



## BOOK XI.

### PRELIMINARY EXPEDITIONS.

#### CHAPTER CXLI.

How our Captain Cortés went on an expedition to the pueblo of Saltocan which stands in a lake about six leagues distant from the City of Mexico, and how he went from there to other pueblos, and what happened on the road I will go on to say.



Over fifteen thousand Tlaxcalans had come to Texcoco with the timber for the launches, and had already been five days in the city without doing anything worth mentioning, and, as they had not brought supplies with them, food was getting scarce, and the Captain of the Tlaxcalans being a very valiant and proud man (I have already said his name was Chichimecatecle), said to Cortés that he wished to go and render some service to our great Emperor by fighting against the Mexicans, both to show his strength and the goodwill he bore us, as well as to avenge the deaths and robberies that the Mexicans had brought upon his brethren and his vassals, in Mexico itself and in his own country, and he begged as a favour from Cortés that he would command and instruct him in what direction he should go and encounter our enemies.

Cortés replied to him that he thought very highly of his good-will, and said that he wished to go himself, the next day, to a pueblo named Saltocan, five or six leagues distant from the City of Texcoco, where, although the houses were built in the waters of a lake, there was an entrance from the land. He had sent three times to summon the people of that pueblo to make peace and they refused to do so, and he had again sent messengers from the people of Tepetescuco<sup>1</sup> and Otumba who were their neighbours, and instead of making peace they ill-treated the messengers and wounded two of them, and the answer that they sent was, that if we came there we would find forces and a fortress as strong as Mexico, and come when we might, we would find them on the field of battle, for they had received word from their Idols that they would kill us there, and their Idols had advised them to send this reply.

It was for this reason that Cortés got ready to go in person on this expedition, and ordered two hundred and fifty soldiers to go in his company with thirty horsemen, and he took with him, Pedro de Alvarado and Cristóbal de Olid and many musketeers and crossbowmen, and all the Tlaxcalans, and a company of warriors from Texcoco, nearly all of them chieftains. He left Gonzalo de Sandoval on guard at Texcoco, and told him to keep a good look out both on the Texcocans, and the launches and the camp, and see that no attack was made on it by night for, as I have already said, we had always to keep on the alert, on the one hand to guard against the Mexicans themselves and on the other, because we were in such a great city, as was Texcoco, where all the inhabitants of the city were relations and friends of the Mexicans. He also ordered Sandoval

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<sup>1</sup> Tepetexcoco?

and Martin López, the master carpenter of the launches, to have the vessels ready to be launched and to sail within fifteen days.

Then after hearing Mass, Cortés left Texcoco and set out on that expedition with his army; and as he marched along, not far from Saltocan, he met great squadrons of Mexicans who were awaiting him in a place where they believed that they could get the better of our Spaniards and kill the horses. Cortés ordered the horsemen (and he himself kept with them) as soon as the muskets and crossbows had been discharged, to break in upon the enemy; however, they killed only a few Mexicans, who at once took refuge in the bush, and in places where the horsemen could not follow them, but our friends the Tlaxcalans captured and killed about thirty of them.

That night Cortés went to sleep at some huts, and kept a good look-out with scouts, watchmen, patrols and spies, for they were in a thickly peopled country, and he knew that Guatemoc the Prince of Mexico had sent many squadrons of warriors to Saltocan as reinforcements, and these troops had come in canoes along some deep creeks. Early the next morning the Mexicans and the people of Saltocan began to attack our troops when they were close to the pueblo, and they shot many darts and arrows at them and slung stones from their slings, from the canals where they were posted, and they wounded ten of our soldiers and many of our Tlaxcalan allies, and our horsemen could do them no hurt, for they could not gallop nor cross the creeks which were all full of water. The causeway and road by which they were used to enter the town from the land had been destroyed and broken down by hand only a few days before, and they had so flooded it that it was as full of water as the ditches. Owing to this,

