

Chapter 1

Spanish Civilization Invades the Americas

A SAILOR RETURNS

ON A BALMY April day in 1493, Columbus made his triumphal entry into Barcelona to report his famous voyage to the King and Queen of Spain. A special messenger had summoned Columbus to the Court as soon as Their Majesties had learned of his return to the city. In August, 1492, he had ventured into unknown seas to prove that the earth was round, that he could find the east by sailing to the west.

On this day, the port city on the Mediterranean welcomed a seaman who came with a strange caravan. As the train of horses and mules approached the city, runners dashed along the streets and shouted, "The Admiral! The Admiral!"

The news created an uproar. Merchants left their shop doors open and swarmed into the lanes. Women unlocked their ironbarred windows and stood on the balconies. Church bells clanged throughout Barcelona.

Armed sailors on horseback led the procession. They cleared a path through the excited mob that choked the narrow street leading to the royal palace. Next in line were the dark-eyed, copper-colored men from the newly-discovered islands

which Columbus thought were off the coast of India. These natives were in feathered hats made from the brilliant plumage of tropical birds. In little cages, carried on the shoulders of these men, were bright green parrots with yellow heads and red-tipped wings. Columbus was fond of parrots. The screeching chatter of the birds mingled strangely with the cheers and laughter of the noisy crowd. It was circus day in Barcelona, the city by the sea.

The nuggets of gold in the noses and ears of the native Indians caught the eye of many a Spaniard. Columbus had his natives wear gold in their dress so that Spain would be impressed with the importance of his discovery. Servants walking in the procession carried baskets of tropical fruits and flowering plants. One basket was filled with chunks of quartz that glittered in the bright sunlight of the warm, spring day.

Columbus showed cunning in displaying his wares first, instead of leading the procession. He rode in the middle of the train with his two young sons. At his side was the King's chamberlain, dispatched by Ferdinand to escort him into the royal presence. A wild clamor broke loose whenever the crowd caught sight of Columbus in the slowly-moving line. The

fiery Spaniards waved their arms and shouted his name. They sang the ballads of Spanish heroes and clicked their heels in Spanish dances. Their joy knew no bounds.

A train of pack mules, guarded by soldiers, brought up the rear of the parade. The packs bulged with boxes containing the secret treasure of the Indies. What was this loot that Columbus hoarded to show to the King and Queen? The curious throng could only wonder. Was it gold?

ADMIRAL OF THE OCEAN SEA

AS COLUMBUS APPROACHED the throne, Ferdinand and Isabella rose to greet him as "Admiral of the Ocean Sea and Viceroy of the Indies." The audience gasped at the honor accorded a common seaman as Columbus knelt before the King and Queen and kissed their hands. A still greater honor awaited him. Columbus was invited to sit beside Their Majesties and the young prince, Don Juan.

Looking out over that well-dressed audience, perhaps the sailor's mind wandered back to that day in May, seven years earlier, when he had first met the beautiful, auburn-haired queen at Cordova. Isabella, though inclined to believe his story that the world was round, and that he could sail *west* to reach the east had felt obligated to consult the learned men of her kingdom. "All in one voice said that it was complete folly and vanity."

The weary years had dragged on, but Columbus had not given up. He had a real friend at court, Luis de Santangel, who said to Isabella:

I have wondered much that your Highness did not accept an empire such as this Columbus has offered. This business is of such a quality that, if

what your Highness thinks difficult or impossible should be proposed to another King and prove successful, the result would be an injury to your kingdom.

Since Spain was impoverished by war, the Queen had suggested waiting, but Luis de Santangel had shaken his head. He knew that Columbus was then on his way toward the border of France to seek aid from the French king.

Santangel, a rich man, offered to lend the money to Isabella for fitting out an expedition for Columbus. He assured her that it would be a small favor to lend her over a million *maravedis* from his own family. He wanted Isabella to send a messenger in haste to overtake Columbus and ask him to return for an audience with Her Majesty.

Well did Columbus remember the day that an officer had overtaken him on the road to France, with a royal summons to return to the Court of Spain. Now, having made his great voyage, he would not disappoint the woman who had believed in him. This was his great moment, and the Queen's.

Like an actor in a play, Columbus leaned forward to tell his story to a breathless audience. For five weeks his three ships had sailed through uncharted seas. They had met wind and rain, and hours of calm without a breeze. The fretful sailors had threatened to turn back toward home and loved ones, but hopes had been revived with signs of land. A sailor on the *Pinta* killed a land bird with a stone; a pelican rested on the deck of the *Santa Maria*; the crew of the *Nina* saw a berry bush floating in the sea. After dark one night, Columbus had seen a light moving up and down. Who was carrying the torch? Four hours later, at two o'clock in the morning, a sailor on the

Pinta sighted land. That was the twelfth day of October in the year 1492.

Columbus praised the kindness of the natives. Knowing Isabella's zeal for her faith, he assured her that the gentle natives could easily become good Christians. At a signal, the Indians walked out with jingling steps. The rulers of Spain fastened curious eyes upon them and their gold. Columbus displayed ears of corn, sweet potatoes, bananas, rhubarb, coconuts, palm oil, and medicinal herbs found in the Indies. In the animal exhibit were lizards, fish, and tropical birds. The parrots chattered glibly, to the delight of the listeners.

The royal audience waited anxiously to learn what loot was stored in the boxes. Columbus lifted a lid and picked up samples of gold ore, grains of gold dust, and little nuggets of the yellow metal for which his sailors had traded thongs of leather and cheap trinkets. He handed the specimens to the King and Queen, who examined them like delighted children with a new toy.

Brass trumpets and shrill woodwinds joined the Queen's chapel choir in a loud *Te Deum* (Hymn of Praise). The reception ended in a blaze of glory for Columbus, Their Majesties, and Spain.

The reception was the last real glory Columbus experienced. He thought he had discovered islands off the Asiatic coast. Instead, he had landed in the West Indies. Four times he set sail in search of the Asiatic mainland and oriental treasure. If Columbus had explored the mainland, he might have realized it was not Asia but a New World. It was not until Magellan, another explorer, and his crew sailed westward around the world in 1522 that the people of Europe knew that the New World was not Asia.

Columbus died before his countrymen fully appreciated the importance of his discovery. As Spaniards migrated to the West Indies, however, the bold adventurers among them explored the shores of Central America. New World lands might mean more gold! The hunt for treasure continued.

CORTES LEADS A GOLD-SEEKING EXPEDITION

A YOUNG BOY who was to find the treasure came to the Indies in the same year that Columbus returned from his last voyage. The bold adventurer who found the gold was the ruthless soldier and leader of men, Hernando Cortes.

Cortes was only nineteen when he left Spain on a sailing ship bound for the Indies with colonists and supplies. In Cuba he was given a land grant with a small gold mine on it and Indian slaves to till the soil and dig the ore. The easy-going life of a plantation owner, however, failed to satisfy his craving for excitement.

The governor of Cuba had previously sent two expeditions to the mainland to seek gold. Although the natives greeted the strangers with showers of lances and arrows, the Spaniards succeeded in trading green glass beads, which the Indians prized, for little idols, animals, and trinkets made of gold. Always, the natives pointed toward the rising sun. They wanted to know if the palefaced men had come from the east. From captured natives, the Spaniards learned that the tribes on the coast were ruled by a powerful emperor called Montezuma, who lived inland in a great city surrounded by water.

