

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

(Continued.)

Every thing they saw excited equally their astonishment and admiration. The public works were remarkable for their strength and skill of design. The magnificent gardens, which stretched for miles round the base of the hill, exhibiting every variety of plant and shrub, fruit and flower, in such perfection, as the highest natural advantages, joined to the greatest industry and taste, could produce. An extensive collection of animals and birds, were added to the floral interest of these beautiful pleasure grounds, where nothing seemed wanting to constitute an earthly paradise. The markets were filled with wares of all descriptions of native manufacture, besides the rich and abundant produce of the fertile valley. The object, however, that excited the greatest attention, was the great temple of Teocalli, a pyramidal structure, nearly 100 feet high, and measuring 300 feet square at the base. Within this building were two figures—one the war-god of the Aztecs, before whose shrine the Spaniards saw “three human hearts smoking and almost palpitating as if recently torn from their victims;” the other deity, in like manner, was gratified by the offering of five human hearts. Such a sight was well calculated to arouse the religious zeal of Cortés, who believed himself commissioned to extirpate this abominable idolatry, and place the cross upon the walls of Mexico. A mind like his could not long brook inaction; already he resolved a daring but hazardous project, to further his views of conquest, when an event occurred that facilitated his plans. Cortés had left a small garrison at Vera Cruz, under Escalante; two of the Spanish soldiers, belonging to this detachment, had been treacherously murdered by one of the neighboring chiefs in command under Montezuma. Cortés made use of this—charging Montezuma as having instigated the crime. The accusation was indignantly denied; and in proof of his innocence, Montezuma instantly summoned the offenders to his presence. Cortés pretended to discredit his assertions, and urged as the only means of satisfaction, his removal from his own palace to the Spanish quarters. The proposal was received with astonishment and indignation; but finding remonstrance in vain, and wanting courage and confidence enough to have recourse at once to arms, Montezuma, in an evil hour, gave an unwilling