations, that several of them were unwilling to re-embark. After having sailed down the coast as far as Porto Santo, Pizarro set out on his return to Panama, where he arrived after three whole years spent in dangerous explorations, which had completely ruined De Luque and Almagro.

Pizarro received by Charles V.

Pizarro resolved to apply to Charles V. before undertaking the conquest of the country which he had discovered, for he could not obtain leave from Los Rios to engage fresh adventurers; so he borrowed the sum required for the voyage, and in 1528 he went to Spain to inform the emperor of the work which he had undertaken. He painted the picture of the countries that were to be conquered in the most pleasing light, and as a reward for his labours the titles of governor, captain-general, and alguazil-major of Peru were bestowed upon him and his heirs in perpetuity. At the same time he was ennobled, and a pension of 1000 crowns was bestowed upon him. His jurisdiction, independent of the governor of Panama, was to extend over a tract of 600 miles along the coast to the south of the Santiago river; it was to be called New Castille, and he was to be the governor; concessions that cost nothing to Spain, for Pizarro had yet to conquer the country. On his side he undertook to raise a body of 250 men, and to provide himself with the necessary ships, arms, and ammunition. Pizarro then repaired to Truxillo, where he persuaded his three brothers Ferdinand, Juan, and Gonzalo to accompany him, as well as one of his half-brothers Martin d'Alcantara. He took advantage of his stay in his native town, and at Caceres, to try to raise recruits, both there and throughout Estramadura; they did not, however, come forward in large numbers, in spite of the title of *Caballeros de la Espada dorada* which he promised to bestow upon all who would serve under him. Then he returned to Panama, where affairs were not going so smoothly as he had hoped. He had succeeded in getting De Luque named Bishop *protector de los Indios*; but for Almagro, whose talents he knew, and whose ambition he feared, he had only asked that he should be ennobled and a gratuity of 500 ducats bestowed upon him, with the government of a fortress which was to be built at Tumbez. Almagro refused to take part in this new expedition; he was not pleased with the meagre portion given to him after spending all his money on the earlier expeditions; he wished now to organize one on his own account. It required all Pizarro's address, aided by the promise to give up to Almagro the office of *adelantado*, to appease him and make him consent to renew the old partnership.

Map of Peru.

The resources of the three partners were so limited at this time, that they could only get together three small ships and 124 soldiers, of whom thirty-six were horse-soldiers; the expedition set out in February, 1531, under the command of Pizarro and his four brothers, whilst Almagro remained at Panama to organize an expedition of supplies. At the end of thirteen days' sailing, and after having been carried by a storm 300 miles more to the south than he had intended, Pizarro was forced to disembark both men and horses on the shores of the Bay of San Mateo, and to follow the line of the coast on land. This march was a difficult one in a very mountainous country, thinly-peopled, and intersected by rivers which had to be crossed at their mouths. At last a place called

Coaqui was reached, where was found a great booty, which decided Pizarro to send back two of his ships. They carried to Panama and Nicaragua spoils to the amount of 30,000 *castellanos*, as well as a great number of emeralds, a rich booty, which would, according to Pizarro, determine many adventurers to come and join him.

Then the conqueror continued his march southwards as far as Porto-Viejo, where he was joined by Sebastian Benalcazar and Juan Fernandez, who brought him twelve horsemen and thirty foot-soldiers. The effect which had been produced in Mexico by the sight of the horses and the reports of the fire-arms was repeated in Peru, and Pizarro was able to reach the Island of Puna in the Gulf of Guayaquil without encountering any resistance. But the islanders were more numerous and more warlike than their brothers of the mainland, and for six months they valiantly resisted all the attacks of the Spaniards. Although Pizarro had received some aid from Nicaragua, brought by Ferdinand de Soto, and although he had beheaded the cacique Tonalla and sixteen of the principal chiefs, he could not overcome their resistance. He was, therefore, obliged to regain the continent, where the maladies peculiar to the country tried his companions so cruelly, that he was forced to stay three months at Tumbez, exposed to the perpetual attacks of the natives. From Tumbez he went next to the Rio Pura, discovered the harbour of Payta, the best on this coast, and founded the colony of San-Miguel, at the mouth of the Chilo, in order that vessels coming from Panama might find a safe shelter. It was here that Pizarro received some envoys from Huascar, who informed him of the revolt of Atahualpa, the brother of Huascar, and asked his aid.

