

invalid soldiers in one of his cities on the plain. By degrees the popularity of Montezuma declined; he ceased to be the friend of his subjects; secluded himself from public observation, requiring the personal attendance in a menial capacity of the first nobles of the land; exacting from them, and all with whom he came in contact, the most slavish homage, the most servile marks of respect. When the monarch passed among his subjects, all eyes were fixed upon the ground, while many prostrated themselves before him. The portrait left us of this celebrated Indian emperor, is an interesting one. He was at this time about 40 years of age, his person was tall and thin, but not ill made; his hair was black and straight, and not very long; his beard was thin; his complexion somewhat paler than generally belongs to his race; his features were serious in their expression; he moved with dignity; his whole demeanor was tempered by an expression of benignity worthy of a great prince. The city of Mexico contained a large and industrious population. The public works manifested an advanced state of civilization. The temples and principal buildings were covered with a hard white stucco, which glistened like enamel in the sun. A draw-bridge was the only entrance into the city. The palace of Montezuma was a vast irregular pile of low stone buildings, so large and so numerous, that one of the conquerors declared, though he had frequently visited it, he never was able to support the fatigue of an entire survey. In the courts, many fountains were playing, which supplied a hundred baths in the interior of the palace. The apartments were large, but not lofty; the ceilings formed of odoriferous woods richly carved; the floors covered with mats; the walls hung with cotton beautifully stained, or with the skins of wild animals; and draperies of feather work, wrought in imitation of birds and insects, which might well compare in nicety of art and beauty of colors with the famed tapestries of Flanders. Thus Mexico, a second Tadmor in the desert, had reached a degree of splendor and magnificence little dreamt of in the Eastern World. And Montezuma, like Nebuchadonoyer, might stand upon his battlements, and look down with a spirit of triumphant exultation upon the mighty city with its temples, towers, and palaces, which rose proudly from the beautiful valley of Jezcuco, and cast their deep shadows upon the quiet surface of the lake. But however fair the aspect of this far-famed city—however advanced its inhabitants