

BERNAL DIAZ CASTILLO

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

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

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

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CHAPTER CXXXVII

How the whole of us marched towards Tezcucó, and what happened to us on our way there.

When Cortes found himself so well provided again with muskets, powder, crossbows, and horses, and observed how impatient the whole of us, officers as well as soldiers, were to commence the siege of the great city of Mexico, he desired the caziques of Tlascalla to furnish him with 10,000 of their troops to

join us in the campaign of Tezcucó, as this was one of the largest towns of New Spain, and next in importance to Mexico. The elder Xicotencatl (now called Don Lorenzo de Vargas) assured him that not only the 10,000, but many more troops were at his service, and that the brave cazique Chichimeclatl, our particular friend, would himself march out at their head. Cortes returned him the most sincere thanks, and, after having reviewed the whole of his troops, whose exact number¹ I have forgotten, we commenced our march on the fourth day after Christmas of the year 1520.

The first night we quartered in a township which was subject to Tezcucó, and were provided with everything we required. From this place we arrived on the Mexican territory, where, if possible, we observed still greater precaution, and always had four of the horse-patrol and an equal number of foot in advance to explore the defiles, as we had been informed on our march that a very formidable mountain pass had been blocked up by large trees which the enemy had felled when notice of our approach was received in Mexico and Tezcucó. During this day's march, however, we met with no kind of obstacle, and quartered ourselves for the night about twelve miles further on, at the foot of a mountain. Here we found it very cold, but kept a sharp look out. With break of day we continued our march further up

¹ Cortes, in his despatches, thus enumerates his troops, 40 horse, 550 foot soldiers, among whom there were 80 musketeers and crossbow-men; 8 or 9 field-pieces and a small supply of powder. (p. 1.)

the mountain, and speedily arrived where the mountain pass had been blocked up by felled trees, and a deep hollow had been made; but as we had great numbers of Tlascallans with us, we soon managed to clear away the trees, and to fill up the hole, so as to enable our cavalry to pass over, a company of crossbowmen and musketeers marching in advance. We now ascended the mountain for some time, and then descended a little, until we came to a spot whence we had a fine view of the lake of Mexico and its large towns standing in the midst of the water.

As soon as we beheld this city again, we thanked the Almighty for having conducted us thus far, and we promised ourselves to act more prudently in this campaign against Mexico than we had done previously. On descending this mountain, we observed numbers of signal fires about Tezcuco and the townships subject to it, and when we had arrived at another formidable pass, we came up with a large body of Mexicans and Tezcucans. They were waiting our arrival near a bridge which had been half burnt down, the water being of considerable depth. We, however, soon put the enemy to flight, and got safely on the opposite side, though our enemies still continued to yell fearfully from out the defiles and other places where we could not get at them, but that was all they did.

Although it was impossible for our cavalry to manœuvre here, our friends the Tlascallans did not remain inactive, for they spread themselves about the country, and carried off everything they could lay their hands on, although Cortes had ordered that no

hostilities should commence unless the enemy attacked us first; the Tlascallans, however, maintained that if these Tezcucans had been friendly inclined towards us, they would not have marched out against us as far as the bridge to stop our further progress.

The night following we took up our quarters in another township under Tezcuco. Here the whole of the inhabitants had fled; nevertheless we took every precaution, as we were almost sure we should be attacked by a vast body of Mexicans who were lying in wait for us in another mountain pass; this we had learnt from five Mexicans whom we had taken prisoners at the bridge just mentioned, but we afterwards heard that they had not dared to run the risk of an engagement with us, and had, consequently, marched off their troops; besides which, at that time, the Mexicans and Tezcucans were not upon the best of terms with each other; and the smallpox was raging throughout the whole of this district, so that they were not able to bring many warriors into the field; while our recent victories over the Mexican garrisons of Quauquecholla, Itztucan, Tepeaca, Xalatzinco, and Castilblanco, had spread terror through the country, and it was firmly believed that the united forces of Huexotzinco and Tlascalla had joined us in this campaign.

The spot where we had encamped for the night may have been about eight miles from Tezcuco, which we left at break of day, and observed every military precaution as we passed along. We had scarcely proceeded a couple of miles when our scouts came in with the glad tidings to Cortes that about ten

Indians were approaching, all unarmed, and bearing a species of golden banner: neither had they, on passing by any dwellings or plantations, been assailed by such terrible yells as on the day before; but everything wore the aspect of peace. Cortes and the whole of us were delighted with these good omens, and we halted for some time to rest a little. Seven distinguished Tezcucans now came up, carrying a golden banner at the point of a long lance, which they lowered, in token of peace, as they approached nearer to us. When they had arrived in the presence of Cortes, who had Doña Marina and Aguilar standing at his side, they addressed him as follows: "Malinche, our lord and master Coanacotzin,² the king of Tezcucó, has sent us to you to beg of you to take him into your friendship. He awaits you in his city of Tezcucó; and, in token of peace, he sends you this golden banner: at the same time he requests you will command your brothers and the Tlascallans not to commit any depredations in his country, and wishes you to take up your quarters in his city, where he will provide you with everything you may require."

These persons likewise assured us that the troops which lay in wait for us in the defiles and mountain passes were not of Tezcucó, but the whole of them were Mexicans sent out against us by Quauhtemóctzin. Cortes and the whole of us were overjoyed at the message which the king of Tezcucó had sent us. He embraced the ambassadors and three of them most

² This king was also called Cohuanacotzin, subsequently he became a convert to Christianity, and took the name of Don Fernando. (p. [3.](#))

affectionately, for they were relatives of Motecusuma, and well known to most of us as having been officers of that monarch. Our general then ordered the Tlascallan chiefs into his presence, and strictly enjoined them not to allow their men to commit any depredations in this country, nor injure any one, as we were at peace with the inhabitants. These orders they obeyed, though they were not so very particular as to the manner in which they procured themselves provisions, as every house had a plentiful supply of maize, beans, dogs, and fowls.

Cortes, however, suspected the Tezcucans were not in earnest in suing for peace, and deliberated with our officers on the subject, who were all of the same opinion, and observed that if the Tezcucans had been honestly inclined they would not have come in so great a hurry, and would have brought provisions with them. Cortes, nevertheless, accepted of the golden banner, which may have been worth about eighty pesos; he thanked the ambassadors, and assured them that it was not our custom to ill-use any of our emperor's subjects; on the contrary, they always experienced the kindest treatment from us. This they themselves would find to be true, if they abided faithfully by the peace they now sought of us; he had also commanded the Tlascallans not to injure any of the inhabitants; but as the Tezcucans on our retreat from Mexico had murdered upwards of forty Spaniards and 200 Tlascallans, and plundered them of all they possessed, he must demand of their king Coanacotzin, and of the caziques of Tezcuco, restitution of the stolen property, and if they delivered

up this to him he would pardon the murder of the Spaniards, whom they could not restore to us again. The ambassadors replied, that they would faithfully communicate all this to their monarch, but assured us that the teules he spoke of were, by order of Cuitlahuatzin, all sent to Mexico with everything they had possessed, and were there sacrificed to Huitzilopochtli.

Cortes, not wishing to intimidate them, made no further reply, but desired one of them to remain with us and dismissed the others in peace.

The next place we came to was one of the suburban villages of Tezcucó, but I have forgotten its name. Here we were furnished with excellent provisions and every other necessary. On our road we destroyed some idols which we found in a large building where we stopped. The next morning we entered Tezcucó itself, and it immediately struck us as singular that we should neither meet with women nor children, but only with grown up men, who all appeared very shy of us, as if they were about to commence hostilities. Notwithstanding this we took up our quarters here, but Cortes gave strict commands that none of the officers or men should stir out of the large courtyards adjoining our quarters, and to be altogether upon their guard, as the inhabitants did not appear very peaceably inclined, and it was necessary we should first see how matters stood.

Alvarado and Oli with several soldiers, among which number I was myself, were ordered to take possession of the great cu, which was very high, and to take with us twenty musketeers as

a guard. From which place we were narrowly to watch the town and lake, of which we had an excellent view from this height. We had no sooner arrived at the top of the temple than we espied the inhabitants of this and the surrounding townships running off with all they possessed; some fleeing to the mountains, others again concealing themselves in those parts of the lake which were thickly grown with reeds; the lake itself being crowded with large and small canoes.

Information of this was immediately forwarded to Cortes, who then determined to seize the king of Tezcucó, who had sent him the golden banner, but was informed by the papas, whom he had despatched to call their monarch, that he had fled with several distinguished personages to Mexico.

In this way the first night passed away, during which time we kept a vigilant look out, posted our sentinels in all directions, and made frequent patrols. The next morning, very early, Cortes sent for the chief authorities of the town, of whom many were opposed to the runaway monarch, as they were at issue with him on various points respecting the privileges he exercised in governing the town. When these made their appearance, he desired them to detail every circumstance to him, and inquired of them how long Coanacotzin had been king. They replied, that Coanacotzin, in order to raise himself to the throne, had murdered his elder brother, the former regent; and that this was done in secret understanding with Cuitlahuatzin, who had attacked and driven us out of Mexico after the death of

Motecusuma; but that there were other persons in the town who had a nearer claim to the crown of Tezcucó, particularly one young man, who was indeed the rightful heir. This young man shortly after became a convert to Christianity, and was baptized with great solemnity by father Olmedo, and named after his godfather, Don Hernando Cortes.³ He was the lawful son of the former prince of Tezcucó, Nezahualpilli.⁴ He was, therefore, without any further delay raised to the throne, and installed with all due solemnity, to the great satisfaction of the inhabitants, who obeyed the new king with the best of good will. That, however, he might be thoroughly confirmed in our holy religion, learn the art of governing, and the Spanish language, Cortes gave him for stewards the bachelor Escobar, and Antonio de Villareal, who was married to the beautiful Isabella de Ojeda. The brave Pedro Sanchez Farsan, whose wife was the courageous and excellent Maria de Estrada, was appointed commandant of the town, and he was particularly cautioned not to allow the king to have any communication with the Mexicans. This prince subsequently rendered us the greatest services; and he was greatly esteemed and beloved by his subjects. The first thing Cortes required of him at present was a sufficient number of hands to assist us in launching the brigantines when they should be completed, and to lengthen and deepen the canals where

³ His Indian name was Ixtlilxuchitl, and his Spanish, Don Hernando Pimentel, not Cortes. (p. [5](#).)

⁴ His real name was Necahuatpilli. (p. [5](#).)

they were to be launched; he then informed the king and chief personages of Tezcucó for what he intended these vessels, and of his determination to inclose Mexico on all sides. They not only declared their willingness to cooperate with us, but even sent messengers to the neighbouring townships, inviting them to seek our friendship, subject themselves to our emperor, and declare war against Mexico.

The whole of our troops were now divided into companies, to each one was assigned some particular station, which, indeed, was very necessary, as Quauhtemóctzin sent out from time to time numbers of large pirogues and canoes, to see whether we were off our guard or not.

About this time several tribes which were subject to Tezcucó came to sue for peace with us and beg forgiveness, if we thought they had been any way implicated in the late murders of our countrymen. Cortes received them most kindly, and took them into his friendship. The building of our brigantines was now rapidly continued, and there were every day from seven to eight thousand Indians employed to lengthen and deepen one of the canals. As we had an equal number of Tlascallans in our service, who greatly desired to heap up honour for themselves in assisting us against the Mexicans, Cortes easily persuaded them to accompany him in an expedition against Iztapalapan, through which town we had passed on our first march to Mexico. Cuitlahuatzin, the king of this township, had been raised to the throne of Mexico, after the death of Motecusuma, and

the inhabitants had done us considerable damage, and were continually committing their depredations on the townships of Chalco, Tlalmanalco, Amaquemecan, and Chimalhuacan, because these had entered into alliance with us. We had now been twelve days in Tezcuco without having achieved any thing worthy of mention, and therefore determined to open the campaign against Iztapalapan.

CHAPTER CXXXVIII

How we marched against Iztapalapan; Cortes taking along with him Alvarado and Oli; while Sandoval was left behind to protect Tezcuco.

The expedition against Iztapalapan was principally undertaken to please the Tlascallans, so great was their desire to try their strength again with the Mexicans on the field of battle. Their patience was almost exhausted, and they longed to revenge the death of their countrymen who were slain in our disastrous flight from Mexico. To this was likewise added, that the Tezcucans could scarcely supply the necessary provisions for so great a body of men, and it was not our interest to be too burdensome to them.

Cortes commanded this expedition in person, accompanied by Alvarado, Oli, thirteen horse, twenty crossbow-men, six musketeers, and two hundred Spanish foot. These troops were joined by the whole of our Tlascallan friends, and twenty of the Tezcucan chiefs, all relations of the Prince Don Hernando, and enemies to Quauhtemoctzin.

After the necessary arrangements had been made, we commenced our march towards Iztapalapan, which lies above sixteen miles from Tezcuco, and, as I have before stated, half the town stands in the lake itself. We marched forward with every military precaution, as the Mexicans had posted their scouts in

all quarters to watch our movements, so that they might be able to throw a body of troops into any place we might threaten to attack.

On this occasion again they had received due information of our design, and they had strengthened the garrison of Iztapalapan with above 8000 warriors; so that we found a considerable army ready to receive us in front of that town. The enemy bravely stood their ground for a considerable length of time, but at last gave way, so vigorously did we set upon them with our horse, crossbows, and muskets; while our friends of Tlascalla rushed upon them like so many furious dogs. The Mexicans now retreated into the town itself, where we pursued them; but this it appears was by a preconcerted plan, and had almost proved fatal to us. The enemy retreated before us, threw themselves into their canoes, and concealed themselves, partly in the houses which stood in the water, and partly among the reeds which grew in the lake. By this time it was quite dark, and as the enemy remained perfectly quiet, we contented ourselves with the victory we had gained, and neglected to observe our usual military precautions. While we thus thought ourselves secure, and least of all imagined we were threatened by any danger, so vast a flood of water rushed all of an instant into the town, that we must undoubtedly have all been drowned, if the distinguished Tezcucans who were with us had not given us timely notice to quit the houses. The enemy had cut through two dams, and thereby at once inundated the town; so that many of our Tlascallan friends, who were not accustomed

to deep waters, and consequently unable to swim, were drowned. We others likewise got a thorough wetting, lost our powder, and were obliged to retreat from the town in all haste, with great risk of our lives. And thus, with our clothes completely drenched, with empty stomachs, and shivering with cold, we passed a most terrible night, the enemy continually assailing our ears with derisive shouts and horrible yells from their canoes and houses. But something still worse awaited us, for the inhabitants of Mexico, who had been apprized of our perilous situation, now came advancing towards us in vast numbers, both by land and water, and fell upon us the next morning with such dreadful fury, that it was only by exerting ourselves to the utmost we were able to make a stand against them. In this engagement we lost two Spaniards and one horse, and great numbers of our men were wounded. By degrees, however, the enemy became less furious in their attacks, and we were thus enabled to retreat to Tezcucó, not a little annoyed at the defeat we had sustained. If we did not reap much honour for ourselves in this last battle, it must be remembered we had lost all our powder. We had, however, taught our enemies to respect us a little, for they remained perfectly quiet after our retreat to Tezcucó, and occupied their time in dressing their wounds, burying the dead, and repairing the houses which had been damaged. I must now return to Tezcucó, where in the meantime ambassadors had arrived from other townships to sue for peace.

CHAPTER CXXXIX

How ambassadors arrive in Tezcuco from three neighbouring townships, to sue for peace, and to beg forgiveness for the murder of several Spaniards who had fallen into their hands; and how Sandoval marched to Chalco and Tlalmanalco, to assist the inhabitants there against the Mexicans.

The second day after our return to Tezcuco, three of the neighbouring townships sent to Cortes, to sue for peace, and beg forgiveness, for having put some Spaniards to death; they strove to exonerate themselves from all guilt, by stating that they had been compelled to march against us by command of Cuitlahuatzin, who had ascended the Mexican throne after Motecusuma's death; they had merely done, they said, what they could not avoid, and had sent the Spaniards they had captured, with their horses, and everything else belonging to them, to Mexico. These townships, which thus came to sue for peace, were Tepetetzcuco and Otumpan; the name of the third I have forgotten. This was the same Otumpan where the memorable battle took place which we fought against the flower of the Mexican army.

The inhabitants of these townships were terrified when they heard of our march against Iztapalapan, and concluded they might now also expect a visit from us; and though they would

have been pleased to hear that we had perished in the water, or had been worsted in the last battle, yet they considered it more advisable, by seeking peace of us, to avert the castigation they feared.

Cortes, seeing he could not do better under the present circumstances, granted them a pardon for the past, but made them give a solemn promise to remain faithful to our emperor in future, to obey us in everything, and never again to enter into an alliance with Mexico; to all of which they faithfully adhered. After this, ambassadors arrived from another township, which lay in the midst of the lake, and was called Mizquic, though we called it Little Venice. The inhabitants of this place had never been upon intimate terms of friendship with the Mexicans, and now utterly detested them. An alliance with these people, from their situation in the midst of the lake, was of the utmost importance to us, and we also flattered ourselves we should, through them, gain the friendship of the other townships which lay on the lake. These ambassadors accordingly were most courteously received by our general, and he dismissed them with the most flattering assurances of our friendship and protection.

During this interview Cortes received information that a large body of Mexican troops were marching against the four townships which had been the first to solicit our friendship. The inhabitants there durst not venture of themselves to bid any defiance to the enemy, but intended to fly to the mountains, or seek refuge with us in Tezcuco. They begged so hard for

assistance, that Cortes at length complied with their request, and marched thither with twenty horse, two hundred foot, thirteen crossbow-men, and ten musketeers, accompanied by Alvarado and Oli. These towns lay about nine miles from Tezcucó, and were threatened with total destruction by the Mexicans for having concluded peace with us. In particular they were afraid of losing the crops of maize in front of the lake, which were now ready for harvesting, and from which the inhabitants of Tezcucó and the four townships had thought to supply us. The Mexicans declared they were coming to cut this maize, as it was their property, and those townships had always till then cultivated those lands for the papas of Mexico; and indeed many lives had already been lost in disputes respecting these fields.

Cortes, being now well acquainted with the true state of the case, sent word to the inhabitants of those places that they had nothing to fear, but to remain quietly at home, and send him word when they were desirous of harvesting their maize crops. He would then despatch an officer, with several horse, to protect the reapers. With this they were perfectly satisfied, and we returned to Tezcucó.

When we found that our stock of maize was nearly all gone, we sent notice of it to those townships, and they immediately commenced reaping their crops; and we marched thither to protect them, with ten horse, one hundred foot, and a few musketeers and crossbow-men, besides the Tlascallan troops, and we took up our position on the maize plantations.

I myself was twice present on these expeditions. On one occasion we had a very sharp skirmish with the Mexicans, a large body of whom had arrived in upwards of 1000 canoes, and secreting themselves among the maize plantations, had commenced carrying off our allies. We instantly fell upon them, and though they fought courageously, yet we compelled them to take to their canoes again. In this skirmish we had one man killed and twelve wounded, of the Tlascallans from fifteen to twenty were killed, and five were carried off alive.

The day following this skirmish we learnt that the townships Chalco and Tlalmanalco, with their dependent villages, were desirous of making peace with us, but were prevented from doing so by the Mexican garrisons stationed there. They complained bitterly of the treatment which they suffered from them; their wives were dragged away, and if handsome were often violated in the presence of their parents and husbands.

About this time our carpenters in Tlascalla had proceeded so far with the building of the brigantines, that the timber was ready to be put together; we were therefore very awkwardly situated, from being so closely bound to Tezcuco, where we had no time to make any arrangements for transporting the brigantines hither; for now the inhabitants of this township, then those of Mizquic, or Little Venice, then again others which stood in alliance with us, came to beg assistance against the Mexicans; besides this, many of our Tlascallan friends longed to return home with their booty, consisting in gold, salt, and other matters, but durst not

venture, on account of the insecurity of the road, as the Mexican troops were spread in all directions.

Under these circumstances, Cortes deemed that the inhabitants of Tlalmanalco and Chalco, before all others, required our more immediate assistance, that they might be enabled to form an alliance with us. The other townships might defend themselves as well as they could for the present, as it would not do to leave Tezcucó without any troops; indeed the utmost vigilance was necessary in that town. Lugo and Sandoval therefore received instructions to march out, with fifteen horse, two hundred foot, a few crossbow-men and musketeers, besides our friends of Tlascallā. They were to dislodge the Mexican troops from Chalco and Tlalmanalco, and clear the road leading to Tlascallā and Vera Cruz, along which the enemy had stationed small detachments.

Information of all this was previously conveyed to the inhabitants of Chalco by some trustworthy men of Tezcucó, that they might fall upon the Mexicans at the same moment with our troops. Nothing could have been more agreeable to the wishes of the inhabitants of Chalco, and they accordingly held themselves in readiness to rise up against the enemy at the proper time.

Sandoval composed his rearguard of five horse, an equal number of crossbow-men, and the greater part of the Tlascallāns, who had all their booty with them. As the Mexicans had everywhere sent out scouts and spies to watch our movements, our present march to Chalco was no secret to them. They had

therefore collected a strong body of their troops, and fell upon our rearguard, which was chiefly composed of Tlascallans. It may easily be supposed that our five horse and few crossbow-men could not stand long against these overpowering numbers; two were very soon killed, and the rest wounded. Sandoval had indeed hastened to their assistance with the first alarm, had succeeded in driving back the Mexicans, and killing seven of their men; yet they managed to gain their canoes, and retreat to a place of safety, which was the more easy for them to do, as the whole of the population of this district was subject to the Mexicans.

Sandoval was uncommonly vexed when he found the five horses and their riders covered with wounds, two crossbow-men killed, and the rest all wounded. He severely reproached them for not having defended themselves better, and for the little protection they had proved to our Tlascallan friends. He could easily see, he added, that they had but recently arrived from Spain, and knew very little about fighting.

His first care now was to provide for the safety of the Tlascallans and their baggage, and to despatch the letters Cortes had given him to Vera Cruz. In these letters our general had given the commandant of that town an account of all our conquests, and of his determination to besiege Mexico, and blockade it on all sides; the letter closed by desiring him to observe the utmost vigilance, and with orders to send all those of his men who were sufficiently strong for service to Tlascalla, where they were to

remain until the road should be cleared of the enemy.

After Sandoval had despatched his messengers with these letters, and conducted our Tlascallan friends to where they were out of the enemy's reach, he marched back to Chalco, which was not very far distant. On this march he was particularly on his guard, since he was well aware that Mexican troops were lurking about in all directions, and lay concealed in every house. He had indeed not advanced far along a level tract of country, covered with maguey and maise plantations, before he was vigorously attacked. The enemy, on this occasion, carried, besides their usual weapons, long pikes, which were especially intended against the charge of our horse upon their line. Sandoval, however, twice broke through their dense ranks, and, with the Spanish troops and small body of allies we had still left, he drove the enemy completely out of the field. Five Spaniards, six horses, and many of our allies, were wounded. This time the enemy received a severe retribution for the fresh attack they made upon our troops; and, among the eight prisoners which were made, three were Mexicans of distinction.

When the inhabitants of Chalco, which lay at a small distance from the field of battle, found Sandoval was approaching their town, they came out to welcome him, and expressed their great joy at the victory he had gained.

The next day Sandoval informed the inhabitants that he was obliged to leave again for Tezcuco. They told him they were desirous of accompanying him there, to pay their respects to

Malinche, and to present to him the two sons of their late cazique, who had died a few days previously of the smallpox. On his death-bed, they said, he expressed a wish to the chiefs of the country that his sons might be introduced to Cortes to be installed by him as caziques of Chalco. The dying man had likewise recommended them to subject themselves to the great monarch of the teules, as it had been prophesied by their forefathers that, at some period or other, there would arrive from the rising of the sun a people with beards, for whom the dominion of these countries was predestined, and there was not the least doubt that that prophecy was fulfilled in our persons.

Sandoval returned to Tezcuco, taking along with him the two princes, several distinguished personages of Chalco and the eight Mexican prisoners. Cortes was highly delighted on seeing him again, and after Sandoval had related all that had taken place, he retired to his own quarters to receive the caziques of Chalco. He paid them every respect, and, according to their request, acknowledged them as vassals of our emperor, and then installed the two sons of the late cazique into their government. After the caziques had fulfilled their commission, they handed over their presents, which may have been worth about 200 pesos.

With the assistance of Doña Marina and Aguilar, Cortes had perfectly comprehended what these caziques had said. He showed them every possible kindness, and gave the government of Chalco to the elder prince, with several towns which were subject to it, and to the younger the township of Tlalmanalco,

Chimalhuacan, Ayotzinco, and of other small towns, so that the elder came in for a little more than half of his father's dominions.

After Cortes had instilled many useful things into the hearts of these men and the young caziques, he dismissed them; and they offered, in return, to render us every service that lay in their power, assuring him, at the same time, that they had been peaceably inclined from the beginning, and that they had been prevented sooner taking the oath of allegiance to our emperor from fear of the Mexican garrison. They likewise informed Cortes that, previous to our retreat from Mexico, they had concealed from the Mexicans two Spaniards who had been sent by him to demand of them tribute in maize, and had conveyed them safely during night-time to our friends of Huexotzinco, thereby saving their lives. This we knew to be perfectly true, for we had been duly informed of it by one of those two Spaniards who had escaped to Tlascalla.

Cortes returned these excellent men many hearty thanks for their kind feeling, and invited them to stay a couple of days longer with us, lest they should fall into the hands of the Mexicans, as he intended to despatch one of his officers to Tlascalla to fetch the woodwork of which our brigantines were to be made, they should then be safely conducted to their homes.

