

Cortes made a prisoner of Montezuma in his own palace, but he was glad to leave the city, in order to collect his forces for a successful attack upon it. Ravaging the provinces, he slaughtered wholesale and made a multitude of prisoners; not men, for it was too troublesome to guard them, but boys, girls, and young women. These were all branded with the letter "G" and divided up amongst the soldiers. But the rank and file complained that by the time Cortes and the officers were satisfied only the old and feeble women were left of them.

Mexico was besieged for seventy-five days, and was captured on August 15, 1521. The streets and houses were full of dead bodies. "I have read of the destruction of Jerusalem," wrote an eye-witness, "but whether there was such mortality in that I do not know." During the siege the ground had been ploughed up to get at the roots of the herbage, the bark had been eaten off the trees, and every drop of fresh water was consumed. A vast number of the inhabitants perished by wounds or famine. Those who remained were "a grief to behold."

The conquerors held a thanksgiving service, and then began to search for gold. Not finding as much as they expected, they took the son of Montezuma, who had fought so bravely, and put him to the torture in order to make him confess where he had concealed the treasures. His feet were soaked in oil and scorched with fire. His cousin, who was tortured with him, looked beseechingly to the lord to give him leave to speak, but the gallant young king replied with contempt, "Am I on a bed of roses?" But why dwell any longer on these barbarities? It is enough to say that Cortes and his Spaniards, by the aid of warlike discipline and destructive weapons, to which the Mexicans could offer no effectual resistance, destroyed a civilization superior to that of Spain herself, and reduced the remnant of its people to a state of ignominious and miserable slavery.

Pizarro acted even more wantonly and wickedly in Peru. A very curious civilization existed in that country, which it is beyond our purpose to describe. The monarch was called the "Inca," and Pizarro sought a friendly interview with him, with the perfidious intention of seizing his person. The Inca approached with a large retinue, and the plain behind him was covered with thirty thousand of his soldiers. A rascally priest, Father Vincent Valverde, undertook to explain the Christian religion. This was done through an interpreter, who made a terrible mess of it. The Inca was informed that he had already got one god, but the Spaniards had three; so, if he accepted them, there would make four. Then he was told all about the life and death of Jesus Christ. He listened incredulously, and at length answered: "Your God, you say, was put to death by the very men he created; but my God still lives in the heavens and looks down on his children." He was then shown the priest's breviary. Turning over its leaves, and lifting it, perhaps contemptuously, to his ear he said, "This is silent; it tells me nothing." The book was thrown with disdain to the