In battle with these natives along the

shores of Yucatan, a large number of Spaniards were killed, a few were captured, and most of those who returned had been wounded with poisoned arrows. This did not stop the Cuban governor, who was after the gold in the new land. Ten ships idled at anchor in the harbor of Santiago, within sight of the governor's palace, awaiting a commander to take the fleet on a third expedition.

The chosen man was Hernando Cortes. At once, he began to collect matchlocks, armor, cross-bows, powder, cannon, cassava bread, salted bacon, and other supplies. He spent his own money and all that he could borrow from his friends. Cortes hired men to walk through the streets of Santiago to advertise his voyage. Tooting trumpets and beating drums, they spread the news that Cortes would share gold, silver, and jewels with every man who joined the expedition. Also, he would give a large piece of land and Indian slaves to any man who wished to settle in the lands he conquered. Such lavish promises led many colonists to seek their fortunes with Cortes. They sold their plantations and slaves to buy food, clothing, ammunition, and horses.

With three hundred soldiers on board, the ten vessels sailed out of the harbor of Santiago. A few days later, the fleet dropped anchor in the harbor of Trinidad, another port on the southern coast of Cuba. Cortes made a speech in the public square of the town. He invited men to join him and promised them great wealth in gold, land, and slaves. One of the richest men in Cuba joined the party in Trinidad. He brought his own ship, food, Negro servants, and, most important of all, his spirited chestnut mare. At the time, horses were scarce and costly in the Indies. At Havana, where the fleet delayed, more

supplies were loaded and more men joined the expedition.

In a holiday mood, as if on a pleasure cruise, the fleet of eleven vessels put out to sea early in the year 1519. On board were poor men seeking a fortune, rich men hunting more gold, landowners wanting more land, noblemen searching for thrills, and young men seeking adventure. The chief pilot was Alaminos, navigator for Columbus on his fourth and last voyage to the Indies.

Alaminos had piloted the two former expeditions from Cuba to the mainland and was familiar with the coast line of Yucatan. There was plenty of battle equipment, including four small falcons and sixteen horses. This was real adventure and hopes were high. Little did those on board dream of the hardships that awaited them. They had yet to learn that the persuasive gentleman, Cortes, was a stern commander who would never turn back once he had set a goal. From this day on, his mission was to lead, and theirs, to follow. Cortes had come to the New World for adventure and gold.

GODS OR MEN?

AMONG THE MANY GODS worshipped by the Mexican Indians was one named Quetzalcoatl, a prophet with a white skin and a black beard. According to the legend, this god had once lived among the tribes. He taught them to be kind to each other and not to cut out the hearts of their brethren in sacrifice to their idols. The natives loved this kind man and obeyed him while he lived among them. When he went away, he promised to return someday from the east, bringing men like himself to conquer and rule the land. In his honor,

great temples were built. In time, however, the people forgot his teaching and returned to their old custom of human sacrifice.

When Montezuma heard that palefaced men with dark beards had landed on the coast, he trembled with fear. He was the rich and powerful emperor of the warlike Aztecs, who had conquered neighboring tribes and demanded from them a tribute of young men and women to be sacrificed to the war-god. Montezuma had disobeyed the laws of Quetzalcoatl. Now the god must be returning, as he had promised, from the east. Montezuma walked the floor and wrung his hands, wondering what move to make.

The Emperor sent his trusted lieutenant, Tendile, a clever, bright fellow, to head a group of messengers with gifts for the strangers. The messengers brought cornbread, pheasants, plums, and choice dishes to feed the strangers. War captives were included in the party in case the bearded men were cannibals and might wish to feast on human flesh. Among the presents were ceremonial hats and capes made of brilliant feathers, and a tiger skin coat of the Aztec priests which was like the one Quetzalcoatl used to wear. When Cortes failed to recognize these sacred emblems, the shrewd Tendile began to doubt. Later, when a bell rang calling men to prayer and Cortes knelt with his men before a wooden cross stuck into the sand, Tendile concluded this bearded stranger was not a god.

During the interview, the church service, and the meal, the artists in Tendile's party were busy painting what they saw on long sheets of white cotton cloth. Cortes suddenly realized that these painters must be impressed with his power, although he did not know they were sketching him so that Montezuma could determine whether

he was a god. He ordered his officers to mount their horses. The Indians had never seen horses. With the spirited chestnut mare in the lead, all sixteen horses galloped down the beach at breakneck speed. The Aztecs stood in awe, thinking the horses, and not the men, were the gods. Next, Cortes had a cannon fired. The sketches of the round ball tearing through the air greatly amused the Spaniards.

In exchange for the Indian gifts, Cortes gave cheap glass beads, a string of imitation pearls, and a decorated armchair for Montezuma to sit in when Cortes called at the palace of the mighty Aztec emperor. He sent to Montezuma a bright red cap trimmed with a medal engraving of St. George slaying the dragon. One of the messengers asked for a gilded helmet worn by one of the Spanish soldiers. Cortes handed it over and requested that it be returned filled with gold dust.

Montezuma was so frightened when these messengers returned that he ordered more war captives to be sacrificed to the gods before he dared to look at the paintings. The horses and cannon ball puzzled him, but the helmet alarmed him. In shape, the headpiece resembled the helmets worn by his forefathers in battle. How could he keep his bearded stranger out of his kingdom? For hours at a time, Montezuma locked himself in his own room in the palace and refused to eat the meals which servants brought to him. He called in fortunetellers to advise him what to do. Finally, he decided to send such costly gifts that the strangers would be satisfied and sail away as others had done who came to Yucatan. If the palefaced leader was not Quetzalcoatl, he would accept the bribes and leave, Montezuma concluded.

THE GOLDEN BRIBE

CORTES HAD THE good fortune to find excellent interpreters at the start. At his first stop after leaving Cuba, he rescued a Spaniard named Aguilar, who had been shipwrecked on the coast of Yucatan eight years before. Aguilar had been a slave of Indian masters for all of that time. The Indians of Tabasco gave Cortes an orphan girl called Malinche. Bright and attractive, Malinche had learned to speak several languages. Without her the conquest of Mexico by Cortes might have failed. Since she could speak both Tabascoan and Aztec, and Aguilar could speak Tabascoan and Spanish, Cortes was able to carry on a conversation with Tendile. He sent word directly to Montezuma that he desired to visit him in his palace. The Emperor did not want him and sent a golden bribe.

In the short space of seven days Tendile returned to the coast with a hundred Aztec porters, their backs bent over with the weight they carried. Tendile uncovered the treasure, each article having been wrapped in white cotton cloth. First, he presented Cortes with a solid gold plate, round like the sun and as large as a wagon wheel, with the Aztec calendar engraved upon it. From another porter's back, he lifted a heavy silver plate, still larger, representing the moon. The third gift was the helmet filled with grains of gold. The Spaniards were speechless with wonder. A treasure, given without asking, was spread before them.

