

the building of the launches was finished, and noted the eagerness of all of us soldiers to commence the siege of Mexico. At that time the people of Chalco sent again to say that the Mexicans were attacking them, and begged for help, and Cortés sent to tell them that he intended to go himself to their pueblos and territories and not to return until the enemy was finally driven from their neighbourhood. He ordered three hundred soldiers and thirty horsemen and nearly all the musketeers and crossbowmen and the men of Texcoco to be in readiness, and Pedro de Alvarado, and Andrés de Tápia and Cristóbal de Olid went in his company as well as the Treasurer Julian de Alderete and the Friar Fray Pedro Melgarejo who by that time had arrived in our camp. I too went with Cortés for he ordered me to do so, and what happened during that expedition I will go on to relate.

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#### CHAPTER CXLIV.

How our Captain Cortés went on an expedition and made a circuit of the lake and of all the cities and large pueblos that were to be found in its neighbourhood, and what else happened on that expedition.

AS Cortés had told the people of Chalco that he was coming to help them so that the Mexicans should no longer come and attack them, (for we had been going there and back every week to assist them) he ordered all the force of soldiers already mentioned to be prepared, and they were three hundred soldiers, thirty horsemen, twenty crossbowmen and fifteen musketeers, and the Treasurer Julian Alderete, Pedro de Alvarado, Andrés de Tápia, Cristóbal de Olid, and the Friar Pedro Melgarejo went also, and Cortés ordered me to go with him, and there were many Tlaxcalans and allies from Texcoco in

his company. He left Gonzalo de Sandoval behind with a good company of soldiers and horsemen to guard Texcoco and the launches.

On the morning of Friday the 5th April 1521 after hearing Mass we set out for Tlamanalco, where we were well received, and we slept there. The next day we went to Chalco, for the one town is quite close to the other, and there Cortés ordered all the Caciques of the province to be called together, and he made them a speech through our interpreters Doña Marina and Gerónimo de Aguilar, in which he gave them to understand that we were now going to try whether we could bring to peace some of the towns in the neighbourhood of the lake, and also to view the land and position before blockading Mexico, and that we were going to place thirteen launches on the lake, and we begged them to be ready to accompany us on the next day with all their warriors. When they understood this all with one voice promised that they would willingly do what we asked.

The next day we went to sleep at another pueblo, subject to Chalco, called Chimaluacan, and there we met more than twenty thousand allies from Chalco, Texcoco, and Huexotzingo and from Tlaxcala and other towns, and in all the expeditions in which I have been engaged in New Spain, never have I known so many of our allied warriors to accompany us as joined us now.

As I have already said before, many of them came in hope of gathering spoil, and it is also true that they came to gorge on human flesh, if there should be any fighting, for they knew for certain that we should have to fight battles. It was the same, so to say, as when in Italy an army marches from one place to another it is followed by crows and kites and other birds of prey which live on the dead bodies that are left in the field after a bloody battle, so I believe it was for the same reason that we were followed by so many thousand Indians.

Let us leave this subject and return to our story. About that time we received news, that in a plain near by, there were many companies and squadrons of Mexicans and all their allies from the country round about waiting to attack us. So Cortés held us in readiness and after hearing Mass we set out early in the morning from the pueblo of Chimaluacan where we had slept, and keeping in good formation and much on the alert, we marched among some high rocks between two hills where there were fortifications and barricades, where many Indians both men and women were safely sheltered, and from these strongholds they yelled and shouted at us, but we did not care to attack them, but kept quietly on our way towards a large pueblo called Yautepec, which we found deserted, and passed by without stopping,<sup>1</sup> and arrived at a plain where there were some springs with very little water, and on one side was a high rocky hill<sup>2</sup> with a fortress very difficult to subdue, as the attempt soon proved, and when we arrived in the neighbourhood of this hill, we saw that it was crowded with warriors, and from the summit they shouted at us and threw stones and shot darts and arrows, and wounded three of our soldiers. Then Cortés ordered us to halt there, and said "it seems that all these Mexicans who shut themselves up in fortresses make mock of us as long as we do not attack them," and he said this thinking of those whom we had left behind among the foot hills, and he ordered some horsemen and crossbowmen to go round to the other side of the hill and see if there was any other place where we could ascend and find a more convenient

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<sup>1</sup> This is misleading ; they were on their way to Yautepec, but it was not until two days later that they passed by that town without stopping. The two peñoles where the fighting took place must have been situated between Chimal and Oaxtepec (cf. Cortés Third Letter).

