

WILSON'S EXPERIMENT.

A MONTHLY FAMILY NEWSPAPER - - - - - PRICE, FIFTEEN PENCE A YEAR.

VOL. 1.

BELLEVILLE, C. W., OCTOBER 15, 1847.

NO. 2.

Sketches of Aboriginai Life.

THE AZTEC PRINCESS; OR, THE DESTINY FORESHAD- OWED OF THE DOWNFALL OF THE ANCIENT HOUSE OF THE MONTEZUMAS.

Rapacious Spain
Followed her bold discoverer o'er the main;
A rabid race, fanatically bold,
And steeled to cruelty by lust of gold,
Traversed the waves, the unknown world explored,
The cross their standard, but their path the sword;
Their steps were graves; o'er prostrate realms
they trod,
They worshipped Mammon, while they vowed
to God.

CHAPTER II.—CONTINUED.

The meeting of the parties was one of no little pomp and ceremony, for the courtly manners and chivalric bearing of the European cavaliers were scarcely superior, in impressiveness and effect, to the barbaric splendour, and graceful consciousness of power, which characterized the flower of the Aztec nobility. The chief, advancing towards the invaders, bowed low to earth, touching the ground with his right hand, then raising it to his head, and presenting it to his guest, announced himself as the envoy and servant of the great Montezuma, sole monarch and master of all the realms of Anahuac; and demanded the name of the stranger, the country from which he came, and the motives which induced him to trespass on the sacred territories of his royal master, and to presume to ask an interview with the emperor in his capital. The Castilian chieftain, with a courteous and knightly bearing replied, that his name was Hernando Cortez—that he was one of the humblest of the servants of the great Charles, the mighty monarch of Spain, and sovereign ruler of the Indies; and that he had come, with his little band of followers, to pay his court to the great Montezuma, and to bear to him the fraternal salutation of his master, which he could only deliver in person.

The reply of the Mexican was dignified, courteous, and pointed, and left no hope to the Spaniard, that he would then be able to effect his purpose, of visiting in person the golden city. "If," said the prince, "your monarch had come himself to our shores, he might well demand a personal meeting with our lord, the emperor, but when he sends his servant to represent him, he surely cannot presume to do more than communicate with the servants of the great Montezuma. If it were possible that another sun should visit yonder sky, he might look upon our sun in his march, and move and shine in his presence. But the moon and the stars cannot shine when he is abroad. They can look upon each other only when he withdraws his light."

The royal message having been delivered, the presents which accompanied it were brought forward, and spread out upon mats, in front of the general's tent.

The Spaniards were struck with surprise and admiration at the fineness of the texture of the cloths, the richness of their dyes, the gorgeous coloring and tasteful arrangement of the feather-work, the masterly workmanship and exquisite finish of the jewelry, and, above all, the immense value, and magnificent size of the golden toys which were presented them. They conceived at once, the most exalted ideas of the riches of the country, and the munificence and splendor of the monarch that ruled over it. Their avarice and cupidity were strongly excited, and more than one of the senior officers, as well as their general, formed the immediate resolution, that in despite of the imperial interdiction, they would endeavor, either by diplomacy or by force, to win their way to the capital, which they supposed must of necessity be the grand

depository of all the treasures in the empire. Their intentions were kept secret, even from each other, and under cover of a specious submission to the expressed will of the monarch, Cortez requested permission to delay his departure, till his men should be recruited, and his stores replenished for his long voyage.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of this unauthorized reprieve, the artful and undefeatable Castilian contrived to draw off from their unwilling and burdensome allegiance to Montezuma, the Totonacs, a considerable tribe, residing in that part of the country where he had effected his landing; and so to impress them with a sense of his own power and the lenity of his government, as to bind them to him in a solemn treaty of alliance. He also sent an embassy to the Tlascalans, a nation that had long maintained its independence against the ambitious encroachments of Mexico, and held Montezuma their natural and only foe. They were a brave and warlike people, and nearly as far advanced in the arts of civilization as their enemies. Their government was a kind of republic. Cortez, with magniloquent pretensions of invincible power, and inexhaustible resources, proposed to assist the Tlascalans in reducing the power of Mexico and putting an end to the oppressions and exactions of Montezuma. For this purpose, he asked leave to pass through their country, on his march to the great capital.