After this interview with the caziques, Cortes determined to send the eight Mexicans whom Sandoval had taken prisoners, to Mexico, and commissioned them to make the following disclosures, in his name, to the new monarch Quauhtemoctzin:

"He, Cortes, was very anxious to preserve the monarch of Mexico and his great city from destruction, and hoped, therefore, he would send messengers of peace to us, in which case every injury we had received at the hands of the Mexicans would be forgiven them and altogether forgotten, nor should we demand restitution of the things they had taken from us. It was an easy matter to make war, but it always terminated in the destruction of those who first began it. We were by no means ignorant of the vast preparations which were going on for the defence of Mexico; it would all, however, prove useless, and the only consequences would be the destruction of his metropolis, and of all its inhabitants. He should bear in mind the amazing power of our Lord God, who lent us his aid on all occasions, and remember also that all the surrounding townships had declared in our favour. For the rest, there was nothing the Tlascallans so greatly desired as a war with the Mexicans, to revenge the death of their fellow-countrymen. We hoped, therefore, he would send messengers to sue for peace, which we would conclude with him on the most honorable terms."

With this message, to which Doña Marina and Aguilar joined some good counsel, the eight prisoners repaired to Mexico. Quauhtemoctzin, however, would not even deign an answer to our proposals of peace, but continued his warlike preparations for the defence of his metropolis, and sent orders to all his troops in the provinces to hold themselves in readiness to march out at a moment's notice, and that every Spaniard who was captured

should be brought alive to Mexico, there to be sacrificed to his gods. In order to gain the good wishes of his people, he exempted many from paying tribute, and made a vast many promises.

About this time, the Quauhtitlans again arrived in our quarters, whom, as we saw above, the Mexicans had ill-used for having formed an alliance with us. The dispute, they said, respecting the maize plantations, which had been formerly cultivated for the use of the priests of Mexico, was renewed by the Mexicans, who each week returned to fall upon the reapers, many of whom they had carried off prisoners to Mexico. Cortes, therefore, determined to put an end to these depredations, and marched thither in person at the head of a hundred foot, twenty horse, twelve crossbow-men and musketeers. In order to make sure of success, spies were posted at proper places, who were to bring immediate notice of the enemy's approach. Thus prepared, we espied early one Wednesday morning a strong body of Mexicans advancing towards us; and when they had come near enough, we sallied out upon them, and drove them back to their canoes; four of them were killed, and three taken prisoners.

After this skirmish, Cortes returned to Tezcucó, and the enemy ever after left those townships in peace. I must now relate what happened to Sandoval on his march to Tlascallá, whither he had been despatched to fetch the materials for building our brigantines.

CHAPTER CXL

How Sandoval marches to Tlascalla in order to fetch the woodwork for building the brigantines, and what happened to him in a place which we termed the Moorish town.

Having so long impatiently awaited the completion of the brigantines, and ardently longed to commence the siege of Mexico, Cortes ordered Sandoval, with two hundred foot, twenty horse, and twenty musketeers and crossbow-men, besides a strong body of Tlascallans, and twenty of the most distinguished persons of Tezcucuo, to march to Tlascalla, in order to fetch the woodwork for constructing the brigantines. He was also to take along with him the aged persons and young children of Chalco, as they would be in greater security there. Cortes had previously brought about a friendly alliance between the Chalcans and Tlascallans; for as the Chalcans, up to this moment, had belonged to the confederation of Mexico, they had always joined the Mexicans in their expeditions against Tlascalla, so that a deadly enmity existed between these two states. By his mediation, Cortes now put an end to this ill-feeling, and made friendship between them, which proved greatly to the advantage of both.

Sandoval, on this occasion, was also ordered to repair to another township which lay close to the road leading to Tlascalla,

in order to chastise the inhabitants there. This township was subject to Tezcucó, and was commonly termed by us the Moorish town.⁵ Here, on our retreat from Mexico, about forty of Narvaez's men and several of Cortes' old soldiers, with numbers of Tlascallans, had been put to death, and the latter plundered of three loads of gold. These people were now to be severely punished for their conduct, although the principal guilt lay with Tezcucó, which, at that time, was closely allied with the Mexicans, and had had the chief hand in that affair.

After Sandoval had safely conducted the Chalcans into Tlascalla, he marched on to the Moorish town, where, however, the inhabitants had been duly apprized of our approach, and were all fled to the mountains. Sandoval, however, pursued them, and killed three or four of the inhabitants, and took four of the principal personages, and numbers of women and children, prisoners. These people he treated very kindly, and inquired of them how they had managed to defeat so many Spaniards in a body? They replied, that great numbers of Mexicans and Tezcucans had fallen upon them while passing through a very narrow defile in the mountains, where the Spaniards could only march one abreast; some had been killed, and the rest were taken prisoners. These were conveyed to Tezcucó, where they were divided between the Mexicans and Tezcucans. They themselves had certainly joined in that attack, but they had merely followed the commands of their superiors. All this the Tezcucans had

⁵ Calpullalpan. (p. [15](#).)

done, they said, to revenge the death of Cacamatzin their king, whom Cortes had taken prisoner, but who perished on the night of our disastrous retreat from Mexico.

The blood of our unfortunate countrymen was even then sticking to the walls of the temple in this township. Here were likewise found on an altar the entire skins of the faces of two Spaniards, with the beards still hanging to them. The skins had been dressed in the same way as the leather we use for making gloves. In the same manner they had prepared the skins of four horses. Great care had been taken of the hair and horseshoes, which were suspended in the chief temple as tokens of victory. Further were discovered numerous articles of Spanish dress which had been brought as an offering to the idols; on one of the walls of a house were found written in charcoal the following words: "Here the unfortunate Juan Yuste, with several of his comrades, was imprisoned by the enemy." This Juan Yuste was a cavalier who had served under Narvaez, and was one of the most distinguished personages among his troops.

Sandoval and his men were sorely grieved at the sight of all this, but what could they do better than show mercy in return? The whole of the inhabitants had fled away, and those women they had captured were sobbing for their husbands and fathers. Sandoval, therefore, set the four distinguished prisoners with all the women at liberty, and despatched them to bring back the inhabitants who had fled to the mountains. These soon made their appearance, begged forgiveness for the past, and declared

themselves vassals of our emperor, with the promise henceforth to be faithful to us and in every way to oppose the Mexicans. In answer to the queries respecting the gold of which they had plundered the Tlascallans, they replied, that the Mexicans and chiefs of Tezcuco had taken it away with them under the pretence that Motecusuma had robbed the temples of it to present it to Malinche.

Sandoval now marched into Tlascalla, and arrived safely in the metropolis of that country, where the caziques had their residence. He found everything in the best order possible, the whole of the woodwork was quite finished and ready to be removed; for which 8000 Indians were taken into our service, who transported the whole of the wood and other materials on their shoulders. These were accompanied by an equal number of warriors, besides an additional 2000 porters to convey our provisions.⁶

Chichimeclatecl, who, the reader will remember was equally brave as he was high in rank, took the chief command over the Tlascallans in person; under him commanded two distinguished personages, named Teucepil⁷ and Teutical, besides other caziques. Martin Lopez, however, with the assistance of other Spaniards, whose names I have forgotten, more

⁶ Several Spanish writers make the number of Tlascallan warriors who accompanied this transport, amount to 180,000; but this is no doubt an excessive exaggeration. Here again the honesty of Bernal Diaz is conspicuous, who never multiplies numbers. (p. [17.](#))

⁷ Teutepil and Ayutecatli were their proper names. (p. [17.](#))

immediately superintended the transport itself. Sandoval had feared he should be obliged to wait a few days in Tlascalla until the building materials could be removed, but was highly delighted to find all went on so expeditiously. His march towards Tezcuco was attended with the same ease, so that after the space of two days all had arrived on the Mexican territory. Here matters began to wear a different aspect, and his troops were assailed by the enemy with hideous yells from out the fields and mountain recesses where they were out of the reach of the cavalry and musketeers. Martin Lopez, therefore, deemed it necessary that greater military precaution should be adopted on their march, particularly as the Tlascallans expressed their fears of being suddenly attacked by large bodies of Mexicans. Sandoval, therefore, distributed the cavalry, crossbow-men and musketeers, in such a manner that a portion were always in advance of the transport, and the remainder he placed along the flanks. Chichimeclatecl, who was commander-in-chief of the Tlascallans, was ordered to bring up the rear, where Sandoval likewise took his station. This chief was excessively hurt at this arrangement of the troops, and considered from the post which had been assigned him, that Sandoval put little trust in his bravery; but as the latter himself followed in the rear, and he was informed that the Mexicans generally attacked the rear first where the baggage was, he became satisfied, embraced Sandoval, and thanked him for the honour he had thus conferred upon him.

After another two days' march the transport arrived in front of

Tezcucó, and Sandoval made his entry with great magnificence. The Tlascallans had expressly put on their finest mantles, had decorated their heads with the most beautiful feathers, and marched into the town in the best military order, while the drums and pipes were playing. Several hours elapsed before the whole had entered the town, and yet none of our Tlascallan friends moved out of the ranks, while they continually kept crying out: *Long live the emperor, our master! Spain for ever! Tlascalla for ever!* Cortes and his officers came out to meet them, and gave Chichimeclatecl and all of them the most hearty welcome.

The woodwork was carried to the neighbourhood of the canals and harbours, where the brigantines were to be completed. Martin Lopez, who had the chief conduct of these operations, now again set diligently to work. His principal assistants were Andreas Nuñez, the elder Ramirez, a certain Diego Hernandez, with several other carpenters, and two smiths. The work went on so expeditiously that the brigantines were finished in a very short time, and had now merely to be caulked, provided with masts, sails, and then to be rigged. We were obliged, however, to keep a sharp look out, lest the Mexicans should destroy the brigantines, which lay on the staples so very near to the lake; indeed they had three several times attempted to set fire to them, on which occasions we took fifteen of their numbers prisoners, who gave us a very minute account of all that was passing in the city of Mexico, and of Quauhtemóctzin's designs. He was determined, they said, not to make peace with us under any consideration

whatsoever; the Mexicans had resolved either to perish in battle or to destroy us all. One despatch after the other was sent to the townships subject to Mexico, commanding the inhabitants to make vigorous preparations for war, and tribute was no longer to be demanded. Night and day were the Mexicans toiling to deepen and widen the canals which intersected the causeways, which were then strengthened by fortifications and palisades. To defend themselves against our horses they had constructed long pikes, to the end of which they had fastened our own swords they had taken on the night of our retreat from Mexico. They had furnished themselves with quantities of round stones for their slings, and large broadswords, with abundance of other weapons.

We were no less assiduous in our warlike preparations, and the canals which had been dug for the launch of our brigantines were now of sufficient width and depth to swim vessels of considerable burden;⁸ which, however, is not surprising, as 8000 Indians were daily occupied at this work.

⁸ Torquemada, who himself saw this canal, says it was full two miles in length. (p. [18](#).)

CHAPTER CXLI

How Cortes marches against the town of Xaltocan, which lay in the midst of the lake, about twenty-four miles from Mexico, and from thence proceeds to other townships.

The materials for building the brigantines were transported to Tezcucó by about 15,000 Tlascallans, who in a few days grew weary of doing nothing; added to which, our provisions were beginning to fail; and as the Tlascallan general was excessively ambitious, and very courageous, he told Cortes he was desirous of rendering our emperor some signal service, and by measuring his strength with the Mexicans, give us some proof of his loyalty, and convince us of his courage; and at the same time to revenge the death of so many of his countrymen. Our general had merely to inform him at what point he should attack the enemy.

Cortes returned him many thanks for his kind offers, and informed him that he intended to march out himself on the following day with a body of troops. His attack would be directed against the town of Xaltocan, which lay twenty miles from Tezcucó, in the midst of the lake, and was connected with the mainland by a causeway. He had already thrice admonished the inhabitants of that town to sue for peace, and but very recently made them offers of peace through their neighbours of Tezcucó and Otumpan. However, they not only refused to

send us messengers of peace, but treated our ambassadors with contempt, and even laid violent hands on them, and then sent them back with this answer to Cortes: "Only come, you will not find us unprepared; come whenever you like, you will always meet with the same reception, and death will be your portion! This was the answer they were desired to give, by command of their gods."

Cortes considered this expedition against the Xaltocans of no small importance, and was therefore determined to command in person. The troops he took with him consisted of two hundred and fifty Spanish foot, thirty horse, with a good number of musketeers and crossbow-men; accompanied by the whole of our Tlascallan friends, and a company of the best warriors of Tezcucu. Of our own officers Cortes selected Alvarado and Oli; Sandoval remaining behind for the protection of Tezcucu, and of our brigantines. We were indeed obliged to be particularly on our guard, for Mexico lay close at hand, nor could we altogether place confidence in the Tezcucans, as the Mexicans had so many friends and relations among them. Before his departure Cortes left especial orders with Sandoval and Lopez to expedite the building of the brigantines, and only allowed them fifteen days more to finish and launch them. He then, after having attended mass, set out on his march. In the neighbourhood of Xaltocan he came up with a large body of Mexicans, who had taken up a strong position, from which they imagined to make a successful attack upon the Spaniards and their horses.

Cortes here placed himself at the head of the cavalry, and, after our musketeers and crossbow-men had fired in among the enemy, he charged their line full gallop, and killed several of them. The Mexicans then retreated to the mountains, where they were pursued by the Tlascallans, who slew above thirty more of their numbers. The first night Cortes encamped in a small hamlet, ordered frequent patrols, posted sentinels in all quarters, and observed every military precaution, as there were many considerable townships in this district. Here we learnt that Quauhtemoctzin had despatched large bodies of troops to the assistance of Xaltocan, which were stationed in canoes on the lake.

Very early next morning we were attacked by the joint forces of the Mexicans and Xaltocans. They kept pouring forth showers of arrows and stones upon us from the small islands which rose among the marshes, by which ten Spaniards and numbers of Tlascallans were wounded. Here our cavalry was completely useless, as they could not pass through the water, which lay between them and the enemy; for they had previously cut through the causeway which led to Xaltocan, and thereby inundated the country. Our musketeers and crossbow-men certainly kept up a brisk fire upon the Mexicans, but here again they had found means to shield their bodies, by raising up boards alongside of their canoes.

Thus all our endeavours proved fruitless, while the enemy kept continually mocking and jeering at us; in derision calling our

men old women, and Malinche himself a man of no courage, but whose whole art lay in deceit and flattery. Cortes must certainly have returned without accomplishing anything, if two Indians of Tepetetzcuco – which was at great enmity with Xaltocan, had not pointed out to one of his men a spot which had been flooded three days previously, but was shallow enough for them to wade through into the town.

On receiving this information Cortes ordered the crossbowmen, musketeers, with our other troops, and several of the Tlascallans, to step boldly into the water, which reached up to their middles, and push forward, while he himself took up his position on the mainland, with the cavalry to cover their rear, should the Mexicans feel inclined to attack them from behind.

The enemy now fell furiously on those advancing through the water, and wounded several of them; but our men were not to be daunted by this, and kept moving forward steadily until they had reached the dry part of the causeway. The road to the town was now open to them, and they made terrible havoc among the enemy's ranks, and richly repaid them for the abusive language they had thrown out. The Mexicans, with the inhabitants, now took refuge in their canoes, and fled to Mexico. Our men made a considerable booty, in cotton, gold, and other matters, then set fire to some houses, and returned to the mainland, where Cortes was stationed; for they feared to take up their night's quarters in the town, as it was entirely surrounded by water.

In this engagement our troops captured several fine young

females, who had not been able to escape from the town. The Tlascallans likewise made a rich booty, and loaded themselves with cotton stuffs, salt, gold, and other matters.

The night following Cortes encamped in a hamlet about four miles from Xaltocan, where our men dressed their wounds; but one Spaniard, who had been shot in the throat by an arrow, died soon after. Sentinels were posted as before, and frequent patrols made during the night, for the country was very thickly populated.

The next day Cortes marched to another extensive township, called Colvatitlan, but was everywhere met with yells and jeers from the Mexicans and the inhabitants. Our men were obliged to bear all this patiently, as our cavalry could not act here, and it was totally impossible to get at the Mexicans, who had posted themselves on the different small islands. Cortes, however, marched into Colvatitlan without opposition, and found the town quite deserted by the inhabitants. Here he took up his quarters for the night, and adopted every military precaution.

The day following he marched to another large township, called Tenayucan, which, on our first march to Mexico, we had termed the town of Serpents, because we found in a large temple there two horrible-looking idols, shaped like serpents. This town was likewise deserted by its inhabitants, who had all fled to Escapuzalco, which lay four miles further on. This was the same Escapuzalco where the great Motecusuma had all his gold and silver articles manufactured; we therefore called it the *town of*

Silversmiths. About two miles from this place lay Tlacupa, the same where we passed the latter part of the night of sorrows, and the enemy killed several more of our men. Before our troops reached this town they fell in with a numerous body of the enemy, formed of the inhabitants of the towns they had passed through, joined by those of Tlacupa and Mexico, which lay in the immediate neighbourhood. They attacked our troops with such impetuosity, and with their ranks so firmly closed, that it was with the utmost difficulty Cortes was able to break their line with the cavalry, and then even our foot had much hard fighting with sword in hand before they could compel the enemy to retreat. Cortes quartered his men for the night in Escapuzalco, and next morning continued his march. If, however, he had been attacked the previous day by large bodies of the enemy, their numbers were greatly increased on this, and they observed more method in their manœuvres, and wounded several of our men. They were, however, compelled to fall back into their fortifications, and the Spaniards forced their way into the town, where they plundered and set fire to a great number of houses.

When the news of the unfortunate termination of the battle reached Mexico, additional troops were immediately ordered to Tlacupa to oppose Cortes, and received instructions first to attack the Spaniards, and then to fall back upon Mexico, in order to entice the Spaniards to pursue them along the causeway. This stratagem succeeded admirably, for Cortes was deceived by their apparent flight, and pursued the enemy as far as a

bridge, thinking the victory was already his. When the Mexicans considered they had caught the Spaniards sufficiently deep in the foil, they turned suddenly round, and fell upon them with such terrific numbers, by land, from their canoes, and from the house-tops, that Cortes almost gave himself up for lost. In his hurried flight over the bridge he was attacked by so vast a body, that all opposition was fruitless. One of our ensigns, determined not to relinquish his hold of the colours, was dangerously wounded in the struggle, and at last tumbled headlong with them into the water, but was fortunate enough to escape drowning, and, by dint of great bravery, succeeded to rescue himself and his flag, just when the Mexicans laid hold of him, and were about to drag him out of the water into a canoe.

In this unfortunate engagement we had five men killed and many wounded, and it was with the greatest difficulty our men could fight their way through the dense body of the enemy, and regain the main land.

After this battle Cortes stayed five more days in Tlacupa, during which time he had another engagement with the Mexicans and their allies; after which he began his march back to Tezcucu by the same road he had come. The Mexicans, who construed this movement into a flight, and imagined that Cortes had lost all courage, thought this was the moment to gain great honour to themselves, by giving the Spaniards a signal defeat. For this purpose they lay in wait for them in a spot where they could get easily at our horse; but met with so rough a reception from our

troops, that a considerable number of them were slain. Cortes lost one man and two horses; but had so far cooled the enemy's lust for battle, that they no longer harassed him on his march, and in a few days he reached the township of Aculman, about eight miles and a half from Tezcuco, to which it was subject. When we were informed of his arrival there, Sandoval, with all of us, accompanied by nearly the whole of the caziques and troops of Tezcuco, went out to meet him. The joy at seeing each other again was very great, for we had been without any tidings of Cortes or his troops for fifteen days.

After the first welcomes had passed, and some arrangements made with respect to our troops, we returned that same day to Tezcuco, as we durst not leave that town unprotected at night. Cortes encamped for the night at Aculman, and did not arrive at Tezcuco until the day following.

As the Tlascallans had made a considerable booty in this expedition, they requested leave of our general to return to their country, which he readily granted; and they took their route through a part of the country where the Mexicans had omitted to station any troops; so that they arrived safely in Tlascalla with all their spoils.

After the lapse of four days, during which time our general and his men had rested from their fatigues, the chiefs of several townships in the northern districts of the country arrived in Tezcuco, with a present of gold and cotton stuffs, and desired to be admitted as vassals of our emperor. These townships were

Tucapan, Maxcaltzinco, Naultzan, and many others of less note.

When the chiefs of these townships were brought into Cortes' presence they paid him the profoundest veneration, and handed over the presents to him; then informed him that they were desirous of being on terms of friendship with us, and of becoming subjects of the king of Spain. They likewise said, that these townships had assisted the Spaniards in the battle of Almeria, where the Mexican commander Quauhpopoca, on whom we had taken so direful a revenge, had put several teules to death.

Cortes, who had always thought to the contrary, was highly delighted on hearing this; he showed these ambassadors every kindness, and graciously accepted of their present. No inquiries were made as to what the conduct of these townships had latterly been; but Cortes, without any hesitation, acknowledged them vassals of our emperor, and then dismissed them with flattering assurances of his friendship.

About this time messengers also arrived from other townships which were in alliance with us, to beg our general's assistance against the Mexicans, who had fallen hostilely into their country with a large body of troops, and had carried off numbers of them prisoners, and scalped many others. Similar bad tidings were likewise received from Chalco and Tlalmanalco, the inhabitants of which towns stated that their destruction was inevitable if they did not receive immediate assistance, as the enemy was rapidly advancing against them in great numbers. They, however, did not

merely give a verbal description of the danger they were in, but likewise brought forth a large piece of nequen cloth, on which they had depicted the different squadrons of the enemy's troops which were marching against them.

Cortes was greatly perplexed to know what he should do, and scarcely knew what answer to give, nor how he should be able to send assistance to both places at once; many of our men were wounded, and almost worn out with fatigue; four had died of their wounds, and eight others of pleurisy, and of bleeding profusely from the nose and mouth, occasioned by the weight of our arms, which we durst never lay aside, and by the forced marches and the quantity of dust which got down our throats.

Our general, however, informed the ambassadors of the first-mentioned townships that he would soon repair to their assistance; but desired them in the meantime to apply to their neighbours for help, and with their united forces to oppose the advancing foe. It was their timidity, he said, which inspired the Mexicans with courage; for the latter had not so many troops at their command as formerly, from the vast increase of their opponents on all sides.

By these representations Cortes succeeded in allaying their fears and arousing their courage, but they requested some authority from him in writing to show to their neighbours, in which he should command them to repair to their assistance.

To explain their motive for desiring this, I must remark, that though the Indians at that time could neither read nor understand

our writing, yet they looked upon any written document as signifying a more particular and peremptory command. They were therefore highly delighted when Cortes gave them the required letter, and they showed it to their friends, who then instantly marched out their troops to join them, and with their united forces they now boldly advanced against the Mexicans, and fought with pretty good success in the battle which followed.

We must now return to Chalco, respecting the safety of which Cortes was particularly solicitous; for it was of the greatest importance to him that this province should be kept clear of the enemy. Our line of communication with Vera Cruz and Tlascalla ran through this country, and from which we also obtained the greater part of our provisions, as the soil was uncommonly productive of maize. Sandoval, therefore, was ordered to march thither very early next morning with 200 foot, twenty horse, twelve crossbow-men, and ten musketeers, besides all the Tlascallan troops which still remained with us, – though these had greatly decreased in numbers; for, as I have above mentioned, most of them had departed to their homes with the booty they had made. A company of Tezcucans was therefore added to this detachment, and placed under the immediate command of Luis Marin, an officer with whom Sandoval lived on the most intimate terms of friendship. We others remained behind for the protection of Tezcuco and our brigantines, nor did Alvarado or Oli leave our head-quarters on this occasion.

Before accompanying Sandoval to Chalco, I must make a

few comments on some observations which fell from several cavaliers, who, on comparing my account of Cortes' expedition to Xaltocan with that of Gomara, discovered that I had omitted three things mentioned in his history. One circumstance was, that Cortes had appeared before Mexico with the thirteen brigantines, and fought a terrible battle with Quauhtemoctzin's whole armed force, which had been distributed in the canoes and large pirogues. The other, that Cortes, when he had advanced up to Mexico along the causeway had held a parley with the Mexican chiefs, and threatened to reduce the town by famine: and the third, that he had not acquainted the inhabitants of Tezcuco with his intention of marching against Xaltocan, from fear they might betray his designs to the Mexicans.

The answer I made those gentlemen on these three points was, that at the time of our expedition against the Xaltocans, our brigantines were not completed, and that it must appear ridiculous in itself, for the brigantines to have found their way overland thither, and that our cavalry and other troops should have taken their road through the lake. But as we have above seen, when Cortes had advanced along the causeway from Tlacupa, it was with great difficulty he made his retreat good, nor had we at that time besieged the town so closely as to be able to cut off all its supplies of provisions; on the contrary, Mexico was then still in possession of the districts whence it obtained those supplies. Everything which Gomara relates as having taken place on that occasion did not happen till some time after. It

is equally untrue when this historian states that Cortes took a roundabout way in order to conceal his design upon Xaltocan from the Tezcucans on his march thither; he had no choice of roads, as there was only one, which led through the territory of Tezcuco.

These are indeed shocking blunders; but I am well aware that they must not be laid entirely to the door of Gomara, but for the most part to the false information which had been furnished him, and this expressly to bestow all the renown of our deeds of arms on Cortes, and thereby throw the heroic valour of his soldiers into the shade. What I relate is the pure truth, and these same cavaliers were subsequently convinced that my statements were correct. Having thus digressed for a short time I must return to Sandoval, who, after he had attended mass marched out with his troops from Tezcuco and arrived in front of Chalco by break of day.

CHAPTER CXLII

How the captain Sandoval marches to Chalco and Tlalmanalco, and what he did there.

Sandoval set out with his troops on the 12th of March, 1521. The first night he encamped at Chalco, and arrived the next morning early before Tlalmanalco, where the caziques and inhabitants gave him a most hearty welcome, and provided abundance of food for his troops; but the caziques informed him he had still to march further on to the large township of Huaxtepec, where a large body of Mexican troops was stationed, who would be joined by all the warriors of the province.