<sup>2</sup> Probably Tlayacapan (see Orozco y Berra, Vol. IV, p. 541, and Itlilxochtl, Historia Chichimeca Cap. 93).

opening whence to attack them. They returned to say that the best approach was where we then were, for there was no other place where it was possible to climb up, for it was all steep rock. Then Cortés ordered us to make an attack, The standard bearer Cristóbal del Corral led the way with other ensigns and all of us followed him while Cortés and the horsemen kept guard on the plain, so that no other troops of Mexicans should fall on the baggage or on us during our attack on the stronghold. As we began to climb up the hill, the Indians who were posted above rolled down so many huge stones and rocks that it was terrifying to see them hurtling and bounding down, and it was a miracle that we were not all of us killed. One soldier fell dead at my feet, he was one Martínez, a Valencian who had been Maestrasala to a Señor de Salva, in Castile ; he had a helmet on his head but he gave no cry and never spoke another word. Still we kept on, but as the great *Galgas*, as we call these big rocks in this country, came rolling and tearing and bounding down and breaking in pieces, they soon killed two more good soldiers, Gaspar Sánchez, nephew of the Treasurer of Cuba, and a man named Bravo, but still we kept on. Then another valiant soldier named Alonzo Rodríguez was killed, and two others were wounded in the head, and nearly all the rest was wounded in the legs, and still we persevered and pushed on ahead.

As I was active in those days, I kept on following the Standard bearer Corral, and we got beneath some hollows and cavities which there were in the hillside so as to avoid a chance rock hitting me and I clambered up from hollow to hollow to escape being killed. The standard bearer Cristóbal del Corral was sheltering himself behind some thick trees covered with thorns which grow in these hollows, his face was streaming with blood

and his banner was broken, and he called out, "Oh Señor Bernal Díaz del Castillo, it is impossible to go on any further, keep in the shelter of the hollow and take care that none of those galgas or boulders strike you, for one can hardly hold on with one's hands and feet, much less climb any higher." Just then I saw that Pedro Barba, a captain of the crossbowmen, and two other soldiers were coming up in the same way that Corral and I had done, climbing from hollow to hollow. I called out from above, "Señor Capitan, don't come up any further, for you can't hold on with hands and feet, but will roll down again." When I said this to him he replied as though he were very valiant, or some great lord and could make no other reply, "Go ahead." I took that reply as a personal insult, and answered him, "let us see you come to where I am," and I went up still higher. At that very moment such a lot of great stones came rolling down on us from above where they had stored them for the purpose, that Pedro Barba was wounded and one soldier killed, and they could not climb a single step higher.

Then the Standard bearer Corral cried out that they should pass the word to Cortés, from mouth to mouth, that we could not get any higher, and that to retreat was equally dangerous.

When Cortés heard this he understood what was happening, for there below where he stood on the level ground two or three soldiers had been killed and seven of them wounded by the great impetus of the boulders which they hurled down on them, and Cortés thought for certain that nearly all of us who had made the ascent must have been killed or badly wounded, for from where he stood he could not see the folds in the hill. So by signs and shouts and by the shots that they fired, we up above knew that they were meant as signals for us to

retreat, and in good order we descended from hollow to hollow, our bodies bruised and streaming with blood, the banners rent, and eight men dead. When Cortés saw us he gave thanks to God and they related to him what had happened between Pedro Barba and me. Pedro Barba himself and the Standard Bearer Corral were telling him about the great strength of the hill and that it was a marvel that the boulders did not carry us away as they flew down, and the story was soon known throughout the camp.