It took a long time to display all the gifts strapped to the backs of the hundred porters. Among the presents were thirty golden ducks, solid gold figures of lions, tigers, dogs, monkeys, deer, and some wild animals which the Spaniards had never seen. A golden bow, with a string attached,

gave Cortes an idea of the Aztec weapons. The carriers unloaded rolls and rolls of white cotton cloth with designs woven in bright feathers, fans made of the gay plumage of tropical birds, sandals of deerskin embroidered in gold thread, feather ornaments in gold and silver cases, necklaces of pearls, emeralds, and rubies, and ten gold chains with locket. With this loot Montezuma hoped to bribe Cortes to leave the country.

The Spaniards could scarcely believe their eyes. They knew now, beyond any doubt, that Montezuma ruled over an empire of fabulous wealth. An Aztec stepped forward to deliver a message from his Emperor. Indeed, this message was the real purpose of the gifts. In polite terms, he stated that Montezuma would be pleased to give Cortes and his men all the food they needed as long as they remained on the coast, but that the Emperor would not see him. In equally polite language, the messenger hinted that the strangers might regret the blunder of trying to enter Mexico uninvited. Cortes thanked the messenger for the gifts and the speech, but insisted that his king, Charles V, had sent him across a wide ocean to pay the respects of His Majesty to the great ruler of Mexico. (Charles V had never heard of Montezuma.) These speeches were translated by Aguilar and Malinche.

When this message was brought back to Montezuma, he grew more worried. In his fright, he ordered young children to be sacrificed. He begged the war-god for power to outwit this stubborn paleface with a beard. Day and night the question haunted him, "Was he Quetzalcoatl?" The Emperor made his last attempt to prove that the stranger was or was not the god. As a final bribe, he sent four green stones,

sacred to the Mexicans, because Quetzalcoatl had taught them how to polish these jewels. To the Spaniards, who wanted gold, the stones were worthless.

While the stones were being delivered to Cortes, the church bell rang, calling the Spaniards to prayer. One of the Aztecs inquired why Cortes humbled himself to kneel before a wooden cross. The answer was a sermon preached by a friar and translated by Aguilar and Malinche. The friar explained that the white strangers had come from the east to stop human sacrifice, kidnapping, the eating of human flesh, and other crimes.

When the third mission returned, Montezuma was even more confused. The bearded man had ignored the precious green stones. He was not Quetzalcoatl. The strangers said they had come from the east to stop human sacrifice. Cortes was Quetzalcoatl. At last, Montezuma stopped brooding over his fate and called a meeting of his war council to dispatch runners to all the conquered tribes with orders to fight the strangers.

In a few days the Indians who had been bringing food disappeared as if by magic. Cortes and his men went up the coast to a better location to start a settlement which they called Vera Cruz. The friends of the Cuban governor wanted to return home with the golden treasure, which they would divide among themselves and the governor who had sent out the expedition. The majority, however, voted to stay and perhaps gain more gold.

It was agreed to send most of Montezuma's bribe to Spain as the fifth which the King claimed of all the gold found in the New World. The best vessel in the fleet was outfitted for the voyage. The charge of the golden loot was given to Alaminos, the best

navigator who had ever come to the Indies. In 1513 he had piloted Ponce de Leon to Florida in his vain search for the "Fountain of Youth." On that expedition, Ponce de Leon crossed the Gulf Stream four times. Consequently, Alaminos learned much about this warm river sweeping out of the Gulf of Mexico into the Atlantic Ocean.

Near the end of July Alaminos left for Spain. He cruised up the coast of Florida to gain speed and time in the swift current of the Gulf Stream, and to avoid the danger of capture by pirates lurking in the sea lanes to the Indies. He delivered the golden bribe to His Majesty, who melted the treasure to pay for his wars in Europe. Thus ended the golden sun and the silver moon, pride of the Aztecs whose works of art were wasted in a futile effort to bribe Cortes.

ON TO MEXICO

TO PROHIBIT THE FRIENDS of the Cuban governor from deserting, Cortes suggested that the ten remaining ships be run onto the sands. The majority agreed. After the vessels were beached, the sailors and pilots joined the expedition. The older men, unable to march, stayed in the new Spanish town of Vera Cruz. Now, there was no retreat!

Going inland from the coast, the invaders cut their way through dense jungle. Parrots screeched in the tree tops and butterflies swarmed in the air. A steady climb brought them out of the steaming lowland into the cooler air of the plateau region, where hills were patched with little plots of corn. At first, the tribes along the way fought the invaders, either through fear of Montezuma or loyalty to him. In these encounters, the Spaniards lost both

men and horses, and many were wounded. It was a bloody road to the inland province on a high plateau. After these battles, however, Cortes gained allies for his conquest by promising to free them from paying tribute to the mighty Emperor of the Aztecs. The chiefs complained that Montezuma's taxgatherers stole their gold, robbed their fields, and kidnapped their daughters. Montezuma grew more fearful when some of his vassals joined the invaders. He sent more gifts hoping Cortes would turn back before he reached the high range of mountains encircling his kingdom.

As if standing on guard, two lofty peaks towered above the mountain barrier to the Aztec kingdom, and one was afire. This was the first active volcano the Spaniards had ever seen and it aroused their curiosity. The natives told them why the mountain smoked. A long time ago, a handsome prince loved a beautiful princess of an

enemy tribe. Forbidden to marry, they eloped and perished. According to the Mexican legend, their spirits were united in the two volcanoes. In his wrath, the prince, Popocatepetl belched hot rock and ashes to hide the sun and destroy the crops. The Aztecs named the highest volcano after him. Popocatepetl became the word in their language for "smoking mountain." At his side, the princess sleeps on the summit of the other volcano. The snow which never melts moulds her figure in a long white gown. The "sleeping woman" is Ixtaccihuatl. With a rumbling sound like distant thunder, the earth trembled beneath the feet of the invading army crossing the divide near the spouting volcano. The native warriors were very frightened at this ill omen. Popocatepetl was muttering angry words at them, they said.