our soldiers found no way by which they could enter the town, or do any damage to its defenders, although the musketeers and crossbowmen kept up a fire against those who went about in canoes, but the canoes were protected by bulwarks of wood, and besides the bulwarks they took good care not to expose themselves. Our soldiers seeing that they could gain no advantage whatever, and that they could not hit on the road and causeway which was there before, because it was all covered with water, cursed the town and our profitless expedition, and were half ashamed because the Mexicans and townspeople shouted at them and called them women, and said that Malinche was a woman too, and that his only bravery was in deceiving them with stories and lies. Just at this moment, two of the Indians, who had come there with our people, who belonged to the pueblo Tepetzcucó and were very hostile to the people of Saltocan, said to one of our soldiers, that three days before they had seen the people of Saltocan breaking open the causeway and they made a ditch [across] it and turned the water of another canal into it, and that not very far ahead the road began again and led to the town. When our soldiers thoroughly understood this, the musketeers and crossbowmen were ranged in good order, some loading while the others fired, and thus, little by little and not altogether, sometimes skipping along and at other times wading waist deep, all our soldiers crossed over, with many of our allies following them. Cortés and the horsemen, turning their backs on our soldiers, kept guard on the land, for they feared that the Mexican squadrons might again fall on our rear. When our men had passed the canals, as I have described, the enemy fell on them with fury, and wounded many of them, but as they had made up their minds to gain the causeway which was close by, they still

forged ahead until they could attack the enemy on land, clear of the water, and then they got to the town. Without further waste of words they fell on the enemy so fiercely that they killed many of them and repaid them well for the trick they had played. Much cotton cloth and gold and other spoil was taken, but, as the town was built in the lake, the Mexicans and the inhabitants soon got into their canoes with all the property they were able to carry, and went off to Mexico.

When our people saw the town deserted, they burned some of the houses, and as they did not dare to sleep there because the town stood in the water, they returned to where Captain Cortés was awaiting them. In that town they captured some very good-looking Indian women, and the Tlaxcalans came out of it rich with cloaks and salt and gold and other spoil. Then they all went to sleep at some huts near some limekilns, about a league distant from Saltocan, and there they dressed their wounds. One soldier died within a few days of an arrow wound in the throat. Sentinels were at once posted, and scouts sent out and every precaution was taken, for all that country was thickly peopled by Culuans.

The next day they marched to the great pueblo named Guautitlan, and as they went on their way, the Indians from the neighbouring villages, and many Mexicans who had joined them, yelled and whistled and shouted insults at our men, but they kept to the canals and the places where the horsemen could not gallop and no harm could be done to them. In this way, our troops arrived at the town which had been abandoned that same day and all property carried off. That night they slept there, well guarded by sentinels and patrols, and the following day marched on to the great pueblo called Tenayuca; this is the place that on our first entrance to Mexico we

called El Pueblo de las Sierpes, because in the principal temple we found the images of two great hideous-looking serpents which were the Idols they worshipped. Let us leave this and go back to this matter of the march. They found this pueblo deserted like the last, and all the Indian inhabitants had assembled together in another town further on called Tacuba. From Tenayuca they marched to Atzacapotzalco,<sup>1</sup> about half a league distant one from the other, and this too was deserted. This town of Atzacapotzalco was where they used to work the gold and silver for the great Montezuma, and we used to call it El pueblo de los Plateros. From there they marched to another town, which I have said was called Tacuba, a distance of half a league one from the other, and this is the place where we halted on that sad night when we came out from Mexico routed, and here they killed some of our soldiers, as I have already said in a former chapter that deals with this subject.

Let us go back to our story: Before our army could reach the town it was met in the open by a large number of troops which were lying in wait for Cortés, gathered from all the pueblos through which the army had passed, as well as those from Tacuba and Mexico, for Mexico was close by. All of them together began an attack on our people in such a manner that our Captain and the horsemen had all they could do to break through their ranks, so close did they keep together. However, our soldiers with good sword play forced them to retreat; then, as it was night-time, they went to sleep in the town after posting sentinels and watchmen.

If there had been many Mexicans gathered together that day, there were many more on the next morning, and in excellent order they advanced to attack our

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<sup>1</sup> Escapuçalco in the text.

people with such energy that they killed and wounded some of our soldiers. Nevertheless, our men forced them to retreat to their houses and fortress, so that they found time to enter Tacuba and burn and sack many of the houses. When this was known in Mexico, many more squadrons were ordered to go forth from the city to fight against Cortés, and it was arranged that when they fought with him, they should pretend to turn in flight towards Mexico, and little by little they should draw our army on to the causeway until they had them well on to it, and that they should behave as though they were retreating out of fear.

