

"THE COSSACKS ARE COMING!"



In the days of Russian rule, when the inhabitants of a Polish city rose in protest against oppression, the reply was often the brief order: "Send the Cossacks!" And presently down the streets would gallop a band of these wild and ruthless horsemen, armed with whips or with sabres drawn. Through the town would ring the cry of terror: "The Cossacks are coming!" while the people ran for shelter. And so, with lash or steel, the Poles were beaten into submission. In this picture we see such a scene. In the foreground a terrified mother turns away from what seems certain death for her child, but a gallant passer-by, even under the horseman's blows, saves the little girl.

Soon the fairy-like city of Mexico appeared in sight, situated on an island in a little lake and connected with the mainland by three great stone causeways or bridges. Montezuma, the emperor, offered no resistance, and in November 1519 the Spaniards entered his capital. To guard against sudden attack, Cortez kept the king as his prisoner and guest.

Meantime other dangers were threatening the success of the expedition. The governor of Cuba, angered by Cortez's disobedience of his commands and jealous of that leader's successes, dispatched an army of 1,200 men in 18 ships to recall him to Cuba. Cortez, however, persuaded these men to join him, and thus added to his army reinforcements which proved of inestimable value the next summer.

The Rising of the Aztecs

At that time the Aztecs rose against their emperor, Montezuma, deposed him, and elected a new ruler in his place. Then they attacked the Spaniards from housetops and from towers. In a terrible night retreat from the city, Cortez lost more than two-thirds of his men, but he did not give up. After reorganizing his army and building boats, he laid siege to the island city. The Aztecs fought desperately, but in August 1521, their city fell, and Spanish dominion was secure.

In the meantime Cortez's enemies, jealous of his fame as a conqueror and envious of the wealth of gold, silver, and precious stones he had taken from Montezuma, were plotting his ruin

in Spain. In order to protect himself, Cortez returned home in 1528. He was received with great honour by the king, Charles V, but when he returned to Mexico he went merely as a military commander, while another was appointed to govern the province he had won.

Charles V Refuses to See Cortez

The governor constantly hindered Cortez in his expeditions, one of which led to the discovery of Lower California in 1533. Finally, embittered by quarrels and by loss of property, Cortez again returned to Spain. This time the king refused to receive him, and, although Cortez rendered Charles V valuable aid on an expedition against Algiers, he was not restored to royal favour.

One day, according to a story, Cortez forced his way through a crowd to speak to the king. But Charles coldly inquired who he was. "I am a man," replied Cortez, "who has gained you more provinces than your father left you towns." The reply obtained nothing from the king, and Cortez spent the remainder of his life in bitter neglect. Even later generations refused him justice, for he was long remembered for his cruelty, but his bravery and ability were forgotten.

COS'SACKS. "The Cossacks! The Cossacks!" On countless occasions in the days of absolute rule in Russia, these words were the signal for a mad scramble of the rioting people as the green-uniformed lance-bearing soldiers of the Tsars, mounted on shaggy ponies, swept down the streets, sabreing right and left or firing