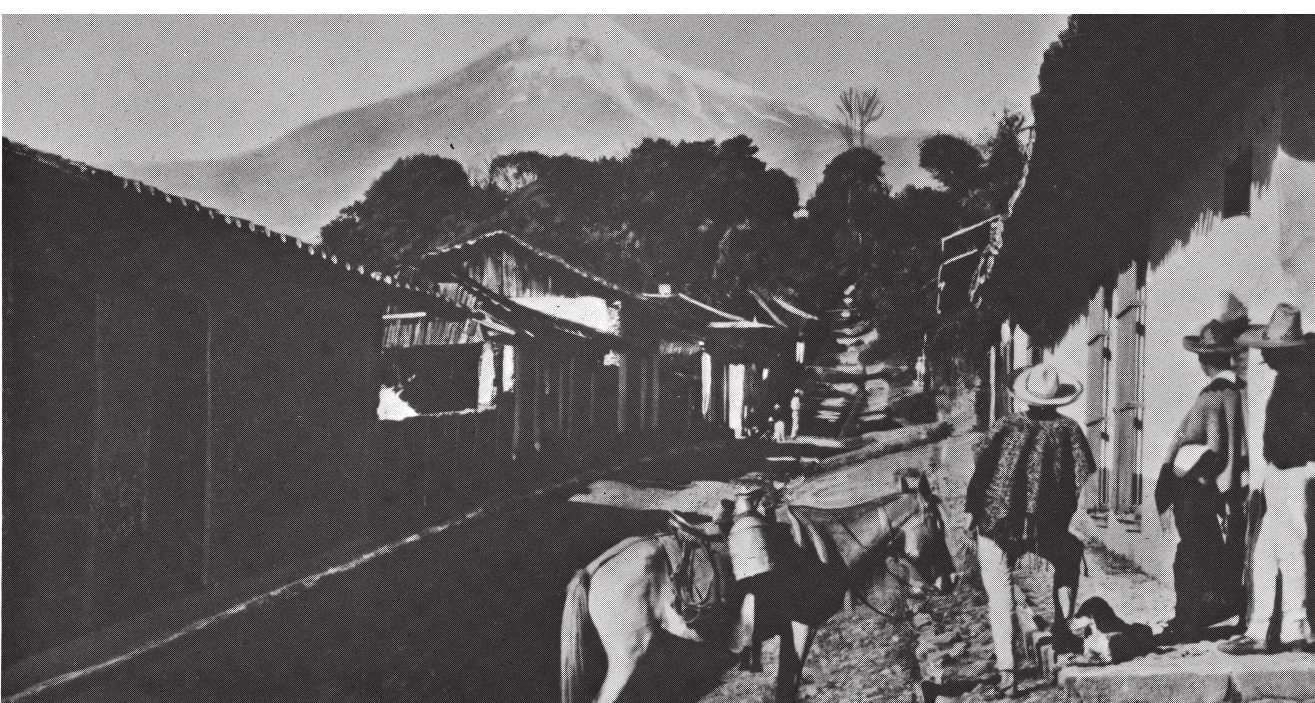
As the army descended from the cold

IXTACCIHUATL (Sleeping Woman)

According to legend, the lovely princess slumbers on top of the mountain by the side of Popocatepetl. The "Sleeping Woman," wrapped in her shroud of eternal snow, is Ixtaccihuatl.

Pan American Union





Pan American Union

POPOCATEPETL (Smoking Mountain)

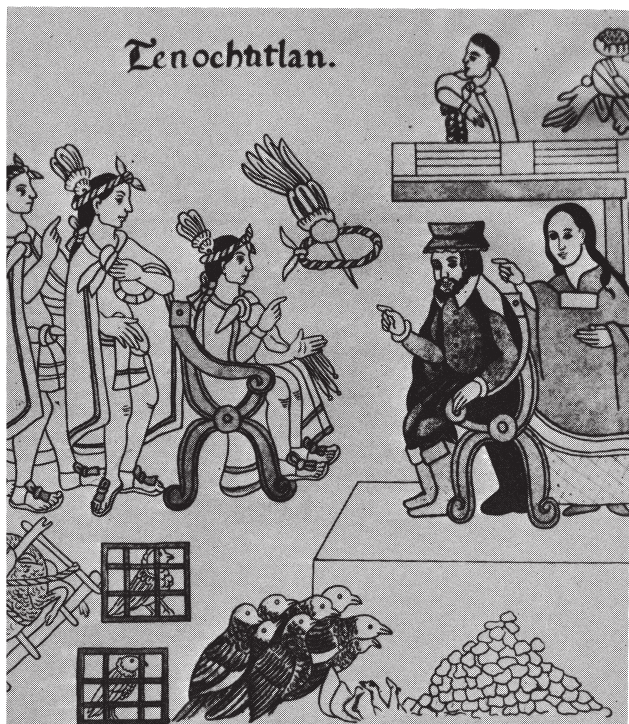
Popocatepetl is no longer a "smoking mountain," as in the time of Cortes. Years ago, as the crater cooled, snowflakes healed the ugly scar. Today, the glistening white cone of this volcano can be seen for many miles in the clear dry air of the high plateau of Mexico.

heights, the climate grew warmer. Pine forests gave way to groves of oak and sycamore. After days on twisting trails, a sudden turn in the road gave the Spaniards their first view of the beautiful basin of Mexico, a high plateau hemmed in by mountains. In the bright sunlight of the autumn day, the lakes were as blue as the sky. On an island in the center rose the temples and palaces of the Aztec capital. This was their goal.

Fearing a rebellion among his conquered tribes, Montezuma decided to receive Cortes as the visiting ambassador of a foreign monarch. He sent his nephew to invite Cortes and his army into the city. The Spaniards entered the capital over a long dike wide enough for eight horsemen to ride abreast. The foreigners "did not amount to four hundred and fifty, but

there were about a thousand natives for the baggage and artillery," and others joined along the way. The lakes swarmed with sight-seers in canoes. From roofs and terraces, the curious crowds eyed the strangers and their horses. They viewed with some alarm the entrance of their old tribal enemies. As Cortes passed through the main gate of the city, Montezuma came forth to meet him. Seated in his throne chair, the Emperor was carried on the shoulders of favorite nobles. A canopy of royal green feathers shielded him from the sunlight. On his head he wore an ornament with green feathers which floated down his back. The soles of his shoes were made of gold and the uppers were studded with jewels. As he stepped from the royal sedan, attendants unrolled yards of cotton cloth for him to walk upon.

CORTES VISITS MONTEZUMA



Pan American Union

In this old sketch, Cortes and Montezuma are carrying on a conversation with Aguilar translating Spanish into Tabascoan, and Malinche — her Christian name was Donna Marina — translating Tabascoan into Aztec.

Bernal Diaz, who went with Cortes into Mexico, wrote an account of this meeting in his journal:

The next day (November 9, 1519) was fixed on by Cortes for his visit to Montezuma. (He took four officers and five soldiers for his bodyguard.) He went to his palace, which as soon as Montezuma was informed of, he came as far as the middle of the hall to meet us, attended by his relations, no other persons being allowed to enter where he was, except on most important business. With great ceremony on each side, the king took Cortes by the hand and leading him to the elevated part of the room, placed him upon his right, and with affability, desired the rest of us to be seated.

The artist included samples of the food Montezuma furnished for his pale-faced guests from overseas.

Parrots in cages were provided for entertainment during their meal.

Cortes got off his horse and walked forward with his interpreters to greet the Emperor of Mexico. Montezuma received him cordially, as thousands of Aztecs looked on and wondered. Were these white men with beards the gods whom the prophet foretold would come from the east to conquer and rule them? A brother of the Emperor escorted the Spaniards to their quarters, while Montezuma returned by a shorter route to arrive ahead of his guests. In his father's palace, large enough to accommodate the four hundred Spaniards, Montezuma welcomed Cortes and his soldiers.

"You are in your house," he said. "Eat, rest, and enjoy yourself. I shall return presently."

He did, with gifts in gold for every man.

THE PRICE OF GOLD AND GLORY

AFTER FOUR DAYS Cortes asked Montezuma for permission to go on a sight-seeing tour of the city. The Emperor assured him safety to go wherever he pleased. With a bodyguard of his own officers, Cortes visited the huge market place. Here, as many as forty thousand people came on special days to buy and to sell their many products, ranging from honey cakes to gold dust. From the market place, the Spaniards went to the great temple of the war-god, the place which they wanted most to see. A steep climb up the 114 steps of the temple rewarded them with a bird's-eye view of the city with its aqueduct, bridges, lakes, market, and two volcanoes in the distance. The sight of prisoners stretched and tied to slabs of stone, waiting to be sacrificed, made the Spaniards shudder.