Let us leave these empty tales and say how there were many companies of Mexicans lying in wait in places where we could neither see nor observe them, hoping to bring help and succour to those posted on the hill, for they well knew that we should not be able to force our way into the stronghold, and they had arranged that while we were fighting, the warriors on the hill on one side, and they on the other, would make an attack on us, and as it had been arranged so they came to the assistance of those on the hill. When Cortés knew that they were approaching, he ordered the horsemen and all of us to go and attack them, and this we did, for the ground was level in places as there were fields lying between the small hills, and we pursued the enemy until they reached another very strong hill.

We killed very few Indians during the pursuit for they took refuge in places where we could not reach them. So we returned to the stronghold which we had attempted to scale, and seeing that there was no water there, and that neither we nor the horses had had anything to drink that day, for the springs which I have spoken about as being there contained nothing but mud, because the many allies whom we had brought with us crowded into them and would not let them flow. For this reason orders were given to shift our camp, and we went down

through some fields to another hill which was distant from the first about a league and a half, thinking that we should find water there, but we found very little of it. Near this hill were some native mulberry trees and there we camped, and there were some twelve or thirteen houses at the foot of the stronghold. As soon as we arrived the Indians began to shout and shoot darts and arrows and roll down boulders from above.

There were many more people in this fortress than there were in the first hill, and it was much stronger, as we afterwards found out.

Our musketeers and crossbowmen fired up at them but they were so high up and protected by so many barricades that we could not do them any harm, besides there was no possibility of climbing up and forcing our way in. Although we made two attempts, from the houses that stood there, over some steps by which we could mount up for two stages, beyond that, as I have already said, it was worse than the first hill, so that we did not increase our reputation at this stronghold any more than at the first, and the victory lay with the Mexicans and their allies.

That night we slept in the mulberry grove and were half dead with thirst. It was arranged that on the next day all the musketeers and crossbowmen should go to another hill which was close by the large one, and should climb up it, for there was a way up although it was not an easy one, to see if from that hill their muskets and crossbows would carry as far as the stronghold on the other, so that they could attack it. Cortés ordered Francisco Verdugo and the Treasurer Juan de Alderete who boasted that they were good crossbowmen, and Pedro Barba who was a Captain, to go as leaders, and all the rest of the soldiers to attack from the steps and tracks of [above] the houses which I have already spoken of, and to climb up as best we could. So we began the ascent, but they

hurled down so many stones both great and small that many of the soldiers were wounded, and in addition to this it was quite useless to attempt the ascent, for even using both our hands and feet we could climb no further. While we were making these attempts the musketeers and crossbowmen from the other hill of which I have spoken, managed to reach the enemy with their muskets and crossbows but they could only just do it, however they killed some and wounded others. In this way we went on attacking them for about half an hour when it pleased our Lord God that they agreed to make peace. The reason why they did so was that they had not got a drop of water, and there was a great number of people on the level ground on the hill top and the people from all the neighbourhood round had taken refuge there both men, women and children and slaves. So that we down below should understand that they wished for peace, the women on the hill waved their shawls and clapped the palms of their hands together as a sign that they would make bread or tortillas for us and the warriors ceased shooting arrows and darts and hurling down stones.

When Cortés observed this he ordered that no more harm should be done to them, and by signs he made them understand that five of their chiefs should come down to treat for peace. When they came down with much reverence they asked Cortés to pardon them for having protected and defended themselves by taking refuge in that stronghold. Cortés replied somewhat angrily through our interpreters Doña Marina and Aguilar that they deserved death for having begun the war, but as they had come to make peace, they must go at once to the other hill and summon the Caciques and chiefs who were stationed there and bring in the dead bodies, and that if they came in peace he would pardon what had happened, if not, that we should attack them and besiege them until



they died of thirst, for we knew well that there [too] they had no water, for there is very little in all that part of the country. So they went off at once to summon the Caciques as they were told to do.

