

ground nearly four hundred years ago. In the suburbs, near the little town of Tacuba, I alighted, to meditate, standing upon another spot made sacred by the memories of the past.

About me were the overhanging branches of a giant Ahuehuete, the same tree under which Cortez and his few remaining followers rallied after reaching the mainland. Efforts have been made by the Spaniards to burn this old monument, who curse it because it reminds them of their defeat, while among the Indians it is cherished as marking the spot where their fathers routed and almost annihilated the hated Spanish invaders. The guard who is now constantly near it told me that the "Gachupin" (Spaniard) who tried to burn it was promptly put to death. Bernal Diaz, a participant in the dreadful scenes of the "Noche Triste" says: "When retreat had finally been decided upon, our captain made the following disposition of the forces. The vanguard, Gonzalo de Sandoval, Francisco de Azevedo, Francisco de Lugo, Diego de Ordaz, Andres de Tepla with eight other captains, whose names I do not mention, and one hundred young and active soldiers.

"To carry and manage the bridge which had been constructed to cross the openings made in the causeway by the Mexicans, 150 Spaniards and 400 Tlascalans.

"To bring up the artillery, 50 Spaniards and 250 Tlascalans.

"To guard the prisoners, 30 Spaniards and 300 Tlascalans. Our great captain (Cortez), Alonso de Avila, Cristobal de Oild, Bernardo Vasquez de Tapia, and other captains whose names I have forgotten, were to give aid where it was most needed. The rear guard was composed of Juan Velasquez de Leon, Pedro de Alvarado, with many other horsemen and 100 soldiers.

"These arrangements completed our captain ordered all of the gold and silver, and jewels, which we had collected from the Indians, brought into the salon, and instructed the king's officials, who were Alonso de Avila and Gonzalo Mexia, to take part of the treasure, one-fifth, which belonged to his highness, and in order that they might carry it he gave them seven horses that were lame and wounded, and one mare, and many Tlascalan Indians, it was said more than eighty, and they all had so much as they could carry, and there were still mountains of gold on the floor.

"Then Cortez called his secretary, whose name was Pedro Hernandez, and other officers of the king, and said: I call you to witness that I have done all in my power to save this gold. We have here seven hundred thousand dollars which we cannot take with us; those who wish may take it—that it's better than leaving it for these dogs. (The Aztecs from whom they had stolen it.) And when they heard this many of the soldiers of Narvaez, and even some of ours, loaded themselves with gold. I affirm that I thought not of gold, but rather of saving my own life, for we were in great danger. I did, however, take from a package which was there, four emeralds, stones greatly prized by the Indians, which I hastily concealed in my breast under my armor, and none too soon, for at that moment Cortez ordered his attendant to take charge of the emeralds, and if he had known that I had concealed these four in my breast, he would have demanded them, and they were of great service to me afterward in curing my wounds and buying food."

The night of June 30, 1520, was dark and stormy, and as the hour of midnight approached a drizzling rain commenced. The preparations for retreat had been completed, and the beleaguered adventurers waited the order to march. About midnight the column

moved silently out from their quarters on the street which led to the Tacuba causeway.

The city was wrapped in darkness and silence. They thanked the Saints for the darkness and rain, and prayed the Virgin that it might continue if only for an hour. The vanguard had almost reached the first opening in the causeway when—Holy Mother! What sound is that which chills the marrow in their very bones, and almost stops their hearts from beating? The piercing cry of alarm shrieked out by a woman. In a moment the great war drum on the temple of Tlatelolco sends forth the alarm, which is answered by blasts from thousands of Aztec trumpets and re-echoed by the war cry of twice ten thousand warriors.

The first breach is reached and the temporary bridge hastily placed in position, the vanguard and baggage, with the artillery pass over in safety; but now thousands of canoes shoot out from the darkness and are swiftly paddled to the causeway; as they approach the hated enemy, a shower of stones, darts, and arrows fall upon the Spanish coats of mail, and then springing to the banks with spear and "maquatl," Aztec and Spaniard close in the deadly struggle. The shouts and curses of men, the screams of women, the triumphant war cry of the assailants, Tlatelolco! Tlatelolco! O-o-o-lullones! the rattle of musketry and clashing of Spanish steel against the flint of Aztec maquatl, heard far out across the lake, awoke the sleeping villagers on its shores, who said, "Surely the battle of the gods is being fought."