Montezuma stepped forth from an inner

chamber, where he had been worshipping and watching in fear that the strangers would offer any kind of an insult to his idols. Through Malinche, Cortes asked to go inside. Montezuma entered with him. Three bleeding hearts, freshly cut from victims, dripped on the stone altar before the statue of the war-god. The floors were black with dried blood and the stench was terrible. The Spaniards did not ask to stay long.

With uneasy minds, they returned to their quarters where they learned from their Indian allies that the war-god had advised Montezuma to welcome the strangers into the city. There they were, on an island, surrounded by thousands of natives who could make them prisoners at any time. Like other prisoners, they might be sacrificed on the foul-smelling altars of that hideous idol, the Aztec god of war. It was not a comforting thought. How could they escape? Again, as at Vera Cruz, gold made the fatal decision.

It was a custom of the Spaniards to look for gold wherever they went. In searching the palace, two soldiers discovered traces of an old doorway in one of the apartments which they occupied. Secretly, they tore down the sealed doorway and found the treasure which Montezuma had inherited from his father. Sheets of solid gold, pounded thin, were stacked in piles upon the floor. Mounds of gold and jeweled trinkets were strewn around the room. The news spread rapidly among the soldiers. Plans were made to escape and take with them the riches of the Aztec kings.

They agreed upon a bold scheme to kidnap Montezuma and hold him in their quarters as a hostage to guarantee their

safety. Cortes and several of his officers called upon the Emperor and forced him to accompany them under threat of death. Although Montezuma was treated with every courtesy and held court for his chiefs as usual, Spaniards were always present. The Aztecs grew suspicious that their ruler was held against his wishes and made plans to rescue him. The nephews of Montezuma gathered an army of warriors pledged to fight until not one Spaniard was left alive. When battles broke out around the palace, Cortes pleaded with Montezuma to tell the Aztecs that the Spaniards would leave the city if the warriors would return to their homes.

A hush fell over the packed square when Montezuma spoke, but it was soon broken by the angry mob, shouting, "Coward! Woman! Traitor!" The air grew

THE CALENDAR STONE

The Calendar Stone, completed in 1479, is thirteen feet in diameter and weighs twenty tons. The carving represents the history of the world with the face of the sun god in the center. This stone shows the extent of Aztec civilization in art and science. It is now exhibited in the National Museum in Mexico City.

Pan American Union



thick with arrows and stones hurled at the speaker. The great Emperor was knocked senseless with a rock and was struck with several arrows. Although the Spaniards waited upon him with every care, he refused to eat. Montezuma wept bitter tears, declaring he wanted to die because he had betrayed his people and his gods. As Montezuma breathed his last, he asked his conqueror to take good care of his most precious jewels, his daughters. Cortes, deeply touched by this request, promised he would guard and provide for them. He kept his word.

After the death of Montezuma, Cortes decided to sneak out of the capital with his army and the golden treasure of the Aztec rulers. The backs of wounded horses were loaded with sheets of gold, and the backs of eighty Indian porters were weighted

down with loot. Each soldier helped himself to all the gold and jewels he could stuff into his pockets and strap onto his shoulders. Cautiously, in a drizzling rain, the army crept across the bridges which connected the island city to the mainland.

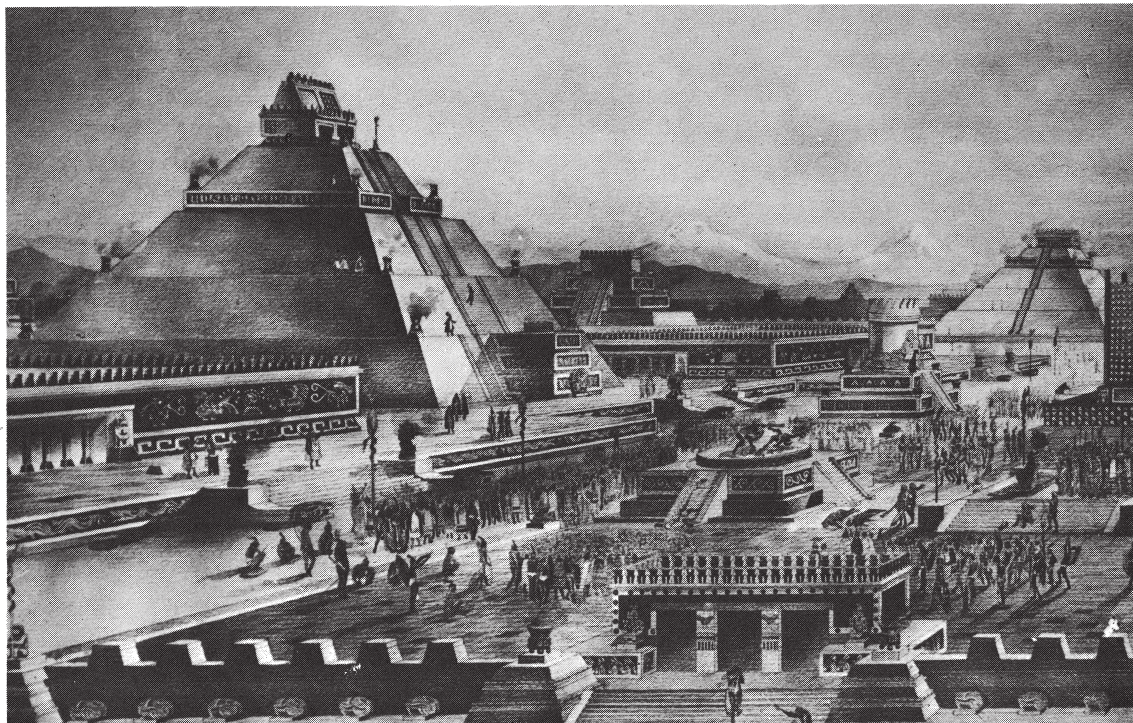
The Aztecs were waiting in the darkness. Suddenly, the lakes became alive with canoes. Thousands of fierce warriors pounced upon the Spaniards and their Indian allies. There was not much room to fight on the bridges and horses and men tumbled off into the water. Most of the stolen gold was lost. During the night, the long-haired priests were busy sacrificing Spanish captives to the greedy god of war. Their weird chants mingled with the blast of trumpets, and the boom of drums drowned the cries of their victims.

Although Montezuma's warriors avenged

CENTRAL SQUARE OF MONTEZUMA'S CAPITAL IN 1519

The temple of the War God towers above all the buildings. To the left of this tall monument is the palace of Axayacatl, Montezuma's father, where Cortes and his soldiers were housed. At the right of the great temple is the palace of Montezuma. The square is crowded with temples to lesser gods, the round sacrificial stone in the center, and the skull rack to the far right.

*Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.
Great Temple of Tenochtitlan by Ignacio Marquina*



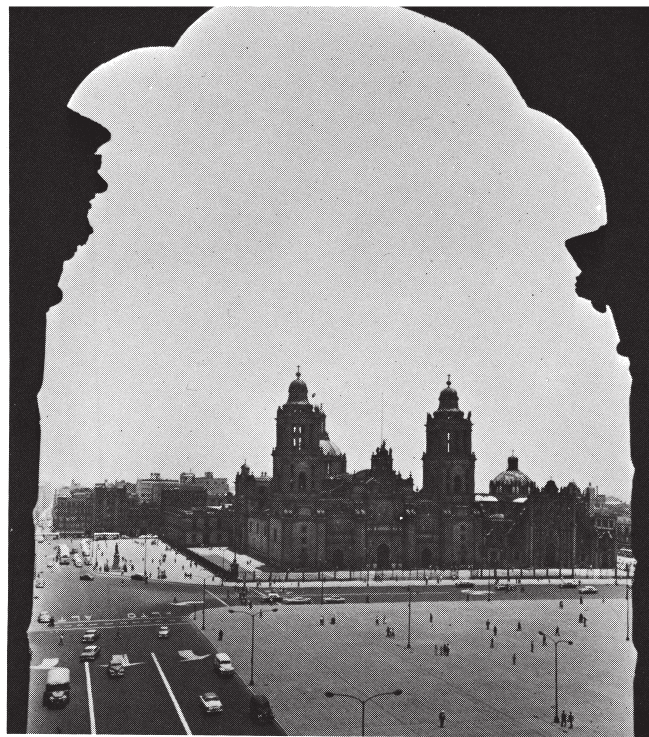
his death on this terrible “night of sorrows,” their victory was short-lived. Cortes and part of his army escaped. The Spanish forces grew as more and more pale-faced men from the land of the rising sun came to conquer and rule the native tribes. The ancient prophecy was fulfilled.

After the conquest, Cortes settled in Cuernavaca, the center of a fertile and beautiful valley where he ruled over a vast estate. For leading the conquest, the King gave him a title, “Marquis of the Valley.” His wealth and fame brought him neither peace of mind nor peace of conscience. Jealous Spaniards plotted against him and Indian tribes rebelled. Another man was sent to govern the country which Cortes had discovered and conquered for Spain without costing the Crown and government a single penny. Cortes returned to Spain seeking justice at the Court and remained to die, like Columbus, a “forgotten man.”

The winner was Spain. This bold and ruthless conquest gave that nation the first colonies in the New World and a foothold in America. The results were far-reaching. More adventurers came, hunting Montezumas and golden treasures. They stayed to build a Spanish empire in the Western Hemisphere.

THREE SPANIARDS AND A MOOR

EIGHT YEARS AFTER Cortes sailed from Havana, Narvaez landed at Tampa Bay in Florida on another gold-hunting expedition. With him were about four hundred men and forty horses. Travel was slow in the swampy wilderness. The land was strewn with fallen trees blown down by hurricanes. As they stumbled over logs and waded through streams, both the men and their horses were targets for hostile



Pan-American Union

PLAZA de la CONSTITUCION — MEXICO

The great central square in the heart of Mexico City is named “Plaza of the Constitution,” but commonly called Zocalo. It marks the heart of the ancient city destroyed by Cortes. The Cathedral of Mexico, with altars covered in gold leaf, stands on the site of the ancient temple to the god of war. Today, in Montezuma’s capital, busy streets cover the old canals; an open paved park hides the spots of temples; a new civilization builds a new way of life.

Indians. The explorers found gold maize, needed for food, but no signs of a golden treasure. Discouraged, the conquistadores begged to return to New Spain (Mexico), although their fleet had sailed away, leaving them stranded in a foreign land.

Out of their stirrups, spurs, and crossbows, the Spaniards made axes, saws, and nails. The one carpenter in the group supervised the building of boats for their escape. Every third day, a horse was killed for food, and the skin on the legs was dried to make water bottles. In about three

weeks, five boats were completed. Their ropes and rigging were made from horses' tails and the sails were fashioned from the shirts of the men. This strange and rickety fleet, carrying the 242 survivors, sailed from Apalachee Bay late in September, 1528.

The frail vessels followed the coast line of the Gulf of Mexico westward, toward the mouth of the Rio Grande. They kept a safe distance from the shore until hunger and thirst drove the men into some inlet for fresh water and shellfish. Once, when suffering terribly from thirst, the men discovered a river of fresh water running through the salty sea. They dipped into the muddy current and drank their fill, not knowing this water came from the Mississippi River that drained the central part of a continent.

In a storm, the boat of Narvaez drifted away into the Gulf and was never seen again. The vessel commanded by Cabeza de Vaca was washed ashore with such violence that men lying unconscious on the bottom were jolted to their senses. Here, they were found by Indians who brought them fish, roots, and water. Other shipwrecked Spaniards were enslaved by Indians wherever they were found along the coast. A wealthy gentleman and his slave were both forced to dig for roots under water until the flesh was torn from their fingers. They had to carry loads of firewood until their bare shoulders were streaked with blood. Summer and winter, they went without clothing.

The captives managed to meet several times a year when the tribes gathered. Finally, after eight years of slavery, only a few of the forty captives were left when the tribes met to feast. The survivors were the son of a physician; the

rich Spaniard and his slave, a black Moor from Africa; and Cabeza de Vaca, the only living officer of the ill-fated expedition. While the Indians were busy feasting, dancing, and singing, the captives made their escape.

The fleeing men had the good fortune to come upon the Indians of the plains of Texas. These Indians were more friendly than those along the Gulf coast. These tribes wandered from place to place as they tracked the "hunchback cows." De Vaca was the first white man to write about the wild bison which roamed the plains of North America. The natives were kind to the strangers. They sent guides to lead them through a pass in the mountains near the present site of El Paso, where they crossed the Rio Grande. The four that were left of the four hundred conquistadores finally reached the town of Culiacan on the western coast of Mexico, to tell a story stranger than fiction. The three Spaniards were the first white men, and the Moor, the first black man, to cross the continent of North America from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The journey of Cabeza de Vaca and his companions changed the maps of the day, which had pictured Mexico as an island with a waterway north of it. Now the world knew that Mexico was a peninsula attached to a large land mass on the north. Having lived with a number of the tribes, these men learned their languages and their ways. They returned with first-hand information of the natives and their customs, of trees and plants, of birds and beasts, of rivers and mountains, of deserts and forests, of climate and rainfall.

Although de Vaca's report to the King of Spain told of suffering hardships and not of finding gold, more adventurers came on

treasure-hunting expeditions. Among these were Hernando de Soto and Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, who started from opposite borders of the continent. De Soto landed in Florida and traveled north and west until he crossed the Mississippi River into Arkansas. At one time, unknowingly, the two expeditions were not far apart. After de Soto's march had begun, Coronado started from western Mexico and traveled north and east as far as the Arkansas River in Kansas. Not long after this near meeting, de Soto died from fever. He was buried at night in the Mississippi River near the present town of Natchez. His watery grave was intended to hide his body from the Indians, who believed he was an immortal god from the land of the rising sun.

Coronado's expedition was prompted by tales from the ex-captive, black Moor. At Culiacan, the Moor told the story of the golden cities of Cibola, where the people lived in three-and four-story houses whose doorways were studded with jewels. He related what Indians had told him of these cities to the north. Because the Moor could talk with the natives wherever he went, the viceroy of Mexico sent him with Friar Marcos and Indian guides to locate Cibola.

