

CORTES AND HIS FIRST OFFICIAL REMISSION OF TREASURE TO CHARLES V

Although there have been abundant discussions of Cortés' Mexican treasure, the list of his first official remission has never before been published.¹ The first shipment of American valuables was a story of blood, travail, and romance. Hernando Cortés, after his dormant qualities of leadership had been aroused by a governor who entrusted him with the command of the expedition to search for the lost Grijalva, gave the first signs of the new capacity when he weighed anchor, hoisted sail, and departed from Cuba.

At Cozumel the poverty of the Indians foretold little that was in the offing, but that self-same fact projected the intrepid and resourceful Cortés into a more northerly coast which, if reports of Grijalva's men where to be credited, offered possibilities. On the Tabascan Coast, where the Indians had orders from their priests to expel the white men, the Spaniards were ill-received. But here the Tabascans were taught the summary lesson of Toledo steel. Defeated, they began that process of alliance and fraternization with the Spaniards which was to roll a motley rebel army, under the command of the amazing Fair God, into the very Aztec capital. Their homage and

¹ The editors wish to state that this document was discovered in the Archivo General de Indias, Contratación 4675 (39-2-2/9, 10 *antigua*), by Professor Earl J. Hamilton of Duke University.

obeisance the Tabascans vouchsafed in "presents of gold wrought into various forms, some resembling the human face, others of animals, birds, and beasts, such as lizards, dogs, and ducks. Also three diadems, and two pieces in form like the sole of a sandal with some articles of little value", ² and some mantles. The twenty female slaves, among whom came doña Marina, were promptly distributed among Cortés' officers, but in the official list of treasure their names did not appear! In his first letter to the Catholic Kings, Cortés deemed the country poor in gold. Propelled northward, dropping anchor at San Juan de Ulúa, now Vera Cruz, on April 22, 1519, Cortés disembarked to say mass and exchange glass beads for the gold and food of the enemy. The gifts of the Tabascans must have been the customary token of respect for a worthy adversary, for the Indian governor, Tendile, presented Cortés, with "several admirable pieces of workmanship of gold", various works of feathers, ten loads of garments of fine cotton and a considerable quantity of provisions. While Tendile was tremulously consulting Montezuma regarding Cortés' proposed interview, the Indians continued to present the Spaniards with necessities. Tendile, returning with other ambassadors to inform Cortés that he need not subject himself to the tortuous mountain course to the capital, sought to emphasize his point by bringing amazing gifts to the Spaniards.³ Instead he aroused their cupidity. A gift estimated at seventy thousand dollars in which one piece, the disc representing the sun, amounted to thirty thousand dollars, could but precipitate anxious debate. The gold dust heaped in the helmet of a Spaniard which attracted the natives, was mute but eloquent testimony that there must be more.

This gift probably offered Cortés the supreme dilemma

² BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO, *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de Nueva España* (Vedia edition, Madrid, 1862), XXVI, 23-28.

³ BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO, *op. cit.*, 34.

of his career. The conservatives among his followers muttered that authority commensurate with so vast and bold an undertaking required more men and consultation with the governor of Cuba. Displaying his chagrin, Tendile was again off to Tenochtitlan, returning shortly with "ten loads of the finest mantles of cotton and feathers. Montezuma also sent four jewels called Calchihuis, resembling emeralds, most highly valued by the mexicans, and various articles of gold, to the amount of three thousand crowns".⁴ A while after the departure of the royal ambassadors, the flow of Cortés' supplies ominously began to dry up. Cortés' command of less than one thousand intrepid men was now divided. The Velásquez faction not only sought to return to Cuba, but to put all the gold in the keeping of a treasurer of the King instead of allowing the men to barter it for food, a thing that might undermine the interests of the far-off king. Tactfully acquiescing, Cortés secured a hand freer from authority by upbraiding the strict royalists: "Look you gentlemen! Our companions suffer under want; I therefore thought it prudent to connive at what was doing; all they obtained amounts to a mere trifle, with the blessing of God we have great and splendid prospects before us; it is now proclaimed as you have desired; see if the soldiers will in the future be able to procure food".⁵

This petty criticism and opposition occasioned one of the most resolute decisions in the whole career of Cortés. Vexed by these subversive murmurings, he guilefully sent his chief opponents away, created a council or *Cabildo*, a means of dealing directly with the king and of thwarting the authority of governor Velásquez. The *Cabildo*, as Cortés had planned, now invested him with the requisite authority and dubbed him governor. His financial position was also improved, for henceforth he was

⁴ BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO, *op. cit.*, 35-37.

⁵ BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO, *True History of the Conquest of Mexico*, (New York, 1927), I, 87.

to receive one-fifth after the deduction of the royal fifth. The irreconcilables he imprisoned and then appeased with a generous allotment of gold.

Although gold had already begun to figure prominently in the expedition, indications—naively bestowed—of what was to follow began to pour in. A group of Cempoallans, burdened by Montezuma's government and desirous of throwing it off, implored a visit from the Europeans. They apologized for the cheap quality of their gifts since the Aztec had seized all their gold. Cortés, induced to accept the invitation, stopped at the Cempoallan Village of Quiavistlan, perched behind a natural fortification of rock. Visiting the fat chief, Cortés was bewildered to observe some elaborately adorned natives, before whom the Cempoallans bowed down with great respect. These, he soon learned, were Montezuma's much feared tax gatherers.