I will stop talking about this until they come back with the reply and will relate that Cortés was standing talking to the Friar Melgarejo and the Treasurer Alderete about the wars that we had already waged before they came, which were just as bad as the attack on the hill, and of the great power of the Mexicans and about the great cities that we had seen since leaving Spain, and was saying that if our Lord the Emperor was told the truth, (instead of the Bishop of Burgos writing to him the reverse) that he would send and give us great rewards, for no other king in the world had had such services done for him as we had performed in winning so many cities for him without his knowing anything whatever about it.

Let us leave out much more conversation that took place and relate how Cortés sent the Standard bearer Corral, and two other captains namely Juan Jaramillo and Pedro de Ircio and me, who happened to be there with them, to ascend the hill and see what the stronghold was like, whether there were many Indians wounded or killed by the arrows and muskets and how many people were gathered there.

When he gave us these orders he said, "Look to it, Sirs, that you do not take from them a single grain of maize, and as I understood it he meant that we should help ourselves, and it was for that reason that he sent us and told me to go with the others. We ascended the hill by a track, and I must say that it was stronger than the first hill for it was sheer rock, and when we reached the top the entrance into the stronghold was no wider than the two mouths of a silo or an oven. At

the very top it was level ground and there was a great breadth of meadow land all crowded with people, both warriors and many women and children, and we found twenty dead men and many wounded, and they had not a drop of water to drink. All their clothes and other property was done up in bundles and there were many bales of cloaks which were the tribute they paid to Guatemoc, and when I saw so many loads of cloths and knew that it was intended for tribute I began to load four Tlaxcalans, my free servants whom I had brought with me, and I also put four other bales on the backs of four other Indians who were guarding the tribute, one bale on each man's back. When Pedro de Ircio saw this he said that [the bales] should not be taken, and I contended that they should, but as he was a Captain, I did as he ordered, for he threatened to tell Cortés about it. Pedro de Ircio said to me that I had heard what Cortés had said, that we should not take a single grain of maize, and I replied that was true, and that it was on account of those very words I wished to carry off these robes. However, he would not let me carry off anything at all, and we went down to tell Cortés what we had seen concerning the things on which he had sent us to report. Then Pedro de Ircio told Cortés about the contention that I had had with him which pleased Cortés greatly, after giving an account of what there was there, Pedro de Ircio said, "I took nothing from them although Bernal Díaz del Castillo had already laden eight Indians with cloth and would have brought them away loaded had I not stopped him." Then Cortés replied, half angrily "Why did he not bring them, you ought to have stayed there with the cloth and the Indians" and he added "See how they understand me, I sent them to help themselves, and from Bernal Díaz who did understand me, they took away the spoil which he was taking from those dogs who

will sit there laughing at us in the company of those whom we have killed and wounded.”

When Pedro de Ircio heard this he wished to go up to the stronghold again, but he was told that there was no reason for his going, and that on no account should he return there.

Let us leave this talk and say that the people from the other hill came in, and, after much discussion about their being pardoned for their past deeds, all gave their fealty to His Majesty. As there was no water in that place we went at once to a fine pueblo already mentioned by me in the last chapter called Oaxtepec, where is the garden which I have said is the best that I have ever seen in all my life, and so said the Treasurer Alderete and the monk Fray Pedro Melgarejo and our Cortés. When they saw it and walked about in it they admired it greatly and said that they had never seen a better garden in Spain. I must add that we all found quarters in the garden that night. The Caciques of the town came to speak and offer their services to Cortés, for Gonzalo de Sandoval had already brought them to peace when he entered the town, as I have written fully in the chapter which treats of that event. That night we slept there and the next morning very early we left for Cuernavaca<sup>1</sup> and we met some squadrons of Mexicans who had come out from that town and the horsemen pursued them more than a league and a half until they took refuge in another large pueblo called Tepostlan where the inhabitants were so completely off their guard that we fell upon them before their spies whom they had sent to watch us could reach them.