When nearing one of the Seven Cities, the Moor and some of his Indian guides raced ahead to be the first to arrive in the Zuni village. When he told the people that white men were coming from the east, they did not believe him because he was black. Offended by his arrogant manner, the Zunis killed the Moor. His frightened guides hurried back to tell the friar, warning him to go no farther. Marcos did go on to get a distant view of the village from a hilltop. He returned to report what he had seen and heard to Coronado, the

new governor of New Galicia, in the western part of Mexico. Together, they rode to the capital to tell the exciting news to the viceroy, Mendoza, who was Coronado's intimate friend. Then and there, plans were made to conquer the rich and powerful "Seven Cities of Cibola."

GENTLEMEN ON HORSEBACK

THE SONS OF Spanish noblemen continued to pour into Mexico seeking adventure and gold. Since they usually carried letters of introduction from the King, the viceroy was obliged to entertain them with barbecue dinners at his ranches and with gay parties at his palace in Mexico City. The favorite sport of these noblemen was to ride about the city on sleek horses from the viceroy's farms. Since these "gentlemen on horseback" wanted adventure and not work, Mendoza turned a willing ear to Coronado's story of the riches of Cibola. A gold-hunting expedition might prove entertaining and attract a number of these "gentlemen."

The equipment for this expedition was costly and today would be calculated in hundreds of thousands of dollars. The captain-general was Coronado. The starting point was Compostela, an inland town near the western coast of the Mexican peninsula. Mendoza traveled on horseback from Mexico City to this distant village to review the troops for this expedition. A blast of trumpets and a roll of drums announced the parade in his honor. Coronado was dressed in gold-plated armor and a shining helmet, tipped with red and white plumes. His horse wore a long, fringed blanket which almost touched the ground. Next in line were his officers, riding prize mounts

from Mendoza's stock farms. Their armor glistened in the sunlight, their lances were held erect, and their swords dangled at their sides. Hundreds of Indians armed with bows and arrows walked in the great procession. It was Sunday, the twenty-second day of February in 1540.

The next morning, about three hundred mounted men, holding silk banners to the breeze, started north from Compostela on the great adventure. It took nearly a thousand Indian and Negro servants to carry the baggage, to lead the pack horses, and to drive the herds of cattle and sheep that were provided to give the men fresh meat on the journey. The friars, except Marcos who remained as a guide, had left weeks before on foot, refusing to ride in luxury. With Indian interpreters, they aimed to make Christians of the inhabitants of the Seven Cities.

In the rough mountain country to the north, the expeditions made slow progress. Along the way, the "gentlemen" gave away their fine clothes to make room on the pack horses for food and water. Many a proud nobleman carried his own belongings

INDIAN VILLAGE OF TAOS, NEW MEXICO

Coronado found Indians living in large apartment houses much like the homes of some Indians in New Mexico today. The old Indian village of Taos was a center of revolt against the Spaniards in the 16th century.

New Mexico Department of Development



on his back. Grass was thin and scattered in the desert region. The plump saddle horses looked like bony nags after five long months of travel.

There was great rejoicing among the Spaniards when they sighted the first of the Seven Cities, a Zuni pueblo in the western part of the present state of New Mexico. The natives saw the strangers approaching. Coronado found the warriors drawn up in battle line to defend their homes. When the chief refused Coronado's terms for peace, the Spaniards attacked and captured the town. Great was their disappointment to find the palaces of their dreams to be mud-brick houses, two and three stories high. Colored rocks and turquoise stones, pressed into the bricks while wet, made the "jewelled doorways." However, they found corn, beans, fowl, and dried meat, which the hungry men needed more than gold and jewels.

In some villages, the frightened natives rushed out to bring gifts of buffalo hides, tanned deerskins, dried melons, wild turkeys, corn meal, turquoise stones, and everything they had with which to buy peace. In other towns, the warriors fought, killing and wounding the Spanish soldiers and stealing their horses. The Spaniards were forced to depend upon the natives for food and clothing. The tramp through cacti and sagebrush had torn their fine clothes into shreds and worn out their shoes. The natives were not prepared to feed and clothe this large, invading army. The demands of the Spaniards took the shirts off their backs and the corn from their bins. In some villages, the natives fled at night into the hills. From their hiding places, the Indians raided the Spanish camps and captured the horses and mules, which they prized. In this way, the Indians

acquired a herd of these fleet-footed animals, unknown to them until the white men came.

The hard-pressed tribes schemed to get rid of their unwelcome guests. Among these tribes was a man from the plains whom they had captured in war and made a slave. A chief promised to free him if he would lead the palefaced strangers into his own country. Here they would die on the prairie without food and water. The slave made up a fairy tale about a wonderland, Quivira, where little gold bells, tied to branches of the trees, tinkled in the breeze to lull the chief to sleep on summer afternoons.

Coronado left the sick and weak men in his base camp near the site of Albuquerque while he took his best soldiers on the journey to Quivira. The slave led them into Kansas, probably as far as the Arkansas River where, he had told them, the fish were as big as horses. On the prairie the Spaniards found wandering tribes of Indians who lived in tents made of buffalo skins and hunted wild cattle for food. The palefaced men did not perish on the plains. They saved themselves by living as the Indians lived. They hunted buffalo and dried the meat in the sun. With wild cherries, grapes, and herbs, they made stews of the dried meat in native fashion. Finally, when the slave, whom they called the "Turk," confessed that he had led the Spaniards out to the plains to die, they killed him. Coronado and his men returned from the "wild-goose chase" hale and hearty.

After searching two years for gold and finding none, Coronado was convinced that the metal did not exist in that country. He was homesick and wanted to return to his wife and children. Rather than endure the



Kansas State Historical Society

CORONADO HEIGHTS

According to legend, Coronado and some of his men stood on this knoll and gazed across the level plain. They were seeking a mythical land of gold, Quivira. If they could return to the same spot today, they would see golden grain in a patchwork design laid down on the prairie. The place would be Kansas, the wheat-growing state.

walk home through desert land, some of his soldiers remained with the Indians. The friars stayed to preach Christianity and established the first missions in this country.

Shamefaced and weary, Coronado entered Mexico City with a small band of soldiers, the remnant of his army. He reported his journey to his best friend, Mendoza, who received him coldly. For weeks afterwards, the "gentlemen on horseback" straggled into the capital on foot. Dirty, unshaven, thin and worn, the survivors were a sorry sight. They went away in silk and velvet and came back in skins and rags. Coronado returned to his rancho, grateful to join the list of forgotten men and live out his days in the peace and quiet of the countryside.

History rates him a great explorer who contributed to the world's knowledge of geography in his day. Coronado had sent



New Mexico State Tourist Bureau

FRIJOLES CANYON – NEW MEXICO

Natives were living in this canyon when Coronado came in 1540. Cliff dwellers had chiseled caves in the rocky walls with tools made of stone and bone. Surprised to find beans growing along the banks of a little stream flowing through the gorge, the Spaniards named the place Frijoles Canyon, and the creek, “El Rito de los Frijoles” – the Little River of the Beans.

small groups of his men in all directions to explore the country. A band of soldiers under Cardenas were the first white men to view that great wonder of the world, the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River.

Coronado’s thorough job of exploration, following the journeys of de Vaca and de Soto, convinced the Spaniards that the country north of the Rio Grande was not a land of gold. They turned their attention to colonizing South America, where riches were flowing from the fabulous mines of Peru. They built a Spanish empire on the southern continent.