Sandoval, on receiving this information, concluded that there was no time to be lost, and immediately marched towards Chimalhuacan, which was subject to Chalco, where he quartered his troops for the night. The inhabitants of Chalco had sent out spies in every direction, and learnt that the enemy was not far off, but lay in wait for the Spaniards in the thickets and hollows of the mountains. Sandoval, who was an officer of great determination and foresight, ordered his march as follows: the musketeers and crossbow-men went in advance, the cavalry were to follow three and three together, and when the former had discharged their pieces, the horse were to charge the enemy's line at full gallop, and to direct the point of their lances at the face, and continue the

attack until the enemy was put to flight. The infantry were to keep their ranks firmly closed, and not to rush in upon the enemy until a signal for that purpose was given. This order of attack Sandoval deemed necessary, as the enemy's numbers were very great, and the nature of the ground unfavorable for his manœuvres; besides that, it was impossible to discover whether the Mexicans had not dug pits or laid other snares to entrap the Spaniards; so that it was quite necessary his small army should keep close together in a body.

After Sandoval had marched a little further on he came up with the Mexicans, who were advancing towards him in three distinct bodies, with fearful yells and the horrible din of drums and shell trumpets, and instantly fell upon our troops like so many furious lions. As soon as Sandoval observed that the enemy intended to fall upon him in three distinct bodies, he likewise changed his order of attack, and commanded the cavalry to charge the foe without delay, and not wait for the rest of the troops. He then placed himself at their head, encouraged his men and rushed forward to the attack, under the cry of – "Santiago!" The powerful shock which the enemy thus sustained certainly caused some of them to recoil, but they immediately closed again and boldly advanced against our horse, being greatly assisted by the unevenness of the ground and a deep break, where it was difficult for our horse to manœuvre. Sandoval, perceiving the enemy's advantage, ordered his foot to close their ranks again, placed the crossbow-men and musketeers in front, and those who

were armed with swords and shields on the flanks. In this order they were again to advance to the attack as soon as they heard a shot from the other side of the break, which would be a signal to them that the cavalry had charged and driven the foe back on to the level ground. Our allies were likewise ordered to follow the example of the Spanish foot; this was accordingly done and the object accomplished.

In this attack the enemy had observed better order in their mode of fighting, and our troops had many wounded. They certainly retreated, but only to make a stand at another and more favorable position. Sandoval, with the horse, followed close at their heels, but merely took three or four prisoners, and lost Gonzalo Dominiguez, whose horse unfortunately stumbled and fell with its whole weight upon him, and he expired a few days after of the consequences.

I particularly mention the loss of Dominiguez, because he was one of the most courageous men of our troops, and one of the best cavalry officers; and considered equally brave in battle as Oli and Sandoval. Every one of us deeply lamented the death of this excellent officer. Sandoval now pursued the enemy with the whole of his troops up to the town of Huaxtepec, where his further progress was arrested by an army of above 15,000 Mexicans, who completely hemmed him in on all sides. Numbers of his men were wounded and five horses killed; but as the ground was level here, he succeeded by a desperate charge of his cavalry to break the enemy's line, and drove them back into

the town. Here the Mexicans were again about to make a stand behind some entrenchments which they had thrown up; but the Spaniards and their allies allowed them no time to rally, and our horse was so close at their heels, that at last they shut themselves up in a strong part of the town where it was impossible to get at them.

Sandoval concluded the enemy would remain quiet for the remainder of the day: he therefore allowed his men to take a little rest, ordered the wounded to be attended to, and provisions to be distributed, of which a considerable booty had been made. Just as his men were in the midst of their repast, two of the cavalry and other of the outposts came up in all haste, crying out, "To arms! to arms! to arms! the Mexicans are advancing in great numbers!" But as it was always the custom of our men to have their weapons ready at hand, they instantly arranged themselves in order of battle, and marched to a large open space, where the conflict was renewed. Here again the Mexicans courageously maintained their position for a short time behind some entrenchments which had been thrown up, and wounded several of our men; but Sandoval attacked them so vigorously with his cavalry, the musketeers, crossbow-men, and remaining foot, that the enemy was completely beat out of the town, and offered no further resistance that day.

Sandoval being now sure that he had gained a complete victory, offered up thanks to the Almighty, and recreated himself in a garden of extraordinary beauty, belonging to this township,

in which there were many spacious buildings, and altogether so many remarkable objects to be seen, as were nowhere else to be found in New Spain. The whole of the grounds were indeed laid out in a style worthy of a great monarch, and it required some considerable time to visit all parts of it, as it was above a mile long.

I was not present myself in this expedition, and did not see this garden until twenty days after, when I accompanied Cortes on his excursion through the different large townships which surround the lake. I had been laid up with a severe wound in the throat, which I received from a lance, in the battle of Iztapalapan, and had nearly cost me my life. The scar is still visible.

But the reader will have already discovered, from my mode of describing, that I was not present in this expedition; as I have never used the expression – we did this, we marched thither; but always put – so and so was done, our troops marched to this place, and to that place, and so on. Nevertheless, everything took place exactly as I have related; for at head-quarters the minutiae of every engagement soon become known, and one cannot add to or suppress any facts.

When Sandoval on the following day found that the enemy had entirely quitted the neighbourhood, he despatched five of the inhabitants, whom he had taken prisoners in the late battles, two of whom were chiefs, to the caziques of this township, desiring them to send him messengers of peace, and assured them a free pardon for all the past. They, however, sent word that they

durst not comply with this summons, from fear of the Mexicans. Offers of a similar nature, which Sandoval made to another large township, met with no better success. This latter place was called Acapalista,⁹ and lay about eight miles from Huaxtepec. It was in vain that Sandoval desired them to consider the difference between war and peace, and to ask themselves what benefit their neighbours of Huaxtepec had derived from all the Mexican troops they had harboured. He desired them to drive away the Mexican garrison, or he would himself march against them, and treat them as enemies. Their reply to this was as follows: "He might come when he liked: they had made up their minds to make a sumptuous repast off their bodies, and to offer up savoury sacrifices to their gods."

The caziques of Chalco, who were with Sandoval being aware that there was a much stronger body of Mexicans lying in Acapalista than had yet appeared in the field of battle, and that they merely awaited a favorable opportunity to renew the attack upon their town, urgently requested him to march thither, and drive the enemy out of that town. Sandoval at first refused to comply with their request, considering that he himself, with many of his troops, and most of the horses, were wounded, and that he did not wish to advance farther than Cortes had ordered him; besides which, several cavaliers of Narvaez's troops urged him to return to Tezcuco, and represented to him that Acapalista was a town of great strength, where they might easily meet with

⁹ Gomara calls this place Accapichtlan; Torquemada, Yacapichtla. (p. [29](#).)

a total overthrow. But the captain Luis Marin strongly advised Sandoval to the contrary, and thought he was not justified in returning before the work was half finished, as the enemy would certainly renew the attack upon Chalco, and thereby defeat the object of the expedition altogether. By these arguments Sandoval was convinced of the necessity of marching against this town, which lay only eight miles farther on, and he set out for that place.

When he had arrived in the neighbourhood of the town, a large body of Mexicans came advancing towards him, and attacked him so vigorously with their lances, slings, and arrows, that three horses and several of his men were instantly wounded, nor was Sandoval able to get at the enemy, who immediately retreated to the rocks and the fortified heights above, making a terrific noise with their drums, shell trumpets, and hideous yells.

Sandoval now despatched a few horse in advance, to see whether the Mexicans, in case he should attack the town itself, could march to its assistance, and halted, with the rest of his troops, in the plain. As the caziques of Chalco and the other Indian allies showed no desire to come to an engagement with the enemy, Sandoval determined to put them to the proof, and cried out to them: "Well, why do you stand looking idly on there? Why don't you advance to the attack? Are we not come here to protect you?" But they replied, they durst not attack this strong place, and considered that the teules had come to do the hardest part of the work for them.

Sandoval was soon convinced that there was not much

dependence to be placed in these Indians, and he therefore stormed the fortified heights with the whole of his Spanish troops. Although numbers of his men were wounded, and he himself severely so on the head, he continued to push forward, and forced his way into the town, where considerable havoc was made among the enemy's ranks, which was increased by the Chalcans and Tlascallans, who now joined in the conflict with great intrepidity. Our troops, indeed, gladly left the last part of the work to them, as soon as the enemy was put to flight, for they felt compassion for the inhabitants, and satisfied themselves by capturing some few pretty females and other objects of value. The Spaniards even checked our allies in their horrid cruelties, and rescued many a man and woman from their grasp who otherwise would have been sacrificed to the idols.

The Mexicans had fled to some steep rocks beyond the town; and, as numbers of them were wounded, they washed off the blood from their bodies in a small brook, so that the very water was tintured by it, though for no longer a space of time than would take to repeat an Ave Maria. Yet Gomara relates that the water was so completely mixed with blood that our men would not quench their thirst at it.¹⁰ But it was not necessary for them to go to this brook for that purpose, as in the town itself there were numbers of wells full of the purest water. After this engagement, Sandoval marched back to Tezcuco, taking

¹⁰ Gomara most likely followed Cortes' despatches, where we find that the stream was coloured with the blood of the Indians, to the distance of four miles. (p. [30](#).)

with him great numbers of prisoners, among whom were many beautiful Indian females.

When Quauhtemoctzin received intelligence of this defeat of his troops, he was excessively grieved; and the more so as the people of Chalco were his subjects, and had now, for the third time, taken up arms against him. He was, however, determined to be revenged; and while Sandoval was marching back to Tezcucó, he assembled an army of upwards of 20,000 men, and despatched these in 2000 canoes to Chalco. Here they arrived so suddenly, that Sandoval had scarcely entered Tezcucó, and had but just seen Cortes, when messengers arrived in canoes from Chalco to solicit his immediate return. Cortes, who was speaking with Sandoval when this message arrived, was so enraged that he would not hear his report to the end; accused him of having neglected his duty, and commanded him to return immediately to Chalco with those of his men who were not wounded. Sandoval's feelings were greatly hurt at Cortes' reproaches; but what grieved him more than all was, that he would not even listen to him. He, however, instantly returned to Chalco, which he and his men reached excessively fatigued by the weight of their arms and the great distance they had marched. The Chalcans, in the meantime, had begged assistance from their neighbours the Huexotzincans and Tlascallans on the first information they received that the Mexicans intended to invade their territory again; and these two powers had made such haste that they arrived that very night, with an army of above

20,000 men. This inspired the Chalcans with fresh courage; they attacked the Mexicans in the open field, fought with uncommon bravery, and of the enemy's chief officers alone they killed and captured as many as fifteen, without mentioning the numbers they made prisoners. This defeat was most humbling to the Mexicans, and they were much more ashamed of it than if they had suffered it from us.

When Sandoval arrived in Chalco, he found the enemy was already vanquished; and, as there was no fear of the Mexicans returning, he marched back to Tezcucuo, taking the prisoners along with him, and now Cortes appeared highly delighted. Sandoval, however, had not forgotten the harsh treatment he had so recently suffered from him, and peremptorily refused, in his anger, to call upon him, although Cortes had sent an invitation to him, and assured him that he had now been informed of the true state of the case, and was convinced that no blame could be attached to him. They subsequently became reconciled, and Cortes strove, by every means in his power, to regain Sandoval's friendship.

CHAPTER CXLIII

How we marked our slaves at Tezcuco with a red-hot iron, and received intelligence that a vessel had run into Vera Cruz.

As Sandoval had brought a great many slaves with him, and there were besides numbers we had taken on previous occasions, Cortes resolved they should be marked with a red-hot iron. It was, therefore, announced that each person was to bring his slaves to a certain house for that purpose. Our men accordingly came with their slaves, and imagined they would merely have to pay the fifth of their value to the emperor, and that then they would be entirely their own without any further deduction.

If, however, Cortes and others had acted meanly towards us in Tepeaca, the meanness they now displayed was still greater. First, the emperor's fifths were deducted; then a second fifth was set apart for Cortes, and other portions for our officers; and, during the night preceding the last division, all the finest females had disappeared. Cortes had faithfully promised the men that all the slaves should be sold by public auction, but this was not done, for the officers of the crown acted in this matter just as they pleased. This was a good hint for us in future; so that afterwards, when we had captured any beautiful Indian females, we concealed them, and gave out that they had escaped, as soon as it came to marking

day; or if any one of us stood in favor with Cortes, he got them secretly marked during the night-time, and paid a fifth of their value to him. In a short time we possessed great numbers of such slaves; and if we were questioned about them, we merely said they were Naborias¹¹ of the neighbouring tribes near Tlascalla, who had come to sue for peace. I must also observe that two months had scarcely elapsed before some of our female slaves knew of every soldier in the troop whether he behaved well to his Naborias or not; whenever, therefore, these females were put up to auction, and they found they had been bought by a man who bore a bad name in this way, they disappeared, and were nowhere to be found. If they did not recapture them it was all the same; they were still debited to the buyer in the royal accounts. Our soldiers fared no better in the division of gold; for if any of them went to demand their share, so many items were balanced against them that they really considered themselves fortunate if they had not to pay something into the bargain.

About this time a vessel arrived in Vera Cruz, from Spain, with the following passengers: Julian de Alderete, a native of Tordesillas, who had been appointed royal treasurer; further, the elder Orduña, from the same place, who lived for some time in Puebla. After the conquest of Mexico he brought over five or six daughters from Spain, all of whom he married well. A Dominican friar, named Pedro Melgarejo de Urrea, from Seville,

¹¹ Indian servants. (p. [32](#).)

who brought with him a papal bull,¹² by which we obtained absolution for all the sins we may have been guilty of during these wars. By means of this bull, Urrea amassed a large fortune in the space of a few months, with which he returned to Spain, whither he was accompanied by Geronimo Lopez, as a commissary of his holiness. This same Lopez subsequently became the royal secretary in Mexico.

Among the numerous other passengers, I can still remember the following names: Antonio de Caravajal, who commanded one of our brigantines, and is still living at Mexico, far advanced in years; Geronimo Ruiz de la Mota, of Burgos, who likewise commanded a brigantine, and, after the conquest of Mexico, married a daughter of Orduña. There was also a certain Briones, of Salamanca, who was hung four years ago for exciting a revolt among the troops in the province of Guatemala; and, lastly, there was Alonso Diaz de la Reguera, who lived for some time in Guatemala, and is now residing at Valladolid.

This vessel had likewise a large store of arms, powder, and other matters on board;¹³ wherefore her arrival was hailed by us all. If I remember rightly, we also heard on this occasion that the bishop of Burgos stood no longer at the head of affairs, and that he had altogether fallen into his majesty's disgrace ever since his majesty had been convinced, by the reports of our agents,

¹² Our old soldier has, "Unas bulas de señor S. Pedro," a bull of St. Peter. (p. [32](#).)

¹³ There were four vessels which arrived on this occasion, carrying 200 Spaniards and 80 horses. (p. [33](#).)

of the great and wonderful services we had rendered the crown, and which the bishop above mentioned, in his official reports, to favour Diego Velasquez, had placed in the opposite light.

In the meantime our brigantines were fast approaching towards completion, and we were all awaiting the moment with impatience when we should be able to lay close siege to Mexico. We had just begun our preparations when messengers arrived from Chalco with the information that the Mexicans were again marching against that town, and they therefore begged we would come immediately to their assistance. Cortes promised them he would himself march with his troops to their relief, and not rest until he had completely driven the enemy from their territory. He therefore immediately issued orders that three hundred foot, thirty horse, the greater part of our musketeers and crossbowmen, with the troops of Tezcuco and Tlascalla, should hold themselves in readiness to march out. Of our principal officers, Alvarado, Tapia, and Oli accompanied him on this occasion. The royal treasurer Julian de Alderete, and father Pedro Melgarejo, both of whom had just arrived from Spain, also joined him. I myself accompanied Cortes in this expedition, at his own particular desire.

CHAPTER CXLIV

How Cortes made a hostile excursion to all the cities and larger townships which lay round about the lake, and what happened on that occasion.

Cortes now marched out with a considerable body of troops to fulfil the promise he had made to the inhabitants of Chalco, in order at once to put an end to the attacks which the Mexicans almost weekly made upon this town. Sandoval was left behind with a strong detachment of foot and horse for the protection of Tezcuco and our brigantines.

We set out on our march very early on the morning of the 5th of April, 1521, after we had attended mass, and took up our quarters the first night in Tlalmanalco, where we were kindly entertained by the inhabitants. The next day we reached Chalco, which lies in the immediate vicinity of the former place; and Cortes instantly sent for all the caziques of the province, whom he then addressed at some length by means of our interpreters, informing them that his present expedition was directed against the townships which lay on the borders of the lake, in order to force them into obedience, and also to explore the territory, and form his plans for blockading the city of Mexico. Our thirteen brigantines, he told them, would shortly be launched, and he requested them to assemble all their warriors by the next day,

that they might join our troops in this expedition. Upon which the caziques one and all declared their willingness to comply with his desires.

The following morning we continued our march, and arrived as far as the township of Chimalhuacan, which was subject to Chalco. Here we were joined by upwards of 20,000 of our allies, who had assembled from Chalco, Tezcucó, Huexotzinco, Tlascalla, and other townships. This was a larger body of Indians than had ever, up to this time, joined our troops in New Spain. All these warriors had been induced to join us in the hopes of making a rich booty; but the expectation of plentiful repasts off human flesh, which never failed after an engagement, was no less an incitement; and I cannot better compare these many thousands of Indians than to the large flocks of vultures, ravens, and other birds of prey which, in the Italian wars, follow the armies, to satiate themselves on the dead bodies which have fallen in battle.

This ferocious appetite of our Indian allies was but too soon to be glutted; for we received information that large bodies of Mexican troops, with their allies from the surrounding neighbourhood, stood ready prepared to attack us in an adjoining valley. At this intelligence, Cortes issued orders that we should equip ourselves for battle early the following morning. We accordingly left Chimalhuacan next day very early, after we had attended mass.

Our march lay through some steep rocks, and we soon arrived between two small mountains whose tops had been fortified.

Hither a vast number of Indians, with their wives, had fled, who yelled excessively, and threw out all manner of abusive language towards us. We, however, took no notice of them, but marched on quietly to an extensive township called Yauhtepec, which was quite deserted by its inhabitants. We made no stay in this place, but marched on until we arrived in a plain where there were several small wells, but little water. On one side of the plain was a high rocky mountain, with a fortification which was most difficult of approach. When we had arrived in the vicinity of this rock, we found that it was crowded with Indians, who jeered at us and greeted us with a shower of arrows, lances, and stones, by which three of our men were wounded. Here Cortes ordered us to halt, and said, "It appears that the Mexicans have everywhere taken up some stronghold, and mock at us, because they imagine we cannot get at them." He then despatched a few of the horse and crossbow-men to reconnoitre a part of the rock, in order to discover some more favorable point to attack the enemy. They, however, returned with the answer that the rock was only accessible at the spot where we had halted, and that, on all other sides, it rose up perpendicularly. Cortes then commanded us to ascend and storm the enemy's fortresses. The first ensign Christobal del Corral and the other ensigns were to lead the way, and all the remaining foot to follow them. Cortes, with the cavalry, stationed himself in the plain beneath, to cover our rear, and protect the baggage against other bodies of Mexicans. As soon as we commenced this laborious ascent, the Indians began

rolling down large stones and huge lumps of rock upon us, and it was terrible to behold how these heavy masses rebounded as they thundered down the rugged steeps. It was a miracle that we were not all crushed to pieces; and certainly Cortes had, in this instance, not acted as a prudent general when he ordered this perilous attack. At my very feet a soldier named Martinez, a native of Valencia, and who had been butler to a gentleman of distinction in Castile, was completely smashed by a piece of rock, and died without a single groan or sigh. Two other soldiers, one of whom was named Gaspar Sanchez, a nephew of the treasurer of Cuba, and the other, Bravo, met with a similar death from the rolling masses of stone. We, nevertheless, continued the ascent with great intrepidity: but scarcely a few moments had elapsed before another brave soldier, named Alonso Rodriguez, with two of his companions, were crushed to death, and most of us were struck on the head by the pieces of stone which were split off the rock by the tumbling masses.

At that time I was still an active young fellow, so that I kept up close with the ensign Corral, and we reached some hollows in the rock, along which we continued to advance for some time, but at the imminent risk of our lives, until Corral could proceed no further, and held himself fast by one of the thick trees with prickly thorns which grew in these hollows; his head was wounded all over, his face covered with blood, and his colours torn into rags. Here he turned round to me, and said, "Alas! Señor Bernal Diaz, it is impossible to advance further this way; for even

if the tumbling masses of rock do not crush us, we shall scarcely be able to hold fast by our hands under these projecting masses." As we were thus clinging to the rock by our hands, I espied Pedro Barba, who commanded the crossbow-men, with two soldiers, likewise clambering up to this projection, and I cried out to him, "Captain, don't give yourself any further trouble; there is neither place here to put your hand or foot, unless you wish to roll headlong down the mountain." To this he answered, in the fulness of his courage, or because he thought he was bound to speak as an officer in high command, "Here we have to do with deeds, not words." I was obliged to swallow this reproach, and replied, "Well, we shall see how well you will manage to get up here!" The words were scarcely out of my mouth when other large pieces of the rock came rolling down from the heights above, by which Pedro Barba was wounded, and one of his men crushed to death. This seemed to deter Barba, and he would not move a step further up.

The ensign Corral now called out to the soldiers to apprise Cortes that it was impossible to ascend further, and that the descent was equally dangerous. This information was conveyed from one man to the other until it reached Cortes, who had even lost three men in the plain below, and several others were severely wounded, by the lumps of rock which came tumbling down. He had, however, not been able to see the perilous situation we were in, from the winding of the rock, but had fully expected to find that the greater part of us were either killed or dreadfully

wounded. He now immediately signified, by loud cries and a few musket shots, that we should descend. This we accordingly did with the utmost precaution, each one striving to assist his neighbour down the steep rocks, until we all safely arrived in the plain beneath; our heads were covered with wounds and blood, and the colours of our ensigns were torn to rags. When Cortes saw the terrible condition we were in, and was informed that we had lost eight men, he offered up thanks to the Almighty that the rest of us had escaped so well.

Among other things that came to be spoken about were the few words which passed between Pedro Barba and myself; indeed the latter mentioned it himself; and the ensign Corral gave such a description of the terrible masses of rock which came rolling down, that every one was astonished at our escape, and the account of the great dangers we had had to brave was noised about through the whole of our camp.

In the meantime a large body of Mexicans were lying in wait for us in a spot where we could neither see nor imagine them to be. They had been stationed there in case the other troops on the rock just mentioned should require assistance; but when they were informed that our attempts to storm this fortified rock had failed, both these bodies determined to fall upon us from various points at once.

When Cortes received notice of their approach, he ordered the horse and the whole of our troops to march against them. The ground we occupied was quite level, and fertile meadows

stretched along between the hills. The enemy now retreated before us, and we pursued them until they took up a strong position on another rock, without our being able to do them much harm, as they continually fled to places where we could not possibly get at them.

We therefore returned to our former position, in front of the first rock we had attempted to ascend; but as not a single drop of water had passed our lips the whole day, and as our horses were equally parched with thirst, and the few wells here contained nothing but muddy water, for the best were in the enemy's possession, we broke up our encampment, and formed another, about six miles further on, at the foot of a mountain, as before; but here also we found but little water.

Near this rocky mountain there stood several black mulberry trees and about ten or twelve houses, and we had scarcely rested a few minutes when the wild war-whoop of the Indians resounded from the mountain top, and we were immediately greeted with a shower of arrows and lances, while large masses of the rock came rolling down, as before. Here the enemy were in greater numbers than on the former occasion, and their position much stronger, as we soon discovered. All the firing of our musketeers and crossbow-men was to no purpose, for the enemy was beyond their reach, and too well protected by their entrenchments. An attempt to ascend the rock was attended with no better success; twice had we essayed this from the houses just mentioned, and some few of us had reached a good way up; but we found it even

more terrific than the former rock; so that we did not exactly gain much honour in this affair, and were forced to cede the victory to the Mexicans and their allies.

We encamped for the night beneath the mulberry trees, but were almost dying with thirst. The following morning our crossbow-men and musketeers were ordered to take up their position on a very steep rock, which lay near to us, and to direct their fire at the enemy in their entrenchments on the rock opposite.

Francisco Verdugo and Julian de Alderete, who were excellent crossbow-men, joined this small detachment, which was placed under the command of Pedro Barba. While these were on their way thither, the rest of our troops once more attempted the ascent of the mountain from the above-mentioned houses; but the enemy continually rolled down numbers of large and small stones, that a great number of our men were soon wounded; and even if we had not met with this opposition, our toil would have been fruitless, for the rock was so steep that we could scarcely move or hold fast by our hands. While we were thus fatiguing ourselves to no purpose, the detachment of musketeers and crossbow-men had arrived at their place of destination, but they were only able to kill and wound a very few of the enemy.

The combat had lasted in this way for above half an hour, when matters took a sudden change, and peace was concluded with the enemy, through the interposition of a merciful Providence. This sudden change was owing to the

circumstance of a number of women, children, and poor people, who had been carried to a level space on the top of the rock for safety, having no water to quench their burning thirst. In order that we, who were beneath, might know what they desired, the women waved their cloaks, and made signs with their hands, to indicate they were willing to bake bread for us; while the Indian troops discontinued to throw their lances, arrows, and stones, upon us.

When Cortes learnt what they desired, he ordered all hostilities to be stayed, and gave the Indians to understand by signs that they should send down to us five of their most distinguished men, to conclude peace with us. It was not long before these made their appearance, and with profound respect begged forgiveness for the past, and assured our general that it was fear for us only which had induced them to take up this strong position on the mountain. Cortes answered them rather harshly, that they had all deserved death, for having commenced hostilities with us; but as they now came of their own accord to sue for peace, he would substitute mercy for justice; but told them they must go to the opposite rock, and call the chiefs of the other troops, that they might likewise come and sue for peace; and inform them, that if they refused we would continue to surround them until they died of thirst, as we were well aware that they could get no water, there being very little to be had in any part of this neighbourhood.