As it was arranged, so they carried it out, and Cortés believing that he was gaining a victory, ordered the enemy to be followed as far as a bridge. When the Mexicans thought that they had already got Cortés in their trap, and the bridge had been crossed, a huge multitude of Indians turned on him, some in canoes and others by land, and others on the azoteas, and they placed him in such straits and matters looked so serious that he believed himself to be defeated, for at the bridge that he had reached, they fell on him with such force that he could effect little or nothing. A standard bearer who carried a banner, in resisting the charge of the enemy, was badly wounded and fell with his banner from the bridge into the water, and was in danger of being drowned, and the Mexicans had even seized him to drag him into a canoe, but he was so strong that he escaped with his banner. In that fight they killed four or five of our soldiers and wounded many of them, and Cortés recognising the great audacity and want of forethought that he had shown in going on to the causeway in the way I have related, and feeling that the Mexicans had caught him in a trap, ordered all his followers to retire in the best order possible without turning their backs, but with

their faces towards the enemy and hand to hand as though resisting an onset. Of the musketeers and crossbowmen some loaded, while the others fired, and the horsemen made some charges, but they were very few, for the horses were soon wounded. In this way, Cortés escaped that time from the power of the Mexicans, and when he got on dry land he gave great thanks to God.

It was at that causeway and bridge that Pedro de Ircio (often mentioned by me before) said to the standard bearer named Juan Volante, who fell into the lake with his banner, to insult him (for he was not on good terms with him on account of a love affair with a woman who had come at the time of the Narvaez expedition), "that he had drowned the son and now he wished to drown the mother," for the banner that Volante was carrying bore the picture of Our Lady the Virgin Santa Maria. He had no reason for making that remark, for the standard bearer was a gentleman and a very valiant man, as he showed himself to be then and at many other times, and it did not go well with Pedro de Ircio for the ill-will he bore towards Juan Volante.

Let us leave Pedro de Ircio, and say that during the five days that Cortés stayed in Tacuba, he had encounters and battles with the Mexicans, and he then returned to Texcoco along the road by which he had come. On the road, the Mexicans raised shouts, believing that he was turning in flight, and they only suspected what was true; and they laid in wait for him in places where they thought to gain honour by attacking him and killing the horses; and they prepared ambushes, and when Cortés saw that, he too set an ambushade and wounded many of the enemy, but they managed to kill two horses, and after that they did not follow him any further.

By long marches, Cortés arrived at a pueblo subject to Texcoco, named Acolman, about two leagues and a half



distant from Texcoco, and as soon as we knew that he had arrived there we went out with Gonzalo de Sandoval to see him and receive him, accompanied by many horsemen and soldiers and the Caciques of Texcoco, especially by Don Hernando, the principal Cacique of that City. We were greatly delighted at the sight of Cortés, for we had known nothing of what had happened to him for fifteen days. After welcoming him, and having some necessary conversation on military matters, we returned to Texcoco that afternoon, for we did not dare to leave the camp without a sufficient guard. Our Cortés stayed in that pueblo until the following day, when he came to Texcoco, and we gave him another reception. The Tlaxcalans, as they were now rich and came laden with spoil, asked leave to return to their homes, and Cortés granted it, and they went by a road where the Mexicans could not spy on them and saved their property.

At the end of four days, during which our Captain was resting, and hurrying on the building of the launches, the people from some pueblos on the North Coast came to ask for peace and offer themselves as vassals to His Majesty and these pueblos were named Tuxpan and Matalcingo and Nautla<sup>1</sup> and other small pueblos in the neighbourhood, and they brought a present of gold and of cotton cloth. They came before Cortés with the greatest reverence and when they had offered their present, they begged him to graciously admit them to his friendship, as they wished to become vassals of the King of Castile. They said that when the Mexicans had killed six Teules in the affair at Almeria, the Mexican Captain was Quetzalpopoca whom we had already burned in punishment, and that all the pueblos which had now come to him went to the help of

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<sup>1</sup> Tuçapan y MasCalzingo y Navtlan in the text. Matalcingo is not shown on the modern map, but on an old map is marked near C. de Palmas in the neighbourhood of Tuxpan.

