

fell little short of those of the besieged. A daily, and often nightly combat was sustained with equal obstinacy and desperation by Spaniards and Aztecs. The former resolved never to quit their post until Mexico acknowledged allegiance to Spain, and was completely humbled in the dust. The Aztecs fought for freedom, honor, and their sacred rights—for all that makes life dear. Guatemozin made the most active preparations for the defence of the capital;—every house was a fortress—every inhabitant a warrior. The city was well garrisoned with provisions—the lake teemed with barks and canoes, which, though they could not stand before the Spanish brigantines, were of great service in bringing in succors from the neighboring Province. Guatemozin exhibited great ability in the direction of his forces. Possessed of undoubted courage and presence of mind, he was ever on the alert to take advantage of any accident favorable to his cause. The chief of the Aztecs certainly claims much of our admiration and sympathy, as with a calm heroism, not excelled in any age, he summoned all his powers to repel the invaders, or perish in the attempt. He would listen to no terms of capitulation, however favorable; would enter into no treaty with the enemies of his country; and when his people were perishing by thousands around him, in all the horrors of famine, he still maintained the same undaunted bearing. At the commencement of the siege, Cortés divided his force into three detachments, commanded by Alvarado, Sandoval, and himself. To these officers he assigned a particular locality in the suburbs of the city, at some little distance from each other, directing them step by step to make their way into the heart of the city, where, eventually, he intended the whole force to meet.

To force an entrance was matter of great difficulty. Every inch of ground was fiercely disputed, and not unfrequently would they lose in the night the labor of the day. Cortés, finding little progress was made, resolved to level all before him, and not to advance one step farther than he had completely cleared the ground, filled up ditches and canals, and left a wide and open space suitable for the effective manœuvres of the army. During the siege, the Spaniards met with some severe checks. At one time Cortés himself was in the most imminent peril. In one of the many assaults, the Aztecs appeared to give way, and of-