The skien of intrigue began to unravel. The harrassed cacique, unfolding the story of Montezuma's wrath with his people for entertaining the Spaniards without royal permission and his demand for twenty Cempoallans to appease the Aztec Gods, was advised by Cortés to clap these representatives of the mighty emperor in jail. The terrified Totonacs, taking his advice, seized eight Mexican noblemen. Cortés' sword of intrigue was two edged. Releasing two of the noblemen in the still of the night, he talked to them in a friendly vein, and sent them to Montezuma as ambassadors of good will. The remaining six were soon released also. With equal alacrity he offered to defend the Cempoallans against the emperor. The released tax-gatherers did not disappoint Cortés. In place of a mighty army of coercion there came gifts valued at a thousand sequins as thanks to Cortés for the courtesy and civility shown his representatives!

It was at this juncture that Cortés, in letters to his majesty, Charles V, began his famous series of five letters

in which he sought to win recognition and acquiescence in his bold policy by elaborating his conquests.

No Spanish conqueror was ever more officially isolated. With his first letter to Charles V, therefore, he sent all booty acquired by his army. So persistent and influential a leader was he that he even induced his officers and men to yield up their shares to correct his levity.⁶ To bolster up his request he recalled his defense of those guilty of spending gold for provisions. Calling for the nays he heard no voices but constrained secretly to offer gold to those who began murmuring later.

The conqueror of the Aztecs selected Captains Alonso Hernández de Portocarrero and Francisco de Montejo as custodians of the first shipment of Mexican treasure to Spain. With that treasure these men sailed for Spain July 16, 1519. Cortés knew with how little favor an agent of his was likely to be received in Cuba, and accordingly advised them to sail by way of the Bahamas without calling in Cuba. With Portocarrero ill at sea, however, Montejo bribed the pilot to put in for provisions as a sick Spaniard at sea was supposed to be "regaled" with rich foods.⁷ There was another reason for this unusual disobedience, for near Marien, where the ship stopped for several days, Montejo had property which he probably wished to look after. Here they renewed their supplies, and showed some of the treasure to a servant. Montejo, solicitous about his affairs, wrote a former overseer of his, Juan de Reja, who, during the absence of Montejo had enrolled in the service of Diego Velásquez. Through this channel the governor learned what was taking place.⁸ This was the time for the much vexed Velásquez to deliver

⁶ FRANCISCO SAVERIO CLAVIGERO, *History of Mexico*, (London, 1787), II, 28.

⁷ EARL J. HAMILTON, "Wages and Subsistence on Spanish Treasure Ships", *Journal of Political Economy*, XXXVII, 430-50.

⁸ F. A. McNUTT, *Letters of Cortés*, (New York, 1908), p. 179-180.

a poetic stroke. He learned that immense riches were being sent to Spain without his sanction, but just as he was too late to stop Cortés when he rushed down to the water's edge in his night shirt, again he was not in time to stop the ship. Naturally jealous and enraged, the governor this time dispatched a vessel to overtake, capture, and return Cortés' envoys. The pursuers gave a crestfallen report. Thus the first shipment of gold and silver from New to Old Spain, which presaged so much for the future, slipped by the first of a series of officials anxious to divert it.

Portocarrero and Montejo also carried Cortés' first letter, dated July 10, to his sovereign—a letter which has never been found, but there is room to conjecture that it did not vary essentially from that of the officials at Vera Cruz, since one was written in support of the other. This letter was sent to the Queen doña Juana and the emperor Charles V., her son, by the Judiciary and Municipal Authorities of Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz, July 10, 1519. Besides serving as a *douceur* this letter sought special favors for the town and the council which had vested Cortés with authority after his disregard of Velásquez.

"Having done as stated, and, being all assembled in our council chamber, we agreed to write to Your Majesties, and to send you, in addition to the one-fifth part which belongs to your rents, according to Your Royal prescriptions, all the gold, silver, and valuables which we have obtained in this country, on account of its being the first, and above which we keep nothing for ourselves. We place this at the disposition of Your Royal Highnesses, as a proof of our very good will for your service, as we have heretofore done with our persons and property, and having agreed upon this amongst ourselves, we selected as our procurators Alonso Hernández Portocarrero, and Francisco de Montejo, whom we send to Your Majesties with all this, that they may kiss Your Royal hands on our behalf, and that, in our names, and in that of this town, and its Council, they may pray Your Royal Highness to favour us of this town, as will appear at greater length from the instructions which we have given them." (F. A. McNUTT, *Letters of Cortés*, I, 159-160.)

A certified copy of the letter of the magistrates which

was examined by Cortés has been located in Vienna,⁹ and according to Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who also signed Cortés' letter, was the more detailed of the two. Although not as valuable to collectors, it is perhaps more valuable to historians than Cortés' own communication. The belief persists that the Council of the Indies suppressed the letter at the instance of Pánfilo de Narváez or that it was taken from Alonso de Avila by Juan de Florey. In such a case, it was perhaps prevented from reaching the emperor.

Portocarrero and Montejo landed in October, 1519, and the official list of treasure remitted by Cortés, and herewith published, was dated about a month later, November 5, 1519.¹⁰ It was inadvertently, it seems, first enemy rather than friend who met these custodians of the treasure, says Francisco López de Gómara, who made a somewhat elaborate list of articles remitted by Cortés through Portocarrero, although he apparently never saw the document published herewith.¹¹ His knowledge on the point appears to have come to him through oral channels—probably from Martín Cortés, the son of the conqueror, to whom the work was dedicated. Benito Martín, friend and agent of the disgruntled governor, being already apprised of the coming of Cortés' agents, lodged a formal complaint with the Casa de Contratación. Cortés was here excoriated as rebel against legally constituted authority. On that ground Martín asked for the arrest

⁹ *Colección de Documentos inéditos para la Historia de España*, I, 102-103.