Here we found some very good-looking Indian women and much spoil, but none of the Mexicans nor any of the

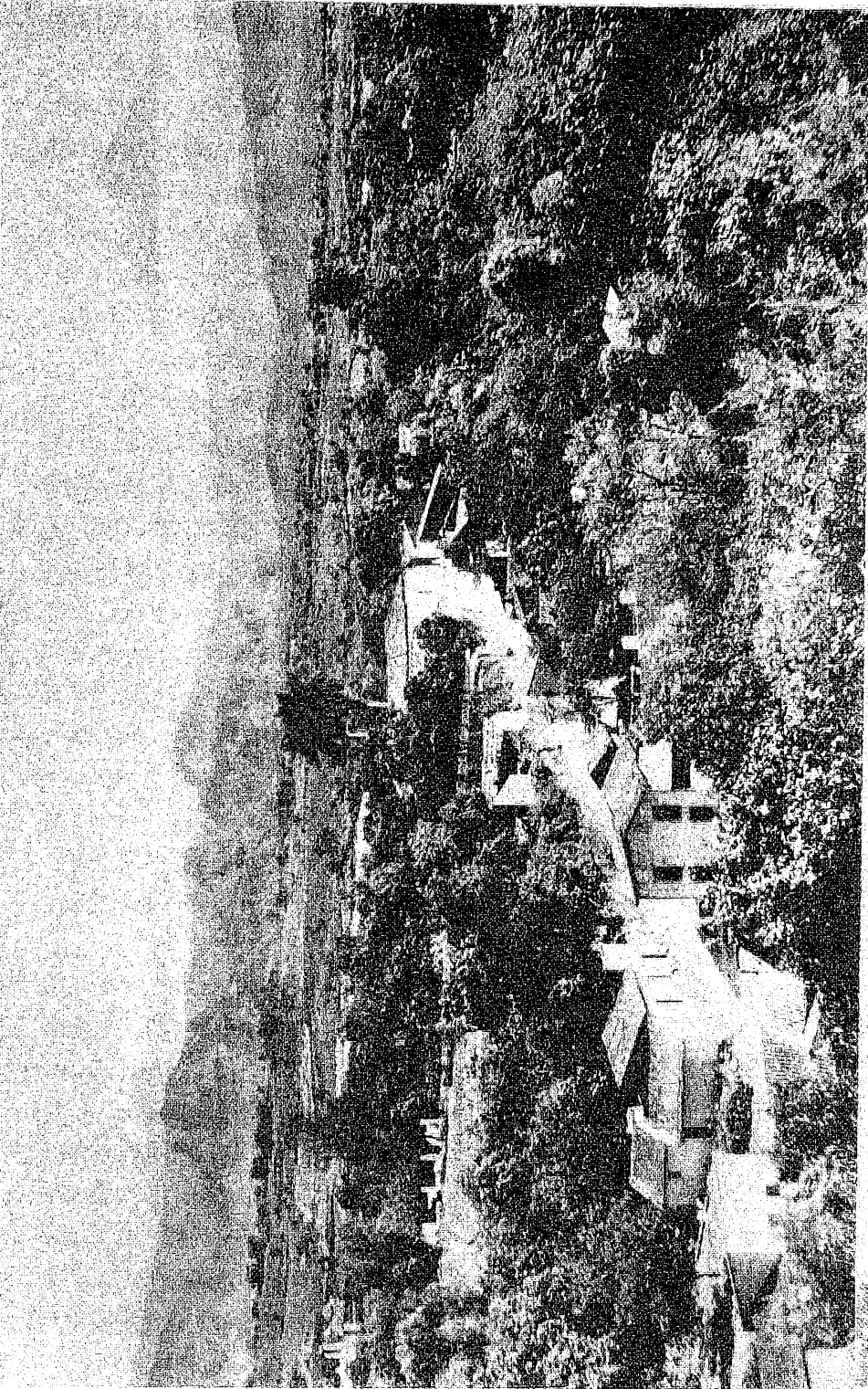
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<sup>1</sup> Coadlabaca in the text (Mex. Cuauhnahuac). In this instance the name is given in mistake for Yautepec. (Cf. Cortés's Third Letter.)