While these personages were on their way to the other rock,

Cortes entered into conversation with father Melgarejo, and the royal treasurer, Alderete, and described to them the battles we had fought previous to their arrival in New Spain; the great power of the Mexicans, and the large cities we had seen up to the present moment in this country; when they assured our general, that if the bishop of Burgos had informed the emperor as faithfully of the truth as he was studious of falsehood in his account, the emperor would certainly by this time have nobly rewarded him and his troops. No monarch, they said, had ever been rendered the vast services he had received at our hands, who had thus, without his knowledge, subjected so many large cities to him.

After this discourse, Cortes ordered the ensign Corral and myself, and two of our officers, Xaramillo and Pedro de Ircio, to ascend the rock, in order to inspect the enemy's fortifications there, and whether our musketeers and crossbow-men had killed or wounded many of the Indians; and altogether to see what kind of people they were. "But I must desire you not even to take as much as a grain of maise from them," added Cortes; and I understood him to say, "Mind you look to your own advantage."

We then began to ascend by a very dangerous path, and we found the enemy's position here even more formidable than the first one, for the rocks were perpendicular. There was only one entrance to the fortification itself, which was not broader than double the width of the mouth of a baker's oven. At the summit of this rock we found a spacious greensward, on which were encamped great numbers of Indian warriors, women, and

children. All the loss they had sustained was twenty killed and several wounded. There was not a drop of water for all this crowd of human beings to drink. A considerable number of bundles of cotton stuffs and other matters were lying about, destined as tribute for Quauhtemoctzin. When I saw all these matters, and knew they were going to be sent as tribute to Mexico, I ordered four Tlascallans who were with me, and four Indians who had charge of these goods, to take each a load and follow me. Just at that moment Pedro Ircio came up, and ordered that everything should be left where it was. I first remonstrated with him for this, but was forced in the end to obey his commands, because he was an officer. "Did you not yourself," said he, "hear Cortes say that we were not even to touch a grain of maise belonging to these people. I will certainly inform against you if you do not leave these things where they are." I acquiesced of course, but I told him I was of opinion that these things were not comprehended in Cortes' commands. However, I returned without taking a single thing with me.

When we had again arrived in the plain below, and given Cortes an account of what we had seen, Pedro de Ircio thought our general would be pleased to hear how he had restrained me from carrying off the packages of cotton stuffs; but Cortes said to him angrily, "Why did you not allow Bernal Diaz to take those things away? Really I am astonished that you did not yourself stay with those people above! Is it thus that you understood me, when I told you to look to your own advantage? Bernal Diaz,

who understood my meaning, was thus forced to return the things which he had taken from those dogs! who now laugh in their sleeves at having killed and wounded so many of our men!"

Upon this, Ircio offered to ascend the rock again, and to fetch the packages; but Cortes said to him sharply, "There is no time for that now."

In the meantime the caziques from the other rock had arrived in our camp; and after giving many reasons why Cortes should pardon them, he granted them their request, and declared them vassals of our emperor.

As water was so very scarce in the whole of this district, we marched back to the town of Huaxtepec, where those extensive gardens where, which I have mentioned above: and I must declare, that during the whole course of my life I never beheld such a splendid spot! I therefore drew the attention of Cortes to them, and he instantly repaired thither with Alderete, the royal treasurer. They both walked about in the garden for a length of time, and acknowledged they had never seen any thing so beautiful in Spain.¹⁴ The whole of us encamped for the night in this garden, and the caziques of the township came to offer their services to Cortes; for Sandoval, on his visit here, had concluded peace with them. The following morning we marched towards Cuernavaca, and came up with a strong body of Mexicans who

¹⁴ According to Torquemada this garden was eight miles in circumference, through the midst of which flowed a small rivulet, whose banks were decorated with all kinds of shrubbery. Besides the many beautiful buildings which it contained there were also artificial rocks. (p. [40](#).)

had been drawn out of this town to oppose us; but our cavalry charged them with great impetuosity, put them to flight, and pursued them for about three miles, up to another large township, called Teputztlan. Here the Mexicans were so very careless, that our troops fell upon them before their spies could give notice of our approach, and we made a considerable booty, besides taking many fine female prisoners; but the Mexicans and the other inhabitants fled precipitately from the town.

Cortes sent three or four several times to the caziques of this district, desiring them to come and sue for peace, otherwise we should burn down their town and put them all to death. However, they each time sent word that they had no wish to come, and we set fire to half the houses of the town, in order to frighten the other towns of this district into obedience. It was not till then that the caziques of Yauhtepec, through which we had passed this day, made their appearance, and declared themselves vassals of our emperor.

The next day we marched to Coadalbaca, which we often erroneously termed Cuernavaca.¹⁵ In this town lay a strong garrison of Mexicans, besides the troops of the place itself, and it was rendered difficult of access from a hollow eight fathoms deep, which lay in front of the town, and through which a small stream of water flowed. There was no other way for our cavalry to get into the town than by two bridges, but these had been

¹⁵ The Mexican name is Quauhnhuac, where Cortes subsequently built himself a palace. (p. [41](#).)

burnt down by the enemy, who were strongly entrenched on the other side of this deep hollow, and incessantly annoyed us with their arrows, lances, and slings. While they were thus attacking us Cortes received information that a couple of miles further up there was a spot where our cavalry could pass over. Our general, therefore, immediately repaired thither with the horse, while the rest of us strove to get over in the best way we could. We succeeded above our expectations, by climbing up and along the branches of the trees which grew on each side of this hollow, but this was attended by considerable danger, and three of our men fell down into the water, one of whom broke his leg. My head grew quite dizzy as I thus passed across the depth; but as soon as twenty or thirty of us, with a great number of Tlascallans had reached the opposite side, we fell upon the rear of the Mexicans before they were in the least aware of it; for they had considered it an impossibility for us to pass the hollow, and imagined in their astonishment, when they saw us approaching, that we were much more numerous than was really the case, particularly as Oli, Alvarado and Tapia, with the greater part of our cavalry who had risked their lives by crossing a bridge which had been almost burnt down, appeared there at the same time. We now fell in a body upon the enemy, who instantly turned round and fled to the mountains, and other parts of this deep hollow, where we could not possibly follow them. A short time afterwards Cortes arrived with the remaining cavalry, and we now took possession of the town without any further opposition. Here we took many

fine Indian females prisoners, and otherwise made a rich booty, particularly of large sized mantles. Our general now allowed us to rest for the remainder of the day, and we all quartered ourselves comfortably in a garden belonging to the chief of the town.

We had not been long here before our outposts brought intelligence that twenty Indians were approaching, who, to judge from their bearing, must either be caziques or men of distinction, and seemed to be coming with some message or to sue for peace. They proved, indeed, to be the caziques of the town, who approached Cortes with the utmost veneration, handed over to him a present in gold, and begged pardon for their recent behaviour towards us. In excuse for not having come earlier to demand peace of us, they said that Quauhtemoctzin had secretly commanded them to treat us as enemies, and that they had not been able to avoid this as their town formed one of the fortifications of the country, and was occupied by a Mexican garrison. They were now, continued they, convinced, that there was no fortification we could not take, and it was therefore their sincere wish to become friendly with us.

Cortes was very kind to these caziques, and spoke to them of our emperor, and of his mercy to all those who willingly obeyed him; and it was in his name he now acknowledged them as his subjects. I still remember the extraordinary expression these caziques made use of on this occasion; namely, that our gods in punishment for their not having sued earlier for peace, had given their gods authority to chastise their persons and deprive them

of their property.¹⁶

¹⁶ According to Cortes' despatches, the Indians made use of these words, which are indeed more intelligible than our author's: "They had sought our friendship thus late, because they thought they were bound first to atone for their guilt by allowing us to inflict some punishment upon them, after which they thought we should not be so embittered against them." (p. [42](#).)

CHAPTER CXLV

The terrible thirst we suffered on our further march; our dangerous position at Xochimilco, and the many battles we fought there with the Mexicans, until our return to Tezcucó.

From Cuernavaca we marched towards Xochimilco, a large town lying about eleven miles from Mexico,¹⁷ and of which the greater part was built in the water. On our march we adopted our usual military precautions, and arrived at a forest of pine trees, without being able to obtain a single drop of water all the way. Our arms were very heavy, and the day, which had been exceedingly hot, was now far spent, and we were almost parched with thirst, yet we had still several miles to go, nor did we know for certain whether we should find the wells, which, it was said, lay further on.

By this time the whole of our troops were almost exhausted with fatigue, and our Tlascallan friends lost all courage after one of their countrymen and an old Spaniard died of thirst. Cortes, observing the great distress we were in, ordered us to halt under the shade of the pine trees, and despatched six of our horse in advance, along the road leading to Xochimilco, in search of some town or village where it was said we should find the wells, as our

¹⁷ According to Torquemada, who was born in Mexico, and was elected provincial of his order by a chapter held at Xochimilco, the distance was sixteen miles. (p. [42](#).)

general proposed to encamp near them for the night.

This small body of cavalry, among which were Oli, Valdenebro, Truxillo, and other brave men, had scarcely left, when I slipt away without being observed by Cortes and the others, taking with me three of my Tlascallan naborias, who were active young fellows, and I followed the three above-mentioned cavalry officers until I was observed, and they halted to wait my coming up. They advised me to return immediately, that I might not fall into the hands of the Mexicans. I was not, however, to be deterred by this; and Oli, with whom I stood on a very friendly footing, at length gave me permission to accompany them, but to hold my hands ready for battle and my legs for flight. I would at that moment have risked my life to obtain a drink of water, so painful was my thirst.

We may have advanced about a couple of miles in a straight line when we came up to a number of country houses which lay scattered among the hills, and were subject to Xochimilco. Our officers entered these dwellings without delay, in search of water, which they found, to their inexpressible joy. One of my Tlascallans, who had followed them, instantly returned to me with a large earthen jug full of water, with which I and my servants quenched our thirst. I now again returned to the wood where Cortes had halted with our troops, and it was high time I did, as the inhabitants were beginning to assemble, and they followed us with hootings and yells. I had ordered the jug to be replenished with water, and gave it to one of my Tlascallans to

carry. On my return, I met Cortes, who had again put his troops in motion. I informed him that we had found water in a small village not far off, and that I had brought him a jug full. My Tlascallans had taken the precaution to cover up the jug carefully, that no one might take it from them, for thirst knows no law. Cortes and the other officers by whom he was surrounded were highly delighted, and drank their fill; we then continued our march, and reached the small village before sunset. There was still some water left in the houses, but not sufficient for the whole of our troops, so that several of the men, in order at least to moisten their mouths, chewed a kind of thistle, the sharp prickles of which wounded their tongues and lips. The small detachment of horse now also returned, and informed our general that they had found the wells where we were to encamp for the night, but these were still a good way off, and the whole neighbourhood was beating to arms.

We encamped near the wells for the night, ordered the pickets and outposts as usual, and otherwise took every precaution. I myself formed one of the night watch, and, if I still remember rightly, it blew a strong gale of wind, and some rain was falling.

The next morning very early we marched towards Xochimilco, and arrived in front of that town about eight in the morning. Here an immense body of the enemy stood ready to oppose us, part of whom were stationed in the open fields, and the rest in front of a bridge which had been destroyed, and near which large entrenchments had been thrown up. At the end of their pikes they had fastened the swords we had lost on our unfortunate retreat

from Mexico, and many of the chiefs were armed with our own broadswords, which had been beautifully polished. The whole of the Mexicans appeared to be well-armed, and the entire plain was filled with warriors.

The conflict for the possession of the bridges lasted about half an hour, yet, with all our firing and hard fighting, we were not able to force them. Our situation became truly perilous, for large bodies now fell upon our rear, so that the only choice we had left was to cross the water at all hazards. In this we fortunately succeeded, partly swimming, and partly wading through. Several of our men, while thus crossing over, drank so much water that their stomachs swelled out to an enormous size. In crossing this water, we lost two men, and had several wounded; nevertheless, we succeeded, by dint of our swords, to drive the enemy before us along a causeway which led to the main land. Cortes, who was advancing with the cavalry from another quarter, fell in with a body of more than 10,000 Mexicans, who were coming to the assistance of the town. The Mexicans, on this occasion, received the charge of the cavalry with fixed lances, and wounded four of our horses. Cortes himself had got into the midst of the enemy, and rode a dark brown horse, which we commonly termed the *flatnose*. Whether this animal, which was otherwise an excellent horse, had become too fat, or was over-fatigued, I cannot say; but, to be short, it fell down with its rider, and numbers of Mexicans instantly laid hold of our general, tore him away from the saddle, and were already carrying him off. When some of the Tlascallans

and the brave Christobal de Olea saw this, they immediately flew to his assistance, and, by dint of heavy blows and good thrusts, they cut their way through to our general, and assisted him into his saddle again. Cortes fortunately escaped with only a wound on the head, but Olea had received three very severe wounds.¹⁸ Those of us who stood nearest now also hastened to the assistance of Cortes; for, as every street was crowded with the enemy, we were obliged to attack them in separate bodies and from different points, so that, for some time, we had totally lost sight of him; but we concluded, from the terrific yells of the Mexicans, that there must be a severe struggle between them and the cavalry. We therefore cut our way through the enemy, at the risk of our lives, to the spot where Cortes, surrounded by only ten of the cavalry, was bravely repelling the desperate attacks of the enemy. The Mexicans had taken up a position behind a deep canal, which had been strengthened by a palisade; they thus had the advantage ground: but we soon put them to flight.

As Olea, who had saved our general's life, was severely wounded, and had lost much blood, and the streets were still crowded by the enemy, we advised Cortes to march back to some entrenchments, under cover of which his own and Olea's wounds could be dressed. This retrograde movement was not accomplished without considerable difficulty and danger; for the Mexicans now imagined we were going to retreat altogether, and

¹⁸ Torquemada here relates that Cortes was saved by a Tlascallan, and that the day following he made a fruitless search for him among the dead. (p. [44](#).)

fell upon us with redoubled fury.

In the midst of this second conflict, Alvarado Tapia and Oli, with the main body of the cavalry, made their appearance, who had been attacking the enemy at other points. The blood was trickling down Oli's face, nor had any one of them escaped without a wound. They said they had been attacked by terrific bodies of the enemy, in the open fields, and had not been able to drive them back. The reason of their having been separated from the rest of the cavalry was, because Cortes, after he had passed across the water, ordered the horse to divide into two bodies, and attack the enemy at different points.

While we were busily engaged dressing the wounds of our men, all at once there arose from out of the streets and adjoining fields terrific yells, with the wild war music of the enemy; the courtyard in which we had stationed ourselves was suddenly filled with Mexicans, and, in a very few moments, many more of our men were wounded. But the enemy drew very little advantage from this bold enterprise; for we set upon them so vigorously in return, that great numbers of them soon lay stretched on the ground. Our cavalry also galloped in among them, and slew a great many more. On our side, we had only one man killed and two horses wounded.

We drove the enemy completely out of the open square, and took possession of another more spacious, in which stood several large temples, where we could rest ourselves in greater safety. Several of our men mounted to the top of these temples, from

whence they could see the great city of Mexico and the extensive lake which it commanded; but at the same time they espied more than 2000 canoes, all filled with warriors, making straightway to us as fast as their paddles could bring them.

These troops were commanded by Quauhtemotzin to attack us immediately, and to leave us no peace night or day. He had likewise despatched another 10,000 men by land, to fall upon us from another quarter: and another 10,000 men stood ready to march hither to relieve the first, that not a single man of us might escape alive from Xochimilco. All this we learnt the day following from the five Mexican chiefs whom we took prisoners. But the Lord Jesus had disposed otherwise for us.

As soon as intelligence was received of the approach of this vast fleet of canoes, we were doubly vigilant, and strong detachments were placed at all the places and canals where we thought the enemy would disembark. Our horses stood ready saddled, and every officer, including Cortes himself, made the rounds during the whole of the night, and kept a sharp look-out on the causeway and towards the mainland. I myself was posted with ten men near a stone wall. We were furnished with stones, crossbows, muskets, and long lances, and were to prevent the enemy from landing in this quarter. Similar small detachments were stationed at the other canals.

I and my comrades thus keeping a sharp look-out, we heard all at once the noise of several canoes, which were advancing directly towards us; but we gave the enemy so rough a reception

with our slings and lances, that they durst not venture to land; and while one of our men had hastened to inform Cortes of what was going forward in this quarter, a second and still more numerous squadron of canoes arrived, and attacked us most vigorously with lances, stones, and arrows, wounding two of our men; but we defended ourselves with no less vigour: and, as it was an uncommon dark night, these canoes again joined the great body of the fleet, which had repaired to some other small harbour or deeper canal, where the whole of them disembarked. These troops, who, it seemed, were not very willing to fight at night-time, joined those which Quauhtemoctzin had sent by land, and both together formed an army of above 15,000 men.

I must here mention a circumstance, which, however, I hope the reader will not construe into vanity on my part.

When one of the men belonging to my small detachment brought Cortes intelligence that a number of Mexican canoes had approached the spot where we were stationed, he, with ten of the cavalry, was just coming towards us. As they approached us with the utmost silence, I and Gonzalo Sanchez cried out to them, "Who goes there? How? can't you open your mouths?" and then slung three or four stones at them. But Cortes, who immediately recognized us by our voices, remarked to Alderete, father Melgarejo, and our quartermaster Christobal de Oli, who accompanied him, "I am in no fear with regard to this quarter; for here are posted two men who came with me when I first arrived in this country, and to whom I would intrust a more important

command than this!" He then came up and spoke to us himself, and observed that our position was one of great danger, and that, in case of need, we were instantly to send for assistance. Our general had scarcely left us when we heard him driving a soldier back to his post, which he had deserted. It was one of those who came with Narvaez.

There is likewise another circumstance which I must not forget to mention. In the battle of the previous day, our musketeers had spent all their powder, and the crossbow-men their arrows; Cortes, therefore, during the night-time, ordered us to collect all the arrows we could find, and to furnish them with fresh feathers and points, of which we had always a good stock by us. With this work our crossbow-men were occupied the whole of the night, and Pedro Barba, captain of that company, never left them for a moment; Cortes himself looking in from time to time to see how they were getting on.

When daylight appeared, our camp was assailed by the whole of the Mexican troops from different points at once; but as we were never unprepared for an attack, our cavalry rushed out towards the land side, and we others, with the Tlascallans, towards the lake, and fell so vigorously on the Mexicans that we soon killed three of their chiefs, and numbers of their troops died of their wounds the day following. The Tlascallans behaved with uncommon bravery, and took five Mexican chiefs whom they brought in prisoners, from whom we learnt the exact number of troops which Quauhtemotzin had ordered against us.

On our side we had only one killed, but a great number of wounded.

This battle, however, had not yet terminated; for our cavalry, in pursuing the enemy, came up with the 10,000 warriors whom Quauhtemoctzin had despatched to the assistance of the others. Several of the officers who commanded these troops wore our Spanish swords, of which they were not a little vain; and they said it was by our own swords we were to be vanquished.

Our few horse durst not encounter so large a body of the enemy, and therefore drew off to one side, until they should be joined by Cortes with the rest of the troops. When our general was informed of their critical position, he instantly sallied out, with the rest of our cavalry, who had remained in the courtyard on account of their wounds, and all our foot, with the Tlascallan troops. A most terrible and obstinate conflict now ensued; but at length, by dint of heavy blows and thrusts, we repulsed the enemy, with considerable loss. On this occasion eight distinguished Mexicans fell into our hands, from whom we learnt that Quauhtemoctzin had despatched against us another considerable fleet of canoes, and other large bodies of his troops by land. These troops he had sent off with the perfect assurance that, coming suddenly upon us, they would complete the victory, after we had been fatigued by such constant fighting, and weakened by loss of men and the number of our wounded.

When we heard this we were doubly on our guard, and our general determined to abandon the town on the following

morning, and not wait for any further attacks. We therefore made the best use of our time to dress our wounds and repair our weapons.

During this interval, it appears that some prisoners of Xochimilco pointed out to the Tlascallans several houses belonging to rich individuals, in which were hidden many valuable things, such as manufactured cotton interwoven with feathers, women's shifts, gold, and other matters. These houses stood in the lake, but it was possible to reach them by a causeway, and by passing over two or three bridges which lay across the deep canals. The Tlascallans communicated this to several of our men, who instantly repaired to these houses, which they found quite unprotected, and, as they had been told, filled with various articles of value. They stowed away as much as they possibly could, and returned with a rich booty to our head-quarters. When others of our men saw these rich spoils, they likewise paid a visit to these dwellings, and were busily engaged in emptying some wooden cases, which were full of different things, when a large fleet of Mexican canoes arrived with a numerous body of troops, and suddenly fell upon the plunderers, of whom they wounded the greater part, and carried off four alive to Mexico. It was indeed a wonder that the rest escaped. Two of the four Spaniards were Juan de Lara and Alonso Hernandez; the two others belonged to the company which stood under the command of Andreas de Monjaraz, but I have forgotten their names.

These unfortunate men were brought into the presence of

Quauhtemoctzin, who questioned them about the smallness of our army, the number of our wounded, and the object of our present expedition: and when he thought he had gained sufficient information, he ordered their arms and legs to be chopped off, and to be sent to those towns which had concluded peace with Cortes, accompanied by the message that he hoped to kill us all before we could escape to Tezcucó, and with our hearts and our blood he would make a savoury offering to his idols.

Quauhtemoctzin then despatched a large fleet of canoes filled with troops, and a considerable army by land, to Xochimilco, with strict commands not to allow one of us to escape alive out of that town.

Not to fatigue the reader with a description of the many battles we fought with the Mexicans during these four days, I will confine myself by stating that, with break of day, so vast a number of Mexicans rushed all at once upon us from the inlets of the lakes, from the streets, and from the mainland, that it was with the utmost exertions only we were able to cut our way through them to a large square which lay at a short distance from the town, and where the inhabitants usually held their markets. There we halted for a few minutes, with the whole of our baggage, to arrange the order of our march.

Previous to quitting this place, Cortes addressed a few words to us, in which he reminded us of our perilous position, having still to pass by several dangerous points, where the whole armed force of Mexico was lying in wait for us. It would, therefore, be

desirable, he said, to leave behind as much of our baggage as we could possibly spare, for it would only encumber our movements in battle.

To this we one and all replied, that we were men who had the power to defend our baggage, ourselves, and his person, if God lent us his protection; and that we considered it but a small sacrifice which he required us to make. When he saw in what an excellent disposition we were, he commended us all to God, and arranged the order of march. The wounded and our baggage were placed in the centre, one half of the cavalry formed the vanguard, and the other half the rearguard; and the crossbowmen and Tlascallans were distributed in a similar manner: for we purposely collected our chief strength around the baggage, as the Mexicans invariably made their first attack upon this. Our musketeers were of no use to us, as all their powder was consumed.

In this way we began to move forward; but as soon as the Mexicans found we were leaving the square, they concluded it was from fear, as was indeed the case; they sallied out upon us, wounded two of our men, and attacked our centre with great intrepidity to make themselves master of our baggage; but they were unable to make any impression on the close order of our ranks.

During the whole of our march to Cojohuacan, which lay about eight miles from Xochimilco, we had continual skirmishes with the Mexicans, who took every favorable opportunity of

annoying us with lances, stones and arrows, and then suddenly retreated beyond the canals, where we could not follow them. In this manner we reached Cojohuacan, at ten o'clock in the morning, and found the town quite deserted by its inhabitants.

I must here observe that there are a number of towns lying round about Mexico, all at about eight miles distance from each other. Of these, Xochimilco, Cojohuacan, Iztapalapan, Chohuilobusco, Quauhnahuac, Mizquic, and three or four other towns, are half-built in the lake itself, and none of these towns lie at a greater distance from each other than from six to eight miles, which accounts for the Mexicans being able to assemble so vast a body of troops against us in Xochimilco.

When we arrived in this deserted town, we dressed our wounds, furnished ourselves with arrows, and rested for the remaining part of the day; and indeed we required some repose, for we knew we should have to fight many more battles before we reached Tezcucuo.

The next morning very early we again continued our march, and took the road towards Tlacupa, which lay about eight miles further on. Large bodies of the enemy fell upon us at three different places along our route, but we each time repulsed them, and pursued them to their canoes in the inlets and canals.

On one occasion during this march, Cortes left the main body with ten of the cavalry, among which were four of his grooms, to lay an ambuscade for the Mexicans, who every now and then came suddenly upon us from the inlets of the lake. Cortes

attacked and routed a body of Mexicans, who, after a short stand, fled with precipitation, and were pursued by our general; in doing which he fell himself into a more terrible ambush, from which the enemy suddenly burst upon him, and wounded two of his men; and he, with all those who accompanied him, would undoubtedly have been killed or taken prisoners if he had not instantly retreated. The enemy, however, succeeded in capturing two of his grooms, who were brought before Quauhtemoctzin, and afterwards sacrificed to his gods.

The main body of our army had, in the meantime, arrived with flying colours in Tlacupa, while only Cortes, with the ten horse, remained behind, and we began to fear that some misfortune had befallen him; wherefore Alvarado, Oli, and Tapia immediately turned back with a strong body of horse in the direction we had seen him take. They soon came up with the two grooms who had escaped from the enemy, and who related how they had been indebted for their lives to a precipitate retreat; and that Cortes was following behind, as he was obliged to ride at a gentle pace, his horse having been wounded. It was not long before our general came up, to the great joy of all; but he appeared excessively grieved at the loss of his two grooms, almost to shedding tears.