¹⁰ FRANCISCO LÓPEZ DE GÓMARA, *Historia General de Indias* (Vedia edition, Madrid, 1852), XXII, 322-323.

¹¹ To give only one instance of disparity between Gómara and the accompanying document: GÓMARA, *op. cit.*, 322, mentions "one hundred and eighty-three small emeralds" where as the document only says "172 gems which seem to be green in color," which might have been opals from the region of Querétaro where they abound. "Lo que enbio de la Nueva España el Capitán Hernando Cortés," *Archivo General de Indias, Contratación* 4675 (39-2-2/9, 10 *antigua*). Of the two copies of the document found in this *legajo* the one herewith reproduced is the more accurate and complete.

of the envoys, the sequestration of the documents they carried, and the confiscation of the treasure entrusted to them. Rodríguez de Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos, who officially fathered the beginning of American affairs, was now omnipotent as president of the Council of the Indies. As an old friend of Governor Velásquez and family, and trembling perhaps for the solidity of his authority before such temerity as that of Cortés, Fonseca became a warm ally of the plaintiff. Moreover, Fonseca's family was about to be joined to that of Velásquez by marriage. The rough treatment from the Bishop of Burgos and the president of the Council of the Indies might have been responsible for the long delay and patience-rending tribulations in attaining a royal audience. Finally gained, this audience was granted to the custodians of his first remission of treasure in Tordesillas, where Charles V was visiting doña Juana, his mother, on his way to Santiago de Compostela, although Díaz, who was misinformed, records that Charles was in Flanders at that time.

The emperor, there is ample evidence to attest, had already seen the presents of gold and ornaments from México. Such a thesis supports the view of another authority that while the presents were held up for a short time by the Bishop of Sevilla, Martín Cortés and a friendly official of the Royal Council, one Núñez, forwarded to the emperor duplicates of the dispatches and a memorial setting forth the extraordinary conduct of Fonseca and his audacious sequestration of the treasure assigned to the emperor. Impressed by the generosity of the gifts and the directness of the letters, the king issued orders that the gifts should be forwarded to him.¹² Too busy in Tordesillas to come to a decision, he soon found when he reached la Coruña that the agents had followed

¹² El Rey al Consejo de Indias, Molina del Rey, 5 de diciembre de 1519.

him. In the Archivo de Simancas there exists a four-page deposition given under oath before the venerable Dr. Carbajal, member of the Royal Council of the Indies, by Francisco Fernández Portocarrero, dated la Coruña, April 30, 1520.¹³ So promising an adventurer, although the necessity of safeguarding the interests of Spain by a more regular and dependent form of government was perhaps perceived as early as 1520, had to be condoned for the time being at least.

This first remission of treasure was only a token of that to follow. Having staked all his findings on preparing the king's mind, Cortés emphasized the future and increased his already inordinate resolution. Turning wrathfully upon those who had thwarted him, he seized the seven traitors who had plotted to reveal to Velásquez the voyage of Portocarrero and Montejo. Hanging the leader, Escudero, he only cut the feet off the pilot, Gonzalo de Umbría, almost frightened the life from a cowering priest, Juan Díaz (who pleaded benefit of clergy and at the same time doubted its efficacy), and administered 200 lashes to the others.

At Tlascala the natives explained their poverty on the ground of frequent wars with the Aztec, but Cortés, gracious and tactful, as well as ruthless, replied that he "valued it more from them, as a testimony of friendship, than if others had given him a house full of gold."¹⁴ While the Spaniards rested and advanced their alliance, Montezuma became inert with the conviction that at last Quetzalcoatl, the Fair God, whom it was ruin to oppose, had come to sit "once again upon his ancient throne!" The acknowledgement, happily for the Spaniards, took the form of gifts of gold to the amount of ten thousand crowns, ten bales of fine feather mantles, and the long awaited invitation to visit México City.

¹³ This document was printed in Spanish by W. H. PRESSCOTT, *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, Appendix VII.

¹⁴ DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO, *op. cit.*, I, 139, II, 332-335.

It was in Cholula, where Cortés responded to a plot against him by treacherously slaying some 6,000 officers and principal men, that seizure began to play an important part in his collections. The Spaniards, in seizing the gems and precious metals, especially from the temples that adorned every hill, overlooked apparel, feathers, and salt which the Tlascalans siezed with equal rapacity. At Iscalapan gifts of gold accompanied complaints against the tyranny of Montezuma, who countered the dangerous tendency with a sixty thousand dollar gift just as the Spaniards reached Tlalmanalco and looked down into the valley of México. Cortés, having informed the emperor that he would enter the capital as an enemy, now had an offer of a bribe to leave the country fifty loads of gold (fifty pounds each) for Cortés, five loads for each captain and one for each soldier, and a promise to give the king of Spain an annual tribute. What a temptation one million dollars (estimated at five million in purchasing power now) must have been! Advancing, the conqueror was met at Amaquemecan by the young Cacama, Lord of Tescoco and first Lord of the whole empire, bringing a load of gold and a renewal of the invitation to visit the capital. Finally housed in the center of the city, and noting the servile obeisance of the opulent and the pitiable subjects, and buildings equal to those in Seville, Cortés, to whom Montezuma had already given two necklaces of mother of pearl holding some gold crayfish ornaments, found himself waited upon by the emperor who brought "many curious pieces of work of gold, silver, feathers, and more than five thousand very fine dresses of cotton".¹⁵ In addition he presented an ornament, highly esteemed by the Indians, comprising a shell fish, set in gold from which dangled eight additional gold ornaments. Montezuma turned an impervious ear to Cortés' adjurations on Christianity, but when he ceased,

¹⁵ BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO, *op. cit.*, II, 340-341, 356-357.