At the period when the Spaniards landed to conquer Peru, it extended along the shore of the Pacific Ocean for 1500 miles, and stretched into the interior as far as the imposing chain of the Andes. Originally the population was divided into savage and barbarous tribes, having no idea of civilization, and living in a perpetual state of warfare with one another. For many centuries affairs had continued in the same state, and there appeared no presage of the coming of a better era, when, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, there appeared to the Indians a man and woman, who pretended that they were the Children of the Sun. They called themselves Manco-Capac and Mama-Oello, and were of majestic appearance; according to Garcilasso de la Vega, towards the middle of the twelfth century they united together a number of wandering tribes, and laid the foundations of the town of Cuzco. Manco-Capac had taught the men agriculture and mechanical arts, whilst Mama-Oello instructed the women in spinning and weaving. When Manco-Capac had satisfied these first needs of all societies, he framed laws for his subjects, and constituted a regular political state. It was thus that the dominion of the Incas or Lords of Peru was established. At first their empire was limited to the neighbourhood of Cuzco, but under their successors it rapidly increased, and extended from the Tropic of Capricorn to the Pearl Islands, a length of thirty degrees. The power of the incas was as absolute as that of the ancient Asiatic sovereigns. "Also," says Zarate, "there was perhaps no other country in the world where the obedience and submission of the subjects was carried further. The incas were to them quasi-divinities; they had but to place a thread drawn from the royal head-fillet in the hands of any one, and the man so distinguished, was certain to be everywhere respected and obeyed, and to find such absolute deference paid to the king's order which he carried, that he could alone exterminate a whole province without any assistance from soldiers, and cause to be put to death all the inhabitants, both male and female, because at the mere sight of this thread, taken from the royal crown, the people voluntarily and without any resistance, offered themselves up to die." However, the old chroniclers all agree in saying that this unlimited power was always used by the incas for the well-being of their subjects. Out of a series of twelve kings, who in succession sat on the throne of Peru, there was not one who did not leave behind him the memory of a just prince adored by his subjects. Should we not search in vain through the annals of any other country in the world for facts analogous to these? Must it not be regretted that the Spaniards should have brought war with all its attendant horrors, and the maladies and vices of a different climate, along with what they in their pride called civilization, amongst a rich and happy people, whose descendants, impoverished and debased as they are, have not even the recollection of their ancient prosperity to console them in their irremediable decay?

"The Peruvians," says Michelet in his admirable *Précis d'Histoire Moderne*, "handed down the principal facts to posterity by knots, which they made in ropes. They had obelisks and exact gnomons to mark the equinoxes and solstices. Their year consisted of 365 days. They had erected prodigies of architecture, and they carved statues with amazing art. They formed the most polished and industrious nation of the New World."

The inca Huayna-Capac, father of Atahualpa, under whom this vast empire was destroyed, had done much to increase and embellish it. This inca, who conquered all the country of Quito, had made, by the hands of his soldiers and of the vanquished people, a great road 1500 miles in length from Cuzco to Quito, across precipices which had been filled up and mountains which had been levelled. Relays of men, stationed at intervals of a mile and a half from each other, carried the emperor's orders throughout the empire. Such was their police, and if we wish to judge of Peruvian magnificence, we need only instance the fact that the king when he travelled was carried on a throne of gold which weighed 25,000 ducats, and the golden litter upon which the throne rested was borne by the highest personages of the realm.

In 1526, when the Spaniards appeared on the coast for the first time, the twelfth inca had lately married — in defiance of the ancient law of the kingdom — the daughter of the vanquished king of Quito, and had had a son of this marriage named Atahualpa, to whom he left this kingdom on his death, which happened about 1529. His eldest son Huascar, whose mother was descended from the incas, had the remainder of his states. But this partition, so contrary to the customs established from time immemorial, caused such great discontent at Cuzco, that Huascar, encouraged by his subjects, determined to march against his brother, who would not acknowledge him for his lord and master. Atahualpa, in his turn, had too lately tasted power to be willing to abandon it. He managed by bribes to attach to himself the greater part of the warriors who had accompanied his father during the conquest of Quito, and when the two armies met, fortune favoured the usurper.