Distrusting the intentions of the strangers, and fearing that, instead of a disinterested friend and ally, they should find in them only a new enemy, whom once admitted, they could never expel from their dominions, and whose yoke might be even harder to bear than that which the Aztec monarch had in vain attempted to fasten on them—the proposed alliance of the Spaniards was rejected, with such bold and ample demonstrations of hostility, as left no room for doubt, that any attempt to force a passage through their territories, would be fiercely and ably contested.

Never daunted by obstacles, though somewhat perplexed, the brave Cortez rushed forward, encountered the almost countless hosts of the Tlascalan army, and, after several severe and deadly contests, in which the skill and prowess of his handful of men, with their terrible horses and yet more terrible fire-arms, were nearly overpowered by the immense numbers, astonishing bravery, and comparative skill of the enemy, he succeeded in terrifying them into submission, and winning them to a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, against the tyrant Montezuma, the common enemy of all the nations of Anahuac. By these singular and unparalleled successes, the little band of Castilian adventurers found themselves fortified, in the heart of the country, in close alliance with two powerful tribes, who swelled their army to ten times its original number, besides supplying them liberally with all the provisions that were needed for themselves and horses.

Never was adventure so rashly undertaken, or so boldly pushed, as this singular expedition of the Spanish cavaliers. And never, probably, were there associated, in one little band, so many of the master spirits of chivalry, the true material of a conquering army. The compeers of Cortez, who submitted to his authority, and acted in perfect harmony with him, as if they were but subordinate parts of himself, were each competent to command a host, and lead it on to certain victory. The impetuous, daring Alvarado, the cool, courageous, rusty Sandoval, the high-spirited, chivalrous Olid, the rash, head-long, cruel Velasquez de Leon, and others, worthy to be comrades of these, and of Cortez—when have the ranks of the war-god assigned so many master spirits to one enterprise? And the brave, the gifted, the indomitable Nicotencatl, the mountain chief of Tlascala, whom the Spaniards, with so much difficulty, first subdued and then won to their cause, as an ally—what a noble personification of the soul and spirit of heroism, realizing in personal bravery, martial skill

and prowess, and in all the commanding qualities of person and of character, which go to constitute the victorious warrior, the best pictures of the type-heroes of epic poetry and history.

In all their previous discoveries in the New World, the progress of the Spaniards to victory was easy, and almost unresisted. The invaders of Mexico, however, found themselves suddenly introduced to a new people, and new scenes—to nations of warriors, to races intelligent, civilized, and competent to self-government and self-defence. And all the skill, courage, and energy of their ablest commanders, and their bravest men, would have availed them nothing in their herculean enterprise, if they had not craftily and skillfully worked upon the jealousies and differences existing between the various tribes and nations of Anahuac, and fomented the long smothered discontents, and unwritten complaints of an over-taxed and sternly-governed people, into open and clamorous resistance to the despotic sway of Montezuma. It is curious and melancholy to observe, how eagerly they shook off the golden yoke of their hereditary monarch, for the iron one of a new master, and exchanged their long-established servitude to their legitimate king and their pagan gods, for a more galling, hopeless, and wasting slavery to the cruel and rapacious invader, under the life-promising Sign of the Cross, the desecrated banner of the Prince of Peace.

CHAPTER III.

SUPERSTITIOUS FEAR AND VASCILLATING POLICY OF MONTEZUMA.

The land was ours—this glorious land—
With all its wealth of woods and streams—
Our warriors, strong in heart and hand,
Our daughters, beautiful as dreams.

And then we heard the omen's say,
That God hath sent his angels forth
To sweep our ancient tribes away.