Father Olmedo advised him to renew them at some oportune time in the future. The gracious host, the Aztec emperor, inquired, concerning the rank of the Spaniards and then sent them some bales of feathers, dresses for each officer, and two bales of dresses of fine cotton for the men. When Cortés, by permission, waited on Montezuma in the latter's palace the royal reception was expressed in terms of rich gifts, comprising "certain pieces of gold and ten loads of fine stuffs which he divided between Cortés and his captains; and to every soldier he gave two collars of gold, each worth ten crowns, and two loads of mantles. The gold amounted in value to upwards of a thousand crowns".¹⁶ Every day some kind of gift poured in. While seeking further security by a virtual imprisonment of Montezuma in the palace of Axayaca, Cortés sent Gonzalo de Umbría and two soldiers to survey the mines of Zacatula.¹⁷ The agent returned with three thousand crowns and good news of the mines. Some nobles who accompanied the returning soldiers brought presents of gold and made a promise of allegiance to Spain. Among the leaders of similar missions, Pizarro found gold in Tustepeque. The imagination of the European soldiers was inflamed by this unprecedented reality. No longer content with these presents they began to bethink themselves of their source. Satisfied on the score of the mines, Cortés made an overture to the emperor to call for a general contribution of gold from all his territories as tribute for Charles V. Montezuma acquiesced and gold flowed in from all quarters. The emperor personally offered the treasure of his father, Azayaca, the last he had. Then there ensued a strange scene, naively recorded by Bernal Díaz del Castillo:

"After some more conversation, Montezuma commanded his officers to deliver to us the treasure, which was in the concealed apart-

¹⁶ BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO, *op cit.*, 170.

¹⁷ This was apparently the first of the famous reconnaissances of Cortés from México.

ment. This was accordingly done, and we were for the space of three days constantly employed in taking it to pieces, from the various manners in which it was worked up; in this we were also assisted by the royal goldsmiths from Escapuzalco. When thus separated, the articles of gold were formed in three heaps, weighing upwards of six hundred thousand crowns, exclusive of the various other valuebles, the gold in plates and bars, and the metal in its rough state from the mines. The goldsmiths melted down the metal which was in the heaps, and ran it into bars the breadth of three fingers. When this was done, another present was received from Montezuma, so rich that it was worthy of admiration, exclusive of the jewels and pearls, the beautiful embroideries of pearls and feathers, and the penaches, and plumage, a recital whereof would be endless. The bars of gold were stamped with the imperial arms by the approbation of us all, and as to the rich ornaments, it was judged the best that they should not be taken to pieces".¹⁸

After exacting a concession of several thousand acres of land for a private estate, Cortés gave to his sequestrations a tang of legality by having Montezuma and the chief Aztec lords take an oath of allegiance to his Catholic Majesty, Charles V.

With the reception of the treasure of Axayaca, these Spaniards still faced a fundamental problem. Cortés, however, extricated himself from the skien of intrigue which his boldness had built up around him and from which only overwhelming success could disentangle him. The funds now on hand were sufficient to cover all the debts contracted in raising an army, arming his men, and equipping his expedition, and to reward officers and men. Even before these allowances, however, came the royal fifth. After such delimitations there still remained enough to finance a nebulous future.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, I, 205-206.

¹⁹ There is also a story that Montezuma gave Cortés five perfect emeralds. Cortés, however, kept them for himself. They became a symbol of ill luck in the life of the conqueror. In México, Cortés' Cuban wife, who came over after the fall of the city, died within six months under conditions which do not redound to the glory of the hero. Moving freely in court circles in Spain, lionized wherever he went, Cortés married the daughter of one of the king's favorites and became Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca, a wedding gift then, but later a means to retire him gracefully from a too active interest in the affairs of New Spain. To that same bride Cortés gave the

Now that the real reckoning with the soldiers had come—there was a house full of riches worth six and a half million dollars—they clamored for a division of spoils on the basis of the arrangement of the *Cabildo* of Vera Cruz. The partition accepted by Cortés was one to arouse the common soldier. Slicing out the royal fifth, reserving his own fifth, he deducted for the expenses incurred in Cuba, the cost of the navy, provided for the Spanish agents, remembered the soldiers at Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz, deducted the losses for horses killed in battle, made generous provision for the priests and captains, and gave to each cavalryman, musketeer, and crossbowman a double share. The balance—a relative and insulting pittance—could go to the ordinary soldiers. In the midst of the grumbling, where many refused to condescend to accept such a niggardly sum, there was no arbiter of justice but the man who meted out injustice.

As suave with his men as with Montezuma, Cortés adroitly answered the loud criticisms that now reached his ears. One Cárdenas, a pilot with a wife and children, became so outspoken and articulate, that Cortés made one of his mellifluous conciliatory addresses, and passed about some small presents and secretly bribed Cárdenas with three hundred crowns for his wife and children. Juan Velásquez de León, captain of the guard of Montezuma and a favorite of that monarch, got into a controversy with the king's treasurer, Mexía, who accused him of taking some of the king's gold and a duel ensued in which both were wounded. Imprisoned for the sake of appearances Mexía, through the dignity of his office of treasurer, was released. It required the interposition of Montezuma to secure release of Velásquez de León, whom Cortés—even

emeralds intended for Charles V. The Marquesa, imprudently wearing them at a court ball, so aroused the jealousy and ire of the queen that Cortés took them from her and ever after kept them on his person. These were the jewels lost in a shipwreck in the Mediterranean Sea during Cortés' service in an expedition against the Moors on his second trip to Spain.