inhabitants waited for us in the town, so Cortés sent three or four times to summon the Caciques to come and make peace, and said that if they did not come he would burn the town and go in search of them. They replied that they did not mean to come, therefore, so as to strike fear into the other pueblos, Cortés ordered half the houses round about to be set on fire. At that very moment the Caciques from the pueblo that we had passed that day which I have said is called Yautepec came and gave their fealty to His Majesty. The next day we took the road for a much better and larger town named Coadlabaca (at the present time we usually alter the spelling and call it Cuernavaca), and it was garrisoned by many warriors both Mexican and Native, and was very strong on account of the Barrancas more than eight fathoms deep, with running water at the bottom, but the volume of water is small. However, they made the place into a stronghold and there was no way of entering for horses except by two bridges which had already been broken down. This protection was sufficient to prevent our forcing an entrance so we fought with them from across the stream and ravine, and they shot many arrows and lances at us and hurled stones from their slings, so that they fell thicker than hail. While this was happening Cortés was informed that about half a league further on there was a place where horses could pass, and he at once set off with all the horsemen while all of us remained looking for some way to get across, and we saw that by means of some trees which stood near the edge one could get over to the other side of that deep ravine, and although three soldiers fell from the trees into the water below, and one of them broke his leg, nevertheless we did cross over although the danger was great. As for me I will say truly that when I was crossing and saw how bad and dangerous the passage was, I turned quite giddy, still I got across, I and others of our soldiers and

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*A View from Cuernavaca  
Looking N.E.*



many Tlaxcalans, and we fell on the rear of the Mexicans who were shooting stones and darts and arrows at our people, and when they saw us they could not believe it, and thought that we were more numerous than we were. At that moment Cristóbal de Olid and Andrés de Tápia and other horsemen who at great risk had crossed by a broken bridge, arrived on the scene and we fell on the enemy so that they turned their backs and fled into the thickets about the deep ravine where we could not reach them. Soon afterwards Cortés himself arrived with the rest of the horsemen.

In this town we took great spoil both of large bales of cloth as well as good-looking women. Cortés ordered us to remain there that day and we all found quarters in the beautiful garden of the chief of the town.

Although I feel bound to speak many times in the course of this story about the great precautions of sentinels, spies and scouts which were taken wherever we were, whether encamped or on the march, it would be tedious to repeat it too often, and for this reason I will go on and say that our scouts came to tell Cortés that twenty Indians were approaching, and that from their movements and appearance they seemed to be Caciques and chieftains who were bringing messages or coming to seek for peace. They proved to be the Caciques of the town, and when they arrived where Cortés was standing they paid him great respect and presented him with some gold jewels and asked him to pardon them for not meeting him peacefully, but they said the Lord of Mexico commanded them to stay in their stronghold and thence to make war on us, and had sent a large force of Mexicans to aid them, but from what they had now seen, there was no place, however strong it might be, that we would not attack and dominate, and they begged him [Cortés] to have mercy and make peace with them. Cortés received

them graciously, and told them that we were the vassals of a great Prince, the Emperor Don Carlos, who was good to all those who wished to serve him and that in his Royal Name he would receive them in peace, and they then gave their fealty to His Majesty. I remember that those Caciques said that our gods had warned their gods that their persons and property and towns would be chastized. We must leave them there and relate how very early on the next day we set out for another great town named Xochimilco and what happened on the road and in the city, and the attacks that were made on us I will go on to tell about, up to our return to Texcoco.

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#### CHAPTER CXLV.

About the great thirst that we endured on the march and the great danger that we were in at Xochimilco from the many battles and skirmishes which we fought against the Mexicans and the natives of that city, and the many other warlike encounters which we went through before returning to Texcoco.

So we set out towards Xochimilco, which is a great city where nearly all the houses are built in a fresh water lake, distant about two and a half leagues from Mexico. We marched with great circumspection and in close order as it was always our custom to do, and we passed through some pine forests, but there was no water whatever along the road. As we carried our arms on our backs and it was already late and the sun was very hot we suffered much from thirst, but we did not know if there was any water ahead of us, for we had marched two or three leagues and we were still uncertain how far off was the pool which we had been told was on the road. When Cortés saw that the whole of the army was tired out and our allies the Tlaxcalans were dispirited, and one of them