

# BERNAL DIAZ CASTILLO

THE MEMOIRS OF THE  
CONQUISTADOR BERNAL  
DIAZ DEL CASTILLO, VOL 1  
(OF 2)

**Bernal Díaz del Castillo**  
**The Memoirs of the**  
**Conquistador Bernal Diaz**  
**del Castillo, Vol 1 (of 2)**

*[http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio\\_book/?art=24547764](http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24547764)*

*The Memoirs of the Conquistador Bernal Diaz del Castillo, Vol 1 (of 2) /  
Written by Himself Containing a True and Full Account of the Discovery and  
Conquest of Mexico and New Spain.:*

# Содержание

CHAPTER I	13
CHAPTER II	17
CHAPTER III	22
CHAPTER IV	28
CHAPTER V	33
CHAPTER VI	36
CHAPTER VII	43
CHAPTER VIII	47
CHAPTER IX	54
CHAPTER X	57
CHAPTER XI	59
CHAPTER XII	64
CHAPTER XIII	66
CHAPTER XIV	71
CHAPTER XV	74
CHAPTER XVI	76
CHAPTER XVII	82
CHAPTER XVIII	85
CHAPTER XIX	91
CHAPTER XX	95
CHAPTER XXI	100
CHAPTER XXII	103
CHAPTER XXIII	107

CHAPTER XXIV	113
CHAPTER XXV	116
CHAPTER XXVI	119
CHAPTER XXVII	121
CHAPTER XXVIII	128
CHAPTER XXIX	130
CHAPTER XXX	135
CHAPTER XXXI	140
CHAPTER XXXII	146
CHAPTER XXXIII	150
CHAPTER XXXIV	153
CHAPTER XXXV	158
CHAPTER XXXVI	163
CHAPTER XXXVII	171
CHAPTER XXXVIII	175
CHAPTER XXXIX	182
CHAPTER XL	188
CHAPTER XLI	193
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	198

**Bernal Díaz del Castillo**  
**The Memoirs of the**  
**Conquistador Bernal Diaz del**  
**Castillo, Vol 1 (of 2) / Written**  
**by Himself Containing a**  
**True and Full Account of**  
**the Discovery and Conquest**  
**of Mexico and New Spain**

**TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE**

The History of the Conquest of New Spain is a subject in which great interest is felt at the present day, and the English public will hail these memoirs, which contain the only true and complete account of that important transaction.

The author of this original and charming production, to which he justly gives the title of 'The True History of the Conquest of New Spain,' was himself one of the Conquistadores; one who not only witnessed the transactions which he relates, but

who also performed a glorious part in them; a soldier who, for impartiality and veracity, perhaps never had his equal. His account is acknowledged to be the only one on which we can place reliance, and it has been the magazine from which the most eloquent of the Spanish writers on the same subject, as well as those of other countries, have borrowed their best materials. Some historians have even transcribed whole pages, but have not had sufficient honesty to acknowledge it.

The author, while living, was never rewarded for the great services he had rendered his country, and it is remarkable that, after his death, his very memoirs were pillaged by court historians, to raise a literary monument to themselves.

Most of the other writers on the conquest, particularly the Spanish, have filled their works with exaggerations, to create astonishment and false interest; pages are filled with so termed philosophical remarks, which but ill supply the place of the intelligent reader's own reflections. Bernal Diaz differs widely from those writers, for he only states what he knows to be true. The British public, fond above all others of original productions, will peruse with interest and delight a work which has so long been the secret fountain from which all other accounts of the conquest, with the exception of those which are least faithful, have taken life.

In respect of its originality, it may vie with any work of modern times, not excepting 'Don Quixote.' The author seems to have been born to show forth truth in all its beauty, and he raises

it to a divinity in his mind. Can anything be more expressive of an honest conscience than what he says in his own preface: "You have only to read my history, and you see it is true."

The reader may form a general idea of this work from the following critique, which Dr. Robertson, the historian, passes upon it: "Bernal Diaz's account bears all the marks of authenticity, and is accompanied with such pleasant naïveté, with such interesting details, with such amusing vanity, and yet so pardonable in an old soldier, who had been, as he boasts, in a hundred and nineteen battles, as renders his book one of the most singular that is to be found in any language."

One circumstance, and that very justly, he is most anxious to impress on your mind, namely, that all the merit of the conquest is not due to Cortes alone; for which reason he generally uses the expression "Cortes and all of us."

This is an allowable feeling in our old soldier, and it must be remembered that the greater part of the men who joined Cortes were of good families, who, as usual on such expeditions, equipped themselves at their own expense, and went out as adventurers of their own free choice.

With respect to our author's style of writing, it is chiefly characterized by plainness and simplicity, and yet there are numerous passages which are written with great force and eloquence, and which, as the Spanish editor says, "could not have been more forcibly expressed, nor with greater elegance." Some readers may at first feel inclined to censure our author for

going into minute particulars in describing the fitting out of the expedition under Cortes; for instance, his describing the qualities and colours of the horses; but all this, it will be seen, was of the utmost importance to his history, and of the horses he was bound to take special notice, for they performed a conspicuous part in the conquest. The honest old soldier even devotes a couple of his last chapters to the whole of his companions in arms, in which he mentions them all by name, describes their persons, their bravery, and the manner in which they died.

To conclude these few remarks on this work, I must observe, that it not only surpasses Cortes' despatches in completeness, but also in truth and naïveté. He represents the whole to you with a simplicity truly sublime; at times he astonishes with a power of expressing his sentiments peculiar to himself, and with a pathos that goes to the very heart.

Bernal Diaz was of a respectable family, and born in Medina del Campo, a small town in the province of Leon. He was what in Spain is termed an hidalgo – though by this little more was signified than a descent from Christian forefathers, without any mixture of Jewish or Moorish blood. With respect to the precise year of his birth he has left us in the dark, but, according to his own account, he first left Castile, for the New World, in the year 1514; and as, on his first arrival in Mexico, in the year 1519, he still calls himself a young man, we may safely conclude that he was born between 1495 and 1500. In the year 1568 he completed his work, at which time there were only six of the Conquistadores

alive, and he must then have been about seventy years of age, but there is every reason for supposing that he reached the advanced age of eighty-six. Endowed with singular nobleness of mind, he had the happiness to enjoy an unblemished reputation.

The excellent Torquemada, in speaking of him in his voluminous work entitled 'Monarchia Indiana,' says, "I saw and knew this same Bernal Diaz in the city of Guatemala; he was then a very aged man, and one who bore the best of reputations." Quoting him in another passage, he has, "Thus says Bernal Diaz del Castillo, a soldier on whose authority and honesty we can place reliance." He was a man devoted to his religion, and it must be particularly borne in mind that the Catholic faith was never stronger than at that time; yet we find him the least superstitious of all the Spanish historians on the Conquest, and, in the 34th Chapter, he has shown a mind superior to the times in which he lived.

If we contemplate the period in which the conquest of New Spain took place, we can easily imagine that Cortes considered it imperative on him to plant his religion among the Indians by the power of the sword, if he could not by kind remonstrances; and we are often reminded of Joshua in the Old Testament. The Spaniards themselves certainly entertained that idea; for in the edition of Cortes' despatches published at Mexico in 1770, his sword is termed, "Gladius Domini et Gideonis: " yet the Spaniards were not the cruel monsters they have generally been described during those times. As far as the conquest of New

Spain is concerned, they were more humane than otherwise; and if at times they used severity, we find that it was caused by the horrible and revolting abominations which were practised by the natives. We can scarcely imagine kinder-hearted beings than the first priests and monks who went out to New Spain; they were men who spent their lives under every species of hardship to promote the happiness of the Indians. Who can picture to his mind a more amiable and noble disposition than that of father Olmedo? He was one of the finest characters, Dr. Robertson says, that ever went out as priest with an invading army!

We may have become exceedingly partial to a work which has now been constantly before our eyes for the last two years, yet we can scarcely imagine that any one could take up a volume, whether a novel or a history, which he would peruse with more delight than these memoirs.

With regard to the translation, which is from the old edition printed at Madrid in 1632, we have acted up to the author's desire, and have neither added nor taken anything away, and have attempted to follow the original as closely as possible. To the original there is not a single note, and particular care has been taken not to overburden the translation with them. In the spelling of the names of the Indian chiefs, the townships, and of the provinces, we have mostly followed Torquemada, who is considered more correct on this point, for he lived fifty years in New Spain, was perfect master of the Mexican language, and made the history of that country his peculiar study.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, regidor of the town of Santiago, in Guatemala, author of this very true and faithful history, have now finished it, in order that it may be published to the world. It treats of the discovery and total conquest of New Spain; and how the great city of Mexico and several other towns were taken, up to the time when peace was concluded with the whole country; also of the founding of many Spanish cities and towns, by which we, as we were in duty bound, extended the dominion of our sovereign.

In this history will be found many curious facts worthy of notice. It likewise points out the errors and blunders contained in a work written by Francisco de Gomara, who not only commits many errors himself in what he writes about New Spain, but he has also been the means of leading those two famous historians astray who followed his account, namely, Dr. Illescas and the bishop Paulo Jovio. What I have written in this book I declare and affirm to be strictly true. I myself was present at every battle and hostile encounter. Indeed, these are not old tales or romances of the seventh century; for, if I may so say, it happened but yesterday what is contained in my history. I relate how, where, and in what manner these things took place; as an accredited eyewitness of this I may mention our very spirited and valorous captain Don Hernando Cortes, marquis del Valle Oaxaca, who wrote an account of these occurrences from Mexico to his

imperial majesty Don Carlos the Fifth, of glorious memory; and likewise the corresponding account of the viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza. But, besides this, you have only to read my history and you see it is true.

I have now completed it this 26th day of February, 1568, from my day-book and memory, in this very loyal city of Guatemala, the seat of the royal court of audience. I also think of mentioning some other circumstances which are for the most part unknown to the public. I must beg of the printers not to take away from, nor add one single syllable to, the following narrative, etc.

# CHAPTER I

The time of my departure from Castile, and what further happened to me.

In the year 1514 I departed from Castile in the suite of Pedro Arias de Avila, who had just then been appointed governor of Terra Firma. At sea we had sometimes bad and sometimes good weather, until we arrived at Nombre Dios, where the plague was raging: of this we lost many of our men, and most of us got terrible sores on our legs, and were otherwise ill. Soon after our arrival, dissensions arose between the governor and a certain wealthy cavalier, named Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, who had brought this province to subjection, and was married to one of the daughters of Avila. As, however, suspicion had been excited against him, owing to a plan he had formed of making a voyage to the South Sea at his own expense, for which he required a considerable body of troops, his own father-in-law deposed him and afterwards sentenced him to decapitation.

While we were spectators of all this, and saw, moreover, how other soldiers rebelled against their superior officers, we learnt that the island of Cuba had just been conquered, and that a nobleman of Quellar, named Diego Velasquez, was appointed governor there. Upon this news some of us met together, cavaliers and soldiers, all persons of quality who had come with

Pedro Arias de Avila, and asked his permission to proceed to the island of Cuba: this he readily granted, not having sufficient employment for so great a number of men as he had brought with him from Spain. Neither was there any further conquest to be made in these parts; all was in profound peace, so thoroughly had his son-in-law Balboa subdued the country, besides which it was but small in extent and thinly populated. As soon, therefore, as we had obtained leave, we embarked in a good vessel and took our departure. Our voyage was most prosperous, so that we speedily arrived at Cuba. The first thing we did was to pay our respects to the governor, who received us with great kindness, and made us a promise of the first Indians that might be discharged. Three years, however, passed away since our first arrival in Terra Firma and stay at Cuba, still living in the expectation of the Indians which had been promised us, but in vain. During the whole of this time we had accomplished nothing worthy of notice: we therefore, the 110 who had come from Terra Firma, with some others of Cuba, who were also without any Indians, met together to concert measures with a rich cavalier named Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba, who, besides being a person of wealth, possessed great numbers of Indians on the island. This gentleman we chose for our captain; he was to lead us out on voyages for the discovery of new countries, where we might find sufficient employment.

We purchased three vessels, two of which were of considerable burden; the third was given us by the governor,

Diego Velasquez, on condition namely, that we should first invade the Guanajas islands, which lie between Cuba and the Honduras, and bring him thence three cargoes of Indians, whom he wanted for slaves; this he would consider as payment for the vessel. We were, however, fully aware that it was an act of injustice which Diego Velasquez thus required at our hands, and gave him for answer: that neither God nor the king had commanded us to turn a free people into slaves. When he learnt our determination, he confessed that our project for the discovery of new countries was more praiseworthy, and he furnished us with provisions for our voyage.

We had now three vessels and a sufficient supply of cassave bread, as it is there made from the juca root. We also purchased some pigs, which cost us three pesos a piece; for at that time there were neither cows nor sheep on the island of Cuba: to this I must also add a scanty supply of other provisions; while every soldier took with him some glass beads for barter. We had three pilots; of whom the principal one, who had the chief command of our vessels, was called Anton de Alaminos, a native of Palos; the two others were, Camacho de Triana, and Juan Alvarez el Manquillo of Huelva. In the same way we hired sailors, and furnished ourselves with ropes, anchors, water-casks, and other necessaries for our voyage, all at our own expense and personal risk.

After we had met together, in all 110, we departed for a harbour on the north coast of Cuba, called by the natives

Ajaruco. The distance from this place to the town of San Christoval, then recently built, was twenty-four miles; for the Havannah had then only been two years in our possession. In order that our squadron might not want for anything really useful, we engaged a priest at the town of San Christoval. His name was Alonso Gonzalez, and by fair words and promises we persuaded him to join us. We also appointed, in the name of his majesty, a treasurer, called Beruardino Miguez, a native of Saint Domingo de la Calzada. This was done in order that if it pleased God we should discover any new countries, where either gold, silver, or pearls were to be found, there might be amongst us a qualified person to take charge of the fifths for the Emperor.<sup>1</sup> After everything had been thus properly ordered and we had heard mass said, we commended ourselves to God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the virgin Mary his blessed mother, and set out on our voyage, as I shall further relate.

---

<sup>1</sup> During the first conquests of the Spaniards in New Spain, one half of the profits arising from the gold mines was paid to the crown; but the ill effects of this exorbitant demand soon began to show themselves, and it was reduced to one third, and then to a fifth, called the real quinto, which continued for a length of time, until it was further reduced. I must take this opportunity of observing, that the Spanish "peso" is equal to about 4s. 6d. of our money. (p. [3](#).)

## CHAPTER II

Of the Discovery of Yucatan, and the battle we fought there with the Natives.

We sailed in the year 1517 from the harbour of Jaruco and left the Havannah. This harbour lies on the north coast of Cuba, and is so called by the natives. After twelve days' sail we had passed the coast of Saint Antonius, which in Cuba is called the country of the Guanatavies, a wild tribe of Indians. We now made for the wide ocean, steering continually towards the west, totally ignorant of the shoals and currents or of the winds which predominate in this latitude. Certainly most hazardous on our part, and indeed we were very soon visited by a terrible storm, which continued two days and two nights, in which the whole of us had nigh perished.

After the storm had abated and we had changed our course, we came in sight of land on the twenty-first day after our departure from Cuba, which filled every heart with joy and thanks towards God. This country had never been discovered before, nor had any one ever heard of it. From our ships we could perceive a considerable sized town, which lay about six miles from the sea shore. On account of its magnitude, and because it was larger than any town in Cuba, we gave it the name of *Grand Cairo*.

We resolved that our smallest vessel should near the shore as

much as possible, to learn the nature of the spot and look out for a good anchorage. One morning, the 5th of March, we perceived five large canoes full of men coming towards us as swift as their paddles and sails could bring them from the town just mentioned. These canoes were hollowed out of the trunks of large trees, after the manner of our kneading troughs. Many of them were big enough to hold from forty to fifty Indians.

As these Indians approached us in their canoes, we made signs of peace and friendship, beckoning at the same time to them with our hands and cloaks to come up to us that we might speak with them; for at that time there was nobody amongst us who understood the language of Yucatan or Mexico. They now came along side of us without evincing the least fear, and more than thirty of them climbed on board of our principal ship. We gave them bacon and cassave bread to eat, and presented each with a necklace of green glass beads. After they had for some time minutely examined the ship, the chief, who was a cazique, gave us to understand, by signs, that he wished to get down again into his canoe and return home, but that he would come the next day with many more canoes in order to take us on shore. These Indians wore a kind of cloak made of cotton, and a small sort of apron which hung from their hips half-way down to the knee, which they termed a maltates. We found them more intelligent than the Indians of Cuba, where only the women wear a similar species of apron made of cotton, which hangs down over their thighs, and is called by them a nagua.

But to continue my narrative. Very early the morning following, our cazique again called upon us: this time he brought with him twelve large canoes and a number of rowers. He made known to our captain, by signs, that we were good friends and might come to his town: he would give us plenty to eat with everything we wanted, and could go on shore in his twelve canoes. I shall never forget how he said, in his language, *con escotoch, con escotoch*, which means, come with me to my houses yonder. We therefore called the spot Punta de Cotoche, under which name it stands on the sea charts.

In consideration of all these friendly invitations from the cazique to accompany him to his village, our captain held a short consultation with us, when we came to the resolution to lower our boats, take the smallest of our vessels with us, and so proceed together with the twelve canoes all at once on shore, as the coast was crowded with Indians from the above-mentioned village. This was accordingly done, and we all arrived there at the same time. The cazique seeing us now landed, but that we made no signs of going to his village, again gave our captain to understand, by signs, that we should follow him to his habitation, making at the same time so many demonstrations of friendship, that a second consultation was held as to whether we should accompany him or not. This was carried in the affirmative, but we took every precaution to be upon our guard, marching in close order with our arms ready for action. We took fifteen crossbows with a like number of matchlocks, and followed the cazique, who was

accompanied by a great number of Indians.

As we were thus marching along, and had arrived in the vicinity of several rocky mountains, the cazique all at once raised his voice, calling aloud to his warriors, who it seemed were lying wait in ambush, to fall upon us and destroy us all. The cazique had no sooner given the signal, than out rushed with terrible fury great numbers of armed warriors, greeting us with such a shower of arrows, that fifteen of our men were immediately wounded. These Indians were clad in a kind of cuirass made of cotton, and armed with lances, shields, bows, and slings; with each a tuft of feathers stuck on his head. As soon as they had let fly their arrows, they rushed forward and attacked us man to man, setting furiously to with their lances, which they held in both hands. When, however, they began to feel the sharp edge of our swords, and saw what destruction our crossbows and matchlocks made among them, they speedily began to give way. Fifteen of their number lay dead on the field.

At some distance from the spot where they had so furiously attacked us was a small place in which stood three houses built of stone and lime. These were temples in which were found many idols made of clay which were of a pretty good size; some had the countenances of devils, others those of females: some again had even more horrible shapes, and appeared to represent Indians committing horrible offences. In these temples we also found small wooden boxes containing other of their gods with hellish faces, several small shells, some ornaments, three crowns, and

other trinkets, some in the shape of fish, others in the shape of ducks, all worked out of an inferior kind of gold. Seeing all this, the gold, and the good architectural style of the temples, we felt overjoyed at the discovery of this country; for Peru was not discovered till sixteen years after. While we were fighting with the Indians, the priest Gonzalez ordered the gold and small idols to be removed to our ships by two Indians whom we had brought with us from Cuba. During the skirmish we took two of the natives prisoners, who subsequently allowed themselves to be baptised and became Christians. One was named Melchior and the other Julian; both were tattooed about the eyes. The combat with the natives now being at an end, we resolved to re-embark, and prosecute our voyage of discovery further along the coast towards the west. Having dressed the wounds of our men we again set sail.

## CHAPTER III

Discovery of the Coast of Campeachy.

Continuing the course we had previously determined upon, more westward along the coast, we discovered many promontories, bays, reefs, and shallows. We all considered this country to be an island, because our pilot, Anton de Alaminos, persisted in it. During daytime we proceeded with all caution, but lay to at nights. After sailing in this way for fourteen days, we perceived another village which appeared to us of considerable magnitude. Here was a bay with an inner harbour, and it appeared to us that there might also be some river or small stream where we could take in fresh water, which latter had become very scarce, as our supply in the casks, which were none of the best, was fast diminishing; for, as the expedition was fitted out solely by persons in poor circumstances, we had not been able to purchase good ones. It happened to be Sunday Lazari when we landed, and we therefore named this place in honour of this day, although we were well aware that the Indians called it the land of *Campeachy*.

In order that the whole of us might land at the same time, we determined to go on shore in our smallest vessel and three boats, all of us well armed, to be ready in case we should meet with a similar rencontre as at the cape of Cotoche. The sea in these bays and roads is very shallow, so that our vessels were forced to

anchor at more than three miles distance from the shore. Thus precautions we landed near the village, but were still a good way from the place where we intended to fill our casks. From this spot the natives also had their water; for we now found that there was no rivulet in the neighbourhood.

When we had brought our casks on shore, filled them with water, and were about to embark again, about fifty Indians from the village came up to us. They all wore stately mantels made of cotton, appeared friendly disposed, and to be caziques. They asked us, by signs, what our business was there? We told them to take in water, and that we were about to re-embark. They further pointed with their hands to the rising of the sun, and asked us whether we came from that quarter, at the same time pronouncing the word *Castilan*, *Castilan*; but at that moment we did not pay any particular attention to the word *Castilan*. In the course of this interview, however, they gave us to understand that we might go with them to their village.

We held a consultation amongst ourselves as to whether we should accept the invitation, and at length unanimously agreed to follow them, but to use the utmost circumspection. They took us to some large edifices, which were strongly put together, of stone and lime, and had otherwise a good appearance. These were temples, the walls of which were covered with figures representing snakes and all manner of gods. Round about a species of altar we perceived several fresh spots of blood. On some of the idols there were figures like crosses, with other

paintings representing groups of Indians. All this astonished us greatly as we had neither seen nor heard, of such things before. It appeared to us that the inhabitants had just been sacrificing some Indians to their gods, to obtain from them the power to overcome us.

There were great numbers of Indians with their wives who received us with pleasing smiles, and otherwise made every show of friendship; but their numbers gradually increasing we began to entertain fears that it would end in the same hostile manner as at Cape Cotoche. While we were thus looking on, a number of Indians approached us clad in tattered cloaks, each carrying a bundle of dried reeds, which they arranged in order on the ground. Among them we also perceived two troops of men armed with bows, lances, shields, slings, and stones, having their cotton cuirasses on. At the head of these, and at some distance from us stood the chiefs. At this moment ten Indians came running out of another temple, all dressed in long white robes, while the thick hair of their heads was so entangled and clotted with blood that it would have been an impossibility to have combed or put it in order without cutting it off. These personages were priests, and in New Spain are commonly termed *Papas*.<sup>2</sup> I repeat it, that in New Spain they are termed *papas*, and I will therefore in future call them by that name. These *papas* brought with them a kind of incense, which looked like resin, and is termed by them *copal*.

---

<sup>2</sup> Bernal Diaz is thus particular in laying stress on this remarkable circumstance, because the pope of Rome, in Spanish, is termed *pápa*. (p. [7](#).)

They had pans made of clay filled with glowing embers, and with these they perfumed us. They also gave us to understand, by signs, that we should leave their country before the bundles of reeds, which had been brought and were going to be set fire to, should be consumed, otherwise they would attack and kill us every man.

Upon this they ordered the bundles to be lighted, and as soon as they began to burn, all were silent, nor did they utter another syllable. Those, on the contrary, who had ranged themselves in order of battle, began to play on their pipes, blow their twisted shells, and beat their drums. When we saw what their real intentions were, and how confident they appeared, it of course reminded us that our wounds which we had received at Cape Cotoche were not yet healed; that two of our men had died of the consequences, whom we had been obliged to throw overboard. As the number of Indians continued to increase, we became alarmed, and resolved to retreat to the shore in the best order we could. In this way we marched along the coast until we arrived at that spot where our boats and the small vessels lay with the water-casks. Not far distant from this place stood a rock in the midst of the sea; for, on account of the vast numbers of Indians, we durst not venture to re-embark where we had at first landed, as they would no doubt have fallen upon us while we were getting into our boats.

After we had thus managed to get our water safe on board and re-embark at the small harbour which the bay here forms,

we continued our course for six days and six nights without interruption, the weather being very fine. But now the wind suddenly veered round to the north and brought stormy weather, as is always the case with a north wind on this coast. The storm lasted twenty-four hours, and indeed we had nearly all of us met with a watery grave, so boisterous was the sea. In order to save ourselves from total destruction we cast anchor near the shore. The safety of our ship now depended upon two ropes, and had they given way we should have been cast on shore. Oh, in what a perilous situation we were then placed! had we been torn away from our anchors we must have been wrecked off the coast! But it was the will of Providence that our old ropes and cables should preserve us. When the storm had abated we continued our course along the coast and kept in as much as possible, that we might take in water when required. For, as I have before stated, our casks were old and leaky; nor was the best economy used with the water, for we thought by going on shore we should be certain either to meet with some spring or obtain it by digging wells. Thus coasting along we espied a village from our ships, and about three miles further on there was a kind of inner harbour, at the head of which it appeared to us there might be some river or brook; we therefore resolved to land here.

The water, as I have above mentioned, being uncommonly shallow along this coast, we were compelled to anchor our two larger vessels at about three miles distance from the shore, fearing they might otherwise run aground. We then proceeded

with our smallest vessel and all our boats in order to land at the above-mentioned inner harbour. We were, however, quite upon our guard, and carried along with us, besides the water-casks, our arms, crossbows, and muskets.