before Montezuma—accused of being mad after gold. Finally listening to the bequests of Montezuma, Cortés vanquished the culprit “from México”. Making a visit to Cholula, he returned within a few days richer than when he went away.²⁰

A very dangerous point in the expedition came when news arrived that Governor Diego Velásquez, bent on revenge, had sent a superior force under Narváez to bring back Cortés and all his precious acquisitions. Cortés, dividing his command, left a small garrison in the city, and set out with the rest of his men and his allies, the Tlascalans. Montezuma, informed by Narváez that Cortés was acting without authority, resorted to subterfuge and for a moment seemed to get hold of his faculties. The two messengers which Narváez sent to demand the surrender of Cortés, his men and the treasury, returned to their commander with their pockets well-filled with gold and a remembrance of courtly treatment at the hands of the Lord of the Valley. These representatives were also supplied with gold to purchase the disaffection of Narváez’s men.

Ostensibly to treat for peace, but in reality for the same secret purpose, Cortés dispatched Father Olmedo to distribute gold among the newly arrived soldiers. With Narváez demanding every mite of gold falling into their possession, is there wonder that his men longed for a leader like Cortés who could take them into the promised land and there let them help themselves? It only took a slight show of force after these persuasions—which came in the form of a surprise attack on a rainy, soggy night—to bring most of these men over as willing followers of the great *conquistador*.

This crisis weathered, the worst moment in the speculator career of Cortés arrived. In the capital at México, a messenger reported the situation was desperate. After

²⁰ BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO, *op. cit.*, 208-209.

displaying initial bad judgment—permitting a celebration of Huitzilochtli in the palace—Cortés' lieutenant, Alvarado, hearing rumors of an imminent uprising, decided to display the mailed fist in close imitation of his chief in Cholula by murdering the lords of the realm. His men then added sacrilege to strategy as they stripped the dead bodies of gold and jewels.

No triumphant returning hero was ever greeted by a more delicate, menacing situation. The virtual prisoner, Montezuma, called upon to speak to the milling mob, for once appeared to his subjects more pusilanimous than regal. With histrionic eloquence he disproved the notion that "there is a divinity that doth hedge a king" when a stone, hurled by a blasphemous and contemptuous subject, dispatched him. Unable to pacify the Indians, Cortés agreed that escape or death was inevitable. A week passed without an opportunity. Exerting themselves at last to elude the seething mass of brown bodies, the Spanish plotted to march silently and rapidly across the shortest causeway to freedom.

And what a dilemma this proposal imposed! Seeking to avoid it, Cortés ordered Avila and Mexía to transport the gold and assigned them eight injured horses and eighty Tlascalán Indians. After having his own share carefully prepared, he turned over as much of the balance to his men as they cared to take. The new arrivals, unfamiliar with campaigning, loaded themselves with so much gold that, once fallen into the channel, they immediately sank. The leathery veterans of the incoming campaign, valuing their lives more than precious metals, took very little of the free gold. The sanguinary *mêlée* annihilated the Tlascalans,²¹ and left only a scant remnant of Spaniards at the time when Cortés is reputed to have deserted mas-

²¹ LUMMIS, *Spanish Pioneers*, (ed. 1843), p. 174, says regarding the broken causeway "the current suddenly broke through the ghastly obstruction" . . . Obviously sheer rhetoric as the sluggish waters of the valley of Mexico would not make a current.

culine self-control for copious tears under the cyprus tree of the doleful night—july 5, 1520. Much gold was abandoned in the city; the rest was dropped on the way out. Although still a mooted point—and despite the fact that many Indians were given the third degrees in subsequent efforts to locate the treasure—probably most of the lost gold later came into Spanish possession. Before reaching the comparative safety of friendly Tlascalan territory, these doughty Spaniards had to fight their way through a native army estimated at 100,000 men, the largest army ever assembled by an Indian monarch, which they did by attacking directly and cutting down central Indian banner.

It was now revealed that the bearers of the gold sent to Tlascala had been murdered and robbed, an incident sometimes taken as a mere ruse of Cortés to increase his wealth. That case, however, is unlikely, for Cortés was very busy at that time.

With this tremendous blow at the prestige of the arms of the Fair Gods, the Indians, with the exception of the Tlascalans, became disaffected and refused to bring in loot. The second phase, like the first, was to be executed with the cooperation of native troops. Gradually isolating the capital by reducing the towns surroundig Lake Tescoco, and then by cutting off all food and water, Cortés, with the aid of some additional men, horses, and munitions from Española, Cuba and Jamaica, hoped to occupy the capital again. Beginning in December, 1520, Cortés had captured emperor Guatemoc, taking the city August 13, 1521.²²

The bodies of the dead, scattered about the streets, trees uprooted to supply food to the miserable besieged bore grim testimony to the effectiveness of the Spanish seige. Tortured to force a disclosure of the hiding place

²² The conquest of the city was precipitate, but the reconquest of the Spaniard by the inertia of the Indian blood has been gradual. In the Paseo de la Reforma of México stands a proud monument, not of Hernando Cortés, but of Guatemoc.

of the gold, Guatemoc responded that it had been cast into the lake. Searching divers found little, but a large disk representing the sun was raised in the imperial gardens. Bernal Díaz del Castillo tells a more straightforward story, holding that the treasury had already been sequestered by the ships of the Spanish navy which could approach the houses built in the water and intercept escaping gold-laden canoes, and locate the treasure hidden in the reeds. "The wealth our navy got was much more than we could guess at; Guatimotzin and all his chiefs declaring, when inquiry was made as to the public treasure, that it had mostly fallen into their hands". The precious stones and metal now amounted to eighty thousand crowns falling to each horseman, and a lesser sum to ordinary soldiers. Some of them scorned so paltry a sum, but Cortés and Charles V were in a receptive mood.