Some appealed to the saints and Holy Virgin for succor; some cursed their fate and him who brought them to this dire extremity; others, fighting sullenly, fell, appealing to the gods to avenge them of their enemies; some sank under their weight of gold, and yielded up the ghost without a struggle.

So, fighting, cursing and struggling on, the first breach was crossed and orders given to raise the bridge and bear it forward. Gallantly Magarino strove to carry out his orders; gallantly Alvarado and his little band charged and charged again, driving back the Aztecs to facilitate his work, but the structure had become imbedded in the soft banks and refused to yield, and when finally released, it was only to be destroyed by the enemy.

The situation was now desperate. The vanguard had reached the second aperture, a gaping gulf of murky water before, a foe whose onslaughts had never for a moment ceased, on every side a mass of panic-stricken fugitives sweeping onward from behind. A moment's hesitation, and men and horses plunge into the dark abyss; a human bridge is formed and over the shrieking, struggling mass their comrades move on toward the mainland. The third and last breach in the causeway is reached. To their dismay it is wider and deeper than any yet crossed, and is defended by a stronger force of warriors. A messenger is sent back to communicate the fact to Cortez, but before he can come up Gonzalo de Sandoval urges his horse into the lake, and followed by his fellow horsemen fights his way to the opposite bank. The fugitives rush after and another human bridge is formed. As the main land is reached the first signs of day appear in the east. Cortez, hurrying to the front, is horrified as he crosses this bridge of human forms. He hastily calls his scattered force together and notes that many valiant men are missing, among them the peerless Alvarado, and gallant Juan Velazquez de Leon. Ordering his followers to await his coming, he turns, and followed by Cristobal de Oild, Alonso de Avila,

Gonzalo de Sandoval, Francisco de Morla and Gonzalo Dominguez, men worthy to have fought in a better cause, fights his way back along the causeway, beyond the first breach, where he meets Alvarado, on foot, with spear in hand, gallantly fighting his way toward the mainland followed by a small remnant of his command.

The chestnut mare which had so often carried him to victory, and which he loved tenderly as a sweet heart, had been killed, and as she leaped forward in her death struggle, her hoof with its iron shoe had struck and killed the daughter of the Aztec king.

Where was Juan Velazquez de Leon, valiant soldier, gallant courtier, trusted comrade in arms? How he fell was never known. "Senor," said Alvarado, addressing Cortez, "it is needless to go farther. All who are behind are dead."

As that band of resolute men stood around this grand old tree the historian says, Cortez, looking at the shattered remnant of his little army, calling in vain the names of his comrades who would never again answer, sat down upon a stone and wept.

As I sit there on the same spot, after a lapse of three hundred and seventy-eight years, the scenes of the past come vividly before me and in fancy I see the struggle of the "Noche Triste" re-enacted.

Slowly the Spaniards fight their way to a temple on an adjacent hill where they fortify and seek relief from their wounds in rest and sleep.

Bernal Diaz says: "There was not a man among us who was not wounded;" and Cortez in his letters says: "There was not a horse among twenty-four that were left us that could run, nor a horseman that could raise his arm, nor a soldier that could move."

That fatal night had cost the lives of seven hundred and fifty Spaniards and four thousand Tlascalan allies, a blow which would have crushed a less resolute spirit. To tell how Cortez avenged it I must leave for another letter.

If the sons have in them the mettle of their sires, when American and Spaniard meet there will be a fight.

Now another matter. I am too far from home to know what the condition of public sentiment may be, but here war is in the air. From the information at my disposal it looks as though to avert it will be impossible.

What the attitude of the Latter-day Saints will be I cannot tell; but this much I want to say: If we are to furnish our quota of men and the brethren desire my services I am ready to go to the front. War may be averted, I pray that it may. If it comes I pray that we may not be asked to participate. I do not wish to abandon my post, but more than all I do not want to see this land of the free imperiled by a power whose history in America for 400 years has been one continual round of murder and plunder, idolatry and prostitution.

Spain to regain her lost American possessions would gladly unite with other European powers to destroy the great republic which is teaching the lesson of human liberty and endangering the institutions of the Old World. The republic must be maintained if it takes us all to do it.

I am in earnest. If Mormon boys go to the front I want to be with them.

Albert Hoff, the alleged murderer of Mrs. Mary L. Clute, who has been on trial at San Francisco for nearly two weeks, was found guilty Saturday of murder in the first degree. The jury was out but twenty-five minutes. Mrs. Clute was killed Dec. 15, 1897.