Just as Cortes entered Tlacupa, it began to rain very fast; for which reason we rested here for a couple of hours in a large square of the town. Our general, with several other officers, the treasurer Alderete, (who fell ill here,) father Melgarejo,

and several soldiers, including myself, ascended to the top of the great temple of this town, from which we beheld the neighbouring city of Mexico, with the numerous other towns which stood in the lake. When father Melgarejo and Alderete beheld all this splendour at once, they could scarcely find words to express their astonishment; but when they contemplated the great city of Mexico more minutely, and saw the numerous canoes hurrying up and down this immense lake laden with merchandize or provisions for the city, or occupied in fishing, they were actually terrified, and exclaimed to each other that our arrival in New Spain could not be by the power of man alone, and that it was through the great mercy of Providence that our lives were still preserved. They had once before remarked, said they, that no monarch had ever been rendered such signal services by his subjects as we had rendered to our emperor; but now they were more convinced than ever, and would duly inform his majesty of what they had seen.

Father Melgarejo then consoled our general for the loss of his two grooms, which so greatly afflicted him. While we soldiers were thus gazing upon the city of Mexico, we again by degrees recognized those spots which had become so memorable to us, and we pointed out to each other the great temple of Huitzilopochtli, the Tlatelulco, and the causeways, with the bridges over which we made our disastrous retreat. At this moment Cortes sighed more deeply than he had previously done for the loss of his two grooms, whom the enemy had carried

off alive. And it was from this day our men began to sing the romance, which commences —

"En Tacuba esta Cortes
Con su esquadron esforsado,
Triste estava y mui penoso
Triste y con gran cuidado,
La una mano en la mexilla
Y la otra en el costado," etc.

As our general was thus standing in deep contemplation, the bachelor Alonso Perez, who was appointed fiscal after the conquest of New Spain, and lived in Mexico, stepped up to him and said, "General, you should not thus give way to grief; it is ever so during war time, and men will certainly never have occasion to sing of you as they did of Nero, —

'Mira Nero de Tarpeya¹⁹
A Roma como se ardia,
Gritos dan niños y viejos,

¹⁹ The following is a free translation of the first six lines: "Pensive and sad brave Cortes stood Surrounded by his valiant band, His thoughts were in the heaviest mood, While musing on Tlacupa's land, Grief must assume an attitude, Forehead and side were clasped by either hand." Of the four following lines Bernal Diaz only gives the first two, the last two I have taken from Las Casas, (Brevissima Relacion de la destruyon de las Indias.) These lines were most likely applied to Cortes after the attack he made upon the Cholullans: On the Tarpeian rock as Nero stood To view the flames consume th' imperial city, Both young and old uttered their grief aloud, But Nero neither showed remorse nor pity. (p. 52.)

Y el de nada se dolia."

To which Cortes replied, "How often have I not offered peace to that city! But it is not that circumstance alone which causes my grief; I am likewise thinking of the dreadful scenes we have to go through before we can subdue this place; though, with the assistance of God, we shall accomplish this also."

I must now, however, quit these discourses and romances; indeed the time was ill suited for such things. Our officers now deliberated whether or not we should march a short distance along the causeway, which lay near to Tlacupa; but as we had no powder left, and only a few arrows, besides that most of our men were wounded, and as a similar attempt which Cortes had made a month earlier on this same causeway had ended so disastrously, it was resolved we should continue our march, lest the Mexicans should fall upon us this very day, or during the night. From the near vicinity of the metropolis it was easy for Quauhtemoctzin to send a body of troops against us at any moment. We therefore broke up our quarters here, and marched straight forward to Escapuzalco, which we found entirely deserted by its inhabitants. From this place we came to Tenayucan, or the town of Serpents, as we called it; (the reader will remember what I related in a former chapter respecting the origin of this name.) The inhabitants of this place had likewise fled. We next came to Quauhtitlan, and the rain came down in torrents during the whole of the day, so that we could scarcely

drag one foot after the other, from the weight of our arms and of our clothes, which were completely drenched with water.

It was perfectly dark when we entered this township, which was also deserted by its inhabitants. The rain came down in torrents during the whole night, which created a great deal of mire and dirt. The inhabitants and Mexicans, who had fled to places where we could not get at them, kept hooting at us from the evening until next morning, without intermission. Owing to the extreme darkness of the night, and the heavy rain which was falling, we neither posted sentinels nor made any rounds; there was nothing but disorder to be seen in our camp, and no one remained at his post. I can speak from experience, for the first watch had been assigned to me; but no officer came to make the rounds, or see that all was right.

The next day we marched to a large township, whose name I have forgotten. The streets were covered with mud, and not an inhabitant was to be seen. On the following morning we arrived at Aculman, which is subject to Tezcucu; and the inhabitants of this place being apprized of our approach, came out to meet us. They were accompanied by several Spaniards, who had arrived from Spain during our absence. Besides these, Sandoval, with the troops under his command, and Don Fernando, king of Tezcucu, had likewise come out to welcome us. Every one was overjoyed at our return, but particularly the inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhood, who brought us quantities of provisions.

Sandoval returned this same day to Tezcucu, fearing the

enemy might make an attack on this town in the night time. The following morning Cortes also left, for this place, where we arrived quite fatigued, and covered with wounds; besides that, we had to mourn the loss of many of our brave companions in arms, whom the Mexicans had carried off alive, and sacrificed to their idols. I must now inform the reader what a perilous posture affairs had assumed at Tezcuco.

CHAPTER CXLVI

How we discover, on our return to Tezcucó, that a conspiracy had been set on foot by the men of Narvaez's troops to murder Cortes, and all who were of his party; of the author of this conspiracy, his punishment; and of other matters.

During our absence a conspiracy had been set on foot by a most intimate friend of the governor of Cuba, named Antonio de Villafañá, a native either of Zamora or Toro, in conjunction with others of Narvaez's troops, whose names, for honour's sake, I will refrain from mentioning here. The object of this conspiracy was to murder Cortes on his return, which was to be done in the following manner.

The conspirators designed handing over a letter to Cortes while he sat at dinner with his officers and other soldiers, which was to be securely fastened and sealed, purporting to come from his father, with a vessel that had just arrived from Spain. While he was occupied in the perusal of this letter, he and the whole of the officers and soldiers who sat at table with him, and offered any resistance, were to be poignarded to death.

All this being settled, it pleased the Almighty that the conspirators should also let two other distinguished officers into the secret, whose names, however, I must likewise repress. Both these officers had accompanied us on our recent expedition

around the lake, and one of these officers, after Cortes should have been killed, was to be appointed one of the new captain-generals. In the same manner the other chief appointments, besides all our property and horses, had already been disposed of by the conspirators. The Almighty, however, in his mercy, prevented this horrible deed from being carried into effect, the consequences of which would have been continual divisions, the inevitable loss of New Spain, and the total destruction of our troops. The whole of this conspiracy was discovered to Cortes by one of our soldiers a couple of days after his return to Tezcucó, and he had thus sufficient time to adopt active measures for suppressing it before it spread further. The honest man who made the discovery to him assured him also that there were several men of rank among the conspirators.

Cortes, after he had handsomely rewarded this man, communicated the whole affair, under the seal of secrecy, to the officers Alvarado, Oli, Lugo, Sandoval, Tapia, and myself; also to the two alcaldes for the year, and to all those in whom he could place confidence. He then ordered us to arm ourselves without any further delay, and he then proceeded with us to the quarters of Antonio de Villafañá.

On entering his apartment we found him in conversation with several of the conspirators, and the four alguacils who accompanied us immediately arrested him. The rest instantly took to flight, but Cortes had many of them seized. Villafañá being thus in our power, Cortes thrust his hand into that officer's

bosom, and drew forth a paper, containing the whole plan of the conspirators, to which all their names were attached. Cortes, on perusing this paper, found the names of several men of importance among the list of conspirators; and being desirous of saving them from dishonour, he afterwards gave out that Villafañá had swallowed the paper, and that he had not read it himself, nor even so much as seen it.

A criminal suit was now instituted against Villafañá, when he, with several others who were implicated in it, made a full confession of the whole matter. Cortes, the two *alcaldes*, and the quartermaster Oli, who formed the court-martial, then pronounced Villafañá guilty, and sentenced him to be hung; and, after he had confessed to father Juan Diaz, he was executed in front of his own quarters.

Here Cortes allowed the matter to rest, though several of the conspirators were kept in close confinement, and in order to frighten them appearances were made as if they likewise would have to share a similar fate with Villafañá. Our general, however, was desirous of saving their names from dishonour; to which may be added, that this was not exactly the time to go to the utmost severity of the law.

From that moment our general had a body guard, consisting of the captain Antonio de Quiñones, a native of Zamora, and twelve trustworthy men, who were to be near his person both night and day. In the same way he likewise requested the rest of us in whom he could place confidence to watch over the safety

of his person. He never, however, evinced any animosity in his subsequent behaviour towards the other conspirators, though he took care to be particularly upon his guard against them.²⁰

After this miserable affair was ended, notice was given that the prisoners we had made in our expedition round the lake were to be brought in to be marked within the space of two days. In order not to waste many words on the subject, for the third time I will merely state that our men were even more shamefully cheated on this occasion than on the former. First the emperor's fifths were deducted, then those of Cortes, and after him our chief officers committed their piracies. If, therefore, any of us had an Indian female who was handsome or strong of limb, we certainly took her to be marked with the iron, but stole her away the night following, and took care not to show her again until some considerable time had elapsed; so that numbers of our slaves were never marked at all, and yet we employed them as our naborias.

²⁰ According to Torquemada there were 300 concerned in this conspiracy, and their intention was to elect Francisco Verdugo, brother-in-law to the governor of Cuba, captain-general in Cortes' stead; but adds that Verdugo, who was very courageous and highly esteemed, was not let into the conspiracy. (p. [55](#).)

CHAPTER CXLVII

How Cortes issues orders to the inhabitants of all the townships in the neighbourhood of Tezcucu which were allied with us, to furnish us with arrows and copper points for the same, and what further took place at our headquarters.

Our brigantines were now so far advanced towards completion, that they had merely to be rigged. For each brigantine a number of spare oars had been made in case of need. The canal in which these vessels were to be launched, and through which they were to be conveyed into the lake, was now also sufficiently deep and wide to swim these vessels.²¹ Cortes now, therefore, began to make active preparations for the siege of Mexico. He issued orders to all the townships which lay in the vicinity of Tezcucu, and were in alliance with us, for each of them to furnish him with 8000 copper points for our arrows, to be made after the model of our Spanish ones, of which some were sent them for that purpose. They were also to furnish an equal number of arrows, which were to be made from a wood particularly adapted for that use, and they received some of our Spanish arrows to work by. He allowed them eight days for the making and delivery of these; and indeed both the arrows and the

²¹ According to Cortes, this canal was two miles long, twice the breadth of a man's length, and as deep. It was completed in fifty days by 8000 Indians. (p. [55](#).)

copper points arrived at Tezcuco in the time specified. Our stock of these now consisted of 50,000 pieces, and the arrow points made by these people were even better than those we brought from Spain.

Cortes then ordered Pedro Barba, who commanded the crossbow-men to divide the arrows and copper points among his men, and see that every man fixed the points neatly to the arrows, and attached the feathers with strong glue. Every crossbow-man was also to furnish himself with two closely twisted cords for his bow; further to provide himself with a number of spare nuts for the bows, that if one should crack or fly off he might have another in readiness. The crossbow-men were also to exercise themselves in shooting at heaps of earth to ascertain the strength of their bows. Care was therefore taken that they should not want for Valencian strings to twist the cords of, for the vessel of Juan Burgos, which had recently arrived from Spain, had fortunately brought a good supply of these as well as of bows, powder, muskets and other arms, besides a quantity of horseshoes. In the same way our cavalry were ordered to equip themselves, have their horses fresh shod, and to exercise them daily in all manner of cavalry evolutions.

Cortes then sent word to the elder Xicotencatl, his two sons, and to Chichimeclatecl, informing them that we should leave Tezcuco after the feast of Corpus Christi, and begin the siege of Mexico. He therefore requested them to send him 20,000 warriors from their country, from Huexotzinco, and

from Cholulla, who were now all in friendly alliance with each other. But it was unnecessary to inform the Tlascallans of our intentions, for they were always duly apprized beforehand by those of their countrymen who accompanied us in our expeditions and returned home with the booty they had made. The inhabitants of Tlalmanalco and Chalco were also requested to hold themselves in readiness to march out at a moment's notice. These and all our other allies were informed of the day when we proposed to commence operations against Mexico. From all sides we received the most friendly assurances of assistance, and that Cortes' orders would be punctually obeyed.

CHAPTER CXLVIII

How Cortes reviews the whole of his troops at Tezcucó; and of his further dispositions for conducting the siege of Mexico.

After Cortes had thus acquainted our allies with his designs against Mexico, he determined to review the whole of his troops, and selected for this purpose the second day of Easter. This review was held in the large square of Tezcucó, and our muster-roll gave the following numbers: Eighty-four horse; six hundred and fifty foot soldiers, of whom some were armed with swords and shields, and others with lances; one hundred and ninety-four crossbow-men and musketeers.

Out of these troops he selected the men who were to serve on the thirteen brigantines; each of which required twelve rowers and a captain, with twelve crossbow-men and musketeers. In this way the thirteen brigantines required two hundred and eighty men, who, with the additional number of artillerymen, amounted to three hundred and twenty-five. Next the cannon, with the necessary powder was distributed among them; and when all this was done, Cortes published the articles of war, which ran as follows:

First of all it was forbidden under a heavy penalty to blaspheme either against our Lord Jesus Christ, his blessed

mother, the holy apostles, or against any of the saints in general.

Secondly, no one was to ill-use any of our allies, take anything from them, not even of the booty they might make, whether this consisted of gold, silver, jewels, or of anything else; for we were to bear in mind that they joined us in this war at our own particular request.

Thirdly, none of the men, either during day or night time, were to leave our head-quarters, whether to fetch provisions from any of the townships allied to us, or for any other purpose whatever. Any one found guilty of this would be severely punished.

Fourthly, every soldier was to supply himself with a sufficient number of arms and keep them in proper order; for we were to remember how well the Mexicans were provided with everything in the shape of weapons.

Fifthly, all gambling for horses or weapons was strictly forbidden.

Lastly, none of the men, whatever company they belonged to, were to lay themselves down to rest without being completely armed and were to keep their shoes on, to which an exception was merely granted in cases of urgent necessity when a person was severely wounded, or unable to do duty; for we should be prepared to receive the enemy at a moment's notice.

Besides these the usual articles of war were again read over, which, among other things, threatened punishment of death to the sentinel who deserted his post or fell asleep while on duty. The same punishment would be inflicted on any soldier who

left his quarters without his captain's permission, or who left his commanding officer in a moment of danger and took to flight.

CHAPTER CXLIX

The manner in which Cortes selects the men who were to row the brigantines; of the commanders who were appointed to each, and of other matters.

Cortes on selecting the men who were to serve on board the brigantines could not find a sufficient number of sailors to row them. All the sailors who had come with us, with Narvaez, and with the vessels which had recently arrived from Jamaica, had been duly noted down, but even then there was not a sufficient number. Besides which many would not condescend to this work, saying, it was unreasonable to think of making rowers of them.

Cortes then turned his attention to those who daily went out a fishing, and found they were mostly natives of Palos, Moguer, Triana, or other coast towns, which were celebrated for producing capital sailors. All these persons were commanded under threats of severe punishment, to enter without delay upon the service of the brigantines. Many, indeed, who were men of noble birth, remonstrated with our general, and told him, it was insulting to think of setting them to such work; but Cortes paid no respect to persons, and by these means he mustered one hundred and fifty capital oars, who indeed had better days of it than we who had to fight on the causeways, and obtained a much greater share of booty than we did, as will be sufficiently seen hereafter.

As soon as each brigantine was fully equipped for war, Cortes ordered a flag, bearing the royal arms, to be hoisted; and a second one, bearing the number of the vessel. The following were the commanders appointed: viz. Pedro Barba, Garcia Holguin, Juan de Limpias, the deaf Carvajal, Juan Xaramillo, Geronimo de la Mota, the other Carvajal, who now lives at an advanced age in the street San Francisco; a certain Portillo, an excellent soldier, who had just arrived from Spain and had brought a beautiful wife with him. The naval captain Zamora, who lives at present in Guaxaca. A certain Colmero, who was both a good sailor and a good soldier. Further, Lerma, Gines, Nortes, Briones of Salamanca, Miguel Diaz de Auz, and one other officer, whose name has slipped my memory.

The whole of the crews were strictly enjoined to pay implicit obedience to their commanders; and any one who left his vessel was liable to severe punishment. The several commanders then received their particular instructions as to the manner in which they were to cooperate with the land forces.

All these matters had just been arranged when Cortes received intelligence that the Tlascallan chiefs were marching with a large body of troops, consisting of Tlascallans and Huexotzincans. The chief command of these had been intrusted to the younger Xicotencatl, the same who commanded against us in our battles with Tlascalla. He was likewise accompanied by his two brothers, the two younger sons of the excellent Don Lorenzo de Vargas. One of the chiefs of Cholulla likewise made his

appearance, but with a very small body of men; for, though the Cholullans had broken off their alliance with Mexico from the time we had punished them so severely, yet they never stood upon the best of terms with us; on the contrary, they appeared as if waiting to see how matters would terminate, and then to side with the triumphant party. After our direful retreat from Mexico, they were almost upon the point of declaring against us.

When Cortes was informed of Xicotencatl's approach, who had come a day before the time appointed, he went out with Alvarado and several other officers to a distance of about a mile from Tezcuco, and welcomed him and his brothers with every demonstration of joy. Xicotencatl, with his men, marched forward in the best order, and all were accoutred in their best garments. Every company had a standard, on which was embroidered a white bird with expanded wings, being the arms of Tlascalla, and resembled an eagle. Every one of the men had a bunch of plumes stuck on his head; they struck up their war music, waved their flags, and continually cried out, "Long live the emperor, our master! Spain for ever! Tlascalla for ever!"

It took these troops about three hours before they had all entered the town, and our general ordered them to be provided with good quarters, and the best food we could get. When they had all entered the town, he once more bid them heartily welcome, assuring them he would enrich them all, and then desired them to rest from their fatigues, adding, that he would let them know the next day the duty they would have to perform.

Almost at the very moment these Tlascallans were marching into Tezcuco, a letter was put into Cortes' hands from Hernando de Barrientos, who was at Chinantla, about 360 miles from Mexico. Barrientos related that, while he was exploring the mines, being left behind for that purpose by Pizarro, the Mexicans had attacked him, and killed three of his companions, and that he alone had been fortunate enough to escape to the inhabitants of Chinantla, who were at enmity with the Mexicans. This was the same people who had furnished us with those long lances in our battle against Narvaez.

Without wishing to repeat the whole contents of this letter, I will only state that Cortes, in answer to it, told him he was about to besiege Mexico, and cautioned him to keep on good terms with the caziques of the country, and not to leave that place until he should receive further intelligence from head-quarters; for he would run great danger of being murdered on the road by the Mexicans.

CHAPTER CL

Of Cortes' further dispositions for the siege.

Cortes now divided the whole of our troops into three divisions. The first division, consisting of one hundred and fifty foot, all well armed with swords and shields, thirty horse, and eighteen musketeers and crossbow-men, was commanded by Alvarado, under whom Guterrez de Badajoz, Andreas de Monjaraz, and Jorge de Alvarado had each the command of fifty men and a third part of the musketeers and crossbow-men; the cavalry being under the immediate command of Alvarado himself. To this division 8000 Tlascallans were added, and Alvarado, in whose division I also was, received orders to take up his position in the town of Tlacupa. Cortes particularly recommended us to furnish ourselves with good weapons, helmets, gorgets, and steel coverings for the legs, to protect our bodies from the destructive weapons of the Mexicans. These precautions were, indeed, very necessary; but, notwithstanding all our defensive armour, scarcely a day past by in which the enemy did not kill or wound some of our men.

The second division was placed under the command of Oli, and consisted of thirty horse, one hundred and sixty-five foot, and twenty crossbow-men and musketeers. Andreas de Tapia, Verdugo, and Lugo commanded under him, he himself

having the immediate command of the cavalry. To this division, likewise, 8000 Tlascallans were added, and they were to take up their position in the town of Cojohuacan, about eight miles from Tlacupa.

Sandoval was appointed to the command of the third division, consisting of twenty-four horse, fourteen crossbow-men and musketeers, and one hundred and fifty foot armed with shields and swords. To this division were added 8000 Indians from the townships of Chalco, Huexotzinco, and other places in alliance with us. Cortes appointed Luis Marin and Pedro de Ircio, two intimate friends of Sandoval, to command under him, the latter himself having the immediate command of the cavalry. This division was to take up a position near Iztapalapan, and Sandoval's instructions were to attack that town, and do as much damage there as he could, until he received further orders. Sandoval did not leave Tezcucó before Cortes was about to step on board, who himself took the chief command of the brigantines. On this flotilla there were altogether 325 men. Thus Sandoval, Oli, and Alvarado were each ordered off to different points: one marched to the left, the other to the right; and those who are not acquainted with the situation of this town or of the lake in general, would imagine that these divisions were removing from one common centre rather than approaching it. Each of these three captains received particular instructions for his plan of operation, and the next morning was fixed for our departure.

In order to be detained as little as possible, we sent off the whole body of Tlascallans in advance to the Mexican frontiers. These troops marched out in the best possible humour, under their commander Chichimeclatecl and other officers, but discovered that their commander-in-chief, the younger Xicotencatl, had remained behind. After considerable inquiries, it was found that he had secretly returned to Tlascalla on the previous night to take forcible possession of the caziquedom and territory of Chichimeclatecl. It appears, according to the accounts of the Tlascallans, that he wished to avail himself of this favorable opportunity of raising himself to supreme power in his own country, which the absence of Chichimeclatecl offered to him, who, in his opinion, was the only person that stood in his way since the death of Maxixcatzin, as he did not fear any opposition from his old blind father. This Xicotencatl, the Tlascallans further added, had never felt any real inclination to join us in the war against Mexico, but had frequently assured them it would terminate in the destruction of us all.²²

When Chichimeclatecl received information of this, he instantly returned to Tezcucu in order to apprise Cortes of it. Our general, on hearing this, despatched five distinguished personages of Tezcucu, and two Tlascallans, who were his

²² Herrera (*Historia Gen. de las Indias*) gives another reason for the younger Xicotencatl's return to Tlascalla. He says, that Alonso Ojeda had given a relation of Xicotencatl, named Piltectetl, who had been shamefully ill-used by the Spaniards, leave to return home, but as Xicotencatl was jealous of this man on account of some love affair, he also secretly decamped for Tlascalla. (p. [61](#).)

particular friends, after Xicotencatl, to request his immediate return to his troops, in Cortes' name. They were to remind him that his father Lorenzo de Vargas would certainly have marched out against Mexico in person, if blindness and old age had not prevented him; that the whole population of Tlascalla continued loyal to his majesty, and that the revolt he wished to excite would throw dishonour on his own country. These representations Cortes desired should be accompanied by large promises, to induce him to return to obedience. Xicotencatl, however, haughtily replied, that he was determined to abide by his resolve, and our dominion in this country would not have continued thus long if his father and Maxixcatzin had followed his advice.

Upon this our general ordered an alguacil to repair in all haste with four of our horse and five distinguished men of Tezcucó to Xicotencatl's abode, to take him prisoner, and hang him without any further ceremony. "All kindness," added Cortes, "is thrown away upon this cazique. His whole time is spent in devising plots and creating mischief. I cannot suffer this to continue any longer; the matter has now come to a crisis."

As soon as Alvarado received information of these commands, he urgently begged of Cortes to pardon Xicotencatl. Our general replied that he would consider about it, though he secretly gave the alguacil peremptory orders to put him to death, which was accordingly done. Xicotencatl was hung in a town subject to Tezcucó, and thus an end was put to all his plottings.

Many Tlascallans assured us that the elder Xicotencatl himself had cautioned Cortes against his son,²³ and had advised him to put him to death.

This affair delayed our departure from Tezcucó for one day; and thus it was not till the 13th of May, 1521, that we commenced our march. As our road lay for a considerable distance in the same direction, our division under Alvarado and that under Oli marched out at the same time. The first night we encamped in the township of Alcuman, to which place Oli had despatched some men in advance to prepare quarters for his troops, and had ordered that the houses which they took possession of should, by way of distinction, be decorated with green boughs. When we arrived with Alvarado, we found, to our surprise, that every house had been taken, and the two divisions were just about to settle the matter, sword in hand, when the officers stepped in between, and thereby put a stop to the dispute. But the insult which had thus been offered to us was not so easily to be forgotten; when, therefore, this circumstance became known to Cortes, he sent off father Melgarejo and Luis Marin to us, with letters to every officer and soldier, in which he reproached us for quarrelling, and admonished us to keep peace with each other. From this moment Alvarado and Oli were never upon such friendly terms as formerly.

²³ Torquemada remarks that, though the younger Xicotencatl was a man of uncommon bravery, his courage failed him when he saw the hour of death approaching. However, this is hardly to be credited, for it is quite contrary to the Indian character. (p. 62.)

The following morning the two divisions continued their march, and we encamped for the night in a town subject to Mexico, but which was quite deserted by its inhabitants. This was likewise the case in Quauhtitlan, where we took up our quarters the next night.

Tenayucan and Escapuzalco, through which we marched the day following, were also quite deserted. Our Tlascallan friends spread themselves all through these townships, and entered into every house during the fore part of the evening, from which they brought in quantities of provisions. We adopted every military precaution for the night, as we were not far distant from Mexico, and could plainly hear the Mexicans, who were lying in crowds in their canoes on the lake and along the causeways, hooting and yelling fearfully throughout the whole of the night, and challenging us to the combat. Their object, was to induce us to fall upon them in the dark, when they would have had a great advantage over us. We had, however, received a sufficient warning by our former misfortune, and very wisely kept ourselves as quietly as possible until next morning, which was a Sunday.