THE CONQUEST OF PERU

IN 1510, as a stowaway in a barrel, Balboa sneaked aboard a vessel leaving a port in the West Indies for the unexplored mainland. The mainland turned out to be the Isthmus of Panama. There, a story told by the young son of an Indian chief started Balboa on an expedition which wrote his name on the pages of history. The story was of a rich country where the people drank from goblets of shining gold.

With a few Spaniards and native allies, Balboa started on his search, cutting his way through a tropical jungle. On a Sunday morning in late September in the year 1513, Balboa climbed alone to the top of a high hill, eager to claim the honor of being the first white man to look upon the Pacific Ocean. When he gave his soldiers permission to follow him, they scaled the peak, shouting, “The sea! The sea!” Balboa named the large body of water, the South Sea, because it lay directly south of the spot where he stood.

One of the sixty-seven men with Balboa on this eventful day was Francisco Pizarro, who could neither read nor write, but who became the conqueror of Peru.

In this conquest, Pizarro followed the pattern set by Cortes in Mexico, although his methods were more cruel than those of Cortes. The conquest of Peru was a bloody, violent affair for both the natives and the Spaniards, who quarreled among themselves. After Pizarro had arrived in Peru, he invited the Inca Emperor, Atahualpa, to a banquet where he was seized and held for ransom.

The Inca ruler, like Montezuma, tried to bribe his captors, trading gold and jewels for life and freedom. The ransom, amounting to millions of dollars, was a room full

of gold and silver plates torn from temples and a bench of gold on which they said the sun was wont to sit down. The ransom was given to the Spaniards but it did not save Atahualpa, who was killed because the Spaniards were afraid to let him go. Almagro, the partner of Pizarro, was not pleased with his share of lands, slaves, and loot. In the civil war that followed, both men were murdered. They died as violently as they had lived.

Spanish goldseekers continued to pour into the new countries. New Spain was colonized. Under the *encomienda* system which the Spaniards established, the natives became the slaves of their Spanish masters. The society developed by the *conquistadores* still affects the pattern of living in Latin American countries. How did it grow?

ENCOMIENDA

SOLDIERS WHO CONQUERED new territory for the King of Spain, as well as favorites at his Court, received land grants in the New World. Since the soil was worthless without servants to till it, these grants included the people living on the land. Thus the natives became the serfs of the new landlords, whose titles to the property were recorded in Madrid. There was much rivalry among aristocrats near the King over who would get land with the most servants to dig the gold and plow the fields.

The men who had borne the hardship of conquering and subjugating the country, the *conquistadores*, felt they had prior right to these awards of lands and serfs, called "*encomiendas*." Today, thousands of acres of land in Latin America still belong

to the descendants of these first colonists, by right of original titles from the Court of the Indies in the sixteenth century. Some of the natives were already serfs, having been conquered by the warlike Incas before the white men came. Although the Indians no longer owned the land, they still lived on it. Under the *encomienda* system, they were not driven from their homelands.

Since there was not enough land to go around, an *encomienda* also came to mean smaller favors, such as the right to demand the labor of a certain number of Indians for any kind of servile work. In a short time,

ATAHUALPA, LAST INCA EMPEROR

The warlike Incas conquered their neighboring tribes in all directions. Atahualpa inherited an empire as large as the United States east of the Mississippi River, extending in places from the forests of the Amazon River on the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west.

Pan American Union



some regions were almost depopulated. Greedy masters had worked the natives to death, and it was necessary to import Negro slaves from Africa. The abuses of the encomienda system were loudly protested by both government and church officials. They pleaded that the King should protect the natives from cruel landlords. The report of Gonzalo Gomez de Cervantes, a governor in Mexico in 1598, deals largely with the abuses of the encomienda system. His description of conditions in the mines explains why so many natives perished in the frantic search for gold. Indians were hunted and captured for forced labor in the mines. Governor Cervantes wrote:

After eight days laborer gets four reales (coins), leaving his clothes torn in a manner to be of no service to him. Besides, when he draws out metal

from the mines, he is covered with mud. When the miserable Indian goes to sleep, he has only these torn clothes to cover him, wet, and full of clay.

By 1598 laws had been passed that limited the laborer's time underground to eight days. Before these laws were made, the laborer often remained in the depths of the mines until he died. The new laws required the mine owners to pay wages to the laborers, although the wages were too small to provide even a bare existence. The abuses continued. Natives would be apportioned for gardening, cleaning, and housework by the judge, and then, be driven to break stones for granaries erected "by the sweat and labor of the miserable Indians." It was mining, however, that caused the most deaths. Cervantes said:

MACHU PICCHU – INCA RUINS – CUZCO, PERU

Inca architects used heavy stones of irregular size, cut and fitted so closely together that a thin knife blade could not be wedged between them. Without cement, walls are still standing where the stones have not been removed for later building.

Pan American Union



All this can be remedied by letting each owner of each mine have only a certain number apportioned to him. And, when their work is done, send them to the judge to be paid and given liberty. Anything that can be carried by pack mules, it is right that it should not be done by the poor Indians. Even if it is more work for the judge who apportions, it is better to preserve the Indian than to have the abuse.

All governors, however, were not as considerate of the natives as was de Cervantes. A chart written in a book published about 1575 lists the number of Spaniards and slaves then working in some mining sections of Mexico.

Place	Spaniards	Negroes	Indians
Zultepec	200	500	200
Temascaltepec	60	150	300 (paying tribute)
Taxco	100	700	900
Pachuca	90		2700 (paying tribute)
Zacatecas	300	500	

Some idea of the amount of gold shipped to Spain from the colonies in America can be gained from a fraction of the report submitted by de Cervantes, who carefully recorded the amounts for each viceroy of Mexico from 1522 to 1594.

Viceroy	Date	Pesos
Don Antonio de Mendoza	1535 - 1548	1,794,224
Don Luis de Velasco	1549 - 1564	4,295,073
Don Martin Enriquez	1570 - 1580	8,769,093
Marques de Villa Manrique	1586 - 1589	3,850,463
Don Luis de Velasco, II	1590 - 1594	4,966,166

Since all Indians paid tribute, a law was passed demanding that each Indian bring in a hen as part of this tribute to get chicken raising started in the colonies. In his report de Cervantes complains that mulattoes who were free went into the country and bought chickens from the natives, carried them to the towns, and sold them at too big a profit. He declared that it is only right that all business be carried on by the descendants of the conquistadores, and asked the King to pass laws to that effect. To this day, in much of Latin America, business and governments are carried on by the descendants of the first families who settled in the Spanish colonies. However, as time goes on, more and more citizens in these countries are sharing in the responsibility of government. More and more of the big land grants given to the early settlers are being divided among the descendants of the native peoples who were living on this land when the Spaniards came.

Thus did a Spanish civilization invade the Americas. It was a duty of conquistadores to spread Christianity. Church towers marked the centers of villages where natives gathered to pray, to play, and to sell their wares. In time, Spain lost her empire in the Western Hemisphere, but her culture remains and flourishes in the republics of Latin America from the Rio Grande to the Strait of Magellan.

MAPS:

WA6r
Atlas of American History by Edgar B. Wesley

WA7r
Our United States by Edgar B. Wesley