

brought there for sale every description of domestic produce and manufacture, with which they were acquainted. They peculiarly excelled in pottery, which was considered as equal to the best in Europe.⁶ It is a further proof of civilized habits, that the Spaniards found barbers' shops, and baths both of vapor and hot water, familiarly used by the inhabitants. A still higher proof of refinement may be discerned in a vigilant police which repressed every thing like disorder among the people.⁷

The city was divided into four quarters, which might rather be called so many separate towns, since they were built at different times, and separated from each other by high stone walls, defining their respective limits. Over each of these districts ruled one of the four great chiefs of the republic, occupying his own spacious mansion, and surrounded by his own immediate vassals. Strange arrangement, — and more strange, that it should have been compatible with social order and tranquillity! The ancient capital, through one quarter of which flowed the rapid current of the Zahuatl, stretched along the summits and sides of hills, at whose base are now gathered the miserable remains of its once flourishing

⁶ "Nullum est fictile vas apud nos, quod arte superet ab illis vasa formata." Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. 5, cap. 2. — Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 83.

⁷ Camargo, *Hist. de Tlascala*, MS. — *Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 59. — Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 4. The last historian enumerates such a number of contemporary Indian authorities for his narrative, as of itself argues no inconsiderable degree of civilization in the people.

population.⁸ Far beyond, to the south-east, extended the bold sierra of Tlascala, and the huge Malinche, crowned with the usual silver diadem of the highest Andes, having its shaggy sides clothed with dark-green forests of firs, gigantic sycamores, and oaks whose towering stems rose to the height of forty or fifty feet, unincumbered by a branch. The clouds, which sailed over from the distant Atlantic, gathered round the lofty peaks of the sierra, and, settling into torrents, poured over the plains in the neighbourhood of the city, converting them, at such seasons, into swamps. Thunder storms, more frequent and terrible here, than in other parts of the table-land, swept down the sides of the mountains, and shook the frail tenements of the capital to their foundations. But, although the bleak winds of the sierra gave an austerity to the climate, unlike the sunny skies and genial temperature of the lower regions, it was far more favorable to the development of both the physical and moral energies. A bold and hardy peasantry was nurtured among the recesses of the hills, fit equally to cultivate the land in peace, and to defend it in war. Unlike the spoiled child of Nature, who derives such facilities of subsistence from her too prodigal hand, as supersede the necessity of exertion on his own part, the Tlascalan earned his bread —

⁸ Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 12.

The population of a place, which Cortés could compare with Granada, had dwindled by the begin-

ning of the present century to 3,400 inhabitants, of which less than a thousand were of the Indian stock. See Humboldt, Essai Politique, tom. II. p. 158.

from a soil not ungrateful, it is true — by the sweat of his brow. He led a life of temperance and toil. Cut off by his long wars with the Aztecs from commercial intercourse, he was driven chiefly to agricultural labor, the occupation most propitious to purity of morals and sinewy strength of constitution. His honest breast glowed with the patriotism, — or local attachment to the soil, which is the fruit of its diligent culture; while he was elevated by a proud consciousness of independence, the natural birth-right of the child of the mountains. — Such was the race with whom Cortés was now associated, for the achievement of his great work.

Some days were given by the Spaniards to festivity, in which they were successively entertained at the hospitable boards of the four great nobles, in their several quarters of the city. Amidst these friendly demonstrations, however, the general never relaxed for a moment his habitual vigilance, or the strict discipline of the camp; and he was careful to provide for the security of the citizens by prohibiting, under severe penalties, any soldier from leaving his quarters without express permission. Indeed, the severity of his discipline provoked the remonstrance of more than one of his officers, as a superfluous caution; and the Tlascalan chiefs took some exception at it, as inferring an unreasonable distrust of them. But, when Cortés explained it, as in obedience to an established military system, they testified their admiration, and the ambitious young

general of the republic proposed to introduce it, if possible, into his own ranks.⁹

The Spanish commander, having assured himself of the loyalty of his new allies, next proposed to accomplish one of the great objects of his mission, their conversion to Christianity. By the advice of father Olmedo, always opposed to precipitate measures, he had deferred this till a suitable opportunity presented itself for opening the subject. Such a one occurred when the chiefs of the state proposed to strengthen the alliance with the Spaniards, by the intermarriage of their daughters with Cortés and his officers. He told them, this could not be, while they continued in the darkness of infidelity. Then, with the aid of the good friar, he expounded as well as he could the doctrines of the Faith; and, exhibiting the image of the Virgin with the infant Redeemer, told them that there was the God, in whose worship alone they would find salvation, while that of their own false idols would sink them in eternal perdition.

