

service of a few brave spirits, than if surrounded by a host of the false or faint-hearted." Such was the effect of his harangue, that not one forsook him, but all pledged themselves to stand by him to the last. Cortés now established his head-quarters at Tepeaca, a town at no great distance from Tlascalua, situated in a fruitful country, favorable for the support of an army. From thence he undertook various expeditions against the neighboring States, who favored the Mexican Government, in which he was invariably successful, and once more restored the renown of the Spanish army. By the directions of Cortés, eight brigantines were built at Tlascalua, in such a manner that they could be taken to pieces, carried on the shoulders of the Indians across the plain, and launched on the Lake of Tezcuco. This conception, bold as it appeared, was actually accomplished, the fleet constructed and borne across mountain and forest before it reached the waters of Tezcuco. Fortunately, at this period, Cortés' diminished band was reinforced by several companies of adventurers. It mattered not with what intention they arrived on the shores of Mexico, the authorities of Vera Cruz seized ships and crew, pressed them into the service of their general, and dispatched them to head-quarters; and such was the generous behavior, and the affable demeanor of Cortés, that many who entered his service unwillingly, became his warmest partizans. Cortés was well aware, in his second visit to the capital, he had a very different monarch to encounter than the generous, but weak and superstitious Montezuma. The brother and successor of this Emperor, Cuitalma, died, after a reign of four months. He was succeeded by his nephew, Guatemozin. He is described as "valiant, and so terrible, that his followers trembled in his presence." Against such a leader, Cortés prepared to measure his strength, and to lead his little band of Spaniards, which amounted, including all the reinforcements, to scarcely 600 men, against the united power of the Aztec Empire. True, the allies of Cortés were numerous, amounting to many thousands, and from them he received essential aid.

It was the latter end of May, 1521, Cortés and his allied forces, after a long and somewhat perilous march, appeared before the gates of Mexico. A close siege of nearly three months followed, during which the sufferings of the besiegers