It was about midday when we landed. The distance from here to the village, which was called Potonchan, might be three miles. Here we found some wells, maize plantations, and stone buildings. Our water-casks were soon filled, but we could not succeed to get them into our boats on account of an attack made upon us by great numbers of the inhabitants. I will, however, break off here and relate the battle we fought, in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

How we landed in a bay close to some maize plantations, near the harbour of Potonchan, and of the attack that was made upon us there.

While we were busy taking in water, near the above-mentioned houses and maize plantations, great numbers of Indians were making towards us from the village of Potonchan, as it is termed by the natives. They had all their cotton cuirasses on, which reached to their knees, and were armed with bows, lances, shields, and swords. The latter were shaped like our broadswords, and are wielded with both hands. They also had slings and stones, their bunches of feathers on, and their whole bodies painted with white, brown, and black colours. They approached us in profound silence, as if they came with the most peaceable intentions, and inquired of us by signs if we came from the rising of the sun, thereby pronouncing the very same words which the inhabitants of St. Lazaro had used: namely, *Castilan*, *Castilan*. We told them, likewise by signs, that we indeed came from the rising of the sun. We certainly did not understand what they meant; nevertheless it was something for us to reflect on, while it at the same time gave rise to a variety of conjectures, since the natives of St. Lazaro had used the identical words.

It was about the hour of Ave Maria, when the Indians

approached us in this manner. A few country houses were scattered round about the neighbourhood. We took the precaution to post watches in different quarters, and upon the whole kept a sharp look out, as the manner in which the natives were assembling seemed to forebode very little good. When we had closed our ranks and taken every necessary precaution, our ears were assailed by the cries and yells of large bodies of Indians who were advancing from different quarters. As they were all armed for battle we could no longer doubt that some evil design was lurking behind; we therefore held a consultation with our captain as to the course we should adopt. Many were of opinion that the best we could do would be to re-embark ourselves in all haste; but, as is always the case in critical moments, one advised this and another that, and so this proposal was overruled as unadvisable, for the vast numbers of Indians would certainly fall upon us while we were getting into our boats and we should all stand in danger of being killed. Others again, among which number I also was, were of opinion that the enemy should be attacked that very night; for, according to the old saying, he who strikes the first blow remains master of the field; but we might make up our minds that each of us singly would have to encounter thirty Indians at least.

Day now began to dawn, and we emboldened each other to meet the coming severe conflict by putting our trust in God and commending our cause to him, while every one was determined to defend himself to the utmost. As soon as daylight had fully

broken forth, we perceived more troops of armed natives moving towards the coast with flying colours. They had on their feather-knots, and were provided with drums, bows, lances, shields, and joined themselves to the others who had arrived in the night. They divided themselves into different bodies, surrounded us on all sides, and commenced pouring forth such showers of arrows, lances, and stones, that more than eighty of our men were wounded at the first onset. They next rushed furiously forward and attacked us man to man: some with their lances, others with their swords and arrows, and all this with such terrible fury that we were compelled also to show them earnest. We dealt many a good thrust and blow amongst them, keeping up at the same time an incessant fire with our muskets and crossbows; for while some loaded others fired. At last, by dint of heavy blows and thrusts we forced them to give way; but they did not retreat further than was necessary, in order that they might still continue to hem us in in all safety; constantly crying out in their language, *Al calachoni, al calachoni*; which signifies, kill the chief! And sure enough our captain was wounded in no less than twelve different places by their arrows. I myself had three; one of which was in my left side and very dangerous, the arrow having pierced to the very bone. Others of our men were wounded by the enemy's lances, and two were carried off alive; of whom, one was called Alonzo Bote, the other was an old Portuguese.

Perceiving how closely we were hemmed in on all sides by the enemy, who not only kept constantly pouring in fresh troops

but were copiously supplied on the field of battle with meat, drink, and quantities of arrows, we soon concluded that all our courageous fighting would not advance us a step. The whole of us were wounded, many shot through the neck, and more than fifty of our men were killed. In this critical situation we determined to cut our way manfully through the enemy's ranks and make for the boats, which fortunately lay on the coast near at hand. We therefore firmly closed our ranks and broke through the enemy. At that moment you should have heard the whizzing of their arrows, the horrible yell they set up, and how the Indians provoked each other to the combat, at the same time making desperate thrusts with their lances. But a still more serious misfortune awaited us; for as we made a simultaneous rush to our boats, they soon sunk or capsized, so that we were forced to cling to them as well as we could; and in this manner by swimming we strove to make the best of our way to the small vessel, which was now in all haste coming up to our assistance. Many of our men were even wounded while climbing into the vessel, but more particularly those who clung to its side; for the Indians pursued us in their canoes and attacked us without intermission. With the greatest exertions and help of God we thus got out of the hands of this people.

After we had gained our vessels we found that fifty-seven of our men were missing, besides the two whom the Indians had carried off alive, and five whom we had thrown overboard, who had died in consequence of their wounds and extreme thirst.

The battle lasted a little longer than half an hour. The spot where it took place was certainly called Potonchan. Our seamen, however, gave it the name of Bahea de mala Pelea, (the bay of the disastrous engagement,) as it stands on the maps. As soon as we found ourselves in safety we returned thanks to Almighty God for the preservation of our lives. Our wounded, however, had still great sufferings to undergo, as we had nothing but salt water to wash their wounds with, which caused them to swell very much. Some of our men swore most bitterly against our chief pilot Alaminos, and the conduct he had pursued; he having steadfastly maintained that this was an island and not a continent. I must, however, break off here, and relate what further happened to us, in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER V

We resolve to return to Cuba. The extreme thirst we suffered, and all the fatigues we underwent until our arrival in the port of Havannah.

After we had got into our vessels, as above related, and returned thanks to God for our preservation, we commenced dressing our wounds. None of us had escaped without two, three, or four wounds. Our captain had as many as twelve, and there was only one single soldier who came off whole. We therefore determined to return to Cuba; but as most of the sailors who had accompanied us on shore were also wounded, we had not sufficient hands to work the sails, we were therefore forced to set fire to our smallest vessel and leave it to the mercy of the waves, after taking out all the ropes, sails, and anchors, and distributing the sailors, who were not wounded equally among the two other vessels. We had, however, to struggle with another far greater evil. This was our great want of fresh water; for although we had filled our barrels and casks near Potonchan, we did not succeed to bring them off, owing to the furious attack of the natives and the hurry we were in to get on board: thus we had been compelled to leave them behind and return without a single drop of water. We suffered most intensely from thirst, and the only way we could in some measure refresh our parched tongues was to hold the edges

of our axes between our lips. Oh, what a fearful undertaking it is to venture out on the discovery of new countries, and place one's life in danger, as we were obliged to do! Those alone can form any idea of it who have gone through the hard school of experience.

We now kept as close into the shore as possible, to look out for some stream or creek where we might meet with fresh water. After thus continuing our course for three days we espied an inlet or mouth of some river as we thought, and sent a few hands on shore in the hopes of meeting with water. These were fifteen sailors who had remained on board during the battle at Potonchan, and three soldiers who had been only slightly wounded. They carried along with them pickaxes and three small casks. But the water in the inlet was salt, and wherever they dug wells it was equally bad. They nevertheless filled the casks with it, but it was so bitter and salty as to be unfit for use. Two soldiers who drank of it became ill of the consequences. The water here swarmed with lizards; we therefore gave this place the name of Lizard Bay, under which name it stands on the sea charts.

But, to continue my history, I must not forget to mention that while our boats were on shore in search of water, there suddenly arose such a violent tempest from the north-east, that our ships were nigh being cast on shore. For, as we were forced to lay to, the wind blowing hard from the north and north-east, our position was extremely dangerous, from a scarcity of ropes.

When the men who had gone on shore with our boats

perceived the danger we were in, they hastened to our assistance, and cast out additional anchors and cables. In this way we lay for two days and two nights. After the expiration of that time we again heaved our anchors and steered in the direction of Cuba. Our pilot Alaminos here held a consultation with the two others, when they concluded that the best plan would be to get, if possible, into the latitude of Florida, which, according to their charts and furthest measurement, could not be more than 210 miles distant; for they assured us if we could get into the latitude of Florida, we should have a better and speedier sail to the Havannah. It turned out exactly as they had said; for Alaminos had been in these parts before, having accompanied Juan de Leon when he discovered Florida, about ten or twelve years previously. After four days' sail we crossed this gulf and came in sight of Florida.

## CHAPTER VI

How twenty of us went on shore in the bay of Florida with the pilot Alaminos in search of water; the hostilities which the natives of this country commenced with us; and of all that further befel us on our passage to the Havannah.

As soon as we had arrived off the coast of Florida we determined that twenty of our men, who had almost recovered from their wounds, should go on shore. Among the number was myself and the pilot, Alaminos. We each took a mattock and a small cask, being, moreover, well armed with crossbows and muskets. Our captain, who was dangerously wounded and very much weakened by the extreme thirst he suffered, begged of us, in the name of God, to bring him some sweet water, as he was almost dying of thirst. Indeed, the water, as I have before said, which we then had was quite salty and not drinkable. We landed in a creek, and our pilot again recognized this coast, which he had visited ten or twelve years previously with Ponce de Leon, when he discovered these countries. They had here fought a battle with the natives, and lost many of their men.

We therefore took every precaution lest the natives should also fall upon us unawares. We posted two sentinels at a spot where the stream had a considerable breadth. We then dug deep wells where we thought fresh water was likely to be found. The sea

was just ebbing, and it pleased God that we should find sweet water there.

With joyful hearts we then took our fill of the refreshing beverage, and washed the bandages of our wounded. A good hour's time was spent in this, and as we were on the point of re-embarking with the casks of water, quite overjoyed at our success, one of the men whom we had placed sentinel on the coast came running towards us in all haste, crying aloud, "To arms! to arms! numbers of Indians are approaching, both by land and sea." And indeed the Indians came up to us almost at the same time with the sentinel.

They had immense sized bows with sharp arrows, lances, and spears – among these some were shaped like swords – while their large powerful bodies were covered with skins of wild beasts. They made straightways to us, let fly their arrows, and wounded six of our men at the first onset. I was also slightly wounded in my right arm. We, however, received our enemies with such well-directed blows and musket-shots that they very soon quitted us who had been digging the wells, and turned towards the creek to assist their companions who in their canoes were attacking those left behind in the boat. The latter had been forced to fight man to man, and had already lost the boat, which the Indians were towing off behind their canoes. Four of the sailors had been wounded, and the pilot, Alaminos, himself severely so in the throat. We, however, courageously faced our enemy, went up to our middles in the water, and soon compelled them, by dint

of our swords, to jump out of the boat again. Twenty-two of the enemy lay dead on the shore; three others, who were slightly wounded, we took on board with us, but they died soon after.

After this skirmish was ended, we questioned the soldier who had stood sentinel as to what had become of his companion, Berrio. He related that his comrade had left him with an axe in his hand, in order to go and cut down a palm-tree, and that this was near the inlet where the Indians first made their appearance. He had also heard him cry out in Spanish, upon which he himself had immediately hastened to give us the information. His companion, no doubt, had been murdered by the Indians. Singular that this man should have lost his life here, he being the only one who escaped without a wound at the battle of Potonchan. We made every search for him, and followed the track of the Indians who had just attacked us; this indeed led us to a palm-tree which had been recently cut, around which were numerous foot-marks. We could, however, discover no marks of blood; and concluded, therefore, that the Indians had carried off the man alive. After we had fruitlessly searched for him in every quarter for upwards of an hour, and repeatedly called out aloud to him, without receiving any answer, we returned to our boat, and brought the water on board. The joy of our men was as great as if we had brought them new life; and one of the soldiers, from excessive thirst, leaped from the vessel into the boat, seized one of the small casks, and poured such an abundance of water into his body, that he instantaneously swelled out and expired.

Having brought the water on board our vessels, hauled in our boats, we hoisted our sails and stood direct for the Havannah. The day and following night the weather was most beautiful as we passed the Martyr Islands and sand-banks of the same name. We had only four fathoms water, where the sea was deepest; our principal ship consequently struck against the rocks and became very leaky, so that all hands were engaged at the pumps, without then being able to get the water under, while we every moment feared the vessel would go down. I never shall forget the answer which some sailors from the Levant, who were among the crew, made when we cried out to them: "Come on, my boys, help us to pump out the water, or we shall all be lost! you see how our wounds and hard labour have debilitated us." "That's your own look out," said they; "we get no pay, suffer both from hunger and thirst, and have, in the bargain, to share your fatigues and wounds." Nothing now remained but to drive them to the pumps by main force; and in this way we had alternately to work the sails and the pumps, however distasteful to us, until the Lord Jesus brought us into the port of Carena, where now the town of Havannah stands, the latter being previously called Puerto de Carenas, and not the Havannah.

As soon as we had set foot on shore we returned thanks to the Almighty for our safe return, and got the water out of our principal ship, in which a Portuguese diver, who happened to be on board another vessel, greatly assisted us. We also immediately wrote to the governor, Diego Velasquez, giving him an account

of the countries we discovered with large townships and houses built of stone, whose inhabitants were clad in cotton, and wore maltates; likewise of the gold and the regular maise-plantations of the country. Our captain journeyed overland to Santispiritus, where he had his Indian commendary: he died, however, ten days after his arrival there, from his wounds. The rest of our men became dispersed through the island, and three more of our men died of their wounds at the Havannah.

Our vessels were taken to Santiago de Cuba, where the governor resided. Here the two Indians were brought on shore whom we had taken with us from the Punta de Cotoche, as above related, called Melchorillo and Julianillo. When, however, we brought forth the box with the crowns, the golden ducks, the fish, and the idols, more noise was made about them than they really merited, so that they became the common topics of conversation throughout the islands of St. Domingo and Cuba; indeed the fame thereof even reached Spain. There it was said that none of the countries which had hitherto been discovered were as rich as this, and in none had there been found houses built of stone. The earthen gods, it was said, were the remains of the ancient heathen times; others again went so far as to affirm that they were descendants of the Jews whom Titus and Vespasian had driven from Jerusalem, who had been shipwrecked off this coast. Peru, indeed, was not then known, and in so far the countries we had discovered were justly considered of the greatest importance. Diego Velasquez closely questioned the two Indians as to whether

there were any gold mines in their country. They answered in the affirmative; and when they were shown some of the gold-dust found in the island of Cuba, they said there was abundance of it in their country. In this they told an untruth, as it is very well known there are neither goldmines on the Punta de Cotoche nor even in whole Yucatan. They were likewise shown the beds in which the seeds of that plant are sown from whose root the cassave bread is made, and in Cuba called yuca: they assured us that the same plant grew in their country, and was called by them tale. As the cassave-root at Cuba is called yuca, and the ground in which it is planted by the Indians tale, so from these two words arose the name of the country, Yucatan; for the Spaniards who were standing around the governor at the time he was speaking to the two Indians said, "You see, sir, they call their country Yucatan." And from this circumstance the country retained the name of Yucatan, although the natives call it otherwise.

In this beautiful voyage of discovery we had spent our all, and returned to Cuba covered with wounds, and as poor as beggars; yet we had reason to congratulate ourselves that it had not been equally disastrous to us all as to many of our companions who had lost their lives. Our captain, as I have already mentioned, died soon after his return; and all of us suffered for a considerable time after from our wounds. Our whole loss amounted to seventy men, which was all we had gained by this voyage of discovery.

Concerning all this the governor Diego Velasquez wrote to those gentlemen in Spain who at that time managed the affairs

of India, and boasted of the discoveries *he* had made, and of the vast expense it had put *him* to. This actually obtained credit, and the bishop of Burgos, Don Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, who also bore the title of archbishop of Rosano, and was president of Indian affairs, wrote in that strain to his majesty, in Flanders, vastly extolling the merit of Diego Velasquez, at the same time not as much as even mentioning the names of any of us who had really discovered the country.

I will, however, break off here, and relate in the following chapter what further fatigues I and three more of my companions in arms had to undergo.

## CHAPTER VII

The fatigues I had to undergo, until my arrival in the town of Trinidad.

I have already above related that I with some other soldiers who had not quite recovered from our wounds remained behind in the Havannah. As soon as the latter began to heal a little we three made up our minds to go in company with a certain Pedro d'Avila, an inhabitant of the Havannah, to the town of Trinidad. This man was going to make a voyage in a canoe along the south coast, and had taken a lading of cotton shirts, which he intended to dispose of in Trinidad. As I have above stated, these canoes are hollowed out of the trunks of trees, after the manner of our bakers' troughs: in this country they are used for coasting; and we had to pay Pedro d'Avila ten doubloons for the voyage.

As we were coasting along, sometimes rowing, sometimes sailing, we arrived after the eleventh day in sight of an Indian village, subject to the Spaniards, and called Cannareon; there arose at night-time such a terrible gale of wind, that, although we rowed with all our strength, we could not keep the sea any longer. Notwithstanding every exertion of Pedro d'Avila, of some Indians from the Havannah, and several other good rowers we had with us, nothing at last remained but to run the canoe aground between the steep rocks. The canoe was dashed

to pieces, the whole lading of Pedro d'Avila went to the bottom, and we made the best of our way on shore, naked as the day we were born, our bodies cut and bruised all over by clambering over the rocks, for we had stripped ourselves of our clothes in order to be the better able to swim, and also, if possible, to save the canoe. As we had only escaped with our lives among these rocks, none other choice was left us than to continue our road over them to Trinidad, which lay along the coast through a barren country full of rugged rocks, where our feet soon became blistered and wounded; as to think of getting anything to eat was quite out of the question; while we had continually to struggle with a terrific gale of wind and the sea breaking over the rocks. Although we had not neglected to cover our bodies as much as possible with leaves and herbs, we nevertheless got sore boils between our legs, which bled very much. At last we could proceed no further; for the sharp stones had covered our feet with wounds: we managed, however, with considerable trouble to reach a more elevated spot. None of us having his sword left, we contrived by means of sharp stones to loosen the bark of some trees and bind it as well as we could under the soles of our feet, with the tendrils of climbers, which grew among the wood. And in this way, after suffering great fatigues we reached a sandy district on the coast, whence in a couple of days we arrived in the Indian village Yeguarama, at that time the property of Bartholomeus de las Casas,<sup>3</sup> who was a priest. I knew him afterwards when he

---

<sup>3</sup> This is the celebrated Las Casas, the protector of the rights of the Indians. (p. [18.](#))

belonged to the order of the Dominicans, and became bishop of Chiopia. Here the Indians gave us to eat, and on the following day we arrived at another village, called Chipiona, which was the joint property of Alonso de Avila, and of Sandoval, but this was not the captain of the same name who gained such vast renown in New Spain. From this place we at last came to Trinidad, where I had an acquaintance, by name Antonio de Medina, who provided me with a suit of clothes as they were worn in that town; my comrades were similarly provided by other of the inhabitants. Quite worn out by fatigue and miserably poor, I set off for Santiago de Cuba, where the governor Diego Velasquez resided. He was just then busily engaged fitting out another squadron, and was highly delighted at seeing me again when I called upon him, for we were related to each other: and as one word led to another, he asked me if my wounds were sufficiently healed to make another trip to Yucatan? I could not help smiling at this and said, who gave the country that name? for the natives do not call it so. "So Melchior, whom you brought with you, calls it," resumed he. "Call it rather, (said I,) the land where they killed one half of our men and wounded the other." "Well, (said he,) if you have undergone many fatigues, you have only shared the same fate with all others who have ventured out on the discovery of new countries. But, on the other hand, you will not fail to be highly honoured and rewarded by his majesty the king, to whom I will transmit a faithful account of all this. Therefore, my friend, you may in all safety join yourself to the squadron I am now

fitting out, and I will take care that you shall have an honorable post." What further happened I will next relate.

## CHAPTER VIII

How Diego Velasquez, governor of Cuba, sent out another armament to the country we had discovered.

It was in the year of our Lord 1518, after Diego Velasquez had learnt the good account we gave of the newly-discovered country, called Yucatan, that he determined to send thither another expedition. For this purpose he selected four vessels, among which were the two in which we warriors had accompanied Cordoba on our recent voyage to Yucatan, purchased at our own expense. At the time this squadron was fitting out there were staying at Santiago de Cuba, Juan de Grijalva, Pedro de Alvarado, Francisco de Montejo, and Alonso de Avila; who had commendaries of Indians in these islands, and had come to transact business with the governor. As these were all men of courage and energy, Velasquez soon made arrangements with them to take part in this expedition, on the following terms: that Juan de Grijalva, who was related to him, should have the chief command of the whole expedition as captain-general, while Pedro de Alvarado, Francisco de Montejo, and Alonso de Avila, should be appointed to the command of the three other ships. They had also to furnish the vessels with provisions of cassave bread and pickled meat; Diego Velasquez had, on the other hand, to procure the four vessels, furnish the necessary crossbows,

muskets, goods for barter, and other matters of less importance. Our account that the houses in the newly-discovered country were built of stone and lime, had spread a vast idea of its riches, added to which the Indian Melchorejo had given to understand by signs that it abounded in gold mines. All this created a great desire among the inhabitants and soldiers throughout the island, who possessed no commendaries of Indians, to go in quest of such a rich country; consequently, in a very short time, we mustered 220. Each person, moreover, furnished himself with additional provisions, arms, and other matters which might be useful.

Thus I again took my departure for that country, under the same commanders I subsequently once more visited it. The instructions which our commanders received from Diego Velasquez, were to this effect, that they should barter for as much gold and silver as they could get, and if they deemed it advisable settle colonies, but left this entirely to their own judgment. A person of the name of Penolosa accompanied us in the capacity of comptroller; for priest we had a certain Juan Diaz. We had also the same three pilots who accompanied us on our former voyage; and a fourth, whose name I do not remember. Each had charge of one of the vessels; but the first in command, as chief pilot, was Anton de Alaminos.

But before I proceed with my narrative, I must here remark, that it is not for want of deference on my part, that I barely give the names of the noblemen who were our commanding

officers, without adding their titles and describing their several escutcheons, but shall simply call them thus, Pedro de Alvarado, Francisco de Montejo, and Alonso de Avila. I therefore now take this opportunity of saying, that Pedro de Alvarado was a bold cavalier, who, subsequent to the conquest of New Spain, became governor and chief justice of the provinces of Guatemala, Honduras, and Chaopo, and comptoir of Santiago. In like manner Francisco de Montejo, a man of great courage, subsequently was governor and chief justice of Yucatan. I shall merely call them by their proper names, up to that time when his majesty conferred on them honorary titles and sovereign authority.

But to return to my subject, our four vessels lay in the harbour of Matanza on the north coast, not far from the old Havannah, which at that time was not built where it now stands. In this harbour, or at least in its neighbourhood, most of the inhabitants had their stores of cassave bread and pickled meat. Here consequently our vessels were provided with everything they further required. This place moreover had been appointed the rendezvous for all the officers and men.

But, before I continue my narrative, I will explain how this harbour obtained the name of Matanza,<sup>4</sup> though it may seem rather out of place here; yet, as so many persons have asked me how it originated, there is some excuse.

Some time ago, when Cuba was not quite subdued, it

---

<sup>4</sup> Puerto de Matanza, the harbour of the massacre. (p. [20](#).)

happened that a vessel, bound from the island of St. Domingo to the Luccas, during a heavy storm, was wrecked off the coast. This took place near the river and harbour of Matanza; there were thirty Spaniards and two Spanish ladies on board. In order to convey them across the river, numbers of Indians had collected together from the Havannah and other districts. They appeared most friendly inclined, and offered to carry the shipwrecked across in their canoes and take them to their habitations, where they would give them to eat. The Spaniards accepted this offer; when the Indians, however, had arrived in the midst of the stream, they upset their canoes and drowned them all, save three of the men and one of the females. The men were allotted to the other Indians, but the female, a very beautiful woman, was given to the most powerful of the caziques, the person who had concocted this piece of treachery. From this circumstance it was that the harbour got the name of Matanza.

I was personally acquainted with the female whose misfortune I have just related. After the total conquest of Cuba, she left the cazique in whose power she then was, and married a citizen of Trinidad, by name Pedro Sanchez Farsan.

I was also acquainted with the three Spaniards whose lives had been spared. One was Gonzalo Mexia, an old man, and native of Xeres; the other, Juan de Santiste-ban, from Madrigal; and the third was Cascorro, a sailor and fisherman, of Huelva. The cazique in whose power he was, had given him his daughter in marriage, and bored holes through his ears and nose, after the

Indian fashion.

Having thus detained the reader for a while with these old stories, it is time I return to the thread of my narrative.

On the 5th of April, 1518, all of us having met together, the officers and soldiers, the pilots made acquainted with the signals, and the hour of departure fixed, we attended mass with fervent devotion, and weighed anchor. After ten days' sail, we passed the cape of Guaniguanico, called by the sailors San Anton. Eight days after, we came in sight of the island of Cozumel; it happened to be the feast of the Holy Cross. This time our ships were carried further off by the currents than the time before under Cordoba; the consequence was that we now landed on the south coast of the island. We here espied a village, and found a good anchorage near it, perfectly free from all rocks. Our commander-in-chief, therefore, went on shore here with a good body of soldiers. The inhabitants, who had never witnessed such a sight before, immediately took to flight when they saw our vessels approaching, so that not a single one of them had remained in the village. At length we discovered two Indians among the recently cut maize plants, who had not been able to get off quick enough. We brought them into the presence of our captain, who spoke to them with the help of Julianillo and Melchorejo, whom we had captured at the Punta de Cotoche, and who understood their language. The distance between their countries was only four hours' sail, which accounts for the inhabitants of Cozumel speaking the same language. Our commander was very kind

to them, gave each some green glass beads, and sent them away to bring the Calachoni of the district, (so the caziques are termed here;) they, however, never returned. While we were still waiting for them, an Indian woman came towards us, comely in appearance, and who spoke the language of Jamaica. She told us that the Indians had fled, out of fear, to the mountains. As I myself and many others among us understood her language, which is the same as that of the island of Cuba, we were quite astonished at the circumstance, and inquired of her how she had got here.