It is unnecessary to burden the reader with a recapitulation of his homily, which contained, probably, dogmas quite as incomprehensible to the untutored Indian, as any to be found in his own rude mythology. But, though it failed to convince his audience, they listened with a deferential awe.

⁹ Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11. — Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 13. — Bernal Diaz, Camargo, Hist. de Tlascalala, MS. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 75. — Gomara, Crónica, cap. 54, 55.

When he had finished, they replied, they had no doubt that the God of the Christians must be a good and a great God, and as such they were willing to give him a place among the divinities of Tlascalá. The polytheistic system of the Indians, like that of the ancient Greeks, was of that accommodating kind which could admit within its elastic folds the deities of any other religion, without violence to itself.¹⁰ But every nation, they continued, must have its own appropriate and tutelary deities. Nor could they, in their old age, abjure the service of those who had watched over them from youth. It would bring down the vengeance of their gods, and of their own nation, who were as warmly attached to their religion as their liberties, and would defend both with the last drop of their blood!

It was clearly inexpedient to press the matter further, at present. But the zeal of Cortés, as usual, waxing warm by opposition, had now mounted too high for him to calculate obstacles; nor would he have shrunk, probably, from the crown of martyrdom in so good a cause. But, fortunately, at least for the success of his temporal cause, this crown was not reserved for him.

The good monk, his ghostly adviser, seeing the

¹⁰ Camargo notices this elastic property in the religions of Anahuac. "Este modo de hablar y decir que les querrá dar otro Dios, es saber que cuando estas gentes tenían noticia de algun Dios de buenas propiedades y costumbres,

que le rescibiesen admitiéndole por tal, porque otras gentes advenedizas trujéron muchos ídolos que tubiéron por Dioses, y á este fin y propósito decían, que Cortés les traía otro Dios." Hist. de Tlascalá, MS.

course things were likely to take, with better judgment interposed to prevent it. He had no desire, he said, to see the same scenes acted over again as at Cempoalla. He had no relish for forced conversions. They could hardly be lasting. The growth of an hour might well die with the hour. Of what use was it to overturn the altar, if the idol remained enthroned in the heart? or to destroy the idol itself, if it were only to make room for another? Better to wait patiently the effect of time and teaching to soften the heart and open the understanding, without which there could be no assurance of a sound and permanent conviction. These rational views were enforced by the remonstrances of Alvarado, Velasquez de Leon, and those in whom Cortés placed most confidence; till, driven from his original purpose, the military polemic consented to relinquish the attempt at conversion, for the present, and to refrain from a repetition of the scenes, which, considering the different mettle of the population, might have been attended with very different results from those at Cozumel and Cempoalla.¹¹

In the course of our narrative, we have had occa-

¹¹ Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84. — Gomara, Crónica, cap. 56. — Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 76, 77.

This is not the account of Camargo. According to him, Cortés gained his point; the nobles led the way by embracing Christianity, and the idols were broken. (Hist. de Tlascalá, MS.) But Camargo

was himself a Christianized Indian, who lived in the next generation after the Conquest; and may very likely have felt as much desire to relieve his nation from the reproach of infidelity, as a modern Spaniard would to scour out the stain — *mala raza y mancha* — of Jewish or Moorish lineage, from his escutcheon.

sion to witness more than once the good effects of the interposition of father Olmedo. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say, that his discretion in spiritual matters contributed as essentially to the success of the expedition, as did the sagacity and courage of Cortés in temporal. He was a true disciple in the school of Las Casas. His heart was unscathed by that fiery fanaticism which sears and hardens whatever it touches. It melted with the warm glow of Christian charity. He had come out to the New World, as a missionary among the heathen, and he shrunk from no sacrifice, but that of the welfare of the poor benighted flock to whom he had consecrated his days. If he followed the banners of the warrior, it was to mitigate the ferocity of war, and to turn the triumphs of the Cross to a good account for the natives themselves, by the spiritual labors of conversion. He afforded the uncommon example—not to have been looked for, certainly, in a Spanish monk of the sixteenth century—of enthusiasm controlled by reason, a quickening zeal tempered by the mild spirit of toleration.

