

obedience was maintained throughout the whole adventurous campaign, as well when in the midst of friends and allies, as when surrounded by hostile legions.

After the royal ambassadors had departed with their pacific message, the mind of Montezuma was harassed and agitated with many doubts of the propriety of the course he had adopted. His nobles, and the tributary princes of the neighboring cities of Tezucó, Tlacoapan, and Iztapalapan, were divided in their opinions. Some complained, though not loudly, of the weak and vacillating policy of the king. Some, even of the common people, feared the consequences, anticipating the most disastrous results, in accordance with their superstitious veneration for the oracles of their faith. The third day after the departure of the envoys, the king was pacing up and down one of the beautifully shaded walks of the royal gardens, listening with a disturbed mind to the powerful expostulations of his brother, Cuitlahua, who, from the beginning, had vehemently opposed every concession to the invaders, and urgently solicited permission to lead the army against them, and drive them out of the land. Suddenly, a voice as of a distant choir of chanters arrested his ear. The melody was solemn, sweet and soothing. It seemed to come sometimes from the upper regions of the air, in tones of silvery clearness and power, sometimes from beneath, in suppressed and muffled harmony, as when the swell organ soliloquises with all its valves closed,—sometimes it retreated, as if dying into an echo along the distant avenues of royal palms and aged cypresses, or the citron and orange groves that skirted the farther end of the garden, and then, suddenly, and with great power, it burst in the full tide of impassioned song, from every tree and bower in that vast paradise of terrestrial sweets. Enchanted by the more than Circean melody, the brothers paused in their animated discourse, and stood, for a few moments, in silent wonder and fixed attention. Presently the chanting ceased, and one solitary voice broke forth in plaintive but emphatic recitative as from the midst of the sparkling jet that played its ceaseless tune in the grand porphyritic basin near which they stood. The words, which were simple and oracular, struck deep into the heart of Montezuma, and found a ready response in that of his royal brother.

The lion\* walks forth in his power and pride,  
The terror and lord of the forest wide—  
When the fox appears, shall he flee and hide?

The eagle's nest is strong and high,  
Unquestioned monarch of the sky—  
Should he quail before the falcon's eye?

The sun rides through the heavens afar,  
Dispensing light from his flaming car—  
Should he veil his glory, or turn him back,  
When the meteor flashes athwart his track?

Shall the eagle invite the hawk to his nest?  
Shall the fox with the lion sit down as a guest?  
Shall the meteor look out from the noonday sky,  
When the sun in his power is flaming by?

The pauses in this significant chant were followed by choral symphonies, expressing, as eloquently as inarticulate sounds could do, the most earnest remonstrance, the most moving expostulation. When this was concluded, the same sweet voice broke forth again, in tones of solemn tenderness and majestic power, in a prophetic warning to Montezuma.

Beware, mighty monarch, beware of the hour,  
When the pale-faced intruder shall come to this bower!

Beware of the weakness that whispers of fear,  
When the all-grasping, gold-seeking Spaniard is near!

Beware how thou readest the dark scroll of fate!  
Its mystic revealings may warn thee too late,  
That the power to command, and the strength to oppose,

Are gone, when thou openest the gate to thy foes.  
The white men are mortal— frail sons of the earth,  
They know not, they claim not, a heavenly birth;  
They bow to disease, and they fall by the sword,  
Pale fear can disarm them, grim death is their lord;

And those terrible coursers, so fiery and strong,  
That bear them like ravenous tigers along,  
The fleet winged arrow shall pierce them, and slay,  
And leave them to eagles and vultures a prey.

\* As Americus Vesputius, in his letter to Lorenzo Di Pier-Francesco De Medici, reports having met with the lion in South America, I have taken the liberty to introduce him as a native in our forests, notwithstanding the prevalent opinion of naturalists to the contrary.

Up, monarch! arouse thee—the hour is at hand  
When the dark howling tempest shall sweep o'er thy land.

Thy doubts and thy fears, ever changing, are life  
With peril to liberty, honor and life;  
And this timid inaction shall surely bring down  
To the dust, in dishonour, thy glorious crown;  
And leave, to all time, on thy once-honored head,  
The curse of a nation forsaken, betrayed.  
Oh! rouse thee, brave monarch! there's power in thy hand  
To scatter the clouds that hang over thy land.  
Speak, speak but the word, there is magic in thee,  
Before which the ruthless invaders shall flee,  
And myriads of braves, all equipped for defence,  
Shall leap at thy bidding, and banish him hence;  
And the gods, who would frown on the recreant slave,  
Will stand by their altars, and fight for the brave.