She told us that, two years ago, she had left Jamaica with ten Indians, in a large canoe, in order to go fishing among the islands in this neighbourhood, but had been driven on shore by the currents, when the inhabitants killed her husband with most of her companions, and sacrificed them to their gods.

It struck our commander, as soon as he had learnt this, that the woman might be employed as a negotiator. He therefore desired her to go and fetch the inhabitants and cazique of the district, and gave her two days to return in. We durst not send Melchorejo and Julianillo with her, lest they should run away and return to their own country.

The day following, the Indian woman returned, but informed us that, notwithstanding all her representations, she could neither persuade the Indians nor their wives to accompany her. We called this place Santa Cruz, because we had discovered it four or five days before the feast of the Holy Cross. In this neighbourhood

there was plenty of honey, manioc, patates, and large herds of musk swine, which have their navels on their backs.<sup>5</sup> This island contains three poor villages, of which the one I am now speaking of is the largest; the two smaller ones were both situated on a promontory at about six miles distance from each other. Our commander Grijalva, perceiving that it was mere loss of time to make any further stay here, gave orders for re-embarking. The Indian woman of Jamaica went along with us, and we continued our voyage.

---

<sup>5</sup> The sus tajassu, pecary, or Mexican musk hog; but what our old soldier, with other writers, mistook for a navel, is an open gland on the lower part of the back, which discharges a fetid ichorous liquor. (p. [22](#).)

## CHAPTER IX

How we landed at Champoton.

From this point we sailed in the same direction we had taken under Cordoba, and arrived after eight days' sail off the coast of Champoton, the place where the Indians had so ill used us, as has been related in the proper place. The sea being very shallow in these parts we dropt our anchor at about three miles distance from the shore, and immediately landed in all our boats with half of our men, as near to the village as possible. The inhabitants and other Indians in the neighbourhood gathered themselves together as they had the time before, when they killed fifty-six of our men and wounded all the rest of us. From their bearing and proud demeanour we could easily perceive that they had not forgotten their victory. They were all well armed according to their fashion, with bows, lances, shields, and broadswords, which they wield with both hands. Added to all this they had slings, cotton cuirasses, drums and trumpets, while most of them had their faces painted black and white. They had arranged themselves along the sea shore in order to fall upon us as soon as we landed. But, as our previous loss had taught us prudence, we took with us this time some falconets, and otherwise well armed ourselves with crossbows and matchlocks.

When we were near enough they let fly such a shower of

arrows and lances that the half of our men were speedily wounded. As soon, however, as we got on shore, we quickly gave them an evil return with our matchlocks and sabres. Nothing daunted by this they each selected their man, whom they particularly aimed at with their arrows, but we had taken the precaution to put on cotton cuirasses. They continued to combat with us for some time, until the arrival of another of our long boats, when we drove them back to the wells near the village. In this conflict we lost Juan de Quitera and many other soldiers. Our commander, Juan de Grijalva, got three arrow wounds and lost two of his teeth, and above sixty of our men were wounded. Immediately upon our putting the enemy to flight, we entered the village, dressed our wounds, and buried the dead. Not a single person had remained behind in the village, and even those whom we had driven back to the wells had merely staid there a sufficient time to carry off their property. In this skirmish we made three prisoners, one of whom was a person of rank. Our commander set them at liberty, desiring them to go and call the cazique of the district. He also presented them with green glass beads and small bells to distribute among the inhabitants, in order to gain their friendship. We treated the three prisoners upon the whole with every kindness, and gave them glass corals to encourage them and gain their good faith. They left us indeed, but took good care not to return; we thought it possible, however, that Julianillo and Melchorejo had misrepresented our commission to them. We staid four days in this place, and I shall never forget

it on account of the immense sized locusts which we saw here. It was a stony spot on which the battle took place, and these creatures, while it lasted, kept continually flying in our faces; and as at the same moment we were greeted by a shower of arrows from the enemy, we also mistook these locusts for arrows. But, as soon as we had discovered our mistake, we deceived ourselves in another more direful way, for we now mistook arrows for locusts, and discontinued to shield ourselves against them. In this way we mistook locusts and arrows to our great sorrow, were severely wounded in consequence, and otherwise found ourselves in a very awkward predicament.

# CHAPTER X

We continued our course and ran into Terminos bay, as we named it.

On our further voyage we came to an opening on the coast, which to us appeared to be the mouth of some broad and large river. It was, however, not a river as we had supposed, but a good harbour, which reached so far inland, and had such a considerable breadth, that it appeared like a sea; and our pilot Anton de Alaminos confidently asserted that this was an island whose two promontories reached nigh to the continent. We, therefore, termed this opening the Boca de Terminos, under which name it may be found on the sea charts. Our commander and the other officers went on shore here with the greater part of our men, among which number I also was. We remained three whole days in this place in order thoroughly to explore the opening and sail through it in all directions. We discovered, however, that it was no island, but a deep indented bay, formed by the continent, affording us a most commodious harbour. As we also found temples here built of stone and lime, full of idols made of wood or clay, with other figures, sometimes representing women, sometimes serpents, also horns of various kinds of wild animals, we concluded that an Indian village must be near at hand: we considered, moreover, that this would be a

most excellent spot to found a colony. We had, however, deceived ourselves in one thing, the district being quite uninhabited. The temples most probably belonged to merchants and hunters, who on their journies most likely ran into this harbour and there made their sacrifices. Fallow deer and rabbits abounded in this neighbourhood, and with one greyhound only we killed ten of the former and great numbers of the latter. Our dog took such a liking to this spot that it ran away while we were busy reimbarcking, nor did we see it again until we visited this place subsequently with Cortes, when it appeared in excellent condition, quite plump and sleeky.

Having thoroughly explored Terminos harbour, and sounded it throughout, we pursued our course along the coast to the river Tabasco, which at present, after the name of its discoverer, is called the river Grijalva.

## CHAPTER XI

How we came into the Tabasco river, which we termed the Grijalva, and what happened to us there.

As we thus by day sailed along the coast of the continent, for at night we lay to on account of the shallows and rocks, we perceived on the third morning a very broad mouth of some river. We approached the shore as near as possible, thinking we should find a good harbour here. As we came closer to the mouth we saw that the waves broke over its shallows: we consequently lowered our boats to make soundings, and found that our two larger vessels could not come in here. It was therefore immediately resolved that they should anchor further out at sea, but that the two remaining vessels which did not draw so much water, with all our boats well manned, should proceed up the river. We could perceive in the canoes along the shore numbers of Indians with bows and arrows, and in other respects armed exactly like those of Champoton. We concluded from their numbers that a village could not be far off; we also found as we proceeded further up the river along the banks, basket kiddles put out, from two of which we took the fish and placed them in a boat a-stern of our principal ship.

This river was previously called after the cazique of the district, the Tabasco; as we, however, discovered it during this

expedition, we gave it the name of the Grijalva river, in honour of our chief commander, under which name it stands on the sea charts.

We might still have been about two miles from the village when we distinctly heard the crackling noise of the felling of trees; for the Indians were constructing barricades and making other preparations of war against us, of the issue of which they entertained no doubts, as they had been duly advertised of the occurrence at Potonchan. As soon as we learnt this, we disembarked our men on a projecting point of land, about two miles from the village, where some palm trees were growing. As soon as they perceived this, about fifty canoes with Indians completely armed after their fashion made towards us, while many other canoes, manned in the same way, lay dispersed about the haven, at a greater distance, not daring to approach us so near as the first.

Seeing how ready they were for action, we were just upon the point of firing off our great guns, and giving them a volley of musket-shots, when it entered our minds, through a merciful Providence, that we ought first to try if we could not gain their friendship. We therefore by means of Julianillo and Melchorejo, (who were natives of the Punta de Cotoche, and certainly understood the language spoken here,) told the chiefs they had nothing to fear from us: we were desirous of discoursing with them and had things to disclose, which, as soon as they had learnt, would make our arrival pleasing to them: they should come to us

and we would gladly give them of the things we had brought.

Upon this invitation four of the canoes approached us, containing thirty Indians, or thereabouts. We showed them necklaces of blue glass beads, small mirrors, and green imitation corals. At the sight of the latter they appeared quite delighted, for they thought them to be chalchihuis stones, which are highly esteemed in their country.

Our captain then told them, by means of our interpreters, that we came from a distant country, and were the subjects of a great emperor, whose name was Don Carlos, who had numerous sovereigns and caziques among his vassals: they should likewise acknowledge this emperor as their lord and master, for then it would go well with them; – he further desired them to give us fowls in exchange for our glass beads.

Two of the Indians, one of whom was the chief and the other a papa – this is a kind of priest, who performs the ceremonies in presence of their idols – answered and said, "they would bring the provisions we required and commence a trade of barter with us. – For the rest they had already a master, and could not help feeling astonished that we, who had but just arrived and knew nothing of them, should that instant wish to impose a master on them. We had better consider a bit before we commenced war with them, as we had with those at Potonchan. That already all the warriors of the country had been ordered out against us, and two armies, each composed of 8000 men were ready for action. They certainly had learnt that a few days ago we had killed and wounded 200 men;

but they were more powerful than the inhabitants of that country, which was the reason why they first wished to know what our intentions were. Our declaration would be communicated to the caziques of the numerous districts, who had united themselves for war or for peace."

Upon this they embraced our commander, in token of peace, who presented them with necklaces of glass beads, and desired them to return as quickly as possible with an answer; adding that if they did not return we would enter their town by main force, though we had no evil intentions whatever.

These delegates communicated with the caziques and papas – the latter having also a voice in their councils, – and they declared that our offer of peace was acceptable to them. Provisions were ordered to be sent us, and all present agreed that they themselves with the neighbouring tribes should each contribute their quota in order to make us a present in gold to insure our good friendship, and obviate a recurrence of what had taken place at Potonchan. From what I subsequently learnt and witnessed I found that it was customary with the inhabitants of these countries to make each other presents whenever they were in treaty about peace.

All I have been relating took place on the promontory where the palm trees stood. About thirty Indians soon arrived, laden with broiled fish, fowls, fruit, and maise-bread. They also brought pans filled with red-hot embers, on which they strewed incense, and perfumed us all. After this ceremony was ended they spread some mats on the ground, over which they laid a

piece of cotton cloth; on this they put some trifling ornaments in gold in the shape of ducks and lizards, with three necklaces made of gold, which had been melted into the shape of round balls. All these things, however, were of an inferior kind of gold, not worth 200 pesos. They next presented us with some mantles and waistcoats, as they themselves wore, and begged of us to accept them in good kind; saying they had no more gold to give us, but that further on towards the setting of the sun there was a country where it was found in great abundance; hereby often repeating the word Culba, Culba, and Mexico, Mexico. We however did not understand what they meant. Although the presents they had brought us were of little value, we nevertheless rejoiced exceedingly on account of the certainty we had gained that there was gold in this country. Having handed over the presents to us with due formality they told us we might now continue our voyage. Our captain thanked them; presenting each at the same time with some green beads. We now determined to re-embark, for the vessels were in great danger on account of the north wind, which in our present situation was quite contrary. We had, moreover, to go in quest of the country, which, according to the assurances of the Indians, abounded in gold.

## CHAPTER XII

We come in sight of the town of Aguajaluco, and give it the name of La Rambla.

Having again re-embarked we continued our course along the coast, and perceived on the second day a town close to the sea shore, called Aguajaluco. We could discern numbers of Indians hurrying to and fro with huge shields made out of large tortoise-shells, which glittered so beautifully in the sun, that some of our men believed they were made of an inferior species of gold. The inhabitants appeared to be walking up and down the shore in great consternation, which induced us to call the village La Rambla, under which name it stands on the sea charts.

As we proceeded further along the coast we came to a bay, into which the river Tonola empties itself: it was this same river we entered on our subsequent voyage. We gave it the name of Sant Antonio, which it still retains on the maps. We next passed the mouth of the great river Guacasualco, and would gladly have run into the bay which it forms if contrary winds had not prevented us. We now came in sight of the great Snow Mountains – Sierras Nevadas. These are covered the whole year round with snow. There were also other mountains, nearer the coast, to which we gave the name of *Holy Martin*, because a soldier of the name of San Martino, a native of the Havannah,

first descried them. One of the commanders, Pedro de Alvarado, whose vessel was the fastest sailer of the whole, being a great way ahead of the others, ran his ship up a river called by the natives Papalohuna: this we termed the Alvarado, after the name of the discoverer. Some Indian fishermen of the village Tlacotalpa gave him fish: we could perceive this, though at a great distance from him. Alvarado was followed by two more of our ships; we were therefore obliged to wait until they returned. This digression without the general's leave occasioned ill blood; and Grijalva forbade Alvarado in future to sail in advance of the squadron, fearing he might meet with some accident or other before the rest could possibly come up to his assistance. From this time the four vessels kept close together. We soon after arrived at the mouth of another river, which we termed the Bandera's Stream, (Flag Stream,) from the circumstance that the banks of the river were crowded with Indians bearing small flags of white cloth attached to their lances. They called out and invited us to come on shore: but I will relate in the next chapter what further took place here.

## CHAPTER XIII

How we arrive on the Bandera's Stream, and gain 1500 pesos.

By this time the existence of the great city of Mexico must be known throughout the major part of the Spanish provinces and the greater part of Christendom: how, like Venice, it was built in the water; and of the mighty monarch who resided there, king of many provinces and lord of all these countries, which in extent were more than quadruple that of Spain. The name of this monarch was Motecusuma: his power was so great that he would gladly have extended it to places where it was impossible, and he wished to know things which he never could learn. He had, however, heard of our first visit under the command of Cordoba, and of our battle at Cotoche and Champoton, also of the second engagement we had had at the last-mentioned spot. He was moreover aware that we had been but a handful of men in comparison with the multitude of the inhabitants; and lastly, it had been made known to him that we gladly exchanged our goods for gold. All this information had, from time to time, been sent him by means of painted figures or signs, drawn, as is the custom with this people, on a thick kind of cloth manufactured from the maguey,<sup>6</sup> very much resembling our linen. Being also

---

<sup>6</sup> The author sometimes also calls this nequen, of which the garments of the poorer

informed that we were continuing our course along the coast, he issued orders to the governors of the several districts that at every place where we landed they should exchange their gold for our glass beads, but particularly for the green ones, which so much resembled their chalchihuis stones; and further he commanded them to gain every information with respect to our intentions. What made him dwell more particularly upon the latter was the ancient tradition in the country, which spoke of a people that would come from the rising of the sun who would at some future period get the dominion of the country.

For whatever purpose it may have been I will leave, but certain it is that the powerful Motecusuma had ordered sentinels to be posted along the banks of the river above mentioned. These sentinels had all small flags attached to the points of their lances, and called out aloud, inviting us to come to them. While we were contemplating from our vessels this, to us, so novel a sight, our commander-in-chief with the other officers and soldiers came to the determination to inquire their meaning. We therefore lowered two of our boats and manned them with twenty soldiers, well armed with crossbows and muskets. The command of this was given to Francisco de Montejo. I was likewise among the number. Our instructions were to send immediate information to the commander-in-chief if anything of a hostile nature should

---

classes were manufactured. The maguey is the well-known agava Americana, the sap of which formed the national drink of the Indians, and the Mexicans were accustomed to write most of their hieroglyphics on the cloth manufactured from the leaves. (p. 29.)

take place and in general to let him know how matters stood. It pleased God that the weather should be calm, which is seldom the case on these coasts. We all got safe on shore, and were met by three caziques, one of whom was a governor under Motecusuma. These were attended by great numbers of Indians, carrying fowls, maise-bread, pines, sapotas, and other provisions; they spread some mats in the shade of the trees, on which they invited us to sit down. All this was done by signs, as Julianillo did not understand their language. Next they brought pans made of clay, filled with glowing embers, on which they strewed a species of resin, smelling very much like our incense, with which they perfumed us.

Francisco de Montejo sent information of all this to our commander-in-chief, who immediately resolved to run the whole squadron into the bay, and proceed on shore with all our men.

When the caziques and the governor saw our general on shore, who, they had been given to understand, was our chief officer, they paid him in their way the greatest possible respect, and perfumed him most vehemently. We thanked them kindly, and in return made many protestations of friendship, also presenting each with white and green glass beads, desiring them at the same time to bring us gold in exchange for our commodities. Motecusuma's governor strongly advised the Indians to comply with our request; the consequence of which was that the inhabitants of the surrounding districts soon brought us every trinket they possessed in the shape of gold, and commenced a

trade of barter with us. During the six days we stayed in this spot we obtained upwards of 1500 pesos' worth of gold trinkets, of various workmanship, but of inferior quality. The historians Francisco Lopez de Gomara and Gonzalo Hernandez de Oviedo have also mentioned this circumstance in their works. They err, however, when they say it took place in the Tabasco or Grijalva river; for it is a well-authenticated fact that there is no gold found in the provinces which border on the river Grijalva, and, upon the whole, very few ornaments of gold. I will not, however, detain my reader with their account, but rather inform him that we took possession of this country for his imperial majesty the Emperor, in the name of Diego Velasquez, the governor of Cuba. This being done, our general told the Indians that he was now desirous of re-embarking, and presented them with some Spanish shirts. We took one of the Indians with us, who subsequently learnt our language and was converted to Christianity, when he took the name of Francisco. I met with him afterwards at Santa Fé, where he had settled himself after the conquest of Mexico. Our commander, finding that the inhabitants brought no more gold, and considering that we had already been here six days, and that our present anchorage was rather dangerous on account of the contrary winds, gave orders for re-embarking. Pursuing our voyage, we came to an island which was quite covered with white sand, lying above nine miles from the main land. We gave it the name of Isla Blanca, as it stands on the sea charts. Not far from this lay another island, nearly five miles from the main land,

which offered us a very commodious landing-place.

Our general, therefore, ordered the boats to be lowered, and landed, with the greater portion of our men, in order to explore the island. We found two houses, which were strongly built of stone and lime; both were ascended by a flight of steps, and surmounted by a species of altar, on which stood several abominable idols, to whom, the previous evening, five Indians had been sacrificed. Their dead bodies still lay there, ripped open, with the arms and legs chopped off, while everything near was besmeared with blood. We contemplated this sight in utter astonishment, and gave this island the name of *Isla de Sacrificios*. Quitting this place, we landed on the neighbouring continent, where we constructed ourselves huts on one of the large downs, with some sails and the branches of trees. Numbers of Indians soon made their appearance, bringing with them small pieces of gold for barter, in the same way as at the *Bandera* stream, according to the commands of *Motecusuma*, as we subsequently learnt. The inhabitants, however, approached us in great fear, and what they brought with them was a mere trifle. Our captain, therefore, soon weighed anchor again. The next place we landed at was in view of another island, which lay about two miles from the continent. This at present is considered the best harbour of the country. What happened to us in this place I will relate in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XIV

How we came into the harbour of San Juan de Culua.

Having disembarked on a part of the coast where it was very sandy, we were annoyed by such multitudes of muschetoës that we were forced to construct ourselves huts on the great downs and in the tops of trees: this, being done, we carefully examined the harbour in our boats, and were fully satisfied that it contained a good anchorage, it being moreover sheltered against the north wind by the island, to which our general now proceeded with thirty men all well armed. Here we found a temple on which stood the great and abominable-looking god Tetzcatlipuca, surrounded by four Indians, dressed in wide black cloaks, and with flying hair, in the same way as our canons or Dominicans wear it. These were priests, who had that very day sacrificed two boys, whose bodies they had ripped up, and then offered their bleeding hearts to the horrible idol. They were going to perfume us in the same way they had done their gods; and though it smelt like our incense, we would not suffer them, so shocked were we at the sight of the two boys whom they had recently murdered, and disgusted with their abominations. Our captain questioned the Indian Francisco whom we had brought with us from the Bandera stream as to what was meant by all this, for he seemed rather an intelligent person; having, at that

time, as I have already stated, no interpreter, our captain put these questions to him by means of signs. Francisco returned for answer that this sacrifice had been ordered by the people of Culua; but, as it was difficult for him to pronounce this latter word, he kept continually saying *Olua, Olua*. From the circumstance of our commander himself being present, and that his Christian name was Juan, and it happening to be the feast of St. John, we gave this small island the name of San Juan de Ulua. This harbour was ever after much frequented. Great numbers of ships have been refitted there, and all merchandise for Mexico and New Spain are here shipped or unladen. During the time we were encamped on these downs, numbers of Indians from the surrounding districts, brought us their gold trinkets in exchange for our goods; but there was so little of it, and that so very inferior in quality, that we scarcely troubled ourselves about it. We remained, nevertheless, seven days in the huts we had constructed, though we were constantly annoyed by swarms of muschetoës, which rendered our stay most uncomfortable. As we had now been so long at sea, and had fully convinced ourselves that it was no island, but a continent, we had discovered, containing considerable towns; as our cassave-bread was become quite mouldy and unfit for eating; considering, moreover, that our numbers were too small to think of making any settlement here, particularly as we had lost ten of our men in consequence of their wounds, besides having four others dangerously ill, – we determined to forward Diego Velasquez an account of the

state of affairs, and desire him to send us succours; indeed Grijalva had a great mind to have founded a colony even with the few men we had to spare. Our captain had throughout shown a magnanimous spirit, and proved himself a brave soldier, let the historian Gomara say anything to the contrary he likes. Pedro de Alvarado was selected to go on this mission to Cuba, with the ship San Sebastian, which had become rather leaky: this vessel could be refitted there, and return with succours and provisions. He also took with him all the gold we had bartered for, the cotton stuffs presented us by the Indians, and our sick. Our principal officers, moreover, each sent Diego Velasquez a written account, according to their several views, of all we had seen. We will now leave Pedro de Alvarado to his own good fortune on his voyage to Cuba, and relate what happened to the vessel which Diego Velasquez sent in quest of us.

## CHAPTER XV

Diego Velasquez sends out a small vessel in quest of us.

From the very moment in which Juan de Grijalva had quitted Cuba for the wide ocean, Diego Velasquez became downcast and thoughtful; he was constantly harassed by the idea that some misfortune would befall us. In the height of his impatience he at last sent out a small vessel, with seven men, in quest of us. The command of this was given to a certain Christobal de Oli, a man of great courage and energy. His instructions were to follow the same course in which Cordoba had sailed, until he should have met with us. It appears, however, that Christobal de Oli, while riding at anchor near the coast, was overtaken by a violent storm, and found himself compelled, in order to save his vessel from being cast ashore, to cut the cables; at least he had no anchor left on his return to Santiago de Cuba, nor had he been able to bring the governor any information respecting us.

Diego Velasquez now despaired more than ever. The arrival of Pedro de Alvarado with the gold and other things, fortunately set his anxiety at rest, who, moreover, detailed to him the discoveries we had made. His joy was excessive when he saw the gold, and how it was worked into various shapes; from which very circumstance it appeared to him and others who happened to be present on business, of much greater value than it really was;

nor were his majesty's officials, who had to take the fifth part, less astonished at the riches of the countries we had discovered. Pedro de Alvarado, who knew how to humour Diego Velasquez, afterwards related that the governor had continually embraced him, – that festivities and tournaments were celebrated for eight successive days. If the fame of the riches of these countries had been rumoured abroad before, it was now, on account of the gold we had sent, the more so; it soon spread through all the islands, and the whole of Spain.

I shall have occasion to speak of this hereafter, and will also leave Diego Velasquez to his festivities, and return to our vessels at San Juan de Ulua.

# CHAPTER XVI

What befell us on our coasting voyage along the Tusta and Tuspa mountains.

After Pedro de Alvarado had set sail for Cuba, our general and other officers held a consultation with the pilots, when it was determined that we should continue our course along the coast, and push our discoveries as far as possible. As we sailed along, we first came in view of the Tusta, and, two days after, of the more elevated mountains of Tuspa, both of which take their names from two towns lying close to the foot of these mountains. On the whole, we saw numbers of towns lying from six to nine miles inland, now the province of Panuco. At last we arrived at a large stream, to which we gave the name of Canoe river, and dropped anchor at its mouth.

While our vessels were lying at anchor here, and our men had become less careful than usual, sixteen large canoes full of Indians, all equipped for battle, with bows, arrows, and lances, came down the stream and made straight for our smallest vessel, commanded by Alonso de Avila, which lay nearest the shore. They greeted our men with a shower of arrows, wounding two of the soldiers, and then lay hold of the vessel as if they meant to carry her off, after they had cut one of the cables. We now hastened to the assistance of Alonso, who was still bravely

repelling his assailants, and had capsized three of their canoes. We were well armed with crossbows and muskets, and very soon wounded at least above a third of our enemies, who speedily retreated to where they had come from, not exactly in the best of spirits. Upon this we weighed anchor and continued our course along the coast until we arrived at a wide projecting cape, which, on account of the strong currents, we found so difficult to double that we considered our further course now impeded. The chief pilot, Alaminos, here told our commander that it was no longer advisable to sail on at a venture, for which he gave us many plausible reasons. This matter being duly considered in council, it was unanimously agreed that we should return to Cuba.