But, though Cortés abandoned the ground of conversion for the present, he compelled the Tlascalans to break the fetters of the unfortunate victims reserved for sacrifice; an act of humanity unhappily only transient in its effects, since the prisons were filled with fresh victims, on his departure.

He also obtained permission for the Spaniards to perform the services of their own religion unmolested. A large cross was erected in one of the

great courts or squares. Mass was celebrated every day in the presence of the army and of crowds of natives, who, if they did not comprehend its full import, were so far edified, that they learned to reverence the religion of their conquerors. The direct interposition of Heaven, however, wrought more for their conversion than the best homily of priest or soldier. Scarcely had the Spaniards left the city,—the tale is told on very respectable authority;—when a thin, transparent cloud descended and settled like a column on the cross, and, wrapping it round in its luminous folds, continued to emit a soft, celestial radiance through the night, thus proclaiming the sacred character of the symbol, on which was shed the halo of divinity!¹²

The principle of toleration in religious matters being established, the Spanish general consented to receive the daughters of the caciques. Five or six of the most beautiful of the Indian maidens were assigned to as many of his principal officers, after they had been cleansed from the stains of infidelity by the waters of baptism. They received, as usual, on this occasion, good Castilian names, in exchange for the barbarous nomenclature of their own vernacular.¹³ Among them, Xicotencatl's daughter, Doña

¹² The miracle is reported by Herrera, (Hist. General, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 15,) and *believed* by Solís. Conquista de Méjico, lib. 3, cap. 5.

¹³ To avoid the perplexity of selection, it was common for the missionary to give the same names to all the Indians baptized on the same day. Thus, one day was set apart for the Johns, another for the Peters, and so on; an ingenious arrangement, much more for the convenience of the clergy, than of the converts. See Camargo, Hist. de Tlascal, MS.

Luisa, as she was called after her baptism, was a princess of the highest estimation and authority in Tlascala. She was given by her father to Alvarado, and their posterity intermarried with the noblest families of Castile. The frank and joyous manners of this cavalier made him a great favorite with the Tlascalans; and his bright, open countenance, fair complexion, and golden locks, gave him the name of *Tonatiuh*, the "Sun." The Indians often pleased their fancies by fastening a *sobriquet*, or some characteristic epithet on the Spaniards. As Cortés was always attended, on public occasions, by Doña Marina, or Malinche, as she was called by the natives, they distinguished him by the same name. By these epithets, originally bestowed in Tlascala, the two Spanish captains were popularly designated among the Indian nations.

While these events were passing, another embassy arrived from the court of Mexico. It was charged, as usual, with a costly donative of embossed gold plate, and rich embroidered stuffs of cotton and feather-work. The terms of the message might well argue a vacillating and timid temper in the monarch, did they not mask a deeper policy. He now invited the Spaniards to his capital, with the

¹⁴ Ibid., MS. — Bernal Díaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 74, 77.

According to Camargo, the Tlascalans gave the Spanish commander three hundred damsels to wait on Marina; and the kind treatment and instruction they received

led some of the chiefs to surrender their own daughters, "con propósito de que si acaso algunas se empuñasen quedase entre ellos generacion de hombres tan valientes y temidos."

assurance of a cordial welcome. He besought them to enter into no alliance with the base and barbarous Tlascalans; and he invited them to take the route of the friendly city of Cholula, where arrangements, according to his orders, were made for their reception.¹⁵

The Tlascalans viewed with deep regret the general's proposed visit to Mexico. Their reports fully confirmed all he had before heard of the power and ambition of Montezuma. His armies, they said, were spread over every part of the continent. His capital was a place of great strength, and as, from its insular position, all communication could be easily cut off with the adjacent country, the Spaniards, once entrapped there, would be at his mercy. His policy, they represented, was as insidious, as his ambition was boundless. "Trust not his fair words," they said, "his courtesies, and his gifts. His professions are hollow, and his friendships are false." When Cortés remarked, that he hoped to bring about a better understanding between the emperor and them, they replied, it would be impossible; however smooth his words, he would hate them at heart.

¹⁵ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 80. — *Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 60. — *Martyr, De Orbe Novo*, dec. 5, cap. 2.

Cortés notices only one Aztec mission, while Diaz speaks of three. The former, from brevity, falls so much short of the whole truth, and the latter, from forgetfulness perhaps, goes so much be-

yond it, that it is not always easy to decide between them. Diaz did not compile his narrative till some fifty years after the Conquest; a lapse of time, which may excuse many errors, but must considerably impair our confidence in the minute accuracy of his details. A more intimate acquaintance with his chronicle does not strengthen this confidence.