The effect of this mysterious warning upon the mind of Montezuma was exceedingly powerful, and seemed, for a time, to change his purpose and fix his resolution. With an energy and decision to which he had long been a stranger, he turned to his brother, and said, "Cuitlahua, you are right. This realm is mine. The gods have made me the father of this people. I must and will defend them. The strangers shall be driven back, or die. They shall never profane the temples and altars of Tenochtitlan, by entering within its gates, or looking upon its walls. Go, marshal your host, and prepare to meet them, before they advance a step further."

Exulting in this sudden demonstration of his ancient martial spirit in his royal brother, and fired with a double zeal in the cause he had so much at heart, by the thrilling influence upon his soul of the mysterious oracle, whose message had been uttered in his hearing, Cuitlahua scarcely waited for the ordinary courtesy of bidding farewell to the king, but flew with the speed of the wind, to execute the grateful trust committed to him. Despatching his messengers in every direction, only a few hours elapsed before his army was drawn up in the great square of the city; and, ere the sun had gone down, they had passed the gates, traversed the grand causeway that linked the amphibious city with the main land, and pitched their camp in a favorable position, several leagues on the way to Cholula.

The ardent imagination of the prince of Iztapalapan kindled at the prospect now opened before. The clouds, so long hanging over his beloved country, were dissipated as by magic, and the clear light of heaven streamed in upon his path, promising a quick and easy conquest, a glorious triumph, and a permanent peace. He had been in many battles, but had never been defeated. He believed the Mexican army invincible any where, but especially on their own soil, and fighting for their altars and their hearths. Terrible as the invading strangers had been hitherto, he had no fear of the coming encounter. He confidently expected to annihilate them at a blow. Happily his soldiers were all animated with the same spirit, and they took to their rest that night, eager for the morning to come, that should light them on their way to a certain and glorious victory.

No sooner had the army departed, than a change came over the spirit of the ill-fated Montezuma. The demons of doubt and fear returned to perplex and harass his soul, and to incline him again to that vacillating policy, those half way measures, by which his doom was to be sealed. In an agony of distrust and suspense, he recounted to himself the history of the past, reviewing all those dark and fearful prophecies, those oft-repeated and mysteriously significant omens, which, for so many years, had foreshadowed the events of the present day, and revealed the inevitable doom of the empire, sealed with the signet of heaven. The impressions produced by the recent warnings of Karee faded and disappeared before the deep and indelible traces of those ancient oracles, on which he had been accustomed from his youth sacredly to rely. He was once more adrift in a tempest of contending impulses, at one moment abandoning all in a paroxysm of despair, at another, vainly flattering himself with the hope of deliverance in some ill-formed stratagem, but never nerving himself to a tone of resolute defiance, or venturing to rest a hope on the issue of an open encounter.

The result of all this agitation was, another abandonment of his noble purpose of defence, and a new resort to stratagem. But the plan of operations, and the scene of execution, were changed. Cholula was selected as the theatre of destruction. The Spaniards had already been invited to take that

city in their route, and orders had been given, and preparations made for their hospitable reception. It was now resolved to make their acceptance of that invitation the signal and seal of their destruction. They were to be drawn into the city, alone, under the pretence that the presence of their Tlascalcan allies, who were the ancient and bitter enemies of the Cholulans, would be likely to create disturbance in the city, and lead to collision if not to bloodshed. The Cholulans were instructed to provide them with a place of encampment, in the heart of their city, where they could easily be surrounded, and cut to pieces. The streets of the city were then to be broken up by deep pits in some places, and barricades in others, to impede the movements of the horses, more dreaded than even the thunder and lightning of their riders.— This being completed under cover of the night, the city was to be filled with soldiers ready to do the work of execution, while the brave Cuitlahua, with the flower of the army of Tenochtitlan, was to encamp at a convenient distance without the walls, to render prompt assistance, in case it should be needed.

This plan being fully arranged in the mind of the Emperor, messengers were despatched with the light of the morning, to arrest the movements of Cuitlahua, and convey the necessary orders to the governor of Cholula. The warlike chieftain was deeply chagrined, and bitterly disappointed, in finding his orders so suddenly countermanded. He saw only certain ruin in the ever wavering policy of the king, and was unable to conceive of any hope, except in striking a bold and decisive blow. He was willing to stake all upon a single cast, and drive back the insolent invader, or perish in the attempt. But Montezuma was the absolute monarch. His word was law; and, though not irreversible like that of the Medo-Persian, it was never to be questioned by any of his subjects. The hero must therefore rest on his arms, and await the issue of a doubtful stratagem.

Meanwhile, the eager and self-sufficient Castilians had pushed forward to Cholula, and entered its gates, under a royal escort, that came out to meet them, and amid the constrained shouts and half-hearted congratulations of a countless multitude of natives, who with mingled fear, hatred and curiosity, gazed on the conquerors as a superior race of beings, and made way for them on every side, to take possession of their city. They were received with the greatest deference and consideration by the chiefs of the little republic, and the ambassadors of Montezuma, who had halted on their way, to prepare a more honorable reception for their guests, and further to ingratiate them with their master, by doing away, as far as they could, the unfavorable impressions on him & his people, which might have been made on their minds, by their intercourse with their old and implacable enemies of the republic of Tlascala.