To this step we were, moreover, induced by the approach of winter, scarcity of provisions, and the bad condition of one of our vessels which had become very leaky. To this may also be added the disagreement between our commanders; for Juan de Grijalva persisted in his opinion that they should make an attempt to leave a colony behind, while Francisco de Montejo and Alonso de Avila, on the contrary, maintained that any such attempt would be fruitless, considering the multitude of warriors which inhabited these countries: to all this may be added that our men were heartily sick of the sea. We therefore turned our vessels about, hoisted all the sails, and arrived in a few days, being greatly assisted by the currents, in the wide waters of the Guacasualco river. We could not make any stay here on account of the boisterous state of the weather, and therefore continued

our course along the coast until we arrived at the mouth of the river Tonala, to which we gave the name of St. Antonio. We ran up this river and careened the leaky vessel, which had struck there several times against the rocks.

While we were busily engaged at this work, numbers of Indians came up to us from the harbour of Tonala, which lay about four miles from this place, bringing with them maize-bread, fish, and fruits, which they readily gave us. Our commander was particularly kind to them, and presented each with white and green glass beads, giving them at the same time to understand by signs that they should bring us gold in exchange for our goods. They soon complied with our wishes, but their gold was of a very inferior quality, for which they received imitation corals. As soon as the inhabitants of Guacasualco and the neighbouring districts had learnt that we offered our goods for barter, they brought us all their golden ornaments, and took in exchange green glass beads, on which they set a high value. Besides ornaments of gold, every Indian had with him a copper axe, which was very highly polished, with the handle curiously carved, as if to serve equally for an ornament as for the field of battle. At first we thought that these axes were made of an inferior kind of gold; we therefore commenced taking them in exchange, and, in the space of two days, had collected more than 600, with which we were no less rejoiced as long as we were ignorant of their real value, than the Indians with our glass beads. One of our sailors, who had by stealth bought seven of

these axes and was secretly congratulating himself on this piece of good fortune, was betrayed to our commander-in-chief, who, ordering the man in his presence, commanded him to deliver up his treasure. Still of opinion that these axes were of gold, the poor fellow, though forced, reluctantly parted with them. This brings to my mind what befell one of our men, named Bartolome Prado: this fellow had managed to get inside of a temple, called by the Indians a cue,<sup>7</sup> which stood upon an elevated spot, and had found in it numerous idols, and some copal, which is the incense of the Indians; also knives made of hard flint, with which they cut their meat offerings, and otherwise make use of in their sacrifices. Besides these things, he found two small wooden boxes, filled with golden trinkets which are worn about the head and neck; also small idols, and other ornaments somewhat resembling our pearls. The idols he brought to his commander, but took care to keep the gold himself. It seems, however, that some one had been watching him all the time, who reported what he had seen to our captain. We all felt concerned at this, and spoke a good word for him, as he was a kind-hearted being: we begged hard of our commander that he might be allowed to retain his treasure, minus the fifth part claimed for the emperor, which being granted, the man had nigh upon eighty pesos left for himself. In this place I must also acquaint my readers how

---

<sup>7</sup> According to Humboldt, the word cue was imported by the Spanish into New Spain from Cuba. The great temple of Mexico was called by the Indians teocalli; a word which Torquemada (*Monarchia Indiana*) thus explains: "Que es come decir, templo, u casas de Dios;" i.e. "As much as to say, a temple, or house of God." (p. 36.)

I sowed some orange seeds close to one of these temples. On account of the numbers of muschetoës which swarm along this river, I had, being tired, laid myself down to rest on the summit of a high temple: in gratitude for the quiet slumber I enjoyed there, I sowed, at the foot of this building, eight orange seeds which I had brought with me from Cuba. These seeds grew very fast, and when grown to small plants, were most probably watered and preserved from the ants by the papas, as soon as they perceived the new plant. I have merely related this in order to acquaint my reader that these were the first orange seeds that were planted in New Spain. Subsequent to the conquest of Mexico and friendly subjection of the Indian tribes on the Guacasualco, this province, being excellently situated, was considered of greater importance than any other, no less on account of its mines than for its beautiful harbour. The country, moreover, abounded in gold, and contained fine pastures for sheep, which was the reason why the most illustrious of the conquistadores<sup>8</sup> of Mexico settled themselves there; among which number was myself, – and I did not forget to look for my orange trees, which, indeed, I transplanted, and they afterwards flourished uncommonly.

I am well aware that it will be said, such old tales as these are quite out of character here; I will not, therefore, say another

---

<sup>8</sup> So those Spaniards, who made the first conquests in New Spain, termed themselves, by way of preference, which name they ever after retained as an honorary title. Even to this day in Spain it is considered very distinguishing to be descended from one of the Conquistadores, and some of the first families there date all their greatness from one of these bold adventurers. (p. [37](#).)

syllable on the subject, but merely acquaint the reader that the inhabitants of these districts were all very much pleased with us, and embraced us at our departure. We set sail for Cuba, and arrived there in the space of forty days, during which time the weather was sometimes favorable and sometimes boisterous. We were most friendly received by the governor Diego Velasquez, who was highly delighted with the additional gold we brought him. Altogether it was well worth 4000 pesos; so that with the 16,000 brought over by Alvarado, the whole amounted to 20,000 pesos. Some make this sum greater, some less; but one thing is certain, the crown officials only took the fifths of the last-mentioned sum. When they were about to take this also of the Indian axes, which we had mistaken for gold, they grew excessively angry on finding them to be merely of a fine species of copper; nor did this circumstance fail to produce the usual laughter at the expense of our trade of barter. Diego Velasquez, however, appeared perfectly satisfied, though not so with his relative Grijalva. This was wrong on his part, for it originated solely in the misrepresentations of Alonso de Avila, a man of a bad disposition, who did all he could, backed by Montejo, to lower Grijalva in his eyes. All this – rumour spread – was done in order to fit out another armament, and select a new commander.

## CHAPTER XVII

Diego Velasquez despatches one of his officials to Spain.

My readers may perhaps think, that what I am now about to relate does not exactly belong to this history; but in the course of it they will readily perceive that I have been obliged to notice many circumstances before I could introduce them to the captain, Hernando Cortes. They ought also to bear in mind, that it often happens that two or three things take place at the same moment; in which case there only remains for the historian to treat of one circumstance after the other, and begin with that which lies nearest at hand. In this place the following comes first under our consideration.

After the arrival of Pedro de Alvarado with the gold which we had made in the newly-discovered country, Diego Velasquez began to fear that some one at court, who might have received private information of all this, would anticipate him, in forwarding his imperial majesty the first news of our important discovery, and so rob him of the reward. He, therefore, despatched one of his chaplains, named Benito Martinez, a thorough man of business, to Spain, with letters and a few of the valuable things, to Don Juan Rodriguez Fonseca, bishop of Burgos, and archbishop of Rosano. He wrote at the same time to the licentiate Louis Zapata, and the secretary Lope Conchillos,

who at that time had the conduct of all Indian affairs under the archbishop.

Diego Velasquez was quite devoted to these gentlemen, and had presented them with considerable Indian villages in Cuba, with the inhabitants of which they worked their gold mines. But he took particular care to provide well for the archbishop, troubling himself very little about his majesty, who was at that time in Flanders.

He sent moreover to these, his patrons, a great portion of the gold trinkets which Alvarado had brought with him; for everything that was determined in the imperial council of India depended upon these gentlemen. Diego Velasquez therefore sought, by means of his chaplain, to obtain unlimited permission to fit out armaments at any time he might think proper to make voyages of discovery, and to found colonies in the new countries as well as in those that might subsequently be discovered: in the accounts he transmitted to Spain, he spoke of the many thousands of gold-pesos which he had already spent in like undertakings; thereby giving such a favorable direction to the negotiations of his chaplain, Benito Martinez, that his expectations were more than fulfilled, who even obtained for him the additional title of Adelantado of Cuba. This latter appointment, however, did not arrive until the new expedition under Cortes had left. I will not make any further remarks on these matters at present, but rather say a few words respecting Francisco Lopez de Gomara's History of the Conquest of New

Spain and Mexico. His history fell into my hands while I was writing my own, and I soon foresaw that I should have to contradict him in many instances. My intention is to give a faithful account, and that in due order, of every circumstance; this will greatly differ from his narrative, which is quite at variance with truth.

## CHAPTER XVIII

Of some errors in the work of Francisco Lopez de Gomara.

While busily engaged writing this narrative, the eloquent History of the Conquest of Mexico and New Spain, by Gomara, fell into my hands; and when I perceived the elegance of his style, and considered the rudeness of my own, I laid down my pen, ashamed at the very thoughts of its being read by men of distinction. With my spirits thus damped, I once more undertook to go through his history; it was then I, for the first time, discovered how mistaken this author was with respect to the occurrences which had really taken place in New Spain. He is equally bad whenever he writes about the magnitude of the towns and number of the inhabitants; in which, whenever it suits him, he does not, for instance, hesitate a moment to put 8000 for eight. In the same way he mentions the extensive buildings we were stated to have commenced, though, in fact, we were only 400 in number when we first went out to war, and had sufficient work to defend ourselves and prevent the victory from going over to our enemies. Though the Indians may have been timid, we were, nevertheless, guiltless of such wholesale slaughter and other barbarities as Gomara would lay to our doors. On the contrary, such was our situation, and I hereby seal my words with an oath when I state,

that we daily offered up our prayers to God and the Holy Virgin to preserve us from destruction.

Alaric was certainly a most courageous monarch, and Attila a soldier whose excessive pride would not allow him to shrink back from anything; yet they never slaughtered such multitudes of human beings on the Catalonian plains as we do in the book of Gomara!

In the same way he mentions what numbers of towns and temples we either burnt or destroyed. I am speaking of the Indian temples, called by the inhabitants cues. This latter circumstance would certainly be most pleasing to his readers; but he never gave it a thought, when he was writing, that the conquistadores themselves, and those better informed, would detect his errors and falsehoods. Even in his other works, whenever he speaks about New Spain, he immediately commits blunders. In one place he praises a commander far above his merits, for which very reason he in another most unjustly diminishes that of a second. In another place again, he gives many a one a command who was not even in the army during the conquest: he gives, for instance, the chief command at the battle fought near the town afterwards called Almeria, to Pedro d'Irico, when, in fact, it was Juan de Escalante who commanded on that occasion, and was killed with seven of his men. Again he says, that Juan Velasquez de Leon founded the colony of Guacasualco, although it was Gonzalo de Sandoval, of Avila. There is as much truth in his account when he says that Cortes ordered

the Indian Quezal Popoca, one of Motecusuma's chiefs, to be burnt, together with the village in which it was stated he had hid himself. Equal reliance may be placed in his description of our entry into the town and fortress of Anga Panga, where everything happened exactly contrary to what he has stated. In his narrative of our proceedings on the downs, when we had appointed Cortes captain-general and chief justice, he has allowed himself to be deceived by false information, while he has totally misrepresented our taking of the town Chamula, in the province of Chiapa. A still greater blunder he commits when he states that Cortes issued his orders secretly for the destruction of the eleven vessels which had brought us to New Spain, for it is perfectly well known that the ships were run on shore by our unanimous consent, and in presence of us all, in order that the sailors might also be armed and accompany us on our march.

In like manner he lowers the merits of Juan de Grijalva, although he had proved himself such a worthy officer; while he passes by Hernandez de Cordoba in silence, though he was the first who discovered Yucatan: of Francisco de Garay he says, that he had accompanied us on the previous expedition under Grijalva, though he first visited New Spain during this last expedition. In the account he gives of the arrival of Narvaez, and the victory we gained over him, he is certainly more faithful, and has been well informed of all the circumstances; but, with respect to the battles with the Tlascallans, up to the time when peace was concluded with them, he has again diverged from the

truth. Concerning the battle we fought in the city of Mexico itself, in which we were worsted and beaten back with the loss of 860 of our troops, of whom a great portion was sacrificed to the idols, – I repeat, where above 860 of our men were killed, for out of 1300 soldiers who had marched into the town to the relief of Pedro de Alvarado, which made out the united forces of Narvaez and Cortes, only 440 escaped, and even these were all wounded, – of this great and important deed of arms he speaks as if it were a mere nothing. He says as little of the subsequent conquest we made of the great city of Mexico, or the manner in which we accomplished it, and omits to mention the number of our killed and wounded; as if this undertaking had merely been a jolly marriage-procession. But why should I continue to enumerate all these particularities one by one, it is a mere waste of ink and paper! I can only say that it is a great pity if Gomara pursues the same course in all his works; for in the beautiful style in which he writes, he ought to make truth perceptible, and distinguish himself therein. But enough of Gomara; I have sufficiently proved, to the sorrow of his readers, how far he has gone beside the truth. I will now return to my history, and strive to act up to the advice of wise men, who say that honesty and truth are the true ornaments to history. Indeed, my rude style of writing would be insupportable without truth, and therefore I was determined to put my trust in it, and continue my narrative in the way I had begun, that it might go to the press, and publish to the world the conquest of New Spain, as it really took place. In this

way his imperial majesty will also learn the great services which we, the true conquistadores, have rendered to the crown; how small our numbers were when we first arrived in this country, under the command of our highly-favoured and faithful captain, Hernando Cortes; what dangers we had to brave; and, lastly, how we conquered this kingdom, which forms a great part of the New World, and for which reason his majesty, our most christian king and master, has so often ordered that we should be rewarded. However, I will not say anything further on this head, though much might be said. In resuming my pen I will, like a careful pilot who throws out the lead when he is in danger of shallows, search after truth, where the historian Gomara flies away from it. I will not, however, detain my readers by entering into minute particulars, but always keep the whole in view, in order that the costs of gathering the leasings may not amount to more than the value of the full vintage. If other historians should further swell out my narrative, and bestow on Cortes, our commander, and on the brave conquistadores in this great and holy expedition, their just measure of praise, I can at least say that I have witnessed for the truth. These, indeed, are not stories about strange countries, or dreams, or contradictory statements; everything I relate, if I may so say, happened but yesterday, and the whole of New Spain can test these representations, and judge how far those are correct who have written on the same subject. I will relate that of which I myself was an eyewitness, facts which I know to be true, and will pay no attention to the contradictory

statements of those who merely write from hearsay, for truth is a sacred thing. I will therefore say no more on this head, though I could, if I liked, say a good deal; and merely add, that there are good grounds for believing that when Gomara was writing his history, he had been deceived by false information: with him, every circumstance is made to turn to the glory and honour of Cortes, while no mention is made of the other brave officers and soldiers; but, the partiality of this author is sufficiently seen from the circumstance of his having dedicated his work to the present Marquis del Valle, son of Cortes, and not to his majesty the king. But, alas! these untruths and errors are not peculiar to Francisco Lopez de Gomara, but have also been the means of leading many other writers and historians who had followed his work into like error, as for instance, Doctor Illescas and Paulo Jovio, who have exactly copied Gomara's account, without adding or taking away a single word. For all their blunders they are indebted to Gomara.

## CHAPTER XIX

How another armament was fitted out for a voyage to the newly discovered countries. The command of which was given to Hernando Cortes, afterwards Marquis of the Vale of Oaxaca; also of the secret cabals which were formed to deprive him of it.

Immediately after the return of Juan de Grijalva from our last voyage of discovery, in the year 1518, Diego Velasquez issued orders for the fitting-out of a more considerable armament than the foregoing. For this purpose he had ten vessels lying in the harbour of Santiago de Cuba, at his disposal. Among these were the four vessels in which we had just returned with Grijalva, which had been immediately refitted and careened. The six others had been collected from the different ports of the island. The vessels were provided with sufficient provisions, consisting in cassave-bread, tobacco, and smoked bacon, to last us on our voyage to the Havannah, where they were to be fully equipped, for at that time there was neither beef nor mutton to be had in Cuba. In the meantime, however, Diego Velasquez could not make up his mind to whom he should intrust the command. Some cavaliers certainly mentioned Vasco Porcallo, a captain of great renown, and related to the earl of Feria, who, it was said, would shortly arrive to take the command. This man, however, did not suit Diego Velasquez; he feared his daring spirit, and was

apprehensive that once having the armament under his command he would declare himself independent of him. Others again spoke of Augustin Bermudez, Antonio Velasquez Borrego, and Bernardino Velasquez, who were all three relatives of Velasquez. We soldiers, however, would not hear of any other than Juan de Grijalva, who, besides being a brave officer, bore an unblemished character; a man moreover who fully understood the art of commanding. While such like rumours were afloat, the affair was secretly settled, by two confidants of Diego Velasquez, Andreas de Duero, secretary to the governor, and Almador de Lares, the royal treasurer, with Hernando Cortes. Cortes was a cavalier of rank, a native of Medellin, and son of Martin Cortes de Monroy, and of Catalina Pizarro Altamirano, both descendants of two ancient noble families of Estremadura, though then in rather straitened circumstances. Cortes had an Indian commendary in Cuba, and had been recently married to Doña Catalina Suarez Pacheco, daughter of the late Diego Suarez Pacheco of Avila, and of Maria de Mercaida of Biscay; and sister to Juan Suarez Pacheco, who, subsequent to the conquest of New Spain, took up his abode in Mexico, where he had a commendary. This marriage proved very expensive to Cortes, and had even occasioned his imprisonment. Diego Velasquez favoured the family of Cortes's wife, who had been averse to the match: but I must leave this for others to expatiate upon, and rather confine myself to the principal subject in this place, which is, to acquaint my reader that the above-mentioned confidants of Diego Velasquez did

all in their power to obtain the appointment of commander-in-chief for Cortes; who, on the other hand, had promised to share equally with them all the profits arising from the gold, silver, and jewels, which pending this expedition should fall to his share, which might turn out very considerable, since the real design of Diego Velasquez, in fitting-out this expedition, was not to make settlements, but that a trade of barter should be carried on with the natives. Duero and the royal treasurer, therefore, employed all their cunning with the governor. They took every opportunity of placing Cortes in the most favorable light – extolling his great courage, in a word, declared him to be the most proper person whom he could intrust with the command. In him he might place implicit confidence, the more so since he himself had been present as a witness at Cortes's marriage, and given the bride away, and was thus spiritually related to him. Their endeavours were indeed crowned with success, by Diego Velasquez conferring the appointment of captain-general of the expedition on that gentleman. The secretary Duero did not fail on this occasion, as the saying is, to write out the commission with the best of ink, to word it agreeably to Cortes's wishes, and finish it in all haste. When the appointment became known to the public, some approved of it and others not.

On the Sunday following, as Diego Velasquez was on his way to church, accompanied by the principal personages in the town, as was due to him in his capacity of governor, it happened that he did Cortes the honour of placing him on his right side; on the

road they were met by a jester, nick-named the fool Servantes: this fellow kept in front of the governor, cutting all manner of ridiculous figures and playing all sorts of pranks. "Well-a-day, friend Diego, (commenced this jack-pudding,) what manner of a captain-general have you appointed? He of Medellin and Estremadura! A captain who wants to try his fortune in no small way. I am afraid he will cut his sticks with your whole squadron; for he is a terrible fellow when he once begins, this you may read in his countenance." As he was chattering on in this strain for some time and growing more severe in his observations, Andreas de Duero, who was walking by the side of Cortes, hit him a good blow on the head, crying out at the same time, "begone you drunken fool! I am sure these scandalous pleasantries never emanated in your brain." The buffoon, however, took no notice of this, but commenced a-new. "Long live my friend Diego and the bold captain Cortes! Upon my life, master Diego, I must really go myself with Cortes to those rich countries, in order that you may not repent of the bargain you have made!" Nobody doubted for a moment that it was Velasquez, the governor's relative, who had feed the jester with a few pesos to utter these complaints, all emanating from a bad feeling. Everything this fool had predicted, however, took place to the very letter, and only proves that fools often speak the truth. It is nevertheless certain that the appointment of Hernando Cortes was pleasing in the eyes of God, a blessing to our holy religion, and of the first importance to his majesty, as will be clearly proved in the sequel.

## CHAPTER XX

Of the designs and plans of Hernando Cortes after he had obtained the appointment of captain.

After Hernando Cortes had thus been appointed captain, he immediately set about to collect all manner of arms and ammunition, consisting of matchlocks, crossbows, powder, and the like; in the same way he took care to provide a large stock of goods for barter, and other necessaries requisite for our expedition. He was now also most particular in adorning his outward person, more than ordinarily: he stuck a bunch of feathers in his cap, to which he fastened a golden medal, which gave him a very stately appearance. Notwithstanding all this he was at that time greatly pinched for money to purchase the things he required, being, in addition, head and ears in debt: for, though his commendary was a lucrative one, and his gold mines very productive, he required it all for his own person and the dress of his young wife. For the rest his countenance was most winning, his conversation agreeable, while he was beloved by every one. He had been twice Alcalde of Santiago de Boroco, where he resided, which is esteemed a great honour in these parts. When, therefore, his friends among the merchants, Jaime Tria and a certain Pedro de Xeres, heard of his appointment, they lent him 4000 gold pesos and other merchandise, upon the income arising

from his commendary. With this money he bought a state robe with golden trains, ensigns bearing the arms of our sovereign the king, on each side of which was the figure of a cross, beneath this a Latin inscription, the meaning of which was: "Brothers, let us in true faith follow the cross, and the victory is ours!" He then made known by sound of drum and trumpet, in the name of his majesty and Diego Velasquez the governor, that all those who felt inclined to accompany him to the conquest and colonization of the newly-discovered countries, should have a share in the gold, silver, and jewels they might gain; also that, when any one settled himself there, he should be presented with an Indian commendary, the distribution of which his majesty had confided to Diego Velasquez.

Although this proclamation was made previous to the return of the chaplain Benito Martinez, whom Diego had despatched to Spain to procure for him such authority and other powers, yet it made a deep impression among the inhabitants of the island. Cortes, also, at the same time wrote to all his friends, inviting them to join the expedition. Many there were who sold all they were possessed of, to buy themselves arms and a horse; others purchased stores of cassave-bread and salted bacon to provision the ships, and otherwise equipped themselves as well as they could. Our numbers had increased to 300 soldiers when we left Santiago de Cuba: we were even joined by some of the principal personages of Diego Velasquez's household; among the number was Diego de Ordas, his steward. To this he had certainly been

advised by his master, to see that nothing was done opposed to his interests, as he did not altogether trust Cortes. There was also Francisco de Morla, Escobar, Herredia, Juan Ruano, Pedro Escudero, and Martin Ramos de Pares of Biscay, with many other friends and acquaintances of Velasquez. Myself I speak of last. Though I have merely enumerated these warriors as they came to my memory; without wishing, however, to give one any preference above the other. I intend hereafter to give the names of them all in the proper place.

While Cortes was thus making every exertion to expedite the equipment of the vessels, the malice and envy of the relatives of Velasquez was not silent, who felt themselves most grievously neglected that the command should have been intrusted to Cortes. Velasquez had only shortly beforehand shown his hatred to Cortes on account of his marriage, and even persecuted him; they were therefore the more spiteful, and in every way strove to lower him in the eyes of the governor, hoping thereby to deprive him of the command. Cortes, who was fully acquainted with this, took care to be always at Velasquez's side. He took every opportunity of showing his attachment to him, and spoke of nothing but of the glory of this undertaking, and of the vast riches it could not fail, in a short time, to bring his patron Velasquez. Even Andreas de Duero urged Cortes by all means to hasten the embarkation, as the relatives of Velasquez had already succeeded in altering his sentiments with regard to Cortes. The latter therefore desired his wife to send him on

board the provisions and other presents which women under such circumstances are accustomed to give their husbands. He made known to the masters and pilots of the different vessels the day and hour of departure, and ordered all the men to be on board by a certain day.

Everything being now ready for his departure, and all the men on board, Cortes called upon the governor to take leave of him, and was accompanied on this occasion by his best friends and companions in arms, Andreas de Duero, the royal treasurer, Almador de Lares, and the principal inhabitants of the town. Velasquez and Cortes vowed eternal friendship, and did not part until they had several times embraced each other.

The next morning early we attended mass, after which we marched to our vessels accompanied by the governor and a number of cavaliers in honorable escort.

The weather being very fine, we arrived, after a few days' sail, safely in the harbour of Trinidad, and landed there.

From what has already been said, and will further be seen in the following chapter, the reader may easily imagine the various difficulties Cortes had to struggle with; though, when my narrative is confronted with that of Gomara, it will be found how greatly they differ. Gomara, for instance, will have that Andreas de Duero was a merchant, though, as private secretary to the governor, he had considerable weight in the island; and of Diego de Ordas, he says, that he accompanied the expedition under Grijalva, though he never went out until this time with Cortes.

But I will leave Gomara and his miserable history, and relate our doings in the town of Trinidad.

## CHAPTER XXI

Cortes's occupations at Trinidad, and of the cavaliers and warriors who there joined our expedition, and other matters.