How did the Cortés expedition come into possession of the riches of the Indians? Any method that was efficacious was acceptable—exchange, gift, plunder and tribute—, for during the first two hectic years of the conquest, little beyond reconnoitring, was done with the mines. Upon first contacts the Indians were glad enough to trade their golden trinkets for sparkling, and to them, dazzling glass beads. The main source of this fountain of wealth flowed from the emperor himself. Upon the arrival of the Spaniards at San Juan de Ulúa, Montezuma, bent upon buying them off, naively adopted the wierd, perverted stratagem of showering them with gifts for that purpose. The gifts, for the most part, grew larger as the ineffectiveness of the preceding ones was observed. From the point of view of Indian art these rarities revealed the workmanship designed to please an emperor. Without a stroke, through this medium, there came into the possession of the Spaniards more tangible wealth than they had ever beheld. Naturally dissatisfied, they coerced recalcitrant tribes, and plundered their villages for wealth. The thoroughness of the Aztec tax gatherers, as the subject

tribes complained, in amassing movable wealth, left little for the Spaniards to collect. The fortune scattered on *la noche triste*, and partially recovered in the reconquest, was the largest amount of booty collected during the conquest of México. The treasure dispatched to Charles V in 1519 was, therefore, made up almost entirely—fully ninety per cent—of Indian gifts in which those of Montezuma were outstanding.

Two relatively careful surveys of Mexican treasure have been made by ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT²³ and ADOLF SOETBEER,²⁴ but none of these studies take note of the first remission of treasure to Charles V. Dr. W. A. LEXIS,²⁵ in a similar survey, passes rapidly over the early period. Professor CLARENCE H. HARING,²⁶ relying upon the Spanish archives as well as upon the Spanish chroniclers, calls attention only to the first two well-known remissions of treasure. In that respect he follows SOETBEER and LEXIS. First mentioning the treasure which survived the expulsion of the Spaniards from México City and the re-conquest, HARING calls attention to the fact that these spoils, as well as private remittances of Cortés and his followers were dispatched in the care of Alonso de Avila and Antonio de Quiñones. The bane of Spanish exploitation of America soon taught its exemplary lesson—Jean Florin, the French buccaneer, captured two of the vessels, and France

²³ *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, (London, 4 Vols., 1811-1822).

²⁴ *Edelmetall-Produktion und Werthverhältniss zwischen Gold und Silber* (Gotha, 1879), 49-60.

²⁵ "Beiträge zur Statistik der Edelmetalle nebst einigen Bemerkungen über die Werthrelation," *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, XXXIV, 361-417.

²⁶ "American Gold and Silver Production in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XXIX, 433-379.

became the first home of this early shipment.²⁷ In order to relieve the disappointment of the king of Spain and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire at this humiliating loss, and perhaps to express his gratitude for his nomination as governor of New Spain, Cortés hastened to make another remission. It was two years later, however, before the shipment—60,000 pesos in gold,²⁸ a canon weighing 2,450 pounds—was made in charge of Diego de Soto. Professor HARING speaks of this assignment "as a second gift to his sovereign" which naturally excludes the first remission, herewith published. In reality it was the third, for the one plundered by Florin was the second. According to GÓMARA, these gifts aside from gold were more important for art than for the material. Moreover, in this shipment there went to Spain the most famous piece of the whole conquest of Mexico, "the large golden disc with the figure of a monster in the center", alone "weighing" 3,800 pesos of gold, probably the figure of the Aztec century, and another of silver, which was probably that of the Aztec year. In pure gold this shipment probably did not run over five thousand pesos, although BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO estimated the value of the gold plate at 20,000 pesos de oro. Neither of the above mentioned authorities, in their summaries of early treasure, included in their estimates the year of the Portocarrero shipment.²⁹ They are more or less scientific conjectures based largely upon still other conjectures. Professor Earl

²⁷ These vessels carried 31,260 pesos in gold 239 pesos of baser gold, besides much more for private individuals. BERNAL DÍAZ mentions 88,000 pesos besides the treasures of the king's wardrobe. The jewels and objects of art, upon which no value was set, would have run into another handsome figure.

Colección de documentos, first series, XII, 352, cited in HARING, *op. cit.*, 422.

²⁸ Really 96,264 pesos.

²⁹ SOETBEER, *op. cit.*, 49, begins with 1522; LEXIS, *op. cit.*, 384, 402, with 1522 also. HUMBOLDT, *Political Essay on New Spain*, Book IV, Chap. II, begins with 1521.

J. Hamilton, who alone has made a thorough and exacting examination of the papers of the House of Trade, carries his figures regularly and consistently back to 1500.⁵⁰ The publication of the accompanying document should do two things: revise the crude approximations of the chroniclers who had their information second-hand and, most of all, explode the oft-repeated error that the shipment seized by Jean Florin and carried to France was the first official remission of treasure from New Spain. That first consignment arrived, without serious mishap, at its destination as the inventory of the house of trade proves.

JOHN TATE LANNING

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*Lo que enbió De la
Nueva España el Ca-
pitán hernando Cortes*

El oro y joyas y piedras y plumas y plata que se ovo en las partes nuevamente descubiertas que el capitan fernando cortes ynbio desde la Rica villa de la vera cruz con alonso hernandez Puertocarrero y francisco de montejo para su cesarea e catolicas magestades y se rrescibieron en esta Casa en sabado cinco de nobienbre de mill y quinientos y diez y nueve años son las siguientes.