After father Juan Diaz had said mass, we commended ourselves to the protection of the Almighty, and both divisions marched forward to cut off the aqueduct of Chapultepec, which lies about two miles from Tlacupa, and supplies Mexico with water. On our way thither, we fell in with several bodies of Mexicans, who had received intelligence that this was to be the

commencement of our operations against Mexico. The enemy had in every way the advantage ground over us, and attacked us vigorously with lances, arrows, and stones, by which three of our men were wounded; but we soon put them to flight, and they were so closely pursued by the Tlascallans that they lost twenty killed, and seven or eight were taken prisoners. We were now able to destroy the aqueduct without any further opposition, and the city of Mexico was deprived of this source of obtaining water during the whole of the siege.

As soon as we had destroyed this aqueduct, our officers determined to make an attempt upon one of the bridges on the causeway leading from Tlacupa. We had scarcely begun to move along the causeway when numbers of canoes, filled with troops, advanced swiftly from both sides, while other large bodies of the enemy came marching up the causeway against us, so that we were quite astounded at the very sight. In the first encounter thirty of our men were wounded and three killed. Notwithstanding all this, we fought our way up to the first bridge. According to what we afterwards heard, it was the wish of the Mexicans that we should pass over the bridge; for we had no sooner done so than we were assailed by such terrific crowds, as to be unable to move. What indeed could we do on a causeway which was no more than eight paces in breadth, where we were attacked on all sides at once? Our crossbow-men and musketeers certainly kept up a continued fire on the canoes, but the enemy received but a trifling loss this way, for they had raised boards

alongside of their canoes, by which their troops were sheltered from our fire. Those of the enemy's troops which attacked us on the causeway itself we certainly drove back each time into the water, but fresh troops kept pouring in too fast for us to gain much advantage this way. Here our cavalry was of no manner of use to us, while the horses were greatly exposed to the attacks of the enemy on each side of the causeway, and many were consequently wounded. If our cavalry attempted to pursue the enemy into the water, the latter had provided against this by palisades, behind which they retired, and stretched out against them their long lances, to which they had fastened the swords we unfortunately lost on our retreat from Mexico.

In this way the battle continued for upwards of an hour, the enemy each time returning to the attack with such excessive fury that, at length, we could stand our ground no longer: nor was this all, for we now saw another large fleet of canoes approaching with a fresh body of men, who were ordered to fall upon our rear. We therefore determined to retreat back along the causeway, for which purpose we ordered the Tlascallans to move off first, that we might effect our retreat in perfect good order. Here the Tlascallans had greatly embarrassed us in our movements, who, it is well known, never can fight standing in the water.

The instant the Mexicans perceived we were turning back, and saw the Tlascallans moving off the causeway, they set up most distracting yells, and attacked us man to man with great fierceness. It is indeed out of my power to describe it. The whole

of the causeway was instantly covered with lances, arrows, and stones, besides that vast quantities fell into the water. When we had again reached the mainland, we returned fervent thanks to the Almighty for having rescued us from this severe battle.

Eight of our men were killed and fifty wounded: added to all this, we were obliged to put up with the hootings and jeers of the enemy, who kept calling upon the Tlascallans to come with double their numbers next time, and they would very soon settle their impudence. Our first deeds of arms, therefore, merely consisted in destroying the aqueduct of Chapultepec, and in reconnoitring the lake along the causeway, in which we did not exactly reap much honour.

For the rest, we passed the following night very quietly in our quarters, posted our sentinels, and dressed our wounds. One of our horses was so severely wounded that it died soon after.

The following morning Oli determined upon taking up the position assigned to his division at Cojohuacan, about six miles further on; and however Alvarado and the other cavaliers might beg of him not to separate the two divisions, yet he would not alter his determination. Christobal de Oli was a man of uncommon bravery, whose pride was wounded at the unsuccessful attempt we had made upon the causeway, and he accused Alvarado of inconsiderateness for having ordered the attack. Nothing, therefore, could induce him to stay, and he marched off with his men to Cojohuacan.

The separation of the two divisions was very impolitic at this

juncture; for if the Mexicans had been aware of the smallness of our numbers, and had attacked either of the divisions during the five following days, before the brigantines had arrived, we should with difficulty have escaped destruction. Both divisions, therefore, remained as quiet as the enemy would allow them, though not a day passed by that the Mexicans did not land troops to annoy us in our camp, and, if possible, to entice us into places where we should be unable to act, and they could attack us to greater advantage.

Sandoval, as we have seen, left Tezcucó with his division four days after the feast of Corpus Christi, and marched towards Iztapalapan. His route lay through townships which were either subject to, or in alliance with Tezcucó. As soon as he arrived at Iztapalapan, he commenced his military operations by burning down the greater portion of the houses which stood on the mainland.

It was not long before large bodies of Mexican troops arrived for the protection of Iztapalapan, with whom Sandoval had a severe skirmish, and drove them back again to their canoes; but still they continued to shower their arrows and darts upon him, and wounded several of his men.

During this conflict a thick smoke was seen to rise from several signal fires which had been lighted on the surrounding hills. This had been a signal to call in all the canoes of Mexico and of the other towns situated on the lake, as Cortes had just run out from Tezcucó with the thirteen brigantines.

The first attack our general made with this fleet was against a rocky height on an island near Mexico. This place had been strongly fortified, and was garrisoned by a great number of Mexicans and inhabitants of other townships. All the canoes of Mexico, Xochimilco, Cojohuacan, Huitzilopuzco, Iztapalapan, and Mexicalzinco, had united in a body to oppose Cortes, which was the reason why the attack was carried on with so little vigour against Sandoval, who, however, was not able to do the enemy much damage, as most of the houses stood in the water; though, in the commencement of the attack, our allies had made many prisoners. In Iztapalapan, Saudoval found himself on a peninsula in the lake, and the only way by which he could reach Cojohuacan was by a causeway which ran half way through the lake, on which he would have been assailed from both sides by the enemy, without his being able to defend himself with much advantage.

When Cortes observed the vast number of canoes which kept continually crowding around the brigantines, he began to feel alarmed, and this not without reason, for their number amounted to above 4000. He therefore abandoned his attack upon the rock, and selected a position with his brigantines, where he would be able to observe all the enemy's movements, and steer off in any direction he might choose. He likewise issued orders to the respective commanders of the brigantines not to commence an attack on the canoes before the wind, which had just commenced blowing from the land, should have increased. When the Mexicans found our fleet was moving off again,

they not incorrectly ascribed it to fear, and they immediately advanced with their canoes to fall upon the brigantines. There now suddenly arose a stiffish breeze, our rowers pulled with all their might, and Cortes ordered the brigantines to run right in among the canoes. Numbers were bored into the ground, many of the enemy killed and wounded, and all the rest of the canoes turned round, and made off at a rapid rate, to seek refuge between the houses built in the lake, where they could not be followed by the brigantines. This was our first naval engagement, and Cortes gained the victory, thanks be to the Almighty.

After this encounter he steered for Cojohuacan, where Oli had taken up his position. Here again he fell in with large bodies of the enemy, who lay in wait for him at a point of considerable danger, and attempted to carry off two of the brigantines. They attacked him at the same time from their canoes, and from the tops of the temples. Cortes now fired in upon them with the cannon, and killed great numbers. The artillerymen fired away so incessantly upon this occasion, that all their powder was consumed, and some of them had their faces and hands burnt. Cortes then despatched the smallest brigantine to Iztapalapan, to bring away all the powder Sandoval had with him there, and wrote word to him not on any account to quit that place. He himself staid the two next days with Oli, on whose position the enemy continued their attacks without intermission.

I must now also relate what took place at this time in Tlacupa, where I was stationed with Alvarado.

When we received intelligence that Cortes had run out with the brigantines, we advanced along our causeway up to the bridge, but this time with greater precaution. Our cavalry was stationed in front of the causeway, while the remaining troops moved along in a close body up to the bridge, the crossbow-men and musketeers keeping up an incessant fire upon the enemy. In this way we renewed the attack each day, and repaired the gaps in the causeway, but three of our men had been killed.

In the meantime the enemy did Sandoval considerable damage from the tops of the houses which stood in the water, and he therefore resolved to attack those which he was best able to get at. Quauhtemoctzin then sent off a large body of troops to the assistance of the town, with commands to cut through the causeway in Sandoval's rear. Cortes observing a vast number of canoes going in the direction of Iztapalapan, instantly steered with the brigantines for the same place, and ordered Oli, with the whole of his division, to shape his course thither along the causeway. They found the Mexicans already hard at work in cutting through the causeway, and concluded from this that Sandoval was destroying the houses which stood in the water. They found him, as they had suspected, already in the heat of an engagement with the enemy, who, however, retired on the approach of the brigantines.

Cortes now ordered Sandoval to quit Iztapalapan with his troops, and to take up his position at Tepeaquilla, in front of the causeway, which leads from this place to Mexico.

This Tepeaquilla is at present dedicated to our dear lady of Guadalupe, where so many miracles have happened, and still daily take place.

CHAPTER CLI

How Cortes assigns particular stations to the twelve brigantines, the thirteenth being considered unfit for service.

Cortes, our officers, and the whole of the troops were now convinced that it was impossible to fight our way to the city along the causeways, unless we were covered on each side by a couple of the brigantines. Our general therefore joined four of these to Alvarado's division, he himself retaining six others near his headquarters, which he had taken up where Oli was stationed; the remaining two he sent to Sandoval, for the smallest brigantine was not considered of sufficient bulk to make head against the large canoes, and was taken out of the service altogether, and the men distributed among the crews of the other twelve.

As soon as the brigantines arrived at our station Alvarado placed two on each side of the causeway, which were to cover us as we advanced to the attack of the bridges. We now fought with better success than we had previously done for the brigantines kept off the canoes, and prevented them from attacking our flanks; so that we now succeeded in forcing some of the bridges, and in destroying several of the enemy's entrenchments. The conflict, however, was no less severe; on the contrary, the Mexicans made so good a use of their lances, arrows, and slings,

that, although our jackets were thickly quilted with cotton, they wounded the greater part of our men; nor did they desist from the attack till night came on; but they had the great advantage over us, that they could relieve their troops from time to time, by pouring in fresh men, and could shower innumerable quantities of stones, arrows, and lances, upon our brigantines, from the tops of the houses. Indeed I cannot find a more appropriate expression than shower, although they alone can feel its full force who were present on the occasion. If we did at times succeed, with the utmost exertion, to force an entrenchment or a bridge, and we omitted to station a strong detachment to guard it, the enemy returned in the night, made another opening in the causeway, threw up larger entrenchments, and dug deep pits, which immediately filled with water, and these they covered slightly over, that we might sink down into them in the midst of the battle of the following day, when the canoes would hasten up to profit by the confusion, and carry off our men prisoners. For this purpose numbers of canoes were lying wait in places where they were out of the reach of our brigantines, though they were always ready at hand, if their assistance was required. But the enemy had provided in another artful way to render our brigantines useless in certain spots of the lake, by driving numbers of stakes into the water, whose tops were just below the surface; so that it was often impossible for our vessels to avoid them, and they consequently stuck fast, and left our troops open to the attacks of the canoes.

I have before mentioned of what little use the cavalry was to us in our operations on the causeway; for whenever they did drive the Mexicans before them up to the bridges, the latter leaped into the water, and retreated behind the entrenchments which they had thrown up on the causeway itself, where other bodies of the enemy stood ready to receive them armed with extremely long lances, with which, and various kinds of projectiles, they severely wounded our horses; so that the owners of the horses were very unwilling to risk them in such unequal conflict; for at that time the ordinary price of a horse was from 800 to 1000 pesos.

When night came on, and released us from the attacks of the enemy, we returned to our encampment, and attended to our wounds, which we dressed with bandages steeped in oil. There was likewise a soldier among our troops, named Juan Catalan, who charmed the wounds, and the Lord Jesus blessed this man's exertions in a manner that he invariably succeeded in his cures. Indeed, if all our wounded, each day we renewed the attack, had remained behind in our camp, none of the companies could ever have sallied out with more than twenty men at a time. When our friends of Tlascalla observed how this man charmed the wounds, and how every one who was wounded applied to him for assistance, they likewise brought him all their wounded, and these were so very numerous, that his only occupation throughout the day consisted in charming wounds.

Our officers and ensigns were most exposed to the enemy's weapons, and were oftener wounded in consequence; for which

reason a fresh set of men were each day appointed to carry our tattered colours. With all these hardships we had to suffer, it will at least be thought that we had plenty of food. But of this we were likewise deprived, and we should have thought ourselves fortunate if we had only had some refreshing food for our wounded; we had not even a cake of maize! Miserable indeed was our distress! The only means we had of keeping soul and body together was by eating herbs and cherries, and at last we had nothing to subsist on but wild figs; Cortes and Sandoval's divisions fared no better than ours, and the Mexicans likewise continued the attack upon them from morning to night. Every blessed day that came they were obliged to advance fighting their way up to the bridges along the causeway; for the Mexicans, and the troops which lay in the other towns of the lake, merely awaited the morning dawn, when the signals were given from the summit of the great temple of Huitzilopochtli to rush out upon us both by land and water.

The operations of the besieged were carried on with perfect order, and it was previously settled where the different bodies of their troops were to direct the attack.

As we began to experience that our daily advancing along the causeway each time cost us a loss of men, besides that we gained little advantage by it, for the Mexicans returned in the night, and again took possession of the points we had forced, we determined to alter our plan of operations, and took up a position on a more spacious part of the causeway, where several towers rose up

together, and where we should be able to quarter ourselves for the night. Though we were miserably off here, and had nothing to protect us from the rain, nor to cover us from the piercing rays of the sun, we were not to be deterred from our purpose. The Indian females who baked our bread were obliged to remain behind in Tlacupa, protected by our cavalry, and the Tlascallans, who at the same time covered our rear, that the enemy might not fall upon us from the mainland. After these precautions had been adopted, we began to carry out our principal object, which was to make ourselves master of the houses in the suburbs, and of the intervening canals. These last were then immediately filled up, and the houses pulled down; for, as I have before mentioned, it was difficult to destroy them by fire, as they were detached, and stood in the water. It was from the tops of the houses that we received most injury from the enemy; so that, by destroying these, we gained a considerable advantage. Whenever we had taken one of the enemy's entrenchments, a bridge, or forced any other strong position, we were obliged to occupy the spot night and day with our troops, which we regulated in the following manner: – Each company watched by turns; the first from the evening time until midnight; the second from midnight until a couple of hours before daylight; and the third from that time till morning, when they were relieved by forty other men. The watch was each time relieved by a like number, though none of these watches left the spot; but when the following arrived, the former lay themselves on the bare ground, and took a little repose; so

that when daylight came there were always one hundred and twenty men collected together ready for action. On other nights, when we expected some sudden attack, the whole of the men marched up at once, and remained under arms until the enemy approached. We had every reason to be upon our guard, for we learnt from several Mexican officers, whom we had taken prisoners in the different engagements, that Quauhtemoctzin and his generals had come to the determination of falling some day or night suddenly upon our encampment on the causeway; and concluded that, after they had destroyed us, they might easily make themselves masters of the two other causeways occupied by Sandoval and Cortes. To accomplish this finishing stroke, the nine towns lying in the lake, besides Tlacupa, Escapuzalco, and Tenayucan, were to cooperate with them. While we should thus be attacked on every side, they meant to carry off the Indian females with our baggage, which we had left behind in Tlacupa.

As soon as we received this information, we sent notice of it to the Tlascallans and our cavalry, who were stationed at Tlacupa, and ordered them to be particularly upon their guard, and to keep a sharp look out all day and night. Nor was it long before the enemy put their scheme into operation; for one midnight an immense body of Mexicans came storming up against us; a couple of hours after another such a body; and with daylight a third came pouring forth. At one time they moved up with the utmost silence; at another they came fiercely along with hideous yells; and it was terrible to behold the innumerable quantities of

lances, stones, and arrows they showered upon us. Though they wounded many of our men, we valiantly maintained our ground, and drove them back with great loss. The Mexicans had at the same time attacked the cavalry and Tlascallans on the mainland at Tlacupa; the latter suffered severely, as they were never much upon their guard during night-time.

In this way, amidst rain, wind, frost, up to our ancles in mud, and covered with wounds, we patiently bore our fatigues, with a morsel of maise cake, a few herbs and figs to stay our hunger, which was the more gnawing from the incessant exertions of our bodily strength. Yet, however bravely we might fight, we advanced but slowly, and the little advantages we gained cost us a number of killed and wounded. The bridges we forced were as often retaken by the enemy, and if we filled up an opening in the causeway new gaps were made, and this continued day after day, until the Mexicans altered their plan of operations, as will shortly be seen.

After thus enumerating these continued scenes of bloodshed and slaughter which took place at our station, and those of Cortes and Sandoval, the reader will ask, what advantage we had derived in destroying the aqueduct of Chapultepec? I must confess, very little; for the enemy received, during the night-time, a plentiful supply of water as well as of provisions from the towns surrounding Mexico, by means of their light canoes.

In order to cut off these supplies, Cortes determined that two brigantines should cruise about the lake during the whole

of the night to capture these canoes, and it was agreed that the provisions found in them should be equally distributed among the three divisions. Although we sensibly felt the absence of our brigantines during the attacks which the enemy made upon us in the night-time, yet we soon began to find what great advantage we had gained by thus diminishing the enemy's supplies. No day passed without our brigantines capturing several of these transports laden with maize, fowls, and other necessities of life, though a few always managed to elude our vessels and slip into the town. The Mexicans, therefore, were determined if possible to rid themselves of these troublesome brigantines, and thought of the following stratagem: They fitted out thirty large pirogues, manned with their best rowers and most courageous warriors, which they ran out during the night-time and concealed them among the reeds of the lake, where they could not be seen by the brigantines. At a short distance from the place where the pirogues lay concealed, stakes had been driven into the water, of which it was intended our two vessels should run foul. In the twilight the enemy sent out two or three canoes which were covered with green boughs, as if laden with provisions for Mexico; and these received instructions to move off in a direction where it was presumed they would be pursued by our brigantines.

As soon as our brigantines espied the two canoes they went in pursuit of them, the latter keeping close into the reeds, and continually nearing the spot where the pirogues lay in ambush. The greater exertions the canoes made to escape, the more

eager were our brigantines in pursuit, and when these were close in upon the spot where the pirogues lay concealed, the latter suddenly darted forth from the reeds, and attacked the brigantines on all sides. In an instant all the officers, soldiers, and sailors were wounded, nor could the brigantines seek refuge in flight, as they had become entangled among the stakes. In this unfortunate affair we lost one of the brigantines and two of our officers, one of whom, named Portillo, a man of great courage, and who had served in Italy, was killed on the spot; the other was Pedro Barba, a very clever officer, who died of his wounds three days after. Both these brigantines belonged to Cortes' division, and he was sorely grieved at the loss we had thus sustained; but we very shortly after paid the enemy out in their own coin, as will presently be seen.

In the meantime Cortes and Sandoval, with their divisions, had many severe encounters with the enemy, but particularly Cortes, as he insisted that all the houses which were taken should be immediately pulled down, and the gaps in the causeway filled up. So that every inch of ground was rendered secure and level, of which possession was taken.

Alvarado had received similar instructions from our general, and was not to pass over any bridge or canal before the part which intersected the causeway was completely filled up; nor to advance beyond any house until it was levelled to the ground.

These commands were strictly adhered to, and with the woodwork and stones of the houses which we pulled down we

filled up the openings in the causeways. In all these operations, and indeed during the whole of the siege, our Tlascallan friends lent us the most efficient services. When the Mexicans found we were thus by degrees pulling down their houses and filling up the canals, they determined to alter their plan of operation, and commenced by cutting a wide and deep opening in that part of the causeway lying between us and the city; they deepened the lake on each side of this opening, and threw up entrenchments near it; strong stakes were then driven into the water to keep off our brigantines, or that they might run foul of them on coming to our assistance. Besides this, great numbers of canoes full of men were constantly lurking in places where we could not see them, with orders not to rush out upon us before we had advanced up to the entrenchments on the causeway.

One Sunday morning large bodies of the enemy came advancing towards us from three different points, and fell so fiercely upon us that it was with much difficulty we could maintain our ground. I had forgotten to mention that Alvarado had posted half of the cavalry on the causeway, for they no longer ran so great a risk of being killed, as most of the houses lay in ruins, and there was more space for them to manœuvre in, without their being exposed to the attacks of the enemy from the house-tops or from the lake. The enemy, as I have just said, advanced bravely from three different points, one body from the quarter where the deep gap had been made in the causeway, the other from the direction where the houses lay in ruins, the third

from the side of Tlacupa, so that we were almost surrounded. Our cavalry, with the Tlascallans, had the good fortune to cut their way through the dense crowds which fell upon our rear, while our foot bravely opposed the two other bodies, which, after a few moments' desperate fighting began to give ground; but this was a mere stratagem of the Mexicans to allow us to take possession of the first entrenchment, and after a short stand they even retreated beyond the second. We thought we had already gained the victory, and waded through the shallow part of the water in vigorous pursuit of the enemy up to some large buildings and towers; while they, to deceive us the more effectually, constantly faced about to fling their arrows at us; and, when we in the least expected it, they suddenly turned round upon us and in an instant we were surrounded and attacked with excessive fury from all sides. It was impossible to resist their overwhelming numbers, and we began to retreat towards the causeway in the best order we could, with our ranks firmly closed. The first opening in the causeway which we had just taken from the enemy was already occupied by numerous canoes, so that we were compelled to make for the opening which the enemy had recently cut, where the water was very deep, and additional large holes had been dug. Here we had no other resource left than to make our way, either by swimming or wading through; but most of us got into the deep holes, when the canoes were instantly at hand to take advantage of our perilous situation.

On this occasion five of our men were made prisoners, and

immediately taken into the presence of Quauhtemoctzin; and most of us were severely wounded. The brigantines certainly made every attempt to assist us, but were unable to come near enough, owing to the heavy stakes that had been driven into the water, between which they stuck fast, and were instantly assailed by showers of missiles from the house-tops and the numberless canoes, by which two of the rowers were killed, and the greater part of the troops on board wounded.

It was indeed a real wonder that all of us did not perish in these deep gaps. I myself was in extreme danger, for several Mexicans had already laid hands on me, but I succeeded in freeing one of my arms, and the Almighty gave me power to cut my way through the enemy, though I was severely wounded in the arm, and just as I had reached a place of safety I fell down breathless and exhausted. This sudden prostration of strength was no doubt owing to the extraordinary exertions I had made to disengage myself from the enemy's grasp, and to the quantity of blood I had lost. I gave myself up for lost when the Mexicans laid hold of me, and commended my soul to God and the holy Virgin.

Alvarado, with the cavalry, had hard work to keep off the numerous bodies who attacked our rear from the side towards Tlacupa, and had not advanced up to this fearful passage; there was only one cavalry soldier, recently arrived from Spain, who ventured too far, and perished with his horse. Alvarado was already coming up to our assistance, with a small body of horse, but fortunately not before we had made good our retreat beyond

the deep gap; for, had he arrived a few minutes earlier, we should, no doubt, have faced about, fought our way back again into the town, and the Mexicans would certainly have cut us off to a man.

This battle took place on a Sunday, and the Mexicans were so elated with the victory they had gained over us, that they fell upon our camp with renewed courage, and in so large a body that they would certainly have taken it by storm but for our cannon and the desperate courage we displayed for the preservation of our lives. During this night, the whole of us remained under arms ready for action, and the horses stood ready saddled and bridled. Cortes was excessively grieved at the defeat we had sustained, and despatched a letter to Alvarado by one of the brigantines in which he told him not, under any circumstances, in future to pass beyond a gap or opening in the causeway before it had been quite filled up; and to keep the horses saddled all day and night, and to observe the utmost vigilance.

Our recent defeat having taught us prudence, we set about filling up the larger opening with the utmost expedition, and completed the work in four days; though it was a labour of great difficulty, and we were the whole time exposed to the attacks of the enemy, who killed six of our men and wounded several others. During the night, each company watched by turns to prevent the Mexicans from destroying our day's work.

As the Mexicans were encamped over against us, we could observe how they regulated their night watches: they were relieved four times during the night, and the men posted at such

distances around a large fire, which was kept up till morning, that they could not be seen excepting at the moments when they poked the fire or when the next watch came to relieve. On some nights the fire became extinguished by the rain, but it was instantly relit; though everything was done in the utmost silence and not a word was exchanged, for they only communicated with each other by whistling. Many a time when we heard the guard approaching to relieve the watch, our crossbow-men and musketeers would shoot in among them at random, but without doing them the slightest injury, as they were posted in places which, even during broad daylight, were beyond the reach of our fire, particularly behind a deep ditch, which they had recently dug, and strengthened by a palisade and breastwork. The Mexicans never omitted to return the compliment, and let fly many an arrow at us in the same way.

The conflict on the causeway was daily renewed, and we always made our attacks in the best order possible, so that we soon became masters of the fosse just mentioned, behind which the enemy encamped at nights, but we had each time to encounter vast bodies of men, and the whole of us were more or less wounded. After fighting the whole day until nightfall, there was naturally nothing further to be done than to return to our former position; but each time we commenced our retreat, other bodies of the enemy fell furiously upon us. The Mexicans were confident they should, one time or other, be able to annihilate us during one of these retreats, and they rushed upon us with the

very fury of tigers, and came in so close upon us that we were compelled to fight foot to foot. But after a time, when we had got more accustomed to their mode of fighting, we first ordered the Tlascallans off the causeway; for these were very numerous, and delighted in combating with the Mexicans, under our immediate protection, though they only embarrassed our movements, of which the enemy were sly enough to take advantage. As soon as we considered the Tlascallans sufficiently in advance of us, we firmly closed our ranks and began our retreat, which was covered by our crossbow-men and musketeers, and by the four brigantines, which kept up with us, two on each side of the causeway. When we reached our encampment we dressed our wounds with bandages steeped in warm oil, and ate our supper off the maize-cakes, the herbs, and the figs which were sent us from Tlacupa. When this was finished, a strong detachment was again posted for the night at the opening in the causeway, and when daylight broke forth the battle was renewed. Such was our life, day after day; and however early we might march out, we always found the enemy ready to receive us, or they had already advanced up to our outposts and defied us to the combat under the most abusive language. Cortes, with his division, fared no better than we did; the fighting was continued night and day, and many of his men were killed and wounded. For the rest, matters stood with him exactly as they did with us on the causeway of Tlacupa, and two brigantines still continued cruising on the lake at night-time to intercept the canoes laden with water and

provisions for Mexico.