On the first notice of our arrival at Trinidad, the inhabitants came out to welcome us and our commander Cortes. Among the great body of cavaliers in this place, every one strove hardest to have Cortes for his guest. Cortes immediately planted his standard in front of his dwelling, and made the public acquainted with the particulars of the expedition in the same way as he had done at Santiago, and further collected whatever he could in the shape of firearms with other necessaries. Here we were also joined by the Alvarados, namely, Pedro, who has often been mentioned in this history, his brothers Gonzalo, Jorge, Gomez, and his natural brother the elder Juan Alvarado. Further we were here joined by Alonso de Avila of Avila, who had a command in the last expedition, under Grijalva; Juan de Escalante, Pedro Sanchez Farsan of Sevilla; Gonzalo Mexia, subsequently treasurer at Mexico; Vaena, Juanes de Fuentarabia, and Christobal de Oli, who had a command at the taking of Mexico, and in all the battles fought in New Spain. Further, Ortiz, the musician, and Gaspar Sanchez, nephew to the treasurer of Cuba; Diego de Pinedo, Alonzo Rodriguez, who possessed

some lucrative gold mines, and Bartolome Garcia. To which may be added many other cavaliers whose names at present I cannot remember, all personages of influence and respectability. From this place Cortes also wrote letters to Santispiritus, fifty-four miles from Trinidad, and made our expedition known to the public there. He knew so well how to mix up his sentences with inviting expressions and great promises, that many of the first personages of that town were thereby induced to join us. These were Hernando Puertocarrero, cousin to the earl of Medellin, and Gonzalo de Sandoval, who had been eight months alguacil-major and governor, and was afterwards a commander in New Spain; also Juan Velasquez de Leon, a relation of Diego Velasquez; Rodrigo Rangel, Gonzalo Lopez de Ximena, with his brother Juan Lopez, and Juan Sedeño. This latter gentleman was an inhabitant of Santispiritus, and had joined Cortes because of the two other Sedeños who were among us. These gentlemen, who were all men of consequence, had arrived at the same time in Trinidad, when Cortes, accompanied by the whole of us, went out to meet them. Cannons were fired, and other rejoicings took place on this occasion, while professions of esteem and friendship were past from one party to the other. All these men possessed land in the neighbourhood of this town, where they ordered cassave-bread to be made, and bacon to be cured, and otherwise collected all the provisions they possibly could for our vessels. Here also we hired soldiers, and purchased some horses, which latter, at that time, were very scarce, and only to be had

at exorbitant prices. Alonso Hernandez de Puertocarrero, whom I had previously known, had not sufficient money to purchase himself a horse; Cortes, therefore, bought one for him, and paid for it with the golden borders of the velvet robe he had procured at Santiago. About this time there also arrived in the port of Trinidad a vessel belonging to a certain Juan Sedeño, of the Havannah, laden with cassave-bread and salted meat, which was destined for the mines of Santiago. This Sedeño, who had called upon our commander to pay his respects, was soon persuaded, by the eloquence and address of Cortes, to sell him his ship with the lading and all, and himself to join the expedition. We had now eleven ships in all, and everything, thanks to Providence, was going on well, when letters arrived from Diego Velasquez with peremptory orders that Cortes was to be deprived of the command. But I will detail this matter in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER XXII

How the governor Diego Velasquez sends two of his officials in all haste to Trinidad, with full power and authority to deprive Cortes of his appointment of captain, and bring the squadron away, &c.

I must now carry my narrative back a few days, in order to relate what happened at Santiago de Cuba after our departure. We had scarcely set sail when Diego Velasquez's friends left him not a moment's peace, harassing him until they had totally revolutionised his sentiments with regard to Cortes. They now plainly told him that he might consider Cortes as lost to his interests from his having so secretly sneaked away from the harbour. Neither had he made any secret of his determination to have the chief command of the armament, whether Diego might wish it or not; for which reason he had embarked his men at night-time, that if any attempt were made to deprive him of the squadron, he would resist it by main force. He, the governor, had been deceived by his private secretary Duero, and De Lares the royal treasurer, who had both made some previous agreement with Cortes to procure him the command. But in particular the relatives of Velasquez were constantly urging him to cancel the recent appointment of Cortes, in which they were backed by a certain old man, named Juan Millan, commonly termed the

astrologer, who was considered by many not to be exactly in his proper senses. This old man repeatedly told the governor that Cortes would now revenge himself for his having, some time ago, thrown him into prison: "Sly and artful as he is, he will be the means of ruining you, if you are not upon your guard."

These hints were not thrown away upon Velasquez; they brought about a revolution in his mind, which ended in his despatching two trustworthy persons out of his establishment, with private instructions to his brother-in-law Francisco de Verdugo, then alcalde major of Trinidad, by which he was peremptorily commanded, under all circumstances, to deprive Cortes of the squadron, whose appointment of captain had been withdrawn, and given to Vasco Porcallo. At the same time he wrote letters to Diego de Ordas, Francisco de Morla, and to his relations and friends, desiring them, at all events, to leave the squadron.

As soon as Cortes got information of this, he had a secret interview with Ordas and all those officers and inhabitants of Trinidad, who, he thought, might feel inclined to obey the orders of Velasquez. To these he spoke so feelingly, and in such kind terms, accompanied by such great promises, that they were all soon gained over to his side. Diego de Ordas even undertook to advise the alcalde major Francisco de Verdugo not to put these commands immediately into execution, and to keep them secret; telling him, at the same time, he had seen nothing in Cortes which gave the slightest reasons for suspecting him of

anything wrong; on the contrary, he had, on every occasion, given proofs of his adherence to the governor. He assured him, moreover, that it would be an impossibility to deprive Cortes of the command of the squadron, in which he had so many friends among the cavaliers, and Diego Velasquez so many enemies, who would not easily forgive him that he had neglected to bestow on them more profitable commendaries. Besides the number of friends Cortes had among the officers, he could rely upon most of the soldiers, and thus it would be useless to attempt anything against him. The whole town would become mixed up in the quarrel, which would be plundered by our men, and even worse consequences might follow. By these arguments, Ordas prevented all violent measures; and one of the above-mentioned officials, whom Diego had sent with despatches to his nephew, named Pedro Laso, even joined our expedition. The other, Cortes sent back with a letter to the governor, in which he made use of every kind sentiment, and expressed his utter astonishment at the resolution he had taken, particularly as he had no other design than to serve God, his majesty the king, and the governor. He earnestly advised him not to listen any further to his cousin Velasquez, nor to allow the kind feeling he entertained for him to be poisoned by such an old fool as Juan Millan. Cortes, at the same time, wrote to his other friends, and in particular to his two confederates, the private secretary and royal treasurer.

The next step he took was to command his men to put their arms into good repair. Every smith in the town was set to work to

fix points to our lances, and the gunners were ordered to search every magazine for arrows. He at last even persuaded the very smiths to join the armament.

We remained altogether twelve days at Trinidad, and thence sailed for the Havannah. From the foregoing statement, the reader will readily perceive how differently all this has been related by Gomara, who even makes Velasquez confer the chief command on Ordas; the latter, he says, invited Cortes to dine with him on board his vessel, had him seized while at dinner, and taken off prisoner to Santiago. I could cite many similar errors from Gomara's history, and thereby convince the reader that it is better to believe an eyewitness than an author who writes about things he never saw. However, enough of Gomara; let us return to our subject.

## CHAPTER XXIII

Cortes embarks with all his cavaliers and soldiers in order to sail along the south side of the island to the Havannah, and sends off one of the vessels to go around the north coast for the same port.

Cortes, finding that he had nothing further to do at Trinidad, acquainted his officers and men with the hour of departure, leaving it to each one's choice either to proceed to the Havannah by sea, or march thither overland, under the command of Pedro de Alvarado, who would be joined by some men from one of the colonies, on his road. Alvarado was a kind-hearted man, who knew best how to deal with soldiers; wherefore I myself, with fifty other military men, gladly joined him; our numbers were, moreover, increased by all our horse. Cortes also sent a vessel, under the command of Juan de Escalante, which was to shape its course around the north coast to the Havannah. Cortes then embarked, and proceeded, with the whole squadron, for the same port. The transport ships must, however, have missed the vessel of our commander-in-chief in the night, as they all arrived safe at the Havannah without it. The troops under Pedro de Alvarado also arrived in good time, and the vessel under the command of Escalante, which had sailed around the north coast.

Cortes alone remained behind; nor could any one account

for his delay, or what could possibly have detained him. Five days passed away without our obtaining the least tidings of him, and we already began to fear that he had been shipwrecked off the Jardines,<sup>9</sup> which lie from thirty to thirty-six miles from the Havannah, near the Pinos isles, where the sea is very shallow. we therefore determined to send out our three smaller vessels in quest of her; but what with the fitting-out of these vessels, added to the manifold opinions and advices, two more days elapsed, and Cortes still remained behind. All manner of artifices were now had recourse to, as to whom the command should be given, until some certainty was gained respecting the fate of Cortes, in which Diego de Ordas, in his capacity of steward over the household of Velasquez, and secret observer of our movements, was most active.

The following misfortune had befallen Cortes. When his vessel, which was of considerable tonnage, had arrived off the Pinos isles on the shallows of the Jardines, there was not sufficient depth of water to carry her, and she consequently got aground. The ship had now to be unladen, which was an easy matter, on account of the nearness of the shore. As soon as she was set afloat again and brought into deeper water she was reloaded and pursued her voyage to the Havannah. The joy among the officers and soldiers was very great as soon as she became visible in the horizon, to those excepted who had prized

---

<sup>9</sup> Jardines, or the Caribbee islands, lying along the south coast of Cuba, better known as the Windward and Leeward islands. (p. [51](#).)

themselves with the command, to whose machinations, however, there was now an end. We accompanied Cortes to the house of Pedro Barba, Velasquez's lieutenant at Trinidad, where quarters had been got ready for his reception. He immediately hoisted his standard in front of his dwelling, and by public proclamation invited the inhabitants to join the expedition.

It was here that Francisco de Montejo first joined us, of whom I shall often have to speak in the course of this history: subsequent to the conquest of Mexico he became adelantado and governor of Yucatan and the Honduras. Here we were also joined by Diego de Soto of Toro, namely, who afterwards was Cortes's steward in Mexico; further, Angula and Garci Caro, Sebastian Rodriguez, Pacheco, Gutierras, Royas (this is not he commonly called the wealthy); also by a young fellow of the name of Santaclara; the two brothers, Martinez del Frexenal and Juan de Najara – not the deaf one of the tennis-court at Mexico: all of whom were men of rank and quality. There were also other soldiers who joined us, whose names I have forgotten.

When Cortes, therefore, beheld all these cavaliers together, his heart leaped with joy, and he sent off another ship for a further supply of provisions to the promontory of Guaniguanico, where Velasquez had landed property. Here was a village where cassave-bread was made, and quantities of swine's flesh cured. He gave the command of this vessel to Diego de Ordas, who, as Velasquez's steward, ordered matters on his master's property as he liked. Cortes wished to keep him out of the way, having learnt

that Ordas had not spoken in very favorable terms of him during the dispute as to whom the command should be given, when he was detained off the Pinos isles. Ordas's instructions were to remain in the harbour of Guaniguanico, after he had taken in his lading, until the arrival there of the vessel which was to sail around the north coast, with which he was then to proceed to the island of Cozumel, provided he received no further instructions by Indian canoes.

Francisco de Montejo and other cavaliers of the Havannah likewise furnished quantities of cassave-bread and cured bacon; there being no other kind of provisions to be had. In the meantime Cortes ordered all our heavy guns, consisting in ten copper cannons and a few falconets, to be brought on shore and given in charge of an artilleryman, named Mesa, a certain Arbenga who traded to the Levant, and Juan Catalan, to prove them, and otherwise put them into good repair; also to furnish for each the right-sized balls and proper quantity of powder. He also gave them an assistant, named Bartolome de Usagre, and furnished them with vinegar and wine to polish the copper pieces. In the same way all our crossbows were inspected, and their strength ascertained by shooting at the target. Cotton being very plentiful here we constructed ourselves cuirasses with it, which form the most efficient protection against Indian arrows, pikes, and slings. Here it was also that Cortes put his establishment on a much superior footing, and had himself served as a person of the first quality. He took for his

butler a certain Guzman, who was subsequently killed by the Indians; he must not, however, be confounded with Christobal de Guzman, who afterwards became his steward, and was the man whom took the king Quauhtemoctzin prisoner, during the battle in the suburbs of Mexico. Rodrigo Rangel he appointed his chamberlain, and Juan de Caceres his house-steward, who after the conquest of Mexico was considered a man of great wealth. Having ordered all these things, he commanded us to hold ourselves in readiness for embarking, and to distribute the horses among the vessels, for which the necessary quantity of maise and hay had been provided.

For memory's sake I will here likewise describe the horses and mares which we took with us on our expedition. Cortes had a dark chesnut stallion, which died afterwards at St. Juan de Ulua. Pedro de Alvarado and Hernando Lopez d'Avila had jointly an excellent brown mare, which had been broken-in for the field of battle as well as for tournaments. After our arrival in New Spain, Alvarado bought Lopez's share, or perhaps took forcible possession of it. Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero had a grey-coloured mare, which Cortes had purchased for him with the golden borders of his state-robe, it was capitally trained for the field of battle. Juan Velasquez de Leon's mare was of the same colour, a noble and powerful animal, full of fire and eager for battle: we commonly termed it the "short tail."

Christobal de Oli had a dark brown fine-spirited horse. Francisco de Montejo and Alonso de Avila had between them

a sores-coloured horse, but of little use in battle. Francisco de Morla had likewise a dark chesnut stallion, one full of fire and wonderfully swift. The light-coloured horse of Juan de Escalante was not worth much. The grey-coloured mare of Diego de Ordas, which would never foal, was neither very swift. Gonzalo Dominiguez had a small dark-brown nag, a very swift and noble animal. Also the brown-coloured horse of Pedro Gonzalez de Truxillo was a swift animal. Moron, who was a native of Vaimo, had a small horse which was pretty well trained. Vaena, of Trinidad, had a darkish-coloured horse, though a bad leaper. The light-coloured chesnut galloway of De Lares was, on the other hand, a splendid animal and a capital runner.

Ortiz, the musician, and a certain Bartolome Garcia, who had applied himself to the art of mining, had between them a very good dark-coloured horse, which they named the Arriero (mule-driver,) and was one of the best animals of the whole corps. Juan Sedeño, of the Havannah, had a fine chesnut mare, which foaled on board. This Sedeño was considered to be the most wealthy man amongst us; for he had a ship of his own, a horse, a few negroes to attend upon him, and his own lading of cassave and cured bacon. Just about this time horses and negroes were only to be purchased for very high prices, which accounts for the small number of the former we had with us on this expedition.

However, I will stop here, and relate in the next chapter what happened as we were just about to embark.

## CHAPTER XXIV

Diego Velasquez sends one of his officials, named Gaspar Garnica, with full authority to take Cortes prisoner, whatever might be the consequence; and what further happened.

In order that my history may be perfectly intelligible to my readers, I must sometimes recur to prior events. In this place I have to return to Diego Velasquez, who, when he learnt that his brother-in-law, Francisco Verdugo, sub-governor of Trinidad, had not only confirmed Cortes in his appointment over the squadron, but even, conjointly with Diego de Ordas, lent him every possible assistance, fell into such a rage that he roared like a wild beast. He accused his private secretary Andreas de Duero, and the royal treasurer Almador de Lares, of a conspiracy to cheat him, adding, that Cortes had run off with the whole squadron. Nor did Velasquez stop here, but despatched one of his officials with imperative commands to Pedro Barba, sub-governor of the Havannah, at the same time writing to all his relatives in that town, to De Ordas and to Juan Velasquez de Leon, who were his special confidants, requiring them to swear, by the friendship they bore him, not, under any pretence whatsoever, to allow the squadron to depart, but to send Cortes prisoner to Santiago. As soon as Garnica, the bearer of these

despatches, arrived, it was immediately guessed for what purpose he came. Cortes was even apprized of it by means of the very bearer himself: for one of the brethren of Charity, who was much in company with Velasquez, and greatly in favour with him, had forwarded by this same Garnica a letter to a brother of the same order, named Bartolome de Olmedo, who had joined our expedition. By means of this letter, Cortes was apprized of the whole posture of affairs by those interested with him, Andreas de Duero and the royal treasurer. Ordas, as we have above seen, having been sent off in quest of provisions, Cortes had now only to fear opposition from Juan Velasquez de Leon; but even him he had half gained over to his side, not being on the best of terms with his relative the governor, who had only presented him with a very poor commendary. Thus it was that the design of Velasquez was frustrated by those very persons to whom he had written. Indeed, from that very moment, these personages only united themselves the closer to Cortes, particularly the sub-governor Pedro Barba, the Alvarados, Puertocarrero, Montejo, Christobal de Oli, Juan de Escalante, Andreas de Monjaraz, and his brother Gregorio, who, with all of us, were ready to stake our lives for Cortes. Had the orders of Velasquez been kept secret in Trinidad, they were now the more so in this place; and Pedro de Barba despatched Garnica to Diego Velasquez with the information that he durst not venture to take Cortes into custody, as he was too powerful and too much beloved by the soldiers; fearing, if he should make the attempt, that the town would be plundered, and

the whole of the inhabitants forcibly dragged away. For the rest, he could assure Diego Velasquez that Cortes was quite devoted to him, and did nothing that could be said to militate against his interests. Cortes himself also wrote a letter couched in those smooth terms he so very well knew how to employ, assuring Velasquez of the unabated friendship he entertained for him, and that he was going to set sail the very next day.

## CHAPTER XXV

Cortes sets sail with the whole squadron for the island of Cozumel, and what further took place.

Cortes deferred the review of his troops until we should have arrived at the island of Cozumel, and gave orders for the embarking of our horses. Pedro de Alvarado, in the San Sebastian, which was a very fast sailer, was ordered to shape his course along the north coast, and his pilot received strict orders to steer direct for the cape of St. Antonio, where all the other vessels would meet and set sail for Cozumel: like instructions were forwarded to Diego de Ordas. Mass having been said, the nine remaining vessels set sail, in a southerly direction, on the 10th of February, 1519. There were sixty soldiers on board the San Sebastian, under Alvarado, among which number I was myself. Camacho, our pilot, took no notice of the orders he had received from Cortes, but shaped his course direct for Cozumel, so that we arrived two days earlier there than the rest. We landed our men in the same harbour I before mentioned in our expedition under Grijalva. Cortes had been detained on his passage by the breaking of the rudder of Francisco de Morla's vessel, which had to be replaced from what they had at hand.

Our vessel, as I have stated above, arrived two days earlier at Cozumel than the rest, and the whole of the men proceeded

on shore. We did not meet with a single Indian in the village of Cozumel, as all the inhabitants had fled away. Alvarado, therefore, ordered us to another village at about four miles distance from the latter. Here the inhabitants had likewise fled to the woods, without, however, being able to carry off all their property, so that we found numbers of fowls and other things; of the former, Alvarado would not permit us to take more than forty. Out of a temple near at hand we took several cotton mats, and a few small boxes containing a species of diadem, small idols, corals, with all manner of trinkets made of an inferior sort of gold. We also took two Indians and a female prisoners, after which we returned to the village near which we had landed.

In the meantime Cortes had arrived with the remaining vessels. He had scarcely stepped on shore when he ordered our pilot Camacho to be put in irons, for having followed a contrary course to what he had been ordered. But his displeasure was still greater when he learnt that the village was quite deserted, and that Alvarado had taken away, besides the fowls, the religious implements and other matters, though of little value, being half copper. Having shown no lenity to Camacho, he now also gave Alvarado an earnest reproof, telling him that it was not the way to gain the love of the inhabitants by beginning to rob them of their property. He then ordered the two Indians and the female whom we had taken prisoners to be brought into his presence, and put several questions to them. Melchorillo, whom we had captured at the promontory of Cotoche, (Julianillo had since died,) and

taken with us, perfectly understood the language of this country, and interpreted on the occasion. Cortes sent the three Indians to the cazique and the inhabitants, desiring them to state that they had nothing to fear from us, and to return to their village. He also restored to them the religious implements, with the golden trinkets, and gave them glass beads in exchange for the fowls, which we had eaten: besides this, he presented each of them with a Spanish shirt. They faithfully executed Cortes's commission; for the very next day the cazique returned with the whole of the inhabitants, and so confidently did they converse with us as if they had known us all their lives: indeed, Cortes had given peremptory orders that they should in no wise be molested. It was here also that Cortes began strict discipline, and set to work with unremitting assiduity, to which Providence lent his blessing; for everything in which he concerned himself went well, particularly with regard to making peace with the tribes or inhabitants of these countries. This the reader will find fully confirmed in the course of my history.

## CHAPTER XXVI

Cortes reviews his troops, and what further happened.

On the third day after our arrival at Cozumel, Cortes reviewed the whole of his troops. Without counting the pilots and marines, our number amounted to 508 men. There were 109 sailors, and sixteen horses, which were trained equally for tournaments or for war. Our squadron consisted of eleven vessels of different tonnage; among these, one was a kind of brigantine, the property of a certain Gines Nortes. The number of crossbow men was thirty-three, and of musketeers thirteen: add to this our heavy guns and four falconets, a great quantity of powder and balls. As to the precise number of crossbow men I cannot exactly swear, though it matters not whether there were a few more or less.

After this review, Cortes ordered the artillerymen Mesa, Bartolome de Usagre, Arbenga, and a certain Catalonier whose name I forget, to keep all our firearms bright and in good order, to see that each cannon had its right-sized ball, to prepare the cartridges, and distribute the powder properly. The chief care of our gun department he confided to a certain Francisco de Oroze, who had proved himself a brave soldier in the Italian wars. Juan Benitez and Pedro de Guzman had to inspect the crossbows, and see that they were supplied with two or three nuts and as many cords. They had also to superintend the exercise of shooting at the

target, and the breaking-in of our horses, particularly to accustom them to the noise of our firearms. I have now said sufficient of our armament: indeed, Cortes was most particular with the merest trifles in these matters.

## CHAPTER XXVII

Cortes receives information that two Spaniards are in the power of the Indians at the promontory of Cotoche: the steps he took upon this news.

As Cortes paid attention to every circumstance, he ordered myself and Martin Camos of Biscay into his presence, and asked us what our opinion was of the word *Castilan*, *Castilan*, which the Indians of Campeachy had so often repeated when we landed there, under the command of Hernandez de Cordoba.

We again informed him of every circumstance that had there taken place. He said, he had often turned this matter over in his mind, and could not help thinking but that the inhabitants must have some Spaniards among them, and he thought it would not be amiss to question the caziques of Cozumel upon this head. This Cortes accordingly did, and desired Melchorejo, who by this time had gained some little knowledge of the Spanish, and perfectly understood the language of Cozumel, to question the chiefs about it. Their several accounts perfectly corresponded; and they satisfactorily proved that there were several Spaniards in the country, whom they had seen themselves; that they served the caziques, who lived two days' march inland, as slaves, and that it was only a few days ago some Indian merchants had spoken with them.

We all felt overjoyed at this news. Cortes told these chiefs that he would send the Spaniards letters, which they call amales in their language, in which he would desire them to come to us. The cazique and other Indians who undertook to forward these letters were most kindly treated by Cortes, who gave them all kinds of presents, and promised them more on their return. Upon which the cazique remarked to Cortes, that it would be necessary to send a ransom to the chiefs whom the Spaniards served as slaves before they would let them go. Various kinds of glass beads were therefore given to the messengers for this purpose, and Cortes sent two of the smaller vessels, armed with twenty crossbow men and a few musketeers, under command of Diego de Ordas, to the coast of Cotoche, with orders to remain there for eight successive days with the larger of the two vessels, and to send him information from time to time by the other vessel, while the messengers brought letters to and fro; for the distance to the promontory of Cotoche from this place was only nine miles, the whole appearing, moreover, to form but one country. The following were the contents of the letter which Cortes wrote to the Spaniards:

"Dear Sirs and Brothers, – Here, on the island of Cozumel, I received information that you are detained prisoners by a cazique. I beg of you to come here to me on the island of Cozumel. To this end I have sent out an armed ship, and ransom-money, should it be required by the Indians. I have ordered the vessel to remain stationary off the promontory of Cotoche for

eight days, to wait for you. Come as speedily as possible; you may depend upon being honorably treated by me. I am here with eleven vessels armed with 500 soldiers, and intend, with the aid of the Almighty and your assistance, to proceed to a place called Tabasco, or Potonchon; etc."

With this letter the two Indian merchants embarked on board our vessel, which passed this narrow gulf in three hours, when the messengers with the ransom-money were put on shore.

After the lapse of a couple of days they actually handed over the letter to one of the Spaniards in question, who, as we afterwards learnt, was called Geronimo de Aguilar, and I shall therefore in future distinguish him by that name. When he had read the letter and received the ransom-money we had forwarded, he was exceedingly rejoiced, and took the latter to the cazique his master to beg for his liberation. The moment he had obtained this he went in quest of his comrade, Gonzalo Guerrero, and made him acquainted with all the circumstances; when Guerrero made the following reply:

"Brother Aguilar, – I have united myself here to one of the females of this country, by whom I have three children; and am, during wartime, as good as cazique or chief. Go! and may God be with you: for myself, I could not appear again among my countrymen. My face has already been disfigured, according to the Indian custom, and my ears have been pierced: what would my countrymen say if they saw me in this attire? Only look at my three children, what lovely little creatures they are; pray give me

some of your glass beads for them, which I shall say my brethren sent them from my country."

Gonzalo's Indian wife followed in the same strain, and was quite displeased with Aguilar's errand. "Only look at that slave there, (said she,) he is come here to take away my husband from me! Mind your own affairs, and do not trouble yourself about us."

Aguilar, however, afterwards made another attempt to induce Gonzalo to leave, telling him to consider that he was a Christian, and that he ought not to risk the salvation of his soul for the sake of an Indian woman. Moreover, he might take her and the children with him if he could not make up his mind to separate himself from them. Aguilar, however, might say what he liked, it was all to no purpose; he could not persuade Gonzalo to accompany his heretofore companion in good and ill fortune. This Guerrero was most probably a sailor, and a native of Palos.<sup>10</sup> He remained among the Indians, while Geronimo de Aguilar alone took his departure with the Indian messengers, and marched towards the coast where our ship was to have waited for them: but she had left; for De Ordas, after staying there the eight days, and another in addition, finding that no one appeared, again set sail for Cozumel. Aguilar was quite downcast when he found the ship was gone, and he again returned to his Indian master.