111 U DCCC primeramente vna Rueda de oro grande con vna
pesos figura de monstruo en medio y labrada toda de fol-
 jes la qual peso tres mil y ochocientos pesos de oro
y en esta Rueda porque hera la mejor pieza que aca se avydo y
de mejor oro se tomo el quinto para sus Reales altezas que fueron
dos mill castellanos que les pertenesco a sus magestades de su quin-
to e derecho Real segund la capitulación traxo el capitan general
fernando cortes de los padres gironimos que Resyden en la ysla es-
pañola y en todas las otras y los mill y ochocientos pesos Restan-
tes a todo lo demas que tiene a cunplimiento de los dichos tres

³⁰ "Imports of American Gold and Silver into Spain, 1503-1660". *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XLIII, 436-472; "American Treasure and Andalusian Prices, 1503-1560," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, I, 1-35.

mill e ochocientos pesos el concejo desta villa haze seruicio a sus magestades dello con todo lo demas que aqui en esta memoria va que le pertenescen.

yten mas dos collares de oro e pedreria que el uno dellos tiene ocho hilos y en ellos dosientas y treynta y dos piedras coloradas y ciento y sesenta y tres verdes y cuelgan del dicho collar por la orladura del veynte e syete cascaveles de oro y en medio dellos ay quatro figuras de piedras grandes engastonadas en oro y en medio del vno cuelgan syete pinjantes çenzillos y en los cabos de los dos cada quatro pinjantes doblados y en vno tiene quatro hilos que tienen ciento e dos piedras coloradas e ciento e setenta e dos piedras que parescen en el color verdes e a la Redonda de las dichas piedras veynte y seys caxcaveles de oro y en el dicho collar dies piedras grandes engastadas en oro de que cuelgan ciento e quarenta e dos pinjantes de oro.

quatro pares de antiparas los dos pares de hoja de oro delgado con vna guarnicion de cuero de venado amarillo y las otras de hoja de plata delgada con una guarnicion de cuero de venado blanco la guarnicion y las rrestantes de plumaje de diversas colores muy bien obradas de las quales de cada vna dellas cuelgan dies e seys caxcaveles de oro y todas guarnecidas de cuero de venado colorado.

yten mas cient pesos de oro por fundir para que sus Reales altezas vean como aca se coje oro de minas.

yten mas en vna caxa vna pieza grande de plumajes enforrada en cuero que en los colores parescen martas y atadas e puestas en la dicha pieza en el medio vna patena de oro grande que peso sesenta pesos de oro e vna pieza de pedreria azul e colorada a manera de Rueda e otra pieza mediana de pedreria azul e vn poco colorada y al cabo de la pieza otro plumaje que cuelga della de colores.

yten mas vn amoscador de plumaje de colores con treynta y syete verguitas cubiertas de oro.

yten mas vna pieza grande de plumajes que ponen en la cabeza en que ay a la Redonda del setenta e ocho piezas pequeñas de oro que seran cada vna tan grande como medio quarto y mas baxo dellas veynte torresicas de oro.

yten vna mitra de pedreria azul con vna figura de mostruo en el medio della enforrada en vn cuero que paresce en las colores martas con vn plumaje pequeño el qual y el de arriba de que se haze mencion son desta dicha mitra.

yten quatro arpones de plumaje con sus puntas de piedra atadas con hilo de oro y vn cetro de pedreria con dos anillos de oro e lo demas plumaje.

yten mas vn brazaletes de pedreria y mas vna pieza de pluma negra y de otras colores pequeña.

yten mas vn par de çapatones de vn cuero que en las colores del parescen martas e las suelas blancas cosidas con tiritas de oro.

mas un espejo puesto en vna pieza de pedreria azul e colorada con vn plumaje pegado a el e dos tiras de cuero colorado pegada e otro que paresce de aquellas martas.

yten mas tres plumajes de colores que son de vna cabeça grande de oro que paresce de cayman.

mas vnas antiparas de pedreria azul enforradas en vn cuero que las colores parescen martas con cada quinze caxcaues de oro.

mas vn maniplo de cuero de lobo con quatro tyras de cuero que parescen de martas pegadas a el.

mas vnas barbas puestas en vnas plumas de colores e las dichas barbas son blancas que parescen de cavellos.

yten mas dos plumajes de colores que son para dos capaçetes de pedreria que abaxo diran.

mas otros dos plumajes de colores que son para dos pieças de oro que se ponen en la cabeça hechas a manera de caracoles grandes.

mas dos guariques grandes de pedreria azul que son para poner en la cabeça grande del cayman.

en otra caxa quadrada vna cabeça de cayman grande de oro que es la que arriba se dize para que son las pieças.

mas vn capaçete de pedreria azul con veynte caxcaveles de oro que le cuelgan a la Redonda con dos cuentas que estan ençima de cada caxcavel e dos guariques de palo con dos chapas de oro.

mas vna paxara de plumaje verde y los pies e pico e ojos de oro.

yten mas otro capaçete de pedreria azul con veynte e çinco caxcaveles de oro con dos cuentas de oro ençima de cada caxcavel que le cuelgan a la Redonda con vnos guariques de palo con chapas de oro e vn paxaro de plumaje verde con los pies e picos e ojos de oro.

yten mas en vna hava de caña dos pieças grandes de oro que se ponen en la cabeça que son hechas a manera de caracol de oro con sus orejas de oro con sus guariques de palo e chapas de oro y mas dos paxaros de plumaje con sus pies e picos e ojos de oro.