On one occasion two Mexicans of distinction were captured, who informed Cortes that forty pirogues and a great number of canoes lay hid among the reeds of the lake to make another attempt upon the two brigantines. Our general returned these men many thanks for what they had communicated, made them some presents, and promised to bestow considerable lands upon them after Mexico should be taken; they then described to him the spot where the armed pirogues lay in ambush, and the different places where the heavy stakes had been driven in, of which it was intended the brigantines should run foul while pursuing the pirogues in their sham flight.

Cortes was now determined to pay the enemy out in their own coin, and in the night-time concealed six of our brigantines in a place where the reeds stood very thick, at about a mile distant from the spot where the pirogues lay in ambuscade. Each brigantine was entirely covered with green boughs, and the men on board were ordered not to make the least noise during the whole of the night. Very early next morning, Cortes ordered one of our other brigantines to run out as usual to waylay the convoys of provisions going to Mexico. Both the above-mentioned distinguished Mexicans were taken on board to point out the place where the pirogues lay concealed, as our brigantine was purposely to steer in that direction. As soon as the Mexicans observed the brigantine approaching, they run out two of their canoes into the lake to allure the brigantine to their pursuit. The

stratagem was laid on both sides in the very same way, and it was now only to be seen which should outdo the other. Our brigantine sharply pursued the two canoes, which were moving off in the direction of the concealed pirogues, but suddenly turned round as if she durst not venture nearer land. The instant the pirogues found the brigantine was turning back, they rushed forth out of the reeds and pulled away at their utmost speed in pursuit of her. The brigantine pretended to seek her safety in flight, and steered in the direction where our six others lay concealed, the pirogues following with the utmost confidence. When these were near enough, a shot was fired as a signal to the Spanish vessels, upon which they, in their turn, rushed out upon the pirogues and canoes with the utmost velocity, and bored several of them into the ground. Now the other brigantine also came up which had shammed flight, so that many of the canoes were captured, and numbers of the enemy killed and wounded. From this moment the Mexicans never again attempted similar stratagems on the lake, nor durst they venture so close in our neighbourhood with their convoys of provisions.

When the inhabitants of those towns which lay in the lake found that we were daily gaining fresh victories both by land and water, and that our allies of Chalco, Tezcucó, Tlascallá, and other districts, became more and more closely united to us, they began to consider the great losses they continually sustained, and the numbers of prisoners we took. The chiefs of these towns, therefore, held a conference among themselves, which ended in

their sending an embassy to Cortes to sue for peace, and humbly to beg forgiveness for the past; adding, that they had been obliged to obey the commands of Quauhtemoctzin.

Cortes was uncommonly rejoiced to find these people were coming to their senses, and we others belonging to the divisions of Alvarado and Sandoval likewise congratulated ourselves on this circumstance.

Our general received the ambassadors kindly, and told them their towns had certainly deserved severe punishment, but he would, nevertheless, pardon them. The towns which sued for peace on this occasion were Iztapalapan, Huitzilopuzco, Cojohuacan, Mizquic, and all the other towns lying in that part of the lake which contained sweet water.

On this occasion Cortes declared that he would not alter his present position until Mexico itself had sued for peace, or that the town was conquered by force of arms.

The above-mentioned towns were now ordered to assist us with all their canoes and troops in the siege of the metropolis, and to furnish us with provisions. They promised faithfully to obey these commands, joined us with all their armed men, but were very sparing with their supplies of provisions.

In our division, under Alvarado, there was no room to quarter any of these new troops, which those who have visited this country during the months of June, July, and August, can easily imagine, as the whole surrounding neighbourhood is covered with water. The fighting on the causeways in the meantime

continued without intermission, and by degrees we had taken a number of temples, houses, bridges, and canals, which latter we instantly filled up with the ruins of the buildings we pulled down, and every foot of ground we gained from the enemy was instantly secured by our troops; yet, with all our exertions and watchfulness, the enemy still succeeded in making fresh apertures in the causeway, behind which they threw up new entrenchments.

As the three companies of which our division was composed considered it a dishonour that one company should constantly be employed in filling up the canals, while the others were fighting, Alvarado, to put an end to all feelings of jealousy, arranged that the three companies should perform the same duties alternately.

By pursuing this mode of operation, in which we were ably assisted by the Tlascallans, we by degrees pulled down everything before us, so that at last the town lay open to our view. It was only in the evening, when we returned to our encampment, that the whole of the three companies were again under arms, as at that time we had most to fear from the enemy.

Cortes and Sandoval had likewise similar toils to go through day and night. On the land side they were incessantly attacked by immense bodies of the enemy, and from the lake by innumerable armed canoes. Cortes on one occasion marched with his division along the causeway, to force a very broad and deep opening, which the Mexicans had strengthened by means of a palisade and mound, defended by a large body of troops. Cortes finding it was

impossible to pass across this opening but by swimming, ordered his men to make the attempt; but they were so vigorously assailed by the enemy from the entrenchments, and those stationed on the house-tops, who literally showered down stones upon them, while the canoes attacked them from each side of the opening, that a great number of his men were wounded, and a few killed. Here the brigantines were rendered totally useless, by the large stakes which had been driven into the water. Cortes and the whole of his troops were often on the brink of destruction; as it was, he had four men killed, and above thirty wounded. At length, by dint of hard fighting, he succeeded in forcing this formidable point; but the day was already so far advanced, that there was no time left to fill up the wide aperture, and he therefore sounded a retreat, in which he had again to fight his way through dense crowds of the enemy, who wounded the whole of his men, and the greater part of the Tlascallans.

Quauhtemoctzin now determined to adopt a new plan of operation, and this he commenced on St. John's day, in the summer month, the very day we made our second entry into Mexico, after the defeat of Narvaez. This day, it seems, the monarch had purposely fixed upon to attack the three divisions at the same moment with the whole of his armed force, both by land and water. It was his firm resolve to destroy us all at once, and his idols encouraged him to make the attempt. The attack was to commence before break of day, when it was yet dark, and the Mexicans had provided against the possibility of

our obtaining any assistance from the brigantines, by driving numbers of additional stakes into the water. They now fell upon us with such fierceness and determination, that they would certainly have stormed our camp itself, if the one hundred and twenty men who had the watch had not been veterans in service. We were certainly very nigh our destruction, and had fifteen men wounded, of whom two died within the space of eight days. The two following nights the enemy sallied out in a similar manner, but we each time repulsed them with considerable loss. Cortes and Sandoval were likewise attacked in the same way.

Quauhtemoctzin, with his generals and papas, finding that no advantage was to be gained over us in this way, determined to attack our position at Tlacupa with his united forces. This was accordingly put into practice as soon as day began to dawn, and they fell upon us from all sides with great intrepidity, and threw our line into disorder; but at this moment it pleased the Almighty to refresh our strength; our troops rallied again, and in their turn fell courageously upon the infuriated foe. Our brigantines too lent us what assistance they could, and the cavalry, with lances fixed, spurred their horses on, while our crossbow-men and musketeers, strove to do their utmost; we others, armed with swords, thrusting and cutting in among the enemy most valiantly, so that at last we drove them back. This was a more terrible battle than any we had fought on the causeways. Alvarado himself was wounded in the head, and eight of our men were killed. If the Tlascallans had likewise encamped this night on the causeway,

we should no doubt have suffered more severely, as their numbers would have embarrassed our movements; but experience had taught us prudence, and each night we ordered them to draw off to Tlacupa, and we only considered ourselves safe when assured they had left the causeway.

In this engagement we slew a great number of the enemy, and among the many men we took prisoners there were four personages of high rank.

By this time the reader will certainly be wearied of reading of battles which were every day renewed; but I have not exaggerated them, for during the ninety-three days we lay before this great and strong city, we were compelled to fight both day and night almost without intermission; and certainly, of all these numerous engagements, I am at least bound to mention the most striking occurrences. If I were desirous of relating every circumstance I should never finish, and my book would resemble '*Amadis de Gaule*,' and other such romances, whose authors can find no end to their pretty stories. I will, however, be as brief as possible in my further account of this siege, and hasten on to St. Hippolytus' day, when we subdued this vast city, and took Quauhtemoctzin, with all his generals, prisoners. But, before we were so far successful, we suffered great hardships, and the whole of us were near perishing in the attempt, particularly the division under Cortes, as the reader will shortly see.

CHAPTER CLII

How the Mexicans defeated Cortes, and took sixty-two of his men prisoners, who were sacrificed to their idols; our general himself being wounded in the leg.

Cortes, finding at length that it was impossible to fill up all the canals, gaps, and openings in the causeway, and that the Mexicans always destroyed at night what we had completed in the day, reopening the apertures we had filled up, and throwing up new entrenchments, called the principal officers of his division together, to deliberate on the present state of the siege. He told them the men would not be able to continue this fatiguing mode of warfare much longer, and he therefore proposed to them that the three divisions should fall upon the city at the same moment, and fight their way up to the Tlatelulco, and there encamp with the troops. Cortes at the same time wrote to Alvarado and Sandoval, desiring them also to deliberate on this point with their officers and soldiers. From that place, he added, they would be able to attack the enemy in the streets, and not have to encounter such severe engagements, or make those dangerous retreats every evening, nor have everlastingly to toil in filling up the openings and canals.

As it always happens in such cases, opinions were very different. Some pronounced this plan to be altogether

unadvisable, and were for pursuing the present plan of operation, which was, to pull down the houses as we advanced, and fill up the openings. Those of us who were of this opinion gave as our principal reason for so thinking, that if we fortified ourselves in the proposed way on the Tlatelulco, the causeways must fall into the hands of the Mexicans, who, with the vast number of men at their command, would undoubtedly reopen the hollows we had filled up, and make other fresh apertures in the causeways. In this great square we should night and day be assailed by the enemy; while our brigantines would not be able to come to our assistance, on account of the stakes driven in the water. In short, we should be surrounded on all sides, and the Mexicans would be masters of the town, of the lake, and of the surrounding neighbourhood.

This, our opinion,²⁴ we took care to draw up in writing, to avoid a recurrence of what took place on our unfortunate retreat from Mexico.

Cortes indeed listened to our reasons for objecting to his plan, but nevertheless determined that the three divisions, including the cavalry, should make an attempt on the following day to fight their way up to the Tlatelulco, and that the Tlascallans, with the troops of Tezcuco, and of the towns which had recently subjected themselves to our emperor, should cooperate with us; the latter were more particularly to assist us with their canoes.

The following morning, accordingly, after we had heard mass,

²⁴ Cortes, in his despatches, tries to throw all the blame of this unfortunate attack upon the royal treasurer. (p. [81](#).)

and commended ourselves to the protection of God, the three divisions sallied forth from their respective encampments.

On our causeway we had forced a bridge and an entrenchment, after some very hard fighting, for Quauhtemoctzin sent out terrific masses to oppose us; so that we had great numbers of wounded, and our friends of Tlascalla above one thousand. We already thought victory was on our side, and we kept continually advancing.

Cortes, with his division, had fought his way across a very deep opening, of which the opposite sides were merely connected by an extremely narrow path, and which the artful Mexicans had purposely so contrived, as they justly foresaw what would take place.

Cortes, with the whole of his division, now sure of victory, vigorously pursued the enemy, who from time to time faced about, to fly their arrows and lances at him; but all this was a mere stratagem on their part, to entice Cortes further into the city; and this object was entirely accomplished.

The wheel of fortune now suddenly turned against Cortes, and the joyous feelings of victory were changed into bitter mourning; for while he was eager in pursuit of the enemy, with every appearance of victory, it so happened that his officers never thought to fill up the large opening which they had crossed. The Mexicans had taken care to lessen the width of the causeway, which in some places was covered with water, and at others with a great depth of mud and mire. When the Mexicans saw that

Cortes had passed the fatal opening without filling it up, their object was gained. An immense body of troops, with numbers of canoes, which lay concealed for this purpose in places where the brigantines could not get at them, now suddenly rushed forth from their hiding places, and fell upon this ill-fated division with incredible fierceness, accompanied by the most fearful yells. It was impossible for the men to make any stand against this overwhelming power, and nothing now remained for our men but to close their ranks firmly, and commence a retreat. But the enemy kept rushing on in such crowds, that our men, just as they had retreated as far back as the dangerous opening, gave up all further resistance, and fled precipitately. Cortes indeed strove to rally his men, and cried out to them, "Stand! stand firm, gentlemen! is it thus you turn your backs upon the enemy?" But all his commands were fruitless here, and every one strove to save his own life. Now the awful consequences of the neglect to fill up the opening in the causeway began to show themselves. In front of the narrow path, which the canoes had now broken down, the Mexicans wounded Cortes in the leg, took sixty Spaniards prisoners, and killed six horses. Several Mexican chiefs had already laid hands on our general, but with great exertion he tore himself from their grasp, and at the same moment the brave Christobal de Olea (who must not be confounded with Christobal de Oli) came up to his assistance, cut down one of the Mexican chiefs who had seized hold of Cortes, and rescued his general, by cutting his way through the enemy sword in hand, assisted

by another excellent soldier, called Lerma. But this heroic deed cost Olea his life, and Lerma was very nigh sharing a like fate. During this dubious conflict for the rescue of our general's person several other of our men had by degrees hastened up to his assistance, who, though themselves covered with wounds, boldly risked their lives for Cortes. Antonio de Quiñones, the captain of his guards, had likewise hastened up; they now succeeded in dragging Cortes out of the water, and, placing him on the back of a horse, he reached a place of safety. At this instant his major-domo, Christobal de Guzman, came up with another horse for him; but the Mexicans, who had become excessively daring, took him prisoner, and instantly carried him into the presence of Quauhtemoctzin. The enemy in the meantime pursued Cortes and his troops up to their very encampment, hooting and yelling most fearfully.

We under Alvarado had likewise advanced along our causeway with like confidence of victory; but, when we least expected it, an immense body of Mexicans, completely clothed in their military costume, rushed out upon us with the most dissonant howls, and threw at our feet five bloody heads of our countrymen, whom they had captured of Cortes' division. "See these heads!" they cried; "we mean to kill you all in the same way we have Malinche and Sandoval, with the whole of their troops! These are some of their heads; you will certainly know them again." Under these and similar threats they continued to surround us on all sides, and fell so furiously upon us that all our

courageous fighting was to no purpose: yet they were unable to break through our firmly closed ranks, and we began to retreat with a steady step, after we had sent the Tlascallans in advance to clear the causeway and the dangerous passages. The Tlascallans, at the sight of the five bleeding heads, had really credited the enemy's shout of triumph, that Malinche, with Sandoval and all their teules, had been killed; and they were seized with sudden terror.

As we were thus retreating, we continually heard the large drum beating from the summit of the chief temple of the city. Its tone was mournful indeed, and sounded like the very instrument of Satan. This drum was so vast in its dimensions that it could be heard from eight to twelve miles distance. Every time we heard its doleful sound, the Mexicans, as we subsequently learnt, offered to their idols the bleeding hearts of our unfortunate countrymen. But we had not near accomplished our retreat; for the enemy attacked us from the house-tops, from out their canoes, and from the mainland at the same time, while fresh troops were constantly pouring in. At this moment Quauhtemoctzin commanded the large horn to be sounded, which was always a signal to his troops that he allowed them no choice but death or victory. With this at the same time was mingled the melancholy sound of the drum from the temple top, which filled the Mexicans with terrific fury, and they ran headlong against our swords. It was really a horrible sight, which I am unable to describe, though even at this moment it comes

vividly to my mind. If the Almighty had not lent us additional strength, we must all have perished, as the whole of us were wounded. To Him alone we are indebted for our preservation, and without His aid we should never again have reached our quarters. Indeed, I cannot sufficiently praise God, who this time again, as on so many other occasions, rescued me out of the hands of the Mexicans. When we had reached our encampment, a brisk charge of our cavalry upon the enemy made somewhat open space for us; but we were mostly indebted to our two brass cannon mounted in front of our camp, which were continually fired among the dense crowds of the enemy on the causeway, each shot mowing numbers of them down. But the Mexicans, confident of victory, kept continually advancing to the attack, and poured showers of stones and lances into our very quarters. No one rendered more effectual service on this day than a cavalier named Pedro Moreno, who is still living in Puebla: for, at this moment of imminent danger, he himself served our cannon, as our artillerymen were all either killed or unable to serve from their wounds. This Pedro Moreno had indeed, on all occasions, proved himself an excellent warrior, yet it was particularly on this day that we were so much indebted to his assistance. The severity of our numerous wounds, and the distress we were in, was all rendered more terrible from the uncertainty we were in respecting the fate of Cortes' and Sandoval's divisions, as the distance between us was full two miles. The words the Mexicans had uttered when they threw the five bleeding heads at our feet,

that Malinche and Sandoval, with all their teules, had been cut to pieces, still rung in our ears, and we suffered intense anxiety. Though we had firmly closed our ranks, and were able to defend ourselves against the furious attacks of the enemy, yet we thought we should be obliged to succumb in the end.

While we were thus assailed by the enemy by land, numerous canoes attacked the brigantines, from one of which the enemy succeeded in carrying off one man alive, besides killing three others, and wounding the captain, with all the men on board. This brigantine would certainly have fared much worse if the one under the command of Juan Xaramillo had not come up to its assistance.

One of these brigantines, under Juan de Limpias Carvajal, had got so jammed in between the stakes that it was with difficulty she was got afloat again. It was on this occasion that Carvajal lost his hearing, by over exertion of his strength. He now lives at Puebla, and fought on that day so courageously, and knew so well how to spur on the men at the oars, that he succeeded in breaking through the stakes and rescuing the brigantine from falling into the enemy's hands. This was the first of our brigantines which had succeeded in breaking through the stakes.

By this time, Cortes, with his division, had also reached his encampment; but here the enemy fell upon him anew, threw three of our countrymen's heads among his troops, crying out, at the same time, that these were some of the heads of Sandoval's and Alvarado's men, whom they had put to death, with all their teules!

At this sight Cortes was completely dismayed; nevertheless he strove to hide his feelings, and commanded his officers to keep the ranks firmly closed, and oppose a solid front to the enemy. At the same time he despatched Tapia, with three horse, to Tlacupa, to see how matters stood with our division, and, in case we had not suffered an entire defeat, to keep in a firm body together, and observe the utmost vigilance both night and day; but this we had of course done without requiring to be reminded of it.

Tapia and his companions fulfilled their commands with the utmost expedition; and, though they had a skirmish in a dangerous pass where Quauhtemoctzin had posted a strong detachment, intending thereby to cut off our line of communication, yet they arrived safe in our camp, though all four were wounded. They still found us hotly engaged with the enemy, but rejoiced exceedingly to see how courageously we defended ourselves. After conveying Cortes' instructions to us, they related what had taken place with his division, but took care not to tell the whole truth, for they said there were only twenty-five killed, and that all the rest of the troops were in excellent condition.

We must now turn to Sandoval, who was advancing victoriously along the causeway, until the Mexicans, after Cortes' defeat, turned the great body of their troops against him, and he was soon obliged to commence a retreat. Two of his men were killed, and all the others wounded, he himself in three different places, on the head, thigh, and arm. The enemy likewise threw in among his men six bleeding heads of our fellow soldiers,

crying out that those were the heads of Malinche, Alvarado, and other officers, and that he and his men would share a similar fate. They then fell upon him with increased fury: but the brave Sandoval was not to be discouraged by this; he ordered his men to close their ranks more firmly, and, as the causeway was very narrow, he first ordered the Tlascallans, who were in great numbers in his division, to march off the causeway, and then commenced his retreat under cover of his brigantines, the musketeers, and crossbow-men. It was, however, no easy task, as his men were terribly wounded and altogether disheartened. As soon as Sandoval had reached the end of the causeway, the Mexicans surrounded him on all sides; but he emboldened his officers and soldiers so, that they kept in a body together, cut their way through the enemy, and arrived safely in their camp, where they were able to adopt every military precaution for its defence.

Sandoval, now considering his troops out of danger, gave the command of his division to captain Luis Marin; and, after his wounds were bandaged up, he set off, accompanied by two horse, for Cortes' head-quarters. On his road he was continually harassed by bodies of the enemy; for, as I have above mentioned, Quauhtemoctzin had everywhere stationed troops in order to cut off our communication.

Sandoval, on coming up to Cortes, said to him, "Alas! general, what a shocking business this has been! Thus miserably have your great schemes terminated!" At these words, tears started

from Cortes' eyes, and he cried out, "O! my son Sandoval! if this misfortune has befallen us for my sins, I have not been so entirely the cause of it as you suppose. The royal treasurer Juan de Alderete neglected to do his duty, and did not obey my orders to fill up the opening in the causeway. The man is not accustomed to war, nor does he know how to obey."

Alderete was standing by when Cortes uttered these words, and he could not restrain himself from retorting the guilt upon Cortes, and maintained that when the latter was advancing victoriously forward, he had spurred his men on to follow quickly at his heels, and cried out, "Forward, cavaliers!" Nothing had at all been mentioned about filling up the opening in the causeway, otherwise he, with the company under his command, would certainly have attended to it. Others again reproached Cortes for not having sooner ordered off the numerous body of allies from the causeway; and, in short, many disagreeable remarks were made on both sides, which I would rather not repeat here.

During this sharp altercation, two of the brigantines which had accompanied Cortes as he advanced along the causeway, made their reappearance. Nothing had been seen or heard of these for a length of time, and they had been given up as lost. It appears they had become jammed in between the stakes, in which awkward position they were attacked by numbers of canoes. At length, after a great deal of hard fighting, they succeeded, with the assistance of a strong breeze, and the utmost exertions of their oars, to break through the stakes and gain the deep water, but

the whole of the men on board were wounded. Cortes was exceedingly rejoiced at their safe return, for he had given them up for lost, but had not mentioned this to his troops, that they might not become more disheartened than they already were.

Upon this Cortes despatched Sandoval in all haste to Tlacupa to see how matters stood with our division, to assist us in the defence of our encampment, if, at least, we were not totally overthrown. Francisco de Lugo was ordered to accompany him thither, as it was naturally to be supposed that small detachments of the enemy were everywhere dispersed. Cortes acquainted Sandoval at the same time that he had previously despatched Tapia with three horse there for the same purpose, but feared they must have been killed on the road.

When Sandoval was about to mount his horse, Cortes embraced him, with these words: "Go, for heaven's sake! You see I cannot be everywhere at the same moment: to you I intrust the chief command of the three divisions for the present, as I am wounded and almost exhausted with fatigue. I beg of you rescue our three divisions from destruction. I doubt not that Alvarado and his troops have defended themselves like brave warriors; yet I cannot help fearing he has been forced to succumb to the overwhelming numbers of these dogs, for you see how I have fared with my division, and it may have gone worse with his."

Upon this Sandoval and Lugo threw themselves on horseback and galloped off for our encampment, where they arrived about the hour of vespers, but we had received intelligence of Cortes'

defeat many hours beforehand. They still found us engaged with the Mexicans, who were doing their utmost to storm our camp from that side of the causeway where we had pulled down several houses, while, at the same time, they attacked us with their canoes from the side towards the lake. They had driven one of our brigantines between the stakes, killed two of the men, and wounded all the rest.

When Sandoval saw how I and many of my comrades stood up to our middles in the water to get the brigantine clear of the stakes, he applauded our courage, and bid us do our utmost to save the vessel from falling into the hands of the enemy, as the Mexicans had already fastened many ropes to her, and were trying to tow her off into the town behind their canoes. Sandoval's encouraging words were not lost upon us, and we fought with such determination that at length we rescued the vessel. On this occasion I was wounded by an arrow.

While we were fighting for the possession of this brigantine, fresh bodies of the enemy kept continually crowding up the causeway. We received many more wounds, and even Sandoval was hit in the face by a stone at the moment Alvarado was coming up to his assistance with another small body of the cavalry; and when Sandoval saw how daringly I, with many of my comrades, opposed the enemy, he ordered us to retreat slowly, that all our horses might not be sacrificed. As we did not immediately obey his commands, he cried out to us, "Are we then all to perish for your sakes? For heaven's sake, my brave companions, make good

your retreat!" These words were scarcely out of his mouth when both he and his horse were again wounded. We now ordered our Indian allies to move off the causeway, and we began to retreat slowly but with our faces always turned towards the enemy. Our musketeers and crossbow-men kept up a continued fire upon them; the cavalry at intervals charged the enemy's line at half speed, and Pedro Moreno thundered away with the cannon. But whatever number of the infuriated enemy we might mow down, it mattered not, they still continued to follow us, for they had made up their minds to overcome us that very night and sacrifice us to their idols.

After we had at last, with excessive toil, crossed a deep opening, and had arrived at our encampment, where we were pretty secure from the enemy's attacks, Sandoval, Lugo, Tapia, and Alvarado stood together relating what had befallen each of the respective divisions, when all in a moment the large drum of Huitzilopochtli again resounded from the summit of the temple, accompanied by all the hellish music of shell trumpets, horns, and other instruments. The sound was truly dismal and terrifying, but still more agonizing was all this to us when we looked up and beheld how the Mexicans were mercilessly sacrificing to their idols our unfortunate companions, who had been captured in Cortes' flight across the opening.

We could plainly see the platform, with the chapel in which those cursed idols stood; how the Mexicans had adorned the heads of the Spaniards with feathers, and compelled their victims

to dance round the god Huitzilopochtli; we saw how they stretched them out at full length on a large stone, ripped open their breasts with flint knives, tore out the palpitating heart, and offered it to their idols. Alas! we were forced to be spectators of all this, and how they then seized hold of the dead bodies by the legs and threw them headlong down the steps of the temple, at the bottom of which other executioners stood ready to receive them, who severed the arms, legs, and heads from the bodies, drew the skin off the faces, which were tanned with the beards still adhering to them, and produced as spectacles of mockery and derision at their feasts; the legs, arms, and other parts of the body being cut up and devoured!

