

Sketch of the Fall of the Aztec Empire, with the Destruction of Mexico.

(Continued.)



ERNANDO CORTES was the son of a Spanish gentleman in the middle ranks of society. The elder Cortés had followed the profession of arms, but was unwilling his son should enter into military life. From a child the young Hernando exhibited great quickness and readiness of apprehension, joined to a restless energy and love of enterprise, indomitable perseverance, and intrepid courage. The faults that usually accompany such a disposition, were not wanting in his

case. He was idle, averse to study, and impatient of control. He was originally intended for the law, but his erratic genius could not bend itself to the labor of a legal education; and at the age of seventeen, his parents reluctantly consented to his following the leading of his own enterprising mind. His first essay was to accompany a small squadron of vessels bound for the Indian Islands. On arriving at Hispanola, he settled down for a short time upon a grant of land which he obtained from the Governor. This quiet life did not, however, suit his ardent temperament. He took advantage of the first opportunity to engage in active service. Such an opening occurred in the conquest of Cuba under Velasquez, who subsequently became Governor of the island. The courage and activity displayed brought Cortés into great favor with Velasquez, who assisted him in various ways; but this favor was not of long continuance. Cortés, by his own imprudence, got into serious difficulties; was twice a prisoner, but each time managed to make his escape; and, finally, a reconciliation took place, though Cortés never again