Such was the mutual jealousy and hatred of these neighboring nations, that, while the Cholulans could in no wise agree to admit the Tlascalans to accompany Cortez into their city; they, on their part, were extremely reluctant to allow him to go in alone, assuring him in the strongest terms, that they were the most treacherous and deceitful of men, and their promises and professions utterly unworthy of confidence. Scorning danger, however, and determined at all hazards, to embrace every opening that seemed to facilitate his approach to the Mexican capital, he marched fearlessly in, and took up his quarters in the great square, or market place. Here, ample accommodations were provided for him and his band. Every courtesy was extended to them by the citizens and their rulers. Their table was amply supplied with all the necessaries and luxuries of the place. They were regarded with a kind of superstitious awe by the multitude, as a race of beings belonging to another world, of ethereal mould, and supernatural powers; and their camp was visited by those of all ranks, and all ages, eager to catch a view of the terrible strangers.

A few days after their arrival, a new embassy from the imperial palace was announced. They held no communication with Cortez, but had a long consultation with the previous envoys still remaining there, and with the authorities of the city. From this time, there was a striking change in the aspect of the Cholulans towards their guests. They were soon made to perceive and feel that, though

invited, they were not welcome guests. The daily supplies for their table were greatly diminished. They received but few and formal visits from the chiefs, and but cold attention from any of the nobles. Cortez was quick to perceive the change, but unable to divine its meaning. It caused him many an anxious hour, especially when he remembered the serious and urgent representations of his Tlascalcan allies of the deceitful and treacherous character of the Cholulans. His apprehensions were by no means diminished, when he learned from the morning report of the night guards, that through the entire night, which had hitherto been a season of perfect silence and repose in the city, sounds were heard on every side, as of people earnestly engaged in some works of fortification, sometimes digging in the earth, sometimes laying up stones in heaps, and in various other ways, "vexing the dull ear of night with uncouth noise." It was found, on examination, that the streets in many places were barricaded, and holes, in others, were lightly covered with branches of trees. Unable to explain these matters, and not wishing to give offence to his entertainers by enquiring too curiously into what might be no more than the ordinary preparation for a national festival, he sent one of his chief officers to report to the Tlascalcan commander, without the gates of the city, and enquire what might be the meaning of these singular movements. Having learned in reply, that a hostile attack was undoubtedly contemplated, and that a large force of Mexicans, under command of the brave Cuitlahua, brother of Montezuma, was encamped at no great distance, ready to co-operate with the Cholulans at a moment's warning, and that a great number of victims had been offered in sacrifice, to propitiate the favor of their gods, the haughty Spaniard found his position anything but agreeable. He was a stranger to fear, but he was certainly most sadly perplexed. And, when, in addition to the information already received, he learned from Marina, his female interpreter, that she had been warned by a friend in the city to abandon the Spaniards, that she might not be involved in their ruin, he was, for a time, quite at a loss what to do. To retreat, would be to manifest fear, and a distrust of his own resources, which might be fatal to his future influence with the natives. To remain where he was—inactive, would be to stand still in the yawning crater of a volcano, when the overcharged cauldron below had already begun to belch forth sulphurous flames and smoke.

The character of the conqueror was one precisely adapted to such exigencies as this. Through the whole course of his wonderful career, he seems to have rushed into difficulty, for the mere pleasure of fighting his way out. In order to extricate himself, he never lost a moment in parleying or diplomacy. His measures were bold, decided, and direct, indicating a self-reliance, and a confidence in his men and means, which is the surest guaranty of success. In this case, having satisfied himself of the actual existence of a conspiracy, he sent for the chief rulers, upbraided them with their want of hospitality, informed them that he should leave the place at break of day the next morning, and demanded a large number of men, to assist in removing his baggage. Promising to comply with this demand, which favored the execution of their own designs, the chiefs departed, and Cortez and his band, sleeping on their arms, prepared for the coming conflict.

Punctually, at the peep of dawn, the princes of Cholula marched into the court, accompanied by a much larger number of men than Cortez had required. With a calm bold air, the haughty Castilian confronted them, charging them with treachery, and detailing all the circumstances of the concerted massacre. He upbraided them with their duplicity and baseness, and gave them to understand that they should pay dear for their false-hearted and cruel designs against those, who, confiding in their hospitality and promises of friendship, had come to their city, and slept quietly within their gates.

Thunderstruck at this unexpected turn of affairs, and fearing more than ever the strange beings, who could read their very thoughts, and fathom the designs which were yet scarcely matured in their own bosoms, the disconcerted magnates tremblingly pleaded guilty to the charge, and attempted to excuse themselves, by urging their allegiance to