the Teules. When Cortés heard this, although he knew that they had been concerned with the Mexicans in the death of Juan de Escalante and the six soldiers who were slain in the affair at Almeria (as I have already related in the Chapter that treats of the matter) he showed them much good-will and accepted the present, and received them as vassals of our Lord the Emperor, and he did not demand an explanation of what had happened, nor call it to mind, for it was not a convenient time to take other steps, and with kind words and promises he dismissed them. At this same time, there came to Cortés other pueblos from among those who had become our friends, asking for help against the Mexicans, and they said that we must come and help them because great squadrons of Mexicans were coming against them and had entered their territory and were carrying off many of their Indians as prisoners, and had wounded others. There also came at the same time, people from Chalco and Tlamanalco who said that if we did not come to their assistance they would all be lost, for many garrisons of their enemies had attacked them, and they told a most pitiful tale, and brought a piece of hennequen cloth, painted with an exact representation of the squadrons of Mexicans which had come against them. Cortés did not know what to say, nor how to answer them or help them, either one way or the other, for he had seen that many of our soldiers were wounded and ill, and eight had died of pains in the back, and from throwing up clotted blood mixed with mud from the mouth and nose, and it was from the fatigue of always wearing armour on our backs, and from the everlasting going on expeditions and from the dust that we swallowed. In addition to this, he saw that three or four horses had died of their wounds, and that we never stopped going on expeditions, some coming and others going. So the answer he gave to the first pueblos

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was to flatter them, and to say that he would soon come to help them, but that while he was on the way, they should get help from other pueblos, their neighbours, and should wait for the Mexicans in the open, and all of them together should attack the enemy, and that if the Mexicans should see that they showed a bold front and matched their strength against them, they would be afraid, for the Mexicans had no longer the forces with which to attack them that they used to have, as they had so many enemies to oppose. He said so much to them, through our interpreters, that he encouraged and put heart into them, and they at once asked for letters for two pueblos in their neighbourhood, which were allies of ours, ordering them to come to their assistance. They did not understand the letters at the time, but they knew well that among us it was a sure thing that when letters were sent they contained commands or signs that we were ordering something of importance. With these letters they went off well contented and showed them to their friends and summoned them to their assistance. As Cortés had ordered them, they awaited the Mexicans in the open and fought a battle with them, and with the help of our allies, their neighbours to whom they had delivered the letters, they did not do badly.

Let us return to the people of Chalco ; as our Cortés saw how important it was for us that this province and the road through it should be freed from Mexicans, (for as I have already said, it was the way we had to come and go to Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz and to Tlaxcala, and we had to supply our camp from that province, for it was a land that produced much Maize), he at once ordered Gonzalo de Sandoval the Chief Alguazil to get ready to start the next morning for Chalco, and he ordered him to take twenty horsemen and two hundred soldiers, twelve crossbowmen and ten musketeers and the Tlaxcalans who

were in camp, who were very few, (for as I have already said in this Chapter, the greater number of them had gone to their homes laden with spoil) and Sandoval, also took with him a company of Texcocans, and Captain Luis Marin who was his intimate friend. Cortés and Pedro de Alvarado and Cristóbal de Olid remained behind to guard the city and the launches.

Before Gonzalo de Sandoval goes to Chalco, as had been arranged, I wish to say here, that while I was writing this story about all that had happened to Cortés in his expedition to Saltocan, there happened to be present two gentlemen who were much interested, as they had read Gomara's History, and they said to me, that there were three things that I had forgotten to write down, which the historian Gomara had written about this same expedition of Cortés; the one was that Cortés visited Mexico with thirteen launches and fought a good battle with the great forces of Guatemoc in their great canoes and pirogues on the lake; the other was that when Cortés entered on the causeway to Mexico, that he held conversations with the Mexican Lords and Caciques, and told them that he would cut off their food supply and they would die of hunger; and the other was that Cortés did not wish to tell the people of Texcoco that he was going to Saltocan lest they should give warning to the people of that town. I answered these same gentlemen that at that time the launches were not finished building, and how could they carry launches overland, or horses or so many people across the lake? It is laughable to write about such a thing. When Cortés advanced along the causeway, as I have related, he had quite enough to do to make his escape with his army, and at that time we had not blockaded Mexico so as to deprive them of food, and they were not suffering from hunger, and they were lords of all their vassals, and what happened many days later when we had

them in our grip, Gomara places here. In what he says, that Cortés went away by another road to go to Saltocan so that the people of Texcoco should not know, I say that they were obliged to go through the pueblos and lands of Texcoco, for the road lay in that direction and in no other, and what he writes is mere nonsense. As I understand it the fault is not his, but that of the man who gave him the information and who told him the story which he has written down, possibly giving him money in order to heighten the praise and glorify him and exaggerate his exploits. He was told these stories so that he should not publish our heroic deeds and that is the truth.

When these two gentlemen who had told me about it saw clearly that what I said was true, they swore that they would tear up the book and history of Gomara which they had in their possession, for so many things he describes as happening in a certain way, are not true.

Let us leave this matter and turn to Captain Gonzalo de Sandoval who left Texcoco after hearing Mass, and arrived near Chalco early in the morning, and what happened I will go on to tell.

