

Indian girl, named Marina, who, at an early period, became attached to the expedition, and by her knowledge of the language, rendered most essential service to the Spaniards. She soon identified herself with their interests, and never swerved from her fidelity; rendering herself, by her amiable and gentle conduct, her ready sympathy with distress, her active and intelligent assistance in times of difficulty and danger, equally beloved and esteemed.

After coasting among the neighboring islands, Cortés landed on the spot where now stands the city of Vera Cruz, then a desolate beach, with a wide and level plain of sand in the background. By the aid of a few small trees, mats, and cotton carpets, the Spaniards formed a small encampment, where they were soon visited by many of the natives, who came to gaze on the wonderful strangers, bringing with them fruits, game, &c. Presently an embassy from Montezuma was announced, who presented the Spanish General with a magnificent present of the various fabrics of the country. Cortés seems at once to have formed the resolution of making his way to Mexico, allured as much by his desire of conquest as his love of gold, which was greatly excited by the splendid specimens of the gold and jewels sent by Montezuma. In place, however, of receiving an invitation to visit the Capital, he was met by an express prohibition. This did not, however, induce him to abandon the idea, but showed him the necessity of a wise and cautious policy. One of his earliest endeavors was to found a colony that would at once command a commodious harbor, form a depository for articles of commerce and barter, prove a city of refuge in case of adverse fortune, and a retreat for the wounded and disabled. The new city of Villa Rica was situated in a wide and open plain on the Gulf of Mexico, considerably north of the modern town of Vera Cruz. It was soon duly provided with a Civil Constitution. Magistrates were elected, and Cortés placed at the head of the colony as Governor and Director General.

The first Indian city of any note visited by the Spaniards was Cempoalla, which was said to contain from twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants. Here they were received as friends by the Caciques, and were hospitably entertained. Here Cortés learnt the disaffection that existed between Montezuma and his