---

<sup>10</sup> Palos, a small town of Spain, lying on the river Tinto. This port produced the best Spanish sailors during the early voyages of discovery, and here also the expedition under Columbus was fitted out. (p. [60](#).)

Ordas, however, did not meet with the best of reception when he returned without the ransom-money or any information respecting the Spaniards, and even without the Indian messengers. Cortes said to him, with great vehemence, he expected he would have fulfilled his commission better than to return without the Spaniards, and even without bringing him any information respecting them, although well aware they were staying in that country. Cortes had, moreover, just that moment been greatly put out by another circumstance. A soldier, called Berrio, had accused some sailors of Gibraleon of having stolen from him a couple of sides of bacon, which they would not return. They positively denied that they had committed the robbery, and even took an oath to that effect; however, after a good search, the bacon was found among their clothes. There were seven sailors who had been concerned in the robbery, and Cortes, notwithstanding their officers interceded in their behalf, ordered them to be severely whipped.

The island of Cozumel, it seems, was a place to which the Indians made pilgrimages; for the neighbouring tribes of the promontory of Cotoche and other districts of Yucatan, came thither in great numbers to sacrifice to some abominable idols, which stood in a temple there. One morning we perceived that the place where these horrible images stood was crowded with Indians and their wives. They burnt a species of resin, which very much resembled our incense, and as such a sight was so novel to us we paid particular attention to all that went forward. Upon this

an old man, who had on a wide cloak and was a priest, mounted to the very top of the temple, and began preaching something to the Indians. We were all very curious to know what the purport of this sermon was, and Cortes desired Melchorejo to interpret it to him. Finding that all he had been saying tended to ungodliness, Cortes ordered the caziques, with the principal men among them and the priest, into his presence, giving them to understand, as well as he could by means of our interpreter, that if they were desirous of becoming our brethren they must give up sacrificing to these idols, which were no gods but evil beings, by which they were led into error and their souls sent to hell. He then presented them with the image of the Virgin Mary and a cross, which he desired them to put up instead. These would prove a blessing to them at all times, make their seeds grow and preserve their souls from eternal perdition. This and many other things respecting our holy religion, Cortes explained to them in a very excellent manner. The caziques and priests answered, that their forefathers had prayed to their idols before them, because they were good gods, and that they were determined to follow their example. Adding, that we should experience what power they possessed; as soon as we had left them, we should certainly all of us go to the bottom of the sea.

Cortes, however, took very little heed of their threats, but commanded the idols to be pulled down, and broken to pieces; which was accordingly done without any further ceremony. He then ordered a quantity of lime to be collected, which is here in

abundance, and with the assistance of the Indian masons a very pretty altar was constructed, on which we placed the image of the holy Virgin. At the same time two of our carpenters, Alonso Yañez and Alvaro Lopez made a cross of new wood which lay at hand, this was set up in a kind of chapel, which we built behind the altar. After all this was completed, father Juan Diaz said mass in front of the new altar, the caziques and priests looking on with the greatest attention.

Before I close this chapter, I have to remark that the caziques on the island of Cozumel, like those on the land of Potonchan, are likewise termed Calachionies.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

The manner in which Cortes divides the squadron. The officers whom he appointed to the command of the several vessels. His instructions to the pilots; the signals which were to be made with lanterns at night, &c.

The following were the officers which commanded the several vessels.

Cortes himself commanded, in the principal vessel, over the whole squadron. To the San Sebastian, which was a very capital sailer, he appointed Alvarado and his brother. The other vessels were severally commanded by Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero, Francisco de Montejo, Christobal de Oli, Diego de Ordas, Juan Velasquez de Leon, Juan de Escalante, Francisco de Morla, and Escobar the page. The smallest vessel, a kind of brigantine, was commanded by its owner, Gines Nortés.

Every vessel had its own pilot, who received his instructions, and also the signals with the lanterns from Alaminos.

As soon as Cortes had ordered these matters he took leave of the caziques and priests, commended them most emphatically to the image of the holy Virgin and to the cross, desiring them to pray before it, not to damage either but continually to decorate them with green boughs. He assured them that thereby they would derive great benefit. They promised to comply with all

his wishes, presented him with four more fowls and two jars of honey, and then took leave of us under the most friendly embraces. It was some day in the month of March, in the year 1519, when we again set sail; we were pursuing our course with the most favorable of winds, when on the very first day at ten o'clock in the morning, signals of distress were made on board one of our vessels, both by flags and the firing of guns. As soon as Cortes saw and heard this, he looked over the poop of his vessel, and found that the ship commanded by Juan de Escalante was making straight again for the island of Cozumel. What is the matter there? What does all this mean? cried out Cortes to the vessel nearest him. A soldier, named Zaragoza replied, that the vessel of Juan de Escalante, laden with cassave-bread, was sinking fast. God forbid! cried Cortes, that any misfortune should befall us here, and desired our chief pilot, Alaminos, to make signals for all the vessels to return to the island Cozumel. So we again put into the harbour we had just left: we unloaded the cassave-bread; and found, to our great joy, that the image of the holy Virgin and cross were in the best condition, and that incense had been placed before them. It was not long before the caziques and priests again made their appearance, and asked what had caused us to return so speedily. Cortes told them that one of our vessels was leaky and had to be repaired, begging of them to assist us with their canoes in unloading our cassave-bread. This they most readily complied with, and it took us four more days to repair the vessel.

## CHAPTER XXIX

How the Spaniard Geronimo de Aguilar, who was in the power of the Indians, came to us when he learnt that we had again returned to the island of Cozumel, and what further happened.

When the Spaniard, who was in the power of the Indians got certain information that we had again returned to the island Cozumel, he rejoiced exceedingly and thanked God with all his heart.

He immediately hired a canoe, with six capital rowers, for himself and the Indians who had brought him the glass beads. The former being richly remunerated with these, so valuable in their estimation: they performed their work so well, that the channel between the island and mainland, a distance of about twelve miles, was soon crossed. After they had arrived off the island and stepped on shore, some soldiers who were returning from the chase of musk swine, informed Cortes that a large canoe had just arrived from the promontory of Cotoche. Cortes immediately despatched Andreas de Tapia with a few men to learn what news they had brought. As Tapia with his men approached the shore, the Indians, who had arrived with Geronimo, evinced great fear and ran back to their canoe in order to put off to sea again. Aguilar, however, told him in their

language they need have no fear; for we were their brothers. Andreas de Tapia, who took Aguilar also for an Indian, for he had every appearance of one, sent to inform Cortes that the seven Indians who had arrived were inhabitants of Cozumel. It was not until they had come up to them and heard the Spaniard pronounce the words – God, holy Virgin, Sevilla, in broken Spanish, and ran up to Tapia to embrace him, that they recognized this strange-looking fellow. One of Tapia's men immediately ran off to inform Cortes that a Spaniard had arrived in the canoe, for which news he expected a handsome reward.

We all greatly rejoiced at this information, and it was not long before Tapia himself arrived with the strange-looking Spaniard. As they passed by us many of our men still kept inquiring of Tapia which among them was the Spaniard? although he was walking at his very side, so much did his countenance resemble that of an Indian. His complexion was naturally of a brownish cast, added to which his hair had been shorn like that of an Indian slave: he carried a paddle across his shoulder, had one of his legs covered with an old tattered stocking; the other, which was not much better, being tied around his waist. An old ragged cloak hung over his shoulders, his maltatas was in a much worse condition. His prayerbook, which was very much torn, he had folded in the corner of his cloak.

When Cortes beheld the man in this attire, he, as all the rest of us had done, asked Tapia where the Spaniard was? When Geronimo heard this, he cowered down after the Indian fashion,

and said: "I am he." Upon this Cortes gave him a shirt, a coat, a pair of trousers, a cap and shoes, from our stores. He then desired him to give us an account of the adventures of his life, and explain how he had got into this country.

He said, though still in broken Spanish, that his name was Geronimo d'Aguilar, and was a native of Ecija. About eight years ago he had been shipwrecked with fifteen men and two women, on a voyage between Darien and the island of St. Domingo, which they had undertaken on account of a lawsuit between a certain Enciso and a certain Valdivia. They had 10,000 pesos on board, and papers relating to the lawsuit. The ship struck against a rock, and they had not been able to get her off again. The whole of the crew then got into the boat, in the hopes of making the island of Cuba or Jamaica, but were driven on shore by the strong currents, where the Calachionies had taken them prisoners and distributed them among themselves. The most of his unfortunate companions had been sacrificed to their gods, and some had died of grief, of which also both the women pined away; being soon worn out by the hard labour of grinding, to which they had been forced by the Indians. He himself had also been doomed as a sacrifice to their idols, but made his escape during the night, and fled to the cazique, with whom he had last been staying, whose name, however, I cannot now remember. Of all his companions, he himself and a certain Gonzalo Guerrero, were only living. He had tried his best to induce him to leave, but in vain.

When Cortes heard this, he returned thanks to the Almighty,

and told the Spaniard that he hoped, with the blessing of God, he would never find reason to regret the determination he had taken. He then put some questions to him about the country and its inhabitants. Aguilar said he was not able to give him much information about either, as he had been treated like a slave, having been merely employed to fetch wood, water, and to work in the maise-plantations. It was only upon one occasion he was sent on some business to a distance of about twelve miles from his village, but, owing to a heavy burden he had to carry and the weak state of his body, he had not even been able to reach that distance; for the rest, he had been given to understand that the country was very thickly populated. With regard to his companion Alonso Guerrero, he had married an Indian woman, and was become the father of three children. He had in every respect adopted the Indian customs, – his cheeks were tattooed, his ears pierced, and his lips turned down. He was a sailor by profession, native of Palos, and was considered by the Indians to be a man of great strength. It might have been about a year ago that a squadron, consisting of three vessels, had touched at the promontory of Cotoche, (probably the expedition under Hernandez de Cordoba,) when Guerrero advised the inhabitants to commence hostilities, who, in common with the caziques of a large district, commanded on that occasion. Cortes here remarked, that he very much wished to get the man into his power, for his staying among the Indians would do us no good.

The caziques of Cozumel showed Aguilar every possible

friendship when they heard him speak in their language. Aguilar advised them always to do honour to the image of the holy Virgin and cross we had set up, as they would prove a blessing to them. It was also upon his advice they begged of Cortes to give them letters of recommendation to other Spaniards who might run into this harbour, in order that they might not be molested by them. Cortes readily complied with this request; and, after mutual protestations of friendship had passed between us, we weighed anchor, and set sail for the river Grijalva.

For the rest, I can assure the reader that what I have related of Aguilar is all the man told us himself, although the historian Gomara gives a very different account; which, however, should not excite our surprise, as he merely thereby intended to divert his readers with some strange story.

## CHAPTER XXX

How we re-embark and sail for the river Grijalva, and what happened to us on our voyage there.

On the 4th of March, 1519, the day after we had had the good fortune to obtain such an excellent and trustworthy interpreter, Cortes gave orders for re-embarking. This took place in the same way as before, and similar instructions were issued with regard to the night signals with the lanterns. For some time we had the most favorable weather imaginable; when, towards evening, it suddenly changed, the wind blowing most violently against us, so that all our vessels were in danger of being cast on shore. Towards midnight, it pleased God the wind should abate, and, when daylight broke forth, our vessels again joined each other; one only was missing, that namely of Velasquez de Leon, which occasioned a good deal of anxiety, for we concluded she had been wrecked off some of the shallows. We did not discover her loss until midday; and as night was now fast approaching, and the vessel still nowhere to be seen, Cortes told our principal pilot Alaminos that we ought not to continue our course without gaining some certain knowledge as to her fate: signals were, therefore, made for all the vessels to drop anchor, to give the missing ship time to come up with us, on the supposition it had been driven into some harbour and there retained by contrary

winds. Alaminos, still finding she did not make her appearance, said to Cortes, "You may be sure, sir, that she has run into some harbour or inlet along this coast, where she is now wind-bound; for her pilot Manquillo has twice before visited these seas, once with Hernandez de Cordoba, the second time under Grijalva, and is acquainted with this bay." Upon this it was resolved that the whole squadron should return to the bay which Alaminos was speaking of, in search of the vessel: to our great joy we indeed found her riding there at anchor, and we all remained here for one day. During this time, Alaminos, with one of our principal officers named Francisco de Lugo, went on shore in two boats; they found the country inhabited, and saw several regular maise-plantations: they likewise met with places where salt was manufactured, and saw four cues, or large temples, with numerous figures, mostly in the shape of women, and of considerable height; whence this promontory was called *la punta de las Mujeres*, (the promontory of women.) Aguilar observed that this was the spot where he was once a slave among the Indians; here his master had found him sunk beneath the weight of the heavy burden which he had forced him to carry: neither was the township far off where Alonso Guerrero had settled himself. Every inhabitant possessed gold, but in small quantities; he would show us the way, if we were desirous of going there. To which Cortes said, laughingly, he had not gone out for the sake of such trifles, but to serve God and his king. In the meantime he despatched Escobar, one of our commanders, with a fast-sailing

vessel of small tonnage, to the Terminos bay, there to examine the country and search for a secure spot to found a colony; also to inform us whether game really was so abundant there as had been represented. All this was done according to the advice of our chief pilot, to save the trouble of running in there with the whole fleet on our passing by. Escobar, when he had explored the harbour, was merely to leave some sign on both sides of the entrance, either by felling trees or by leaving something in writing, from which we should know that he had entered safely, or that, having fully explored the harbour, he was tacking about until we fell in with him again.

With these instructions Escobar set sail, and ran into Terminos bay, where he executed the commands he had received: he likewise found the greyhound which had run away from us when we landed there with Grijalva. It was quite glossy and fat, and immediately knew the ship again as it entered the bay, wagging its tail, and jumping up against our men as it followed them on board. Escobar now quitted the bay, and intended laying-to until the rest of our vessels should come up, but was driven a considerable way out to sea by a strong south wind. We must now return to our squadron, which we left at the punta de las Mujeres. Having left this spot next morning with a stiffish breeze blowing from the land, we arrived at the entrance of Terminos bay, without, however, seeing anything of Escobar. Cortes ordered a boat to be lowered, armed with ten crossbowmen, to run into the bay, or search whether Escobar had left

any sign or written paper as desired. Some trees were found cut down, and near them a small paper, on which was written, that both the bay and country round about were charming, that the spot abounded with game, and that they had found the dog. Our principal pilot here remarked to Cortes that it would be most advisable for us to continue our course, for the south wind had no doubt obliged Escobar to hold out to sea, though he could not be far off, as he must have sailed in a slanting direction. Cortes, however, still apprehended some accident must have befallen him: nevertheless, he ordered the sails to be set, and we very soon came up with Escobar, who related all he had seen, and explained what had prevented him from waiting for us. In this way we arrived in the waters off Potonchan, and Cortes ordered Alaminos to run into the inlet where Cordoba and Grijalva had met with such disastrous treatment. Alaminos, however, declared that it was a dangerous station for the vessels, as the waters were very shallow off the coast, and we should be forced to anchor six miles from the land. Cortes's intention was to punish the inhabitants severely, and many of us who had been present at those engagements begged of him to run in that we might revenge ourselves upon them. But Alaminos and the other pilots said we should lose more than three days by running in, and, if the weather became unfavorable, we might be detained there above eight: the wind, moreover, being now most favorable to reach the Tabasco river, which was our chief object, and where we might arrive in a couple of days. We accordingly put out to sea, and

reached the Tabasco after three days' sail.

## CHAPTER XXXI

How we arrive in the river Grijalva, called in the Indian language the Tabasco; the battle we fought there; and what further took place.

On the 12th of March, 1519, we arrived with our whole squadron in the mouth of the Tabasco. As we had experienced, under the expedition with Grijalva, that no vessels of any considerable burden could enter the mouth of the river, our larger ones anchored out at sea, while the smaller ones only, followed by our boats, carrying the whole of our men, sailed up the river, in order to disembark at the promontory where the palm trees grew, about four miles from the town of Tabasco; the same spot where Grijalva had landed.

We perceived numbers of Indians, all under arms, lurking between the almond trees along the shore. This circumstance greatly astonished those among us who were here before with Grijalva. Besides this, more than 12,000 men, all armed after their fashion, had assembled at the town itself in order to attack us. This town was very powerful at that time, many others being subject to it. These warlike preparations were occasioned by the following circumstances: The inhabitants of Potonchan, of Lazaro, and other neighbouring tribes, had accused the Tabascans of cowardice, for having given Grijalva

their gold trinkets mentioned above: they reproached them the more because their population was more extensive, and their warriors much more numerous than those of the tribes just mentioned, who had courageously attacked and killed fifty-six of our men. It was owing to these reproaches that they now likewise took up arms against us. Cortes observing these preparations, desired our interpreter Aguilar, who perfectly understood the language of Tabasco, to ask some Indians who were passing by in a large canoe, what the meaning was of all this noise? we had not come to do them any harm; on the contrary, we were disposed to treat them as our brethren, and share our victuals with them: they should be careful how they went to war with us, for they would certainly have to repent it. This and many other things were told them by Aguilar, to incline them to peace, but the more he said the more insolent they became, threatening to destroy us all should we dare to set foot on their territory or in their town, which they had fortified by means of heavy trees felled for the purpose, and a strong stone wall. Aguilar, however, made another attempt to bring about peace, and obtain us permission to take in fresh water, barter for provisions, and incline them to listen to the disclosures we came to make in the name of our God. They, however, persisted we should not pass beyond the palm trees; if we did, they would kill us all.

When Cortes found that all attempts to make peace were fruitless, he ordered the small vessels and boats to prepare for battle. Three pieces of cannon were put on board of each of

the former, the crossbow-men and musketeers being equally distributed among them. We remembered, during the expedition under Grijalva, that a narrow road ran from the palm trees along some quagmires and wells to the town. Cortes here posted three sentinels to watch whether the Indians went home at night, if so, to send him immediate notice. Information was soon brought in the affirmative. The rest of the day was now spent in reconnoitring the territory, and fitting out the vessels. The next morning early, after we had attended mass and well armed ourselves, Cortes despatched Alonso de Avila with one hundred men, among whom were ten crossbow-men, along the narrow road above mentioned, leading to the town, which, as soon as he should hear the firing of cannon, he was to attack on one side, while we did the same from the other; Cortes himself, with the rest of our officers and men, moving up the river in the small vessels and our boats.

When the Indians, who were standing under arms along the coast between the palm trees, saw us approaching, they leaped into their canoes and stationed themselves where we were going to land, in order to prevent us. The shore was covered with warriors armed with all kinds of weapons, while a terrible noise assailed our ears from their twisted shells, drums, and fifes. Cortes ordered us to halt for a few moments and not to fire as yet. As he was very particular in doing everything in proper form, he desired the royal secretary, who was with us, and Diego de Godoy, once more to request the inhabitants to allow

us to come peaceably on shore to take in fresh water. Aguilar acted as interpreter. They were also to give them some notion, if possible, of the Lord God, and his imperial majesty, and explain to them, that if they attacked us, and we in defending ourselves killed any of their men, the guilt would be upon their heads, not ours. The Indians, however, continued their defiance, threatening to destroy us all if we came on shore. Indeed the battle now soon began, for immediately after they commenced pouring forth showers of arrows, the drummers to give signals for the other troops to fall upon us in a body, and in an instant they rushed bravely forward. They completely surrounded us with their canoes, and shot off their arrows so quickly, that many of us were soon wounded, we being moreover compelled for a length of time to fight up to our waists, and sometimes even higher in the water. The place where we were attempting to land was disadvantageous in another way, for the ground was composed of mud and clay, in which it was impossible to move very fast, particularly as at the same time we had to defend ourselves against the enemy's arrows and the thrusts of their lances. Cortes himself, while fighting in this way was obliged to leave one of his shoes sticking in the mud in order to get on firm land. We had all, indeed, hard work to do before we could gain the dry ground; but having once obtained this we fell so furiously upon our enemies, under the cry of our patron St. Jacob! that they began to retreat, but immediately again drew themselves up in order of battle behind the wood and the trees they had cut down. Here they made

an obstinate resistance, until we likewise drove them from this place, having forced some passages leading to the town, which latter we entered fighting our way in. The battle now continued in the streets, until our progress was impeded by another barricade of fallen trees, defended by a fresh set of men. Here the conflict was continued with renewed obstinacy, the Indians incessantly crying out: *ala lala, al calachoni, al calachoni!* meaning in their language, kill the commander-in-chief. While we were thus busily engaged, Alonso de Avila appeared with his men, who had marched along from the palm-trees. He had been detained by the morass and pools of water which lay in his road. This delay now proved an advantage to us, as we had also lost time in striving to make peace with the enemy by means of our two parliamentaries, and the difficulty we had had to fight our way on shore. With our united troops we now beat the Indians from this strong post; though, like brave warriors, they set vigorously upon us with their arrows and lances, which latter had been hardened in the fire; nor did they turn their backs, until we had forced our way into a large courtyard, adjoining which were several spacious apartments and halls. Here also stood three temples, but the Indians had carried off all the religious implements with them.

The enemy being now put to flight, Cortes ordered his men to halt, that we might take formal possession of the country, in the name of his majesty. He performed this ceremony by drawing his sword, and giving therewith two deep cuts into a large ceiba tree, which stood in the courtyard, crying out at the

same time, that he would defend the possession of this country with sword and shield against any one who should dare dispute it. The whole of us who were present gave our assent to these proceedings, swearing we would support him in its defence; all of which was formally registered by the royal treasurer. The adherents of Diego Velasquez alone were not pleased because the name of the latter had not at all been mentioned therein.

In this engagement fourteen of our men were wounded, I myself was of the number, being wounded by an arrow in the thigh, though not severely. The Indians lost, altogether, eighteen men. We passed the night in this spot, having taken the precaution to post sentinels in different places, so necessary did we deem it to be upon our guard here.

## CHAPTER XXXII

How Cortes despatches two of our principal officers, each with one hundred men, to explore the interior of the country, and what further took place.

The next day Cortes despatched Alvarado with one hundred men, among whom were fifteen crossbow-men and musketeers, to march six miles inland, in order to explore the country. He was to take along with him Melchorejo, of the punta de Cotoche, but he could nowhere be found. He had most probably gone off in a canoe the night before with the inhabitants of Tabasco. We conjectured this at least, because the day previous he had left all his Spanish clothes behind him hanging in a tree. Cortes was greatly vexed at his escape, as he might betray many things to the inhabitants that would do us no good.

I will, however, leave the fugitive to his own fate, and continue my narrative.

Cortes also sent out a second of our chief officers, named Francisco de Lugo, with another hundred men; among whom were twelve crossbow-men and musketeers, with similar instructions as to Alvarado, but to take another direction and return to head-quarters towards evening.

Francisco de Lugo may have reached the distance of about four miles when he fell in with vast numbers of Indians,

commanded by their several chiefs. They were armed as usual, immediately advanced towards our men, whom they surrounded on all sides, and began pouring forth a shower of arrows. The Indians, indeed, were in too great numbers for our small detachment. They first threw in their lances and the stones from their slings, then fell upon our men with sharp swords, which they wield with both hands. Though De Lugo and his men defended themselves bravely, they were unable to drive back such overwhelming numbers. They therefore began to retreat in the best order possible to our head-quarters, having first despatched an Indian of Cuba, who was a swift runner, to inform Cortes of their situation and beg of him to send a reinforcement. During all this time De Lugo and his troops, particularly the crossbow-men and musketeers bravely withstood the whole body of the enemy.

In the meantime Alvarado had marched about four miles in the direction he was commanded to take, when he came to an inlet which he was unable to pass. Here the good Lord fortunately gave him the thought to return in a direction which led to the spot where De Lugo was fighting with the Indians. The firing of the muskets, the noise of the drums and trumpets, with the yelling of the Indians, soon convinced Alvarado that the latter had again commenced hostilities; he therefore marched in a direct line to the place whence the noise came, and found De Lugo in the heat of an engagement with the enemy, of whom five were already killed. Both detachments now fell with their united forces upon the Indians, who were speedily dispersed, yet they were unable

to put them totally to the rout; on the contrary, they would certainly have followed us to our head-quarters, if Cortes had not come up with the rest of our troops, when, after some sharp firing and heavy blows, they were obliged to fall back. Cortes, on receiving information of De Lugo's dangerous position, had immediately repaired to his assistance with the whole of his men, and came up with the two commanders at about two miles from our head-quarters. In this engagement we did not escape without some loss, for two of De Lugo's detachment were killed and eight wounded; Alvarado had only three of the latter. Having arrived at our head-quarters, we dressed the wounds of our men, buried the dead, and posted sentinels in proper places, that we might not be fallen upon unawares. In this battle, the enemy lost fifteen men killed, and three were taken prisoners, of whom one appeared to be a chief. Our interpreter Aguilar asked them what madness could have induced them to attack us? One of the Indians returned for answer, that Melchorejo, whom we brought with us from the punta de Cotoche, had come over to their camp the night previous, advising them to fall upon us, and continue to do so night and day, for, in the end, they would, no doubt, be able to conquer our small numbers: so that Cortes's apprehensions with respect to the flight of this fellow were verified.

We now despatched one of our prisoners to the caziques with green glass beads, and offers of peace: this personage, however, never returned to bring any answer. We also learnt from our two other prisoners, who were closely questioned by Aguilar, that the

day previous all the caziques of the neighbouring districts had been under arms to fall upon us, and that the next day they would return to storm our head-quarters. All this was likewise done by the advice of Melchorejo.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

Cortes issues orders that we should hold ourselves in readiness to march against the Indians on the following day; he also commands the horses to be brought on shore. How the battle terminates we fought with them.