mas dies e seys Rodelas de pedreria con sus plumajes de colores que cuelgan a la Redonda dellas e vna tabla ancha esquinada de pedrerya con sus plumajes de colores y en medio de la dicha tabla hecho de la dicha pedreria vna cruz de Ruedas la qual esta aforrada en cuero que tiene las colores como martas.

otro sy vn çetro de pedreria colorada hecho a manera de culebra con su cabeça y los dientes y ojos paresçen de nacar y el puño guar-

neçido con un cuero de animal pintado e debaxo del dicho puño cuelgan seys plumajes pequeños.

yten mas vn moscador de plumajes puesto en vna caña guarneçida en vn cuero de animal pintado hecho a manera de veleta y ençima tiene vna copa de plumajes que en fin de todo tiene muchas plumas verdes largas.

yten dos anades hechas de hilo e plumajes e tienen los cañones de las alas y las colas de oro y las huñas de los pies e ojos y cavos de los picos puestas en sendas cañas cuviertas de oro y abaxo vnas pellas de plumajes la vna blanca y la otra amarilla con cierta argenteria de oro entre las plumas y de cada vna dellas cuelgan siete Ramales de pluma.

yten tres pieças hechas a manera de liças puestas en sendas cañas cubiertas de oro e que tienen las colas e las agallas ojos e bocas de oro y abaxo en las colas vnos plumajes de plumas verdes y azia las bocas de las dichas liças tienen sendas copas de plumajes de colores y en algunas de las plumas blancas cuelga cierta arjenteria de oro y abaxo del asydero cuelga de cada vna seys Ramales de plumajes de colores.

yten vna verguita de cobre aforrada en vn cuero puesta vna pieça de oro a manera de plumaje que ençima y abaxo tiene çiertos plumajes de colores.

yten quatro moscadores de plumaje de colores que los tres dellos tienen a diez canonçitos cubyertos de oro y el vno a treze.

yten quatro arpones de pedernal blanco puesto en quatro baras guarneçidas de plumajes.

yten una Rodela grande de plumajes goarneçido el enves de vn cuero de animal pintado y en el canpo de la dicha Rodela en medio vna chapa de oro con vna figura de las que los yndios hazen con quatro otras medias chapas en la orla que todas ellas juntas hazen vna cruz.

yten vna pieça de plumaje de diversas colores hecha a manera de media casulla aforrada en vn cuero de animal pintado que los señores destas partes que hasta aqui heran se ponian colgadas del pescueço y en el pecho treçe pieças de oro muy bien asentadas.

yten vna pieça de plumajes de colores que los señores en esta tierra se solian poner en las cabeças hecho a manera de çimera de justador y della cuelgan dos orejeras de pedreria con dos caxcaveles y dos cuentas de oro y ençima vn plumaje de plumas verdes ancho y debaxo le cuelgan vnos cavellos blancos.

otro sy quatro cabeças de animales las dos paresçen de lobo y las otras dos tigres con unos cueros pintados y dellos les cuelgan caxcaveles de metal.

yten dos cueros de animales pintados aforrados en unas mantas de algodón que paresçen de gato çerval.

yten vn cuero bermejo y pardillo de otro animal que paresçe de leon y otros dos cueros de venado.

mas quatro cueros de venados pequeños adobados y mas media dozena de guadameçiles de los que aca hazen los yndios.

mas dos libros de los que aca tienen los yndios.

mas media dozena de amoscadores de plumajes de colores.

mas vna poma de plumas de colores con çierta argenteria en ella.

XLVIII ms^{CO}

otro sy vna Rueda de plata grande la qual peso por Romana quarenta y ocho marcos de plata.

1 m^O V o^S IIII @

mas en unos braçaletes e vnas ojas batidas vn marco y cinco onças y quatro adarmes.

IIII ms^{COII} o^S

vna Rodela e otra pequeña de plata que pesaron quatro marcos e dos onças.

VI ms^{CO} II o^S

otras dos Rodelas que pareçen de plata las quales pesaron seys marcos y dos onças de plata.

1 m^O VII o^S

otra Rodela que pareçe asy de plata que peso vn marco e syete onças.

Ropa de algodón

yten mas dos pieças grandes de algodón texidas de labores de blanco y negro y leonado muy Ricas.

yten dos pieças texidas de pluma e otra pieça texida a escaques de colores.

otra pieça texida de labores colorado negro blanco por el enves no se paresçen las labores.

otra pieça texida de labores en medio vnas Ruedas negras de plumas.

yten dos mantas blancas con vnos plumajes texidas.

otra manta con vnas pasesyca pegadas de colores.

vn sayo de hombre de la tierra.

vna pieça blanca con vna Rueda grande de plumas blancas en medio.

dos pieças de guacaça pardilla con vnas Ruedas de pluma.

otras dos de guacaça leonada.

seys pieças de pinzel.

otra pieça colorada con vnas Ruedas.

otras dos pieças azules de pynsel.

dos camisas de muger.

doze almaysares digo honse almaysares.

CORTES AND HIS FIRST OFFICIAL REMISSION

Seys Rodelas que tienen cada vna vna chapa de oro que toma toda la Rodela.

yten media mitra de oro.

Todas las quales dichas cosas asy como vinieron ynbiarnos a su magestad con domingo de ochandiano por virtud de vna carta que sobre ello su magestad nos mando escreuir fecha en molyn del Rey a çinco de dezienbre de 1 U dxix y el dicho domingo traxo çedula de su magestad por la qual le mando entregar las cosas suso dichas a luys Vert goarda joyas de su magestad y carta de pago del dicho luys Vert de como las Rescibio que esta en poder del dicho thesorero.

el doctor matienço — Rubricado