In this way the Mexicans served all the Spaniards they took prisoners; and the entrails alone were thrown to the tigers, lions, otters, and serpents, which were kept in cages. These abominable barbarities we were forced to witness with our own eyes from our very camp; and the reader may easily imagine our feelings, how excessively agonizing! the more so as we were so near our unfortunate companions without being able to assist them. Every one of us thanked God from the bottom of his soul for His great mercy in having rescued us from such a horrible death!

While we were thus gazing upon this dismal scene, fresh troops of Mexicans came storming along in great numbers, and fell upon us from all sides with the fury of wild beasts; and continually cried, "Only look up to the temple! such will be the end of you all! This our gods have often promised us!" but the

threats which they threw out against our Tlascallan friends were even more terrible. They threw among them the bones of the legs and arms of their countrymen and of ours which had been roasted and the flesh torn off, crying out at the same time, "We have already satiated ourselves with the flesh of your countrymen and of the teules; you may, therefore, as well enjoy what remains on these bones! Do you see the ruins of those houses there which you have pulled down? you will soon have to build us up much larger and finer ones. Only remain faithful to the teules, and we promise you you shall be with them when we sacrifice them to our gods!"

Quauhtemoctzin, after gaining this victory, forwarded the feet and hands of our unfortunate countrymen, with their beards and skins, as also the heads of the horses they had killed, to all our allies and his own relations, accompanied by the assurance that more than half of the Spaniards had been killed, and that he would soon have the rest in his power. He therefore ordered those towns which had entered into our alliance immediately to send ambassadors to Mexico, otherwise he would march against them and put the whole of the inhabitants to death.

From this moment the enemy attacked us without intermission day and night; but as we were always upon our guard, and kept in a body together, we gave them no opportunity of taking us by surprise.

Our officers shared the hardships with the meanest soldiers, and the horses stood always ready saddled, one half on the

causeway, the other at Tlacupa. Whenever we filled up any opening, the Mexicans were sure to return and open it again, and throw up more formidable entrenchments on the opposite side. Our allies of the towns which lay in the lake, who had up to this moment assisted us with their canoes, began to fall off after they had lost so many of their men and numbers of their canoes, and though they lent no aid to the Mexicans, yet they only awaited the final issue of the siege to forsake us altogether.

Sandoval, Tapia, Lugo, and the other officers who had arrived from the other divisions, now thought it high time to return to their own troops and inform Cortes as to how matters stood with us. They accordingly hastened back to our general's headquarters, and told him how valiantly Alvarado and his men were defending themselves, and the great vigilance which was observed in his camp.

Sandoval, who was always a good friend to me, told Cortes on this occasion how he had found me, with several others, up to my middle in the water fighting away to rescue one of the brigantines; adding, that had it not been for us, she must undoubtedly have been lost with all the men on board. What he further added in my praise I will not mention, as it concerns my own person, but it was often repeated by others and sufficiently known to all the troops.

When Cortes learnt what excellent order we observed in our camp, his heart grew lighter, and he commanded the divisions to keep out of the way of the enemy as much as

possible, and confine themselves to the defence of the respective encampments, on which the Mexicans renewed the attack every morning by throwing in darts, stones, and other missiles. But after we had strengthened our encampment by a deep and broad ditch we considered ourselves more secure, and remained quiet for the four following days. Cortes and Sandoval allowing their troops a like period of rest, and certainly we stood much in need of it, for we were all wounded and quite enfeebled by continued fighting, and the little nourishment we received. On that terrible day the loss of the three divisions amounted to sixty men and seven horses. The short repose we enjoyed was most beneficial to us, but we had now to deliberate on our future plan of operation.

CHAPTER CLIII

The new plan of operation which we adopt in the siege, and how all our allies return to their several homes.

For the next five days we stood at night under arms on the causeway, the brigantines lying on each side in the lake, while one half of our cavalry kept patrolling about Tlacupa, where our baggage and baking-house were; the other half being stationed near our camp. As soon as the day began to dawn, the Mexicans renewed the attack upon our encampment, which they were determined to take by storm.

Similar attacks were likewise made on the encampments of Sandoval and Cortes, until we changed our plan of operation. The Mexicans in the meantime made solemn sacrifices every day in the large temple on the Tlatelulco, and celebrated their feasts. Each time the infernal drum resounded from the temple, accompanied by the discordant noise of shell trumpets, timbrels, horns, and the horrible yells and howlings of the Mexicans. Large fires were kept up on the platform of the temple during the whole night, and each night a certain number of our unfortunate countrymen were sacrificed to their cursed idols, Huitzilopochtli and Tetzcatlipuca, who, in the discourses which the papas held with them, promised that we should all be killed in a few days. As these gods were lying and evil-minded beings, they deceived

the Mexicans with these promises in order that they might not be induced to sue for peace with the teules. Unfortunately the Tlascallans and our other allies began to put faith in these oracles after our last defeat.

One morning large bodies of Mexicans again fell upon us with the intention of surrounding us on all sides. Each separate body of the Mexicans was distinguished by a particular dress and certain warlike devices, and regularly relieved each other in battle. In the midst of their fierce attacks they constantly cried out, "You are a set of low-minded scoundrels, you are fit for nothing, and you neither know how to build a house nor how to cultivate maise. You are a pack of worthless fellows, and only come to plunder our town. You have fled away from your own country and deserted your own king; but before eight days are past there will not be one of you left alive. Oh! you miserable beings, you are so bad and beastly that even your very flesh is not eatable. It tastes as bitter as gall!"

It is most probable that after they had feasted all the bodies of several of our companions, the Almighty, in his mercy, had turned the flesh bitter. Against the Tlascallans they threw out more terrible language, threatening to turn them all into slaves, fatten some for their sacrifices, and reserve others for rebuilding their houses and tilling the ground.

All these abominable threats they uttered in the midst of fighting, and they came pouring forth over the ruins of the houses we had destroyed, or they fell upon us in the rear from their

numerous canoes; but the Almighty each time gave us fresh vigour, so that we were able to make a good stand against the enemy and beat them back with considerable loss in killed and wounded.

About this time our allies of Huexotzinco, Cholulla, Tezcuco, and Tlascalla, had become wearied of the war, and secretly agreed with each other to return to their homes. Without mentioning a single word either to Cortes, Sandoval, or Alvarado, they all suddenly left our encampments, only a few of the most faithful remaining with us. In Cortes' division there remained a brother of the king of Tezcuco, the brave Suchel, (who was subsequently baptized with the name of Don Carlos,) with about forty of his relations and friends. In Sandoval's division a cazique of Huexotzinco, with about fifty men: and in our division the sons of our honest friend Don Lorenzo de Vargas, with the brave Chichimeclatecl, and about eighty men.

We were not a little dismayed to find that our allies had thus suddenly decamped, and when Cortes questioned those who remained as to the motives which had induced their countrymen to desert us, they replied, that their companions had at length began to fear the threats of the Mexicans and the oracles of their idols, that we should all be destroyed, particularly when they saw what numbers of our men were killed and wounded; besides their own great losses, which already amounted to above 1200 men. To all this was added the warnings of the younger Xicotencatl, whom Cortes had caused to be hung at Tezcuco, namely, that

sooner or later we should all be put to death, as he had been assured by his soothsayers.

Our general was greatly alarmed at this desertion, but took care to hide his real feelings from those few of our allies who had remained faithful, and merely remarked, with a placid smile on his countenance, that there was nothing to fear, and he was surprised that their countrymen did not see through the real design of the Mexicans in promulgating the false oracles of their gods. By this and other plausible speeches, added to vast promises, he strengthened them in their fidelity.

On one of these occasions the above-mentioned Suchel, who was a man of uncommon bravery, and a cazique in his own right, said to Cortes: "Malinche, you should not humble yourself each day to renew the conflict with the enemy. In my opinion you should rather command your officers to cruize round the town with the brigantines, in order to cut off all its supplies of water and provisions. In that city there are so many thousands of warriors that their store of provisions must soon become exhausted. The only supply of water they have is from the rain that falls, and what they obtain from wells recently dug, which cannot be wholesome to drink. What can they do if you cut off their supplies of provisions and water? for a war against hunger and thirst is the most direful of all calamities!"

When he had done speaking Cortes gave him a hearty embrace, thanked him for his good advice, and promised to bestow valuable townships upon him. To this he had been advised

all along by many of us soldiers; but a Spanish soldier has too much spirit to reduce a town by famine; he is all impatience to fight his way in.

After Cortes had maturely considered this plan, he sent word by means of brigantines to Alvarado and Sandoval to desist from the daily attacks upon the town. This new method of conducting the siege was greatly favoured by the circumstance that our brigantines stood no longer in fear of the stakes which the enemy had driven into the lake, for if there was a stiffish breeze and the men vigorously plied their oars, the brigantines were sure each time to break through them. By this means we became complete masters of the lake, and all the detached buildings which stood in the water. When the Mexicans saw the great advantage we gained over them in this way they became considerably disheartened.

In the meantime we continued the combat on the causeways, and in the space of four days we had with great difficulty and labour filled up the wide opening in front of our camp. Two companies repelling the attacks of the enemy, while the third was occupied in filling up the aperture. Cortes did the same with his division, and himself assisted in dragging along beams and planks to make the causeway more safe. Sandoval was similarly engaged on his causeway, and now the brigantines were able to lend us considerable assistance, since they no longer feared the stakes.

In this way we continually kept advancing nearer and nearer to the city, though the enemy constantly renewed their attacks upon

us, and that with so much fury and intrepidity that it was often with difficulty we could repulse them. But the Almighty had strengthened our arms, and our crossbow-men and musketeers did great execution among the crowded ranks of the enemy; yet we had still every evening to retreat along the causeway to our encampment, which was not the easiest part of the day's work, as the enemy, still big with the recent victory they had gained over us, fought with great confidence. At one time they fell upon us from three sides, and wounded two horses, but thank heavens we cut our way through, slaughtered a considerable number of them and made many prisoners. On our side we had likewise several wounded, but this did not discourage us, we each day returned to the conflict, dressed our wounds at night with bandages steeped in warm oil, supped off vegetables, maize-cakes, and figs, and then posted our watches for the night.

The hellish rejoicings on the summit of the large temple were still kept up during the night. Really it is impossible to describe the dreadful and dismal sound of this diabolical drum, with the yelling and other dissonant noises which burst forth each time the Mexicans sacrificed one of our countrymen between the large fires they had kindled on the summit of the temple! For ten successive days were these inhuman sacrifices continued, until all their prisoners were gone; Christobal de Guzman, who was among the number, they had reserved for the last, and kept alive for eighteen days.

During these sacrifices the idols delivered their oracles, and

promised the Mexicans our total destruction before ten days had expired, if they only persevered in their attacks upon us. And thus it was they allowed themselves to be deceived!

The following morning early the Mexicans again advanced in numerous bodies to the attack, and would undoubtedly have forced their way up to our encampment if we had not kept up a steady fire upon them with our cannon, which Pedro Mareno served with great effect. I must not forget to mention that they shot our own arrows at us from five crossbows which they had captured, the use of which they had compelled the Spaniards whom they had taken prisoners to teach them; but the injury they did us with these was next to nothing.

Matters went on in the same way at the two other encampments, with which we kept up a constant communication, by means of the brigantines, which also conveyed Cortes' different commands, and these he always put down in writing.

While the three divisions were thus steadily carrying on their operations against the city, our brigantines were also continually on the alert, and two of those belonging to Cortes' division diligently chased the convoys of provisions and water going to Mexico. On one occasion they captured a large canoe quite filled with a species of slime,²⁵ which, when dried, tastes very much like cheese. The number of prisoners our vessels took was likewise very great.

²⁵ Respecting this slimy substance, called by the Mexicans Tecuitlatl, see a former note, first vol. (p. [95](#).)

Twelve or thirteen days may now have passed away since our unfortunate defeat; and as Suchel, the brother of the king of Tezcuco, became daily more convinced that we had the advantage over the Mexicans, and that their threats to destroy us all within ten days had been a mere trick of their idols to delude them, he sent word to his brother to despatch the whole armed force of Tezcuco to aid in the siege. The king of Tezcuco soon complied with his brother's wishes, and before two days had elapsed above 2000 of his warriors arrived in our camp. I still remember quite well that they were accompanied by Pedro Sanchez Farsan and Antonio de Villareal, who subsequently married the lady Ojeda. The first of these gentlemen, it will be remembered, Cortes had appointed commandant of Tezcuco, and the second chamberlain to the king of that place. Cortes was not a little rejoiced at the arrival of this considerable body of men, and did not forget to bestow his praises on them.

The Tlascallans followed the example of the Tezrucans, who shortly after returned in great numbers, under the command of Tecapaneca, cazique of Topoyanco. In the same way large bodies of men arrived from Huexotzinco, but very few came from Cholulla.

Cortes commanded all these Indian troops to repair to his head-quarters, having previously taken the precaution to station detachments along the line of their march, to protect them against any attacks of the enemy.

When they had all arrived he stepped into the midst of them,

and addressed them in Spanish, which was interpreted by Aguilar and Doña Marina. He assured them he had never doubted their being well and faithfully inclined towards him, from the time they had become subjects of our emperor, and experienced our bounty. When he invited them to join him in this campaign against Mexico, he had had no other object in view than that they might reap a real benefit by it, and return home laden with booty; and to give them an opportunity of revenging themselves on their old enemies, with whom they had never been able to cope previous to our arrival in their country. Though they had fought bravely, and stoutly assisted us on every occasion, they should nevertheless bear in mind that each day we ordered their troops to draw off from the causeways, because they embarrassed our movements; and though our numbers had been so very scanty, yet we had never stood in need of their assistance; for we had told them over and over again that the Lord Jesus was our stronghold, from whom all victory comes. They were likewise convinced that we were able to level houses to the ground, and pull up the palisades, without their aid. For the rest, he was bound to make the observation to them that, according to the strict articles of war, they had deserved punishment of death, because they had deserted their general at a time when the battle was at its height. He would, however, pardon them, on account of their ignorance of our laws and articles of war; he must now likewise forbid them, under any pretence whatever, to kill any Mexicans that might be taken prisoners; for he was anxious to make himself master of

the city, by pacifying its inhabitants.

After Cortes had done speaking, he embraced Chichimeclatecl, the two younger Xicotencatls, and Suchel of Tezcucuo, bestowed great praise on their faithful adherence to our emperor, promising to reward them with a larger extent of territory than they already possessed, besides a gift of numerous slaves. He was equally kind towards the caziques of Topoyanco, Huexotzinco, and of Cholulla, and then distributed these Indian auxiliaries equally among the three divisions.

As our battles with the Mexicans continued day after day in the same manner, I will not go so much into particulars as heretofore. I have merely to add, that during these days it began to rain very fast every evening, and that the heavier the showers the more welcome they were to us; for as soon as the Mexicans were wet they desisted from their attacks, and did not molest us on our retreats at night. Neither must I omit to mention that towards the close of the ninety-three days in which we kept Mexico closely besieged, we upon one occasion fell with our divisions at the same moment into the town, and fought our way up to the wells, from which the Mexicans, as I have above mentioned, drew all their drinkable water. These wells we completely destroyed; but we certainly did not accomplish this without encountering a severe opposition from the enemy, who directed their long lances more particularly against our cavalry, which here galloped up and down on the level dry ground in fine style.

CHAPTER CLIV

How Cortes offers terms of peace to Quauhtemoctzin.

After we had by degrees gained so many advantages over the Mexicans, taken most of the bridges, causeways, and entrenchments, and levelled so many houses to the ground, Cortes determined to despatch three distinguished Mexicans, whom we had taken prisoners, to Quauhtemoctzin, to offer him terms of peace. At first the three men refused to accept of this commission, assuring our general that Quauhtemoctzin would put them to death if they came with such a message. But at length, by fair words and promises, added to some valuable presents, he persuaded them into compliance. He then desired them to take the following message to their monarch: "He (Cortes) felt a great affection for Quauhtemoctzin, as he was so near a relative, and son-in-law to his late friend, the powerful Motecusuma. He should indeed feel sorely grieved if he compelled him to destroy the great city of Mexico. He was also grieved to see so many of its inhabitants, with his subjects of the surrounding country, daily becoming victims to these continued battles. He now therefore, in the name of our emperor, offered him terms of peace, with forgiveness for all the injury he had done us. He advised him to take this offer, which had now been made four several times to him, into his serious consideration, and no longer

allow himself to be deceived by the inexperience of youth, and the bad advice of his evil-minded papas and cursed idols. He ought to reflect on the vast number of men he had already lost; that we were in possession of all the cities and towns of the surrounding neighbourhood; that the number of his enemies daily increased; and that, at least, he should have some compassion for his subjects. He (Cortes) was also well aware that provisions began to fail in Mexico, and that the inhabitants had no means of obtaining water."

By means of our interpreters these three distinguished personages perfectly comprehended what Cortes said to them, yet they begged of him to give them some written document which they might present to Quauhtemoctzin, for they well knew we were accustomed to accompany every message of this nature with a letter, or *amatl*, as they termed any written order.

When these three personages arrived in the presence of Quauhtemoctzin they fulfilled their commission with many tears and sighs. The Mexican monarch on this occasion was surrounded by his chief officers, and at first appeared inclined to be angry with those who thus presumed to come with such a message. But as he was a young man of a kind and affable disposition,²⁶ he assembled all his great officers, and the most distinguished of his papas, and told them that he felt

²⁶ Bernal Diaz further remarks, (which we thought better to insert here,) that his complexion was fairer than that of the Indians in general; that he was above twenty-three years of age, and that he had a beautiful wife, daughter of his uncle Motecusuma. (p. 98.)

inclined to put an end to the war with Malinche and his troops. The Mexicans, he continued, had already tried every mode of attack, and put every species of defence into practice, and had continually altered their plans of operation; yet, when they thought the Spaniards vanquished, they each time returned with renewed vigour. They were aware that a considerable body of auxiliaries had recently joined their enemies; that every town had declared against Mexico; the brigantines no longer feared the stakes they had driven into the lake; the cavalry galloped without fear through their streets, and they were threatened with the most terrible of calamities, want of provisions and water. He now therefore demanded the opinion of each person present, but more particularly of the papas, who were acquainted with the wishes of their gods. He desired every one fearlessly to speak his mind, and state his views of the matter.

Upon this, it is said, they declared themselves to the following effect: "Great and mighty monarch! You are our lord and master, and the sceptre you sway is in good hands. On every occasion you have shown great penetration and power of mind, and you have deserved a crown, even had it not been yours by inheritance. Peace is certainly an excellent thing, but you must remember that, from the moment these teules set foot in this country and in Mexico, our condition has daily grown worse. Remember the many presents your uncle the late powerful Motecusuma bestowed upon these teules, and the important services he rendered them, and what treatment he received in return! Reflect

on the fate of Cacamatzin, the king of Tezcucó: and your uncle, how did he end his days? What has become of your relatives the kings of Iztapalapan, Cojohuacan, Tlacupa, and of Talatzinco? Have not even the very sons of the great Motecusuma perished? All the gold and wealth of this great city has vanished. Great numbers of the inhabitants of Tepeaca, of Chalco, and even of Tezcucó, have been led away into slavery, and have been marked in the face with a red-hot iron! Remember, therefore, above all things, what our gods have promised you. Listen to their advice, and put no trust in Malinche and his fine words. It is better to be buried sword in hand under the ruins of this city than to submit to the power of those who wish to turn us into slaves, and have prepared every species of torture for us."

This speech the papas accompanied with the assurance that the gods, a few nights ago, while they were sacrificing to them, had promised the Mexicans victory.

"If," answered Quauhtemóctzin, rather sorrowfully, "these are your wishes, let them be done! Make the most of the maize and other provisions we have still left, and let us all die sword in hand! Let no man presume, from this moment, to mention the word peace in my presence! He who dares so to do I will put to death with my own hand."

Every one present then swore that they would exert themselves unceasingly day and night, and sacrifice their lives in the defence of the metropolis. They likewise found means to provide for their most pressing wants by making arrangements with the

inhabitants of Xochimilco and other townships to provide them with water; and in Mexico itself new wells were dug, from which, contrary to all expectations, they obtained drinkable water. All hostilities had now been staid for two days in expectation of an answer from Quauhtemoctzin; when all of a sudden our three camps were attacked by immense bodies of the enemy with lion-like fierceness, and with such confidence as though they were sure of victory. During this attack, Quauhtemoctzin's horn was sounded, and it was with great difficulty we prevented the enemy from disordering our ranks; for the Mexicans now ran right upon our swords and lances, so that we were obliged to fight them foot to foot.

We certainly each time remained master of the field, and at length got more accustomed to these attacks; yet many of us were continually wounded. In this way the infuriated enemy fell upon us at different points for six or seven days consecutively, and great was the slaughter we made among their ranks; but we could not give them a complete overthrow.

One time the Mexicans cried out, "What does Malinche mean by his repeated offers of peace? Does he imagine we are so foolish as to listen to him? Our gods have promised us victory, and we have abundance of provisions and water. Not one of you will escape alive from here; therefore speak no more to us about terms of peace. Such things belong to women; arms were made for man!"

With these words they fell upon us with the fury of mad dogs,

and the combat lasted until the darkness of night put an end to it. We then as usual marched back to our encampment, having first ordered our Indian auxiliaries from the causeway. We then posted our watches for the night, and ate the little supper we could get under arms, after having fought from the first dawn of day to the fall of night.

In this way the siege continued many days, until three townships in alliance with Mexico, named Matlaltzinco and Malinalco, the third I have forgotten, which lay about thirty-two miles from Mexico, agreed to fall upon our rear with their united forces, while the Mexicans, at the same moment, were to attack us from the city. In this way they thought they could not fail to destroy the whole of us; but we shall soon see how this scheme terminated.

CHAPTER CLV

How Gonzalo de Sandoval marches against the provinces which had sent their troops to cooperate with Quauhtemoctzin.

In order that these events may be rendered more intelligible, I must recur to the defeat which Cortes' division sustained on the causeway, when sixty of his men, or rather sixty-two, as subsequently appeared, were taken prisoners. The reader will remember that Quauhtemoctzin, after that unfortunate day, sent the feet and hands, with the skins torn from the faces of the murdered Spaniards, and the heads of the dead horses to Matlaltzinco, Malinalco, and other townships. This he did to blazon forth the victory he had gained over us; and he summoned the inhabitants to cooperate with him, and carry on the war with us day and night without intermission, and on a certain day to fall upon our rear, while he with his troops sallied out upon us from the city; in that way, he assured them, they could not fail to give us a total overthrow, as above half of our men had been killed in the last battle. This message from Quauhtemoctzin met with the more favorable reception in Matlaltzinco, as the monarch had many relations on his mother's side in this township. It was therefore resolved that the whole armed force of the country should be called out, and march to the relief of Mexico.

The warriors of these three townships accordingly put themselves in motion, and commenced hostilities by plundering and ill-using the inhabitants of the districts they passed through, and carrying off their children to sacrifice them to their idols. The inhabitants of these places, therefore, applied to Cortes, who instantly despatched Andreas de Tapia, with twenty horse, one hundred Spanish foot, and a strong body of our allies to their assistance. Tapia soon dispersed the enemy, with considerable loss, and they fled precipitately to their own country.

Cortes was excessively pleased with the promptness that Tapia had displayed, who, however, had scarcely returned to head-quarters, when messengers arrived from Quauhnahuac, praying for immediate assistance against these same tribes of Matlaltzinco and Malinalco, who had fallen hostilely into their country.

Cortes, on receiving this intelligence, instantly ordered off Sandoval with twenty cavalry, eighty of his most nimble foot soldiers, and a considerable body of allies to their assistance. God only knows how perilous the situation of the three divisions became by the expedition against these warlike tribes, as most of our troops were suffering from severe wounds and lacked all manner of refreshments! Much indeed might be said in praise of the victories which Sandoval gained over the enemy, but I will not detain my reader with them, but merely state that he speedily returned to his division. He brought in prisoners with him, two of the most distinguished personages of Matlaltzinco,

and restored peace to the country. We certainly derived great advantages from this expedition; our allies were protected from any further attacks, a new and dangerous foe was put down, and it proved to Quauhtemoctzin that the power of his allies in the provinces was very feeble; for the Mexicans had triumphantly cried out to us in the last battles, that the warriors of Matlaltzinco, and of other provinces, would march against us; and then, as their gods had promised them, we should all be destroyed.

After the successful termination of this expedition Cortes again offered terms of peace to Quauhtemoctzin, in the same way as on the former occasion, and told him that the emperor, our master, again offered him terms of peace, that the city might not be totally destroyed, which was the only reason we had staid hostilities for the last five days. He ought to reflect that he had scarcely any provisions and water left for his troops and the unfortunate inhabitants, and that two thirds of the city lay in ruins. He might convince himself by questioning the two chiefs of Matlaltzinco, whom he expressly sent to him on this occasion, what he had to expect from their country in the shape of assistance. To this message, which Cortes accompanied by offers of sincere friendship, Quauhtemoctzin would not deign an answer, but ordered the two chiefs of Matlaltzinco to leave the city and return to their homes. Immediately after this our three divisions were, if possible, attacked with greater fury than on any previous occasion; and whatever numbers of these infuriated beings we might kill, they were not to be deterred, and it seemed

as if they only sought death. Under the cry of, "Tenitoz rey Castilla? Tenitoz Axaca?" which in their language means: What will the king of Spain say to this? What will he now say? They showered forth upon us volumes of lances, arrows, and stones, so that the whole causeway was completely covered with them. However courageously the Mexicans might defend themselves, we nevertheless each day made new inroads upon the city. Their numbers had greatly decreased, nor did they make any fresh openings in the causeway; though they never failed to harass us every evening when we marched back to our encampment.

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