They warmly protested, also, against the general's taking the route of Cholula. The inhabitants, not brave in the open field, were more dangerous from their perfidy and craft. They were Montezuma's tools, and would do his bidding. The Tlascalans seemed to combine with this distrust a superstitious dread of the ancient city, the head-quarters of the religion of Anahuac. It was here that the god Quetzalcoatl held the pristine seat of his empire. His temple was celebrated throughout the land, and the priests were confidently believed to have the power, as they themselves boasted, of opening an inundation from the foundations of his shrine, which should bury their enemies in the deluge. The Tlascalans further reminded Cortés, that, while so many other and distant places had sent to him at Tlascala, to testify their good-will, and offer their allegiance to his sovereigns, Cholula, only six leagues distant, had done neither. — The last suggestion struck the general more forcibly than any of the preceding. He instantly despatched a summons to the city, requiring a formal tender of its submission.

Among the embassies from different quarters which had waited on the Spanish commander, while at Tlascala, was one from Ixtlilxochitl, son of the great Nezahualpilli, and an unsuccessful competitor with his elder brother — as noticed in a former part of our narrative — for the crown of Tezcuco.¹⁶ Though defeated in his pretensions, he had obtained

¹⁶ Ante, p. 311.

a part of the kingdom, over which he ruled with a deadly feeling of animosity towards his rival, and to Montezuma, who had sustained him. He now offered his services to Cortés, asking his aid, in return, to place him on the throne of his ancestors. The politic general returned such an answer to the aspiring young prince, as might encourage his expectations, and attach him to his interests. It was his aim to strengthen his cause, by attracting to himself every particle of disaffection that was floating through the land.

It was not long before deputies arrived from Cholula, profuse in their expressions of good-will, and inviting the presence of the Spaniards in their capital. The messengers were of low degree, far beneath the usual rank of ambassadors. This was pointed out by the Tlascalans; and Cortés regarded it as a fresh indignity. He sent in consequence a new summons, declaring, if they did not instantly send him a deputation of their principal men, he would deal with them as *rebels* to his own sovereign, the rightful lord of these realms!¹⁷ The menace had the desired effect. The Cholulans were not inclined to contest, at least, for the present, his magnificent pretensions. An-

¹⁷ "Si no viniessen, iria sobre ellos, y los destruiria, y procederia contra ellos como contra personas rebeldes; diciéndoles, como todas estas Partes, y otras muy mayores Tierras, y Señoríos eran de Vuestra Alteza." (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 63.) "Rebellion" was a very convenient

term, fastened in like manner by the countrymen of Cortés on the Moors, for defending the possessions which they had held for eight centuries in the Peninsula. It justified very rigorous reprisals. — (See the History of Ferdinand and Isabella, Part I. Chap. 13, et alibi.)

other embassy appeared in the camp, consisting of some of the highest nobles ; who repeated the invitation for the Spaniards to visit their city, and excused their own tardy appearance by apprehensions for their personal safety in the capital of their enemies. The explanation was plausible, and was admitted by Cortés.

The Tlascalans were now more than ever opposed to his projected visit. A strong Aztec force, they had ascertained, lay in the neighbourhood of Cholula, and the people were actively placing their city in a posture of defence. They suspected some insidious scheme concerted by Montezuma to destroy the Spaniards.

These suggestions disturbed the mind of Cortés, but did not turn him from his purpose. He felt a natural curiosity to see the venerable city so celebrated in the history of the Indian nations. He had, besides, gone too far to recede, too far, at least, to do so without a show of apprehension, implying a distrust in his own resources, which could not fail to have a bad effect on his enemies, his allies, and his own men. After a brief consultation with his officers, he decided on the route to Cholula.¹⁸

It was now three weeks since the Spaniards had taken up their residence within the hospitable walls

¹⁸ Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 62, 63 — Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4. — Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84. — Gomara, Crónica, cap. 58. — Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2. — Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 18. — Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.

of Tlascala; and nearly six, since they entered her territory. They had been met on the threshold as an enemy, with the most determined hostility. They were now to part with the same people, as friends and allies; fast friends, who were to stand by them, side by side, through the whole of their arduous struggle. The result of their visit, therefore, was of the last importance; since on the coöperation of these brave and warlike republicans, greatly depended the ultimate success of the expedition.



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