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#### INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO CHAPTERS CXLII TO CXLV.

DURING the expeditions described in the four following Chapters, the Spaniards passed out of the Valley of Mexico through the gap between the Serrania of Ajusco and the slopes of Popocatepetl, and descended into the plains of Morelos and Cuernavaca. The towns of Yecapixtla, Oaxtepec, Yautepec, and Cuernavaca all stand at somewhat the same altitude, about 5000 ft. above the level of the sea and a little more than 2000 ft. below the level of the Valley of Mexico. The Serrania of Ajusco, with its innumerable extinct craters and somewhat recent lava fields, and the mass of Popocatepetl, form a lofty barrier to the north of these towns, which is edged near Tepostlan and towards the East by a fringe of broken

and abrupt conglomerate rock, forming hills and cliffs, with spurs running southward into the plains of Morelos and Cuernavaca. Just to the south of this rampart, several isolated hills of a few hundred feet in height arise somewhat abruptly from the plain, and it was on one of these hills that the Indians took refuge.

Ixtlilxochitl<sup>1</sup> says that Tlayacapan, which lies halfway between Yecapixtla and Teposlan, is the hill or Peñol which was so successfully defended against the attack of the Spaniards, and there is no doubt that the Peñol must have been in that neighbourhood.

Neither Bernal Díaz nor Cortés appear to have visited Yecapixtla, and their descriptions of its position are somewhat misleading. The town is not situated on a lofty eminence, but, like Cuernavaca, although on slightly rising ground, it hardly stands out from the surrounding plain. These plains slope gradually to the south, and are deeply scored by the numerous small streams which, flowing from the mountains to the north, have cut their way deep down through soil and rock, forming ravines or barrancas, which, in chosen spots, render fortifications almost unnecessary. Both Yecapixtla and Cuernavaca are nearly surrounded by such ravines.

Bernal Díaz falls into an error, with regard to Yautepec, when describing the route followed by the army; this error is corrected in a foot-note on page 67. Cortés, in his third letter, says that after leaving Yautepec they went to Gilutepeque. No such name is now known, and we can safely follow Bernal Díaz, who says that the town was Tepostlan (although Orozco y Berra says that Bernal Díaz "confounds" the name with that of Tepostlan). From the nature of the ground, the pursuit by the horsemen after leaving Yautepec must have been in the direction of Tepostlan, and that position also fits in with the march two days later to Cuernavaca.

The return march from Cuernavaca across the Serrania de Ajusco was a most laborious undertaking, as a height of at least 10,000 ft. above sea level had to be reached before descending to the valley in the direction of Xochimilco.

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By an unfortunate error, Tlamanalco is not marked in the map of the Valley of Mexico, issued in Vol. III. Its position between Chalco and Amecameca is given in the map showing the route of the Spaniards from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico, issued with Vol. I.

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<sup>1</sup> "Historia Chichimeca," Cap. 93. MS., see Orozco y Berra, *Hist. Antigua*, vol. iv, p. 541.

## CHAPTER CXLII.

How Captain Gonzalo de Sandoval went to Chalco and Tlamanalco with the whole of his army; and I will go on to tell what happened on the march.

I HAVE already said in the last Chapter that the pueblos of Chalco and Tlamanalco came to ask Cortés to send them help, because there were great companies and squadrons of Mexicans in their neighbourhood who had come to attack them. They told such a tale of woe that he ordered Gonzalo de Sandoval to go to their aid with two hundred soldiers, twenty horsemen, ten or twelve cross-bowmen and some musketeers, and our Tlaxcalan friends, and a company of Indians from Texcoco. Sandoval took Captain Luis Marin with him as a companion, for they were great friends.

After hearing Mass, he set out on the 12th March in the year 1521, and they slept at some farms belonging to Chalco, and on the next morning arrived at Tlamanalco where the Caciques and Captains gave him a good reception and provided food, and advised him to go at once in the direction of a great pueblo called Oaxtepec,<sup>1</sup> for he would find the whole of the Mexican forces either assembled at Oaxtepec or on the road thither; and they said that all the warriors from the province of Chalco would accompany him.

Sandoval thought it advisable to set out at once, so the order was given, and they went on to sleep at another pueblo subject to Chalco called Chimaluacan, for the spies, sent by the people of Chalco to watch the Culuas, came to report that the enemy's forces were lying in wait for them in some rocky defiles in the neighbourhood of that town.

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<sup>1</sup> Guaxtepeque in the text.