While these events were transpiring in the ever moving camp of the victorious invaders, the imperial court of Tenochtitlan was agitated and distracted by the divided counsels and wavering policy of the superstitious, fear-stricken monarch, and his various advisers. At one time, deeply offended by their audacious disregard of his positive prohibitions, and roused to a sense of his duty as a king, by the prophetic warning of Karec, which never ceased to ring in his ears, Montezuma was almost persuaded to give in to the war-party, and send out an army that should overwhelm the strangers at a blow. But, before this noble purpose had time to mature itself into action, all his superstitious fears would revive, and, without coming to any decision either to move or stand still, he would pause in timid inaction, till some new successes had made the invaders more formidable than before, and invested their mission with something more of that preternatural sacredness, which alone had power to unman the monarch, and disarm his craving ambition. At each advance of the conquering Castilians, he realized the growing necessity of prompt and efficient measures of defence, while at the same time he felt a greater reluctance to contend with fate. The result was, that he only dallied with the foe, by continually sending new embassies, each with larger and richer presents than the preceding, having no effect but to add fuel to their already burning thirst for gold, and strengthen their determination to accomplish their original purpose.

These royal embassies were less and less firm and peremptory in their terms, until they assumed the tone of expostulation, and assigning various and often conflicting reasons why the Spaniards should not pursue their route any farther towards the imperial city. At length, when the courier announced the arrival of the mysterious band at Tlascala, and the consummation of the alliance between them and his old and bitter enemies, together with the defection of many cities and districts, he felt it impossible to remain any longer

undecided. His throne trembled under him. He must act, or it would fall, and involve him and his house in inevitable ruin. Instead, however, of a bold and masterly activity in the defence of his capital and crown, he changed his policy altogether, and sending a new embassy with more splendid gifts than ever, invited the strangers to his court, and pronounced them all the hospitality of his empire. He designated the route they should pursue, and gave orders for their reception in all the towns and cities through which they should pass.

Montezuma was politic and wise in some things, and the purpose he had now in view, if it had not been frustrated, would have been deemed a master stroke of policy, worthy of the ablest disciples of the Machivellian school. Perceiving the necessity of breaking up this combination of new and old enemies, he had recourse to stratagem to effect it, intending that the strangers, whom he dared not to oppose with direct violence, should fall into the snare they had laid for themselves, in thrusting themselves forward, in despite of his repeated remonstrances, into the heart of his empire. He feared to raise his own hand to destroy them, because they were, in his view, commissioned of heaven to overturn his throne; but he deemed it perfectly consistent with this reverence for the decrees of fate, to lay a snare into which they should fall, and so destroy themselves. He little understood the watchfulness and circumspection of the man he had to deal with, or the tremendous advantage which their armor of proof and their engines of destruction gave the Europeans over the almost naked Mexicans, with their primitive weapons of offence. It was his plan to separate the foreigners from their new Indian allies, and invite them to come alone to the capital, as was first proposed. And he designed to assign them accommodations in one of the ancient palaces, in the heart of the city, where, surrounded by high walls, on every side, they should be shut up from all intercourse with the people, and left to perish of famine.

When this purpose was formed, the monarch kept it a profound secret in his own breast. The ambassadors whom he sent to the Castilian camp, were of the highest ranks of the nobility, and were accompanied by a long train of slaves, bearing the rich presents, by which the wily monarch hoped at the same time to display his own royal munificence, and to propitiate the favor of the dreaded strangers. Every new display of this kind only served more effectually to decant his own hopes; for the advance of the Spaniards, whose lust of gold was absolutely insatiable, was so far from being satisfied with this profusion of royal gifts, that it was only the more inflamed with every new accession to their treasures. The only effect, therefore, of these repeated embassies was to confirm the Spaniards in their convictions of the conscious weakness of the Mexicans, and make them the more resolute in pushing forward to complete the subjugation of the whole country, and possess themselves of all its seemingly inexhaustible treasures of gold.

Montezuma had now another difficulty to contend with, in his endeavor to rid himself of the intruders. The Tlascalans represented him to Cortez as false and deceitful as he was ambitious and rapacious, and used every argument in their power to dissuade him from committing himself to his hands. But the bold adventurer, always confident in his own resources, seemed never to think of danger when an object was to be accomplished, or to regard any thing as impossible which he desired to attain. As soon as the door was thrown open to his amicable approach to the capital, he set himself to prepare for the march. The expostulations and suspicions of the Tlascalans made him, perhaps, more careful in his preparations against a surprise, and more rigorous in the discipline of his little corps, than he might otherwise have been. Wherever he was, his camp was as cautiously posted, as fully and rigidly guarded as it on the eve of battle, he was hourly expecting an assault. This watch-