Cortes being now certain that the Indians would renew the attack, immediately ordered all our horses to be brought on shore, and every one, our wounded not excepted, to hold himself in readiness. When our horses, which had been such a length of time at sea, now stepped on firm ground again, they appeared very awkward and full of fear; however, the day following, they had regained their usual liveliness and agility. There were also six or seven of our men, all young and otherwise strong fellows, who were attacked with such severe pains in the groins that they could not walk without support. No one could guess the cause of this; it was only said they had lived too freely at Cuba, and that the pain was occasioned by the heat, and the weight of their arms; Cortes, therefore, ordered them again on board. The cavaliers, who were to fight on horseback, were commanded to hang bells around their horses' necks, and Cortes impressed on their minds not to rush at the Indians with their lances before they had been dispersed, and then even to aim at their faces only. The following men were selected to fight on horseback: Christobal

de Oli, Pedro de Alvarado, Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero, and Juan de Escalante. Francisco de Montejo and Alonso de Avila were to use the horses of Ortiz the musician, and of a certain Bartolome Garcia, though neither were worth much. Further, there were Velasquez de Leon, Francisco de Morla, and one of the Lares, (for there was another excellent horseman among us of that name,) and Gonzalo Dominiguez, both superior horsemen; lastly, there were Moron de Bayamo and Pedro de Truxillo. Then comes Cortes, who placed himself at their head. Mesa had charge of the artillery, while the rest of our men were commanded by Diego de Ordas, who, though he knew nothing of the cavalry service, excelled as a crossbow-man and musketeer. The morning following, which was the day of annunciation to the holy Virgin, we attended mass very early, and arranged ourselves under our ensign Antonio de Villareal. We now put ourselves in motion, and marched towards some extensive bean fields, where Francisco de Lugo and Pedro de Alvarado had fought the previous battle. There was a village in this neighbourhood called Cintla, belonging to the Tabascans, which lay about four miles from our head-quarters. Cortes, on account of the bogs which our horse could not pass, was obliged to take a circuitous route. Our other troops, however, under Diego de Ordas, came up with the Indians near Cintla, where they had arranged themselves on the plain: if they felt equal ardour for the combat as we did, they could now satisfy themselves, – for this was a battle in every sense of the word which we here fought, fearful in the extreme, as will

be seen.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

How we are attacked by all the caziques of Tabasco, and the whole armed force of this province, and what further took place.

The Indians were already moving forward in search of us, when we came up with them: every one had a large bunch of feathers on his head, a cotton cuirass on, and their faces were daubed with white, black, and red colours. Besides having drums and trumpets, they were armed with huge bows and arrows, shields, lances, and large broadswords; they had also bodies of slingers, and others armed with poles hardened in the fire. The Indians were in such vast numbers that they completely filled the bean fields, and immediately fell upon us on all sides at once, like furious dogs. Their attack was so impetuous, so numerous were the arrows, stones, and lances with which they greeted us, that above seventy of our men were wounded in no time, and one named Saldaña, was struck by an arrow in the ear, and instantly dropt down dead. With like fury they rushed at us with their pikes, at the same time pouring forth showers of arrows, and continually wounding our men. However, we fully repaid them with our crossbows, muskets, and heavy cannon, cutting right and left among them with our swords. By this means we forced them to give ground a little, but only that they

might shower forth their arrows at a greater distance, where they thought themselves more secure from our arms. Even then our artilleryman Mesa made terrible havoc among them, standing as they did crowded together and within reach of the cannon, so that he could fire among them to his heart's content. Notwithstanding the destruction we made among their ranks, we could not put them to flight. I now remarked to our commander Diego de Ordas that we should rush forward upon the Indians and close with them. My motive for advising this was, because I saw that they merely retreated from fear of our swords, but still continued to annoy us at a distance with arrows, lances, and large stones. De Ordas, however, considered this not expedient, as the enemy's numbers were so vast that every single man of us would have had to encounter 300 of the enemy at once.

My advice, however, was at length followed up, and we fell so heavily upon them that they retreated as far as the wells. All this time Cortes still remained behind with the cavalry, though we so greatly longed for that reinforcement: we began to fear that some misfortune might also have befallen him. I shall never forget the piping and yelling which the Indians set up at every shot we fired, and how they sought to hide their loss from us by tossing up earth and straw into the air, making a terrible noise with their drums and trumpets, and their war-whoop *Ala lala*.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Ala lala. What a striking similarity there is between this cry and the Turkish Alla il Allah, of which, as Byron says, in one of his notes to the 'Bride of Abydos,' the Turks are very profuse in battle! (p. [75](#).)

In one of these moments Cortes came galloping up with the horse. Our enemies being still busily engaged with us, did not immediately observe this, so that our cavalry easily dashed in among them from behind. The nature of the ground was quite favorable for its manœuvres; and as it consisted of strong active fellows, most of the horses being, moreover, powerful and fiery animals, our small body of cavalry in every way made the best use of their weapons. When we, who were already hotly engaged with the enemy, espied our cavalry, we fought with renewed energy, while the latter, by attacking them in the rear at the same time, now obliged them to face about. The Indians, who had never seen any horses before, could not think otherwise than that horse and rider were one body. Quite astounded at this to them so novel a sight, they quitted the plain and retreated to a rising ground.

Cortes now related why he had not come sooner. First, he had been delayed by the morass; then again he was obliged to fight his way through other bodies of the enemy whom he had met, in which five men and eight horses were wounded.

Having somewhat rested from our fatigue under the trees which stood on the field of battle, we praised God and the holy Virgin, and thanked them with uplifted hands for the complete victory they had granted us: and, as it was the feast of the annunciation to the holy Virgin, the town which was subsequently built here in memory of this great victory, was named Santa Maria de la Vitoria. This was the first battle we fought under Cortes in New Spain.

After this pious solemnity we bandaged the wounds of our men with linen, which was all we had for that purpose. Those of our horses we dressed with melted fat, which we cut from the dead bodies of the Indians. We likewise took this opportunity of counting the number of killed left by the enemy on the field of battle. We found above eight hundred, numbers still showing signs of life. Our swords had done the most carnage among them, though many were killed by our cannon. Wherever the cavalry made its appearance the enemy had most work to do. The fighting lasted about an hour; and our enemies maintained their ground so well, that they did not quit the field of battle until our horse broke in among them. There were two caziques among the five prisoners we made.

As we were quite fatigued and hungry we returned to our quarters, buried the two soldiers, one of whom had been shot in the neck and the other in the ear, posted strong watches, then ate our supper and retired to rest.

Francisco Lopez de Gomara, in his account of this battle, says, that previous to the arrival of Cortes with the cavalry, the holy apostle St. Jacob or St. Peter in person had galloped up on a gray-coloured horse to our assistance. I can only say, that for the exertion of our arms and this victory, we stand indebted to our Lord Jesus Christ; and that in this battle every individual man among us was set upon by such numbers of the enemy, that if each of them had merely thrown a handful of earth upon us we should have been buried beneath it. Certain it is, therefore, that

God showed his mercy to us here, and it may, indeed, have been one of the two glorious apostles St. Jacob or St. Peter who thus came to our assistance. Perhaps on account of my sins I was not considered worthy of the good fortune to behold them; for I could only see Francisco de Morla on his brown horse galloping up with Cortes, and even at this very moment, while I am writing this, I can fancy I see all passing before my eyes just as I have related it; although I, an unworthy sinner, was not considered worthy of beholding one of the glorious apostles face to face: yet again I never heard any of the four hundred soldiers, nor ever Cortes himself, nor any of the many cavaliers, mention this wonder, or confirm its truth. We should certainly have built a church, and have called the town *Santiago*, or *San Pedro de la Vitoria*, and not *Santa Maria de la Vitoria*. If, therefore, what Gomara relates is true, then we must indeed have been bad Christians not to have paid greater respect to the assistance which God sent us in the person of his holy apostles, and for having omitted to thank him daily for it in his own church. Nevertheless, I should feel delighted if this historian has spoken the truth, although I must confess that I never heard this wonder mentioned before reading his book, nor have I ever heard any of the conquistadores speak of it who were present at the battle.

## CHAPTER XXXV

How Cortes assembles all the caziques of this province, and what further happened.

I have above related that in this battle we took five prisoners, among whom were two chiefs. Aguilar, who understood their language, often discoursed with them, and from some remarks which they made, concluded that we might employ them as delegates to their countrymen. Having communicated his thoughts to Cortes, he proposed they should be set at liberty, and despatched with a message to the caziques and other inhabitants of the district. To this Cortes assented, ordering both the prisoners to be presented with blue glass beads, while Aguilar told them many things which he knew would please the inhabitants and prove advantageous to us. He assured them, that after this battle, which had been entirely of their own seeking, they had nothing further to fear from us, and commissioned them now to assemble all the caziques of the district, for we were very desirous of communicating with them. Everything Aguilar said was done with the view of inclining the Indians to make peace with us. The prisoners most willingly complied with our wishes, which they communicated to the caziques and principal personages among the inhabitants, telling them how we longed to become their friends. This message was in so far successful,

that they resolved to send us fifteen of their Indian slaves with fowls, baked fish, and maise-bread. These slaves had their faces blackened, and were completely covered with ragged cloaks. When these personages appeared in the presence of Cortes he received them very friendly: Aguilar, on the contrary, asked them in an angry tone, why they had come with such painted faces – appearing rather to seek war than peace? If they were desirous of making peace, continued he, persons of rank should be deputed to us, not slaves. This they were to communicate to those who had sent them. We, however, treated these black faces very kindly, presenting them moreover with blue beads in token of peace, and in order to gain the good wishes of the inhabitants. And sure enough the very next day above thirty of the principal Indians, well dressed, appeared in our quarters, bringing with them, fowls, fruits, and maise-bread, and begged permission of Cortes to burn and bury the bodies of their fallen countrymen, in order that they might not create a pestilence in the air, or become a prey to the lions and tigers. This being granted, they brought along with them a great number of Indians to burn the bodies, and bury them according to their custom. Cortes himself went to watch their proceedings, when they assured him they had lost above 800 killed, without counting the wounded; adding, that at present they durst not enter into any treaty with us, as the day following all the chiefs and principal personages of the district would assemble to take our offers of peace into consideration.

Cortes, who profited by every circumstance, said smilingly to

us: "It appears to me, gentlemen, that the Indians stand in great awe of our horses, and imagine that these and our guns alone fight the battle. A thought has just struck me which will further confirm them in this notion. You must bring here the mare of Juan Sedeño which foaled on board a short time ago, and fasten her here where I am now standing. Then bring also the stallion of the musician Ortiz, which is a very fiery animal, and will quickly scent the mare. As soon as you find this to be the case, lead both the horses to separate places, that the caziques may neither see the horses, nor hear them neigh, until I shall be in conversation with them." All this was accordingly done. He likewise ordered our largest cannon to be heavily loaded with gunpowder and ball.

A little after midday, forty caziques arrived in great state and richly clothed according to their fashion. They saluted Cortes and all of us, perfumed us with their incense, begged forgiveness for what had happened, and promised to be friendly for the future. Cortes answered by our interpreter Aguilar, reminding them, with a very serious look, how often he had wished them to make peace with us, and how, owing to their obstinacy, we were almost upon the point of destroying them with the whole of the inhabitants of this district. We were vassals of the mighty king and lord the emperor Charles, he further added, who had sent us to this country with orders to favour and assist those who should submit to his imperial sway, which we would assuredly do if they were amicably inclined towards us. If, however, they were not so, the *tepuscles* (so the Indians called our cannon)

would be fired off, which were already embittered against them in some measure on account of the attack they had made upon us. Cortes, at this moment, gave the signal for firing our largest cannon. The report was like a sudden clap of thunder, the ball whizzing along the hills, which could be distinctly heard as it was midday and not a breath of air stirring. The caziques who had never seen this before appeared in dismay, and believed all Cortes had said; who, however, desired Aguilar to comfort and assure them he had given orders that no harm should be done them. At this moment the stallion was brought and fastened at a short distance from the spot where Cortes and the caziques were holding the conference: as the mare was likewise near at hand, the stallion immediately began to neigh, stamp the ground and rear itself, while its eyes were continually fixed on the Indians who stood in front of Cortes's tent, as the mare was placed behind it. The caziques, however, thought the animal was making all these movements against them and appeared greatly agitated. When Cortes found what effect this scene had made upon the Indians, he rose from his seat, and walking to the horse, took hold of the bridle, and desired his servant to lead it away. Aguilar, however, was to make the Indians believe that he had ordered the horse not to do them any injury.

While all this was going on above thirty Indian porters (whom they term tamemes) arrived with fowls, baked fish, and various fruits: these porters, on account of their loads, had perhaps not been able to follow the caziques fast enough. A lively discourse

was now kept up between Cortes and the caziques, who in the end left us perfectly contented, with the assurance that the following day they would return with a present.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

How all the caziques and calachonis of the river Grijalva arrive with presents, and what happened after this.

On the following morning, it was one of the last days in March, 1519, a number of caziques, with the principal personages of the Tabasco district and surrounding neighbourhood arrived. They paid us profound reverence, and brought a present, consisting in four diadems, some lizards, ear-rings, four ducks, figures like dogs, others with Indian faces, two sandals with golden soles, and various other trifling trinkets of gold,<sup>12</sup> whose value I have forgotten. There were also cloaks as the Indians wear them, which are very commodious. The present altogether was of little value, (most likely the province altogether possessed few riches,) and was certainly not to be compared to the twenty females with which they presented us, among whom one was a very fine woman, who subsequently became a convert to

---

<sup>12</sup> This passage is very important, as it shows to what degree of civilization the inhabitants of this district had arrived, and that they were at least skilful in the working of gold. The Spanish words are: "Quatro diademas, unas lagartijas, y dos como perillos, y orejeras, y cinco anades, y dos figuras de caras de Indios, y dos Suelas de Oro, como de sus Cotoras." The Caras de Indios (faces of Indians) were most probably shaped like masks, for similar ones, made of clay, are found to this day in the vale of Mexico. "Suelas de Oro, como de sus Cotoras," we have ventured to translate "Sandals with golden soles," particularly as Bernal Diaz, in a subsequent chapter, expressly remarks that Motecusuma wore a kind of half-boot with soles of gold. (p. [80](#).)

Christianity, and was named Doña Marina. Cortes was vastly pleased with this present, and held, by means of Aguilar, a long discourse with the caziques, telling them among other things, that their present was very acceptable; but he had something further to beg, namely, that they should again return to their dwellings with their wives and children. He should not consider the peace really concluded unless within the space of two days all the inhabitants had returned to the village. The caziques upon this issued the necessary orders, and in a couple of days all the families had returned. They showed the same readiness to comply with Cortes's wishes when he desired them to do away with their idols and human sacrifices. He likewise, as well as he could, gave them some idea of our holy Christian faith, and how we only adored one God. We also showed them a very pious figure, representing the mother of God holding her blessed Son in her arms, and explained to them how we paid reverence to this figure, and by it to the mother of God who was in heaven. Hereupon the caziques answered, that they were much pleased with this great *Tecleciguata*, and that they should much like to keep it in their village. In their language, *Tecleciguata* means a woman of distinction. Cortes promised them they should have it, and for this purpose ordered a pretty altar to be built. In the same way our carpenters, Alonso Yañez and Alvaro Lopez, were desired to construct a very high cross.

Cortes also further asked the caziques, why they had thus for the third time commenced war with us, though we had always

sought to be at peace with them? They answered, that they were sorry enough for it, and we had forgiven them; for the rest it was at the instigation of their brother, the cazique of Champoton, who had previously accused them of cowardice for not having attacked us when we arrived off the coast with four ships under another commander, meaning most probably Grijalva. The same advice was also given them by our Indian interpreter, who had run away from us in the night-time, telling them not to leave us any peace day or night, as we were but few in number. Cortes desired that he should be delivered up to us, but they declared they did not know what had become of him, as on the unfortunate termination of the battle he had immediately took to flight. This, however, was an untruth, as we were well aware how dearly the poor devil had paid for his advice, as shortly after the battle he was seized and sacrificed to their gods.

On being questioned as to where they got their gold and the trinkets, they answered from the country towards the setting of the sun, and pronounced the words *Culhua* and *Mexico*. As at that time we did not comprehend the meaning of these words, we paid little attention to them. We, however, questioned our other interpreter Francisco, who remained with us from our former expedition under Grijalva, but he knew very little of the Tabasco language, being only acquainted with the Culhuan, that is to say the Mexican. He told Cortes, partly by signs, that *Culhua* lay at a great distance before us, at the same time continually mentioning the word *Mexico*, *Mexico*. We were then still ignorant what he

wished to convey to us.

The day following the cross and altar were erected, and the figure of the holy Virgin being placed thereon: we all fell down upon our knees before it, while father Bartolome de Olmedo read mass. The caziques and chief Indians were present. On this occasion also the village of Tabasco was in all solemnity named Santa Maria de la Vitoria; and father Olmedo, with the assistance of Aguilar, said many excellent things to the twenty females who were presented to us, concerning our holy religion; that they should abandon their belief in idols, and no longer bring them sacrifices, for they were not gods but evil spirits; they had up to this moment lived in gross error, and should now adore Christ, our Lord. After this address the women were baptized, and she of whom I have already spoken was named Doña Marina. This was a lady of distinction, the daughter of a powerful cazique and a princess who had subjects of her own, which, indeed, you might see from her appearance. The circumstances which occasioned her being brought into our power I will relate hereafter. The names of the other Indian females who were baptized I cannot now bring to mind; but these were the first who were converted to Christianity in New Spain, and were distributed among Cortes's chief officers. Doña Marina, who was the prettiest, the most active and lively of the number, was given to Puertocarrero, who was a stout cavalier and cousin to the earl of Medellin. When he subsequently left for Spain, Cortes took Marina unto himself, and had a son by her, who was named Don Martin Cortes, and

became Comptoir of Santiago.

We remained five days in this spot, partly to cure our wounds, partly for the sake of those who suffered from pain in the groins, but who soon recovered here. Cortes employed these days in useful conversation with the caziques, and talked to them about the emperor, our master, of his numerous lordly vassals, and the advantage they would gain by having subjected themselves to him; as, for the future, in all their difficulties they would only have to apply to him, and wherever he might be he would come to their assistance.

The caziques thanked him for this offer; they solemnly declared themselves to be vassals of our great emperor, and these were the first among the inhabitants of New Spain who subjected themselves to his majesty. As the day following was Palm Sunday, Cortes desired them to come early in the morning to pray before the holy mother of God and the cross. He also sent for six Indian carpenters to assist ours in making a cross on a high ceiba tree,<sup>13</sup> near the village of Cintla, where the Lord had granted us the great victory. This cross was made in a manner so as to be very durable, for the bark of the tree, which always grows to again, was so cut as to form that figure. Lastly, Cortes desired the Indians to bring out all their canoes in order to assist us in re-embarking, for we were desirous of setting sail on that

---

<sup>13</sup> The bombax ceiba of Linnæus, and one of the tallest trees growing in America. The fruit produces a very fine cotton, resembling silk, used for stuffing bolsters and chair seats. (p. [82](#).)

holy day, as, according to our pilots, our present station was not secure from the north winds.

Early the next morning the caziques and the principal personages, all with their wives and children, made their appearance in the courtyard, where we had erected the altar and cross, and collected the palm branches for our procession. Upon this Cortes, with the officers and all our men, rose and made a solemn procession. Both our priests, the father Bartolome de Olmedo, belonging to the order of the charitable brethren, and Juan Dias, were dressed in their full canonicals, and read mass. We prayed before the cross and kissed it, the caziques and Indians all the while looking on. After the ceremony was finished the principal Indians brought ten fowls, baked fish, and all kinds of greens, which we enjoyed very much. We now took our leave, and Cortes repeatedly recommended them to take care of the image of the holy Virgin and the cross, and to hold the chapel in due reverence, in order that salvation and blessings might come upon them.

We all embarked in the evening, and on Monday morning we set sail with a good wind. We always kept close to the shore, and steered in the direction of San Juan de Ulua. As we coasted along, the weather being most favorable, we who had been here with Grijalva, and were well acquainted with these parts, pointed out to Cortes La Rambla, which the Indians call Aguajaluco; further on, the coast of Tonala or San Antonio, the great river Guacasualco, the elevated snow mountains (sierras

nevadas), and those of San Martin. We also showed him the split rock forming two points, which stretch out into the sea, and somewhat resemble the figure of a chair. We then showed him the river Alvarado; further on the river Banderas, where we made the 16000 pesos; the Isla Blanca and Isla Verde, also the Isla di Sacrificios, where, under Grijalva, we found the idols with the Indians who had been recently sacrificed.

In this way we pretty quickly arrived at San Juan de Ulua, which we reached on Holy Thursday about noon. I shall never forget how Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero just about this time remarked to Cortes: "Methinks we are now certainly arrived in that country, of which those gentlemen who have been here twice before, sung:<sup>14</sup>

'Cata Francia, montesinos!  
Cata Paris, la Ciudad,  
Cata las aguas de Duero,  
Do van a dar en la mar!"

"I tell you, only look at this rich country, and keep strict command over us." Cortes, who well knew what he meant, said in return: "If God will only grant us that good fortune in arms which he gave to Roland, the Paladin, then with your assistance

---

<sup>14</sup> Cata Francia, Montesinos, &c. This is the first strophe of an old Spanish romance, in which Montesinos the father desires his son to revenge him of his mortal enemy Tomillas: "Montesinos cast a glance  
On your lands, the soil of France;  
See how the Duro's sportive motion  
Carries its waters to the ocean!" (p. 83.)>

and that of the other gentlemen cavaliers, we shall succeed in everything else." This happened just at the moment when Cortes was entering the river Alvarado, which circumstance is also mentioned by Gomara.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

How Doña Marina herself was a caziquess, and the daughter of distinguished personages; also a ruler over a people and several towns, and how she came to Tabasco.

Previous to going into any details here respecting the powerful Motecusuma, his immense kingdom of Mexico, and its inhabitants, I must relate what I know of Doña Marina. She was born a ruler over a people and country, – for her parents had the dominion of a township called Painala, to which several other townships were subject, lying about twenty-four miles from the town of Guacasualco. Her father died when she was very young, and her mother married another young cazique. By him she had a son, of whom it appears they were both very fond, and to whom, after their death, they designed to leave their territories. In order, however, that the daughter of the first marriage might not stand in his way, she was conveyed secretly during night-time to an Indian family in Xicalango, they spreading the rumour she had died, which gained further belief from the circumstance that a daughter of one of her female slaves happened to die at the time. The Indians of Xicalango did not keep the young girl themselves, but gave her to the inhabitants of Tabasco, by whom she was presented to Cortes. I knew her mother and half-brother myself, the latter having already reached manhood,

and governed the township jointly with his mother. When they were subsequently both converted to Christianity, the latter was named Martha and her son Lazaro. I was well acquainted with the whole of this circumstance; for in the year 1523, when Mexico and several other provinces had been subdued, and Christobal de Oli had rebelled in the Higueras, Cortes came to Guacasualco, and on that occasion visited Marina's birth-place. Most of the inhabitants of Guacasualco accompanied Cortes on this expedition; I myself was also among the number. As Doña Marina, in all the wars of New Spain, Tlascalla, and at the siege of Mexico, had rendered the greatest services in capacity of an interpretress, Cortes carried her everywhere with him. During this journey it also was that he married her to a cavalier of the township of Orizava, named Juan Xaramillo. Among others, there was present as a witness a certain Aranda of Tabasco, through whom this circumstance became immediately known. These are the true particulars of the whole case, not, however, as related by Gomara. For the rest, Marina had the most extensive influence in New Spain, and did with the Indians what she pleased.

While Cortes was staying in Guacasualco, he ordered all the caziques of the province to assemble, and advised them to adopt our holy religion. On this occasion the mother and brother of Doña Marina also made their appearance with the other caziques. They recognized each other immediately; the former, however, appeared to be in the greatest anxiety, thinking that they had

merely been called there to be killed. Doña Marina, however, desired them to dry away their tears, and comforted them by saying they were unconscious of what they were doing when they had sent her away to the inhabitants of Xicalango, and that she freely forgave the past. By this means God certainly directed everything for her best, turned her away from the errors of heathenism, and converted her to Christianity.

Thus destined, she likewise bore a son unto her master Cortes, and then married a cavalier named Juan Xaramillo. All this I consider of much greater importance than if she had been presented with the sole dominion of the whole of New Spain. She likewise gave presents to her relatives on their return home. What I have related is the strict truth, and can swear to it. Gomara's account respecting this is wholly erroneous, and he adds many other circumstances which I shall leave without comment. This, however, is certain, that the whole affair reminds one of the history of Joseph and his brethren in Egypt, when they came into his power. After this diversion into matters which subsequently took place, I must relate how we first managed to understand Doña Marina. She was conversant with the language of Guacasualco, which is the Mexican, and with that of Tabasco. Aguilar, however, merely understood the latter, which is spoken throughout the whole of Yucatan. Doña Marina had, therefore, first to make herself understood to Aguilar, who then translated what she said into Spanish. This woman was a valuable instrument to us in the conquest of New Spain. It was,

through her only, under the protection of the Almighty, that many things<sup>15</sup> were accomplished by us: without her we never should have understood the Mexican language, and, upon the whole, have been unable to surmount many difficulties.

Let this suffice respecting Doña Marina; I will now relate how we arrived in San Juan de Ulua.

---

<sup>15</sup> On this woman the captain Cadahalso, in his 'Cartas Marruecas,' passes the following encomium: "Primera muger, que no ha prejudicado en uno exercito;" i.e. "The first woman who ever accompanied an army without being a prejudice to it." (p. [85](#).)

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

How we arrive with our vessels in San Juan de Ulua, and what we did there.

On Holy Thursday, in the year of our Lord 1519, we arrived with our whole squadron in the harbour of San Juan de Ulua. As Alaminos well remembered this spot from the expedition under Grijalva, he brought our ships to anchor in a place where they were sheltered from the north wind. We had scarcely lain here half an hour when we espied two large canoes, which are called here pirogues, filled with a number of Indians, making straight for Cortes's vessel, which, from the large flag hanging from the mast-head, they recognized as our commander's ship. They climbed on board without any ceremony, and inquired for the *Tlatoan*, which, in their language, means master. Doña Marina understood their question, and pointed to Cortes; they, therefore, turned to him, paying him great reverence after the Indian fashion, and bid him welcome. Their master, they said, who was a servant of the great Motecusuma, had sent them in order to ascertain who we were and what we came to seek in his country. We had only to inform them of what we wanted for our ships, and they would see that it was provided.

Cortes thanked them for their kindness, through Aguilar and Doña Marina, presented them with some blue glass beads, and

ordered some meat and drink to be placed before them. After they had taken some refreshment, he told them we were merely come here to make their acquaintance, and open a trade with them: we had not the remotest intention of doing them an injury, nor need they apprehend anything from our arrival. The ambassadors now returned, well contented, to their homes. The following morning, Good Friday, we disembarked our horses and cannon near some sand-hills which here run along the whole coast. Our artilleryman Mesa placed the cannon on a very advantageous spot, and we erected an altar where mass was immediately performed: for Cortes and the other chief officers huts were constructed of green boughs; the rest of us likewise constructed huts, and slept three together: the horses also were well provided for. The whole of Good Friday was spent in this work; and on the Saturday many Indians arrived, who had been sent by a man of distinction, named Quitlalpitoc, governor under Motecusuma: this personage was afterwards christened Ovandillo. They had axes with them, and cut off an additional quantity of branches to make a better finish to Cortes's hut, which they then overhung with large pieces of cloth, to keep out the heat, which was already very great. They also brought along with them fowls, maise-bread, and plums, which were then nice and ripe; also, if I rightly recollect, they had with them some gold trinkets. All these things they handed over to Cortes, adding, that the governor himself would come the next day and bring with him a further supply of provisions. Cortes

joyfully accepted of these presents, and ordered various kinds of toys we had brought for barter to be given them, with which they were uncommonly delighted. On Easter day, the governor indeed appeared in person, as had been assured us. His name was *Teuthlille*, and he was one of the former generals of the Mexican empire. He was accompanied by another person of distinction, called *Quitlalpiloc*. We subsequently learnt that both these personages were appointed governors over the provinces *Cotastlan*, *Tustepec*, *Guazpaltepec*, and *Tlatateteclio*, and other townships recently subdued. They were followed by a great number of Indians, carrying the presents, consisting of fowls and greens. *Teuthlille* having ordered the others to stand back a little, walked up to *Cortes*, and made him three most reverential bows, after the Indian fashion, which he repeated on turning to us who stood nearest. *Cortes* bid both welcome, then embraced them, and desired them to wait a little, as he would afterwards give them a more circumstantial answer. In the meantime he ordered the altar to be fitted up as prettily as possible. *Francisco Bartolome* and father *Juan Diaz* performed mass. Both the governors and the principal personages of their suite were present during the ceremony, after which *Cortes* sat down to dinner with them.

After the table had been cleared, *Cortes*, with the assistance of *Aguilar* and *Doña Marina*, entered into conversation with the Mexican officials and the *caziques*, telling them we were Christians, and subjects of the greatest monarch of the world, whose name was emperor *Charles*, and that he had many great

personages among his vassals and servants. We had come by his command to their country, of which and its powerful monarch who now reigned over it, his majesty had heard long ago. As far as regarded himself, he was desirous of becoming his friend, and had to disclose many things to him, in the name of his emperor, which he would listen to with delight. In order that a good understanding might be established between him and his subjects, they should acquaint him with the place where their monarch resided, that he might pay his respects to him, and make the necessary disclosures. To which Teuthlille answered in a rather imperious tone, "Since you are but just arrived, it would be more fitting that you, previous to your desiring an interview with my monarch, should accept this present, which we have brought you in his name, and disclose your wishes to me." He then brought forth, out of a species of box, a quantity of gold trinkets, of beautiful and skilful workmanship, besides more than twenty packages of stuffs very prettily worked of white cotton and feathers. These they presented to Cortes, with various other costly things, which, owing to the number of years which have since elapsed, I cannot now remember, besides provisions, consisting in quantities of fowls, fruits, and dried fish. Cortes accepted all this with a joyful countenance, presenting these gentlemen in return with glass beads resembling brilliants, and other things we brought from Spain. He begged of them to desire the inhabitants of the different districts to commence trading with us, as we possessed various articles which we were desirous

of exchanging for gold; this they promised to do.

Cortes then ordered an arm-chair to be brought, beautifully painted and adorned with inlaid work, some pieces of precious stones, wrapt in cotton cloth, perfumed with musk, a necklace of imitation pearls, a scarlet cap, with a medal, on which was represented the holy St. George on horseback, with lance in hand, killing the dragon. Cortes addressed Teuthlille, and said, that he presented this chair to his monarch Motecusuma, that he might sit in it when he should pay him a visit, and the string of pearls to wind around his head on the same occasion; all of which were presents from the emperor our master, who had sent these things to his monarch in token of friendship and as a proof of the esteem in which he held him: he ought now to inform us where and when he could personally wait upon him. Teuthlille accepted the presents, and said, in return, that his master Motecusuma, as he was also a great monarch, would on his side be equally delighted to learn something about our great emperor: he would hasten to lay the presents before him, and return with his answer.

Teuthlille had with him very clever painters, for there were such in Mexico, and he ordered them to sketch the likeness and whole person of Cortes, with the dress he wore; also all the other chief officers, the soldiers, our vessels, horses, Doña Marina, and Aguilar; even our two dogs, the cannon, the balls; in short, everything they could fix their eyes on belonging to us: these paintings they took along with them to show to their monarch. In order, however, to convey to him a still greater idea of our power,

Cortes ordered our cannon to be heavily laden with powder, so as to produce a very loud report, commanding also Alvarado and the other cavaliers to mount their horses, to hang bells around the necks of the latter, and to gallop up in full speed in presence of Motecusuma's ambassadors. Cortes also mounted his horse, and said to the others, "It would be capital if we could gallop across these sand-hills at full speed; but, as we should so easily stick in the sand, it will be better for us to ride two and two along the sea-shore at low water." He then gave the command of the horse to Alvarado, whose brown mare was a spirited animal, and very swift. All this was done in presence of the Mexican ambassadors; but, that they might likewise see the cannon fired, Cortes, under the pretence of having something further to communicate, took them and several other principal personages to a spot where they might have a good view of it. The weather was perfectly calm; and when the cannon was fired, the stone balls flew with a tremendous crash along the sand-hills, re-echoing for a length of time. The Indians were terribly startled, and ordered their painters to represent this likewise, to them so novel a sight, that they might show it to Motecusuma.

One of our men had on a casque, which was partly gilt; Teuthlille, who was much more enlightened than any of his companions, remarked, when his eye fell upon it, that it bore a great resemblance to a helmet which belonged to their most ancient forefathers, and now adorned the head of their warrior-god Huitzilopochtli. Motecusuma, he further added, would

certainly be uncommonly pleased if he could likewise see this casque. Cortes, on hearing this, ordered the casque to be presented to him, thereby expressing the wish, that he should like to satisfy himself that the gold of this country was similar to what we find in our rivers. If they would send him the casque full of gold dust, he would send it to our great emperor. Upon this Teuthlille took leave of Cortes and all of us, promising to return speedily, while Cortes, under the most tender of embraces, made him every profession of friendship.

After this personage had taken his departure, we learnt that he was not merely a distinguished statesman, but also the most nimble pedestrian at Motecusuma's court. He did, indeed, use the utmost expedition to bring his monarch information, and hand over to him the paintings and presents. The great Motecusuma was vastly astonished at everything he heard and saw, and yet he was pleased. But, when at last he espied the casque, and compared it with that of the idol Huitzilopochtli, he no longer doubted for an instant that we belonged to that people, whom his forefathers had prophesied would, one time or other, come and subdue the country.

Concerning these things Gomara has adduced much of which he had been ill informed; I will not, however, detain myself by contradicting him, but continue my narrative.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

How Teuthlille makes his report to Motecusuma, and gives him our presents; as also what further took place in our camp.

After the departure of Teuthlille with the presents which Cortes sent to his monarch, Motecusuma; the other governor, Quitlalpitoc, remained behind in our camp. He took up his quarters in a kind of hut, at a distance from ours, and ordered Indians to bake maise-bread, procure the fowls, fruits, and fish, which the province had to furnish, for the table of Cortes and his officers. We other soldiers, if we wished to get our bellies full were compelled to catch shell and other fish ourselves. In the meantime numbers of Indians arrived from the above-mentioned provinces, over which the two officials sent by Motecusuma were governors, bringing with them some gold trinkets of small value, and fowls, which they gave us in exchange for our goods, consisting in glass pearls and such like; with which we were all provided, having experienced the value of these during the expedition under Grijalva.

Six or seven days may have thus been spent, when Teuthlille returned in the morning with more than a hundred Indian porters, all heavily laden, accompanied by a great Mexican cazique, who both in countenance, stature, and deportment,

greatly resembled Cortes, and on that account only had been selected by his monarch to accompany the deputation; for, as was related, when Teuthlille brought forth the picture representing Cortes, all the grandees who were present with their monarch Motecusuma, immediately observed that he resembled a person of distinction named Quintalbor. This was the same person who now accompanied Teuthlille, we therefore called one the Cortes of this place, and the other the Cortes of that place. We must now, however, learn what the ambassadors did when they came into the presence of Cortes. First of all they touched the ground at his feet with the hand, they then perfumed him and all the Spaniards who were present, with pans made of clay. Cortes gave them a most cordial reception, and desired them to sit down at his side. The cazique Quintalbor was commissioned to discuss matters jointly with Teuthlille. Both, therefore, told Cortes he was most welcome in their country; and after a good deal of talking on both sides, they produced the presents and spread them out on a mat, over which they had first thrown some cotton cloths. The first was a round plate, about the size of a waggon wheel, representing the sun, the whole of the finest gold, and of the most beautiful workmanship; a most extraordinary work of art, which, according to the account of those who weighed it, was worth above 20,000 gold pesos. The second was a round plate, even larger than the former, of massive silver, representing the moon, with rays and other figures on it, being of great value. The third was the casque, completely filled with pure grains of

gold, as they are found in the mines, worth about 3000 pesos, which was more to us than if it had been ten times the value, as we now knew for certain there were rich gold mines in the country. Among other things there were also thirty golden ducks, exactly resembling the living bird, and of splendid workmanship, further figures resembling lions, tigers, dogs and apes; likewise ten chains with lockets, all of gold, and of the most costly workmanship; a bow with the string and twelve arrows, and two staffs five palms in length, like those used by the justices, all cast of the purest gold; further, they brought small cases containing the most beautiful green feathers, blended with gold and silver, and fans similarly worked; every species of game likewise cast in gold. In short such a number of objects, which from the many years since elapsed I cannot now altogether remember.<sup>16</sup> There

---

<sup>16</sup> These remarkable presents have all been enumerated by Torquemada, (*Monarchia Indiana*, i, iv, c. 17;) and we cannot do better than give his minute description of them here: "The ambassador of Motecusuma ordered mats to be spread on the ground before Cortes, and over them some cotton cloths, on which he arranged the presents, consisting of large quantities of cotton shirts and other cotton stuffs, beautifully manufactured, and interwoven with feathers of the most splendid colours; bucklers made of the purest white staffs, decorated with feathers, gold, silver, and pearls, surpassing everything in beauty and skilfulness of workmanship that was ever seen. There was also a helmet, tastefully carved out of wood, filled with grains of gold; a casque, made of thin plates of gold, decorated with tassels and stones, resembling the smaragdus; numerous large bunches of feathers of diversified colours, fastened in silver and gold; fans for keeping off flies, made of the rarest feathers; a thousand lockets of gold and silver, of the most curious and beautiful workmanship; bracelets and military decorations of gold and silver, splendidly embossed with green and bright yellow feathers; leather made of deer skin, curried and coloured in the best possible manner; shoes and sandals of the same leather, sewn with thin gold wire, and

were alone above thirty packages of cotton stuffs, variously manufactured and interworked with variegated feathers. When the great cazique Quintalbor and Teuthlille handed over these presents to Cortes, they begged of him to accept of them in the same friendly disposition with which their monarch sent them, and to distribute them among his Teules. Upon this they began to unfold what their monarch had in particular commissioned them to say, which was as follows: "He, Motecusuma, was delighted with the arrival of such courageous men in his states, as we, according to the accounts he had received and judging from the occurrence at Tabasco, certainly must be. He wished very much

---

the soles made of splendid white and blue stone. There were other kinds of shoes, most tastefully manufactured of cotton; mirrors of marcasite, globular shaped, of the size of a fist, and most ingeniously set in gold, the small frame itself being very valuable, and worthy of the acceptance of any crowned head; coverings and curtains to beds, manufactured of various coloured cotton, more glossy and of finer texture than silk; a number of other gold and silver trinkets; a necklace of gold, decorated with upwards of a hundred emeralds, rubies, and various other ornaments of gold; a second necklace, consisting of numbers of large pearls and emeralds, all of the most exquisite workmanship; numerous other gold trinkets in the shape of frogs and animals; jewels in the form of medals, the shrines being even more valuable than the precious stones they contained; a quantity of large and small grains of gold. The most valuable of these presents, however, were two round plates, one of gold, on which was a sun with rays and the zodiac; this weighed above one hundred marks: the other was of silver, which in a similar manner represented the moon, weighing above fifty marks: both were massive, and of the thickness of the Spanish coin of four silver reals, and as large as a waggon wheel. Those who saw these splendid presents said that, without considering the beautiful workmanship, the value of the gold and silver alone amounted to 25,000 castellanos de oro; so that the whole together may well be estimated at 50,000 ducats." (p. [91](#).)

to see our great emperor, who was such a powerful monarch, of whom, although residing at such a vast distance, he had already gained some knowledge, and he would send him a present of some valuable stones. He was likewise ready to furnish us with everything we might require during our stay. But as for Cortes calling upon him, we had better give up all thoughts of that, as it was not necessary, and would be accompanied with great difficulties."

Cortes thanked them most sincerely for their kindness, gave to each a couple of shirts made of holland, blue beads, and other trifles, begging of them to return to their great monarch Motecusuma, and tell him that our emperor and master would take it very unkind, after we had come from such distant countries and crossed such vast seas, merely with the intention of paying our respects to Motecusuma, if we returned without fulfilling this object. He wished, therefore, to proceed to his residence and himself to receive his commands. The ambassadors answered, that they would mention all this to their monarch, but that any waiting upon him would be superfluous. Cortes upon this gave them out of our poverty a cup, of Florentine workmanship, gilt and surrounded with a quantity of relieved foliage, besides those shirts made of holland, and other things; all these were to be presented to Motecusuma, and he desired them to take his answer to him. Both the delegates then departed, while Quitlalpitoc remained alone behind in our camp, commissioned, it appeared, by the two

other officials of Motecusuma, to provide provisions for us out of the neighbouring districts.

## CHAPTER XL

How Cortes goes in search of another harbour and a good spot to found a colony, and what further happened.

After the Mexican ambassadors had again taken their departure, Cortes ordered two vessels to sail further on and explore the coast. The command of these was given to Francisco de Montejo, with orders to follow the same course taken by Grijalva. He was to sail on for the space of ten days, and search for a good harbour and convenient spot to form a settlement; for in the sandy region we were now staying it was impossible to live, on account of the gnats; the inhabited districts, moreover, being too far distant. Alaminos and el Manquillo who were already acquainted with these waters, piloted the vessels. Montejo departed and arrived in the waters of Rio Grande, near Panuco, as far as we had gone with Grijalva, but on account of the heavy currents there he could proceed no further; he, therefore, returned to San Juan de Ulua, bringing us no other news than that they had seen at a distance of about thirty-six miles further on a town, which to all appearance was fortified. This place was called Quiahuitzlan, having a harbour, which, according to the opinion of Alaminos, was secure from the north wind. Ten or twelve days were spent by Montejo in this expedition out and home. Quitlalpitoc, who had remained to furnish us with provisions,

soon ceased to do so altogether, which, of course, created a great scarcity of food: our cassave-bread had likewise become quite mouldy and swarmed with worms, so that we had nothing to eat if we did not procure ourselves shellfish. In the commencement the Indians had certainly brought us gold and fowls for our goods, but now they no longer came in such great numbers as at first, and those who did come appeared quite shy and reserved. We, therefore, anxiously awaited the return of the two ambassadors from Mexico.

After some days had elapsed Teuthlille indeed returned with a great number of Indians. They observed the same courteous behaviour as on the previous occasion, perfuming Cortes and all of us, and then brought forth their presents, consisting in ten packages of mantles, richly worked in feathers; further, four *chalchihuitls*, a species of green stone of uncommon value, which are held in higher estimation with them than the smaragdus<sup>17</sup> with us; lastly, there were also all kinds of gold trinkets, which I heard valued at 3000 pesos. The great cazique

---

<sup>17</sup> Chalchihuitls; Bernal Diaz calls these Chalchuites. This stone is of a light green colour, at first held in great estimation by the Spaniards, but Torquemada, a contemporary of our author, remarks, (Monarchia, Ind. i, p. 462,) it is a stone on which the Indians set a high value, but not so the Spaniards. He calls it a kind of smaragdus, "the polishing of which the Indians say was taught them by the god Quetzalcohuatl." Bustamente (Historia de la Conquista de Mexico escrita, por Fr. Bernardino Sahagun, Mexico, 1829,) calls it, "Piedra jaspe, mui verde, o sea esmeralda ordinaria," i.e. "A jasper of a very green colour, or a common smaragdus." This stone represented among the Mexicans everything that was excellent in its kind, for which reason they put such a stone in the mouth of the distinguished chiefs who died. (p. 93.)

Quintalbor had fallen ill on the journey, and consequently remained behind. Teuthlille and Quitlalpitoc, therefore, alone fulfilled Motecusuma's commission, and assured us that he had most graciously accepted of our present. Regarding the four chalchihuitls they observed, that those were intended as a present to our emperor, as each of them was worth, more than a load of gold. For the rest it was unnecessary to send any more messengers to Mexico, neither was there any further mention to be made of a personal interview between their monarch and Cortes.

Although, it was very unpleasant to the latter that his visit to Motecusuma should thus be declined in dry words, yet he thanked them most kindly; and added to some of us who were present: "Really this Motecusuma must be a great and rich gentleman; nevertheless, if God be willing, we shall one day visit him in his palace!" "We only wish, (returned we soldiers,) that we were once nicely engaged with him."

All this took place just about the hour of Ave Maria; the bell, therefore, announced that we should assemble ourselves around the cross, which we had erected on an elevated sand-hill. While we were all on our knees before it, and repeating the Ave Maria, Teuthlille and Quitlalpitoc inquired why we thus humbled ourselves so greatly before that pole.

Cortes immediately turned to Bartolome de Olmedo, and remarked to him: "This is a good opportunity, father, to give these people some notion of our holy religion through our

interpreters." This father Olmedo accordingly did in a manner which would have done honour to the greatest of theologians. He first of all explained that we were Christians, and then expatiated on the whole substance of our belief; he then proved that their idols were useless things, evil spirits, which fled away from the presence of the cross. On such a cross, he continued, the Lord of heaven and earth suffered death, we believed in him only, and prayed to him as the only true God, Jesus Christ, who suffered death for the salvation of the human race; who rose again on the third day, and ascended into heaven, that he would again appear to hold judgment over the living and the dead. Upon this followed everything that was edifying, which the Indians comprehended well, and which they assured us they would relate to their monarch.

Cortes then explained to them, that among the many reasons which had induced our great emperor to send us here, one was that they should abandon for ever the religion of their cursed idols, abolish human sacrifices, and abstain from kidnapping. He, therefore, must beg of them to erect crosses like this in their towns and on their temples, and also the figure of the holy Virgin, with her most excellent Son, then God would bestow great blessings on them. In short, there were many expressions replete with excellent feeling, which I am unable wholly to report, and therefore will rather leave in my pen.

Our men now commenced to barter with the Indians, who had arrived with Teuthlille for what they had brought, and obtained

various kinds of things, all of inferior gold, which we gave to our sailors for catching us fish; this was the only means we had of stilling our hunger. Cortes was well aware of this, and secretly enjoyed the idea; however, the creatures of Diego Velasquez drew his attention to it, and thought he ought not to permit such a species of traffic. We shall further see what happened on this account.

# CHAPTER XLI

What happened on account of our bartering for gold, and of other things which took place in our camp.

This bartering for gold being continued with the Indians, the adherents of Diego Velasquez remonstrated with Cortes, and asked him how he could suffer such a thing? Diego Velasquez, they added, had not sent him hither, that the soldiers should put most of the gold in their pockets. It ought to be made known, that henceforth no one but Cortes himself should barter for gold, and that every one should render an account of the gold in his possession, in order that the emperor's fifths might be deducted therefrom. It was, moreover, necessary to appoint a treasurer. Cortes confessed they were in the right, and allowed them to choose a treasurer themselves. But, not until their choice had fallen on one Gonzalo Mexia, did he show what his real intentions were; then he said to them with a heavy frown on his brow: "Only consider, gentlemen, how hard our comrades have to fare, since provisions totally fail! In order that they might not hunger, I have up to this moment overlooked this system of bartering, and indeed it produces but a mere trifle. I hope, with the assistance of God, that our affairs will take a better turn by and bye. Everything has its two sides to be looked at, and as we have now, in compliance with your wishes, ordered that no more bartering

for gold shall be allowed in future, we have to see whence we are henceforth to obtain provisions."

Gomara is in the wrong, when he relates, that Cortes issued that order, on this occasion, to make Motecusuma believe we cared little about gold. This monarch knew very well how the matter stood on this point, from the time of our arrival under Grijalva in the Bandera stream; he might also easily guess what we were after, when we begged of him to send us the casque full of golden grains, and our daily bartering for that metal. The Mexicans, indeed, are not the kind of folks to be thus imposed upon.

However this may be, one fine morning the Indians, who had resided near us in the huts and were accustomed to furnish us with provisions and bring gold for barter, had all secretly left with Quiltlalpitoc. This, we subsequently learnt, was done by the commands of Motecusuma, who had forbidden all intercourse with Cortes, which he had been induced to do from his attachment to his idol-gods. These were named *Tetzcatlipuca* and *Huitzilopochtli*, the former being the god of hell and the latter the god of war, to whom Motecusuma daily sacrificed some young children, that they might disclose to him what he should do with us. His intention was to take us prisoners if we would not re-embark, and employ some to educate children, while others were to be sacrificed. For his idol-gods, as we afterwards discovered, advised him not to listen to Cortes, and to take no notice of what we had sent him word concerning the cross and the figure of the

blessed Virgin. This was also the reason why his men had gone away so secretly.

Affairs having assumed such a posture, we now daily expected that hostilities would break out, and were particularly on our guard. It was during one of these days that I was standing sentinel on the sand-hills with another soldier, when we espied five Indians approaching along the shore. Not to alarm our camp with such a trifle we allowed them to come up. They all appeared very good humoured, made their obeisance to us after their fashion, and begged of us, by signs, to conduct them to our camp. Upon which I said to my companion, I will take them there, while you remain where you are, for at that time my legs were not so infirm as they are now, in my old age. When I presented them to Cortes, they paid him the profoundest respect, and continually repeated the word, *Lopelucio, Lopelucio*, which in the Totonaque language means Lord, great God. In dress and language this people differed entirely from the Mexicans, whom Motecusuma had sent to our camp. They had large holes bored in their under-lips, in which they wore pieces of blue speckled stone, or thin plates of gold; the holes in their ears were still larger in size, and adorned with similar ornaments. Neither Aguilar nor Doña Marina understood their language; but the latter inquired of them whether there was any *Naëyavatos*, or interpreter, among them? Upon which two of them answered that they understood the Mexican language, and now the discourse immediately commenced. They bid us welcome, and stated that

their ruler had sent them hither to inquire who we were, and that he would be delighted to be of any use to such powerful men as we were. They would have waited upon us earlier if they had not shunned the people of Culhua, namely, the Mexicans (meaning as much as villains,) who had been with us. Most probably these people had heard of our battles at Tabasco and Potonchan; they at least knew that the Mexicans had secretly departed from us three days ago. Cortes learnt from them many things which were of the greatest importance to him, particularly respecting the enemies and opponents of Motecusuma: Cortes, therefore, was most friendly to these people, gave them various kinds of presents, and desired them to return to their ruler and acquaint him that he would visit him shortly in person. From this moment we called these Indians by no other name than Lopelucios. However, it was impossible for us to remain on these sand-hills, on account of the long-legged and small gnats, which they call chechenes, and are the worst of all: we could get no sleep for them. Moreover, we had no kind of provisions left; our cassave-bread was quite mouldy and uneatable, on account of the worms, with which it swarmed: it was, therefore, no wonder that several of our men, who had Indian possessions in the island of Cuba, should wish to return home, which was in particular the case with all the friends and creatures of Velasquez. Cortes, observing this disposition, gave orders for our departure to Quiahuitzlan, which had been seen by Montejo and Alaminos, and where the vessels would be secure from the north winds, being sheltered by the rock above

mentioned.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.