

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,¹ 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.

¹ Guaxtepeque in the text.

As Sandoval was very crafty and well advised, he sent the musketeers and crossbowmen in advance, and ordered the horsemen to keep together in parties of three, and, when the crossbowmen and musketeers had fired their shots, to charge the enemy at a hand gallop with their lances held short, so as to strike the faces of their enemies and put them to flight, and always to keep together in parties of three. He ordered the foot soldiers always to keep their close formation and not to charge the enemy until he gave the order, for it was reported that the enemy were very numerous, and this proved to be true. As the enemy was posted in broken ground and it was not known if they had dug pits or raised barricades, Sandoval wished to keep his soldiers well in hand so as to avoid any disaster.

As he continued his march he saw the Mexican squadrons approaching him in three divisions, shouting and whistling and sounding trumpets and drums. The Indians were armed with all their usual weapons and they came on to the attack like fierce lions. When Sandoval saw how bold they were, he did not keep to the orders he had given, but told the horsemen to charge them at once before they could reach our men. Cheering on his troops by shouting "Santiago and at them," Sandoval led the charge himself, and by that movement, he nearly routed some of the Mexican squadrons, but not all of them, so that they soon turned and showed a firm front, for they were helped by the bad track and broken ground, and the horsemen owing to the rough ground were not able to gallop and could not get in rear of them. For this reason, Sandoval turned, and ordered the musketeers and crossbowmen to go ahead in good formation and told the shield bearers to keep on their flanks, and when they could see that they were wounding and damaging the enemy and should hear a shot fired from this other side of the barranca, that it would be a signal for all the horsemen to charge together and hurl

the enemy from that position, for he thought that they could be driven on to the level ground near by. He also warned his [Indian] allies to be ready to support the Spaniards. Sandoval's orders were carried out, and in that movement many of our men were wounded, for the enemies who attacked them were very numerous. To finish my story, the Mexicans were forced into retreat but their flight was towards other bad passes. Sandoval and the horsemen went in pursuit, but overtook only three or four of the enemy. During that pursuit, owing to the badness of the road, the horse of a cavalryman, named Gonzalo Domínguez, fell with his rider beneath him, and the man died from his injuries within a few days. I call this to mind because Gonzalo Domínguez was one of the best horsemen and one of the most valiant men that Cortés had brought in his Company, and we held him in as much esteem for his valour, as we did Cristóbal de Olid and Gonzalo de Sandoval, so that we all felt the loss greatly.

To go back to Sandoval and his army ; they followed the enemy to the neighbourhood of a pueblo already mentioned by me which is called Oaxtepec, but before reaching the town, over fifteen thousand Mexicans emerged from it and began to surround our soldiers and wounded many of them and five horses, but as the ground was level in some places, our horsemen, making a united effort, broke up two of their squadrons, and the rest turned tail and fled towards the town in order to guard some barricades which they had raised, but our soldiers and the allies followed so close that they had no time to defend them, and the horsemen kept up the pursuit in other directions until they had shut the enemy up in a part of the town where they could not be reached. Thinking that the enemy would not again renew the attack on that day, Sandoval ordered his men to rest and tend their wounds, and they began to take their

food, and much spoil was taken in that town. While they were eating, two horsemen and two soldiers who had been told off before the men began to eat, the horsemen as scouts and the soldiers as sentinels, ran in crying "To arms, to arms; the Mexicans are coming in great force." As they were always accustomed to have their arms in readiness, the horsemen were soon mounted and they came out into a great plaza. At that moment the enemy were upon them, and there they fought another good battle. After the enemy had been for some time showing us a good front from some barricades and wounding some of our men, Sandoval fell on them so suddenly with his horsemen, that with the help of the muskets and crossbows and the sword-play of the soldiers, he drove them from the town into some neighbouring barrancas, and they did not come back again that day.

When Captain Sandoval found himself free from that struggle, he gave thanks to God and went to rest and sleep in an orchard within the town, which was so beautiful and contained such fine buildings that it was the best worth beholding of anything we had seen in New Spain.¹ There were so many things in it to look at that it was really wonderful and was certainly the orchard of a great prince, and they could not go all through it then, for it was more than a quarter of a league in length.

Let us stop talking about the orchard and say that I

¹ Blotted out in the original: "both on account of the arrangement and diversity of the many kinds of fruit trees and of the roses and other sweet-scented plants, and for the arrangement made for the supply of water from a river which was led into the garden, and the rich chambers and the decoration of them, and the sweet-scented cedar wood and the excellent furniture, and the - - - benches, and the numerous houses, all coated with plaster and adorned with a thousand pictures, and the avenues and the weaving together of the branches, and in other parts the medicinal herbs and the vegetables, many of them very good to eat."

did not go myself on this expedition, nor did I then walk about this orchard, but I went there about twenty days later when, in company with Cortés, we made the round of the great towns of the lakes, as I shall tell later on. The reason why I did not go this first time was because I had been badly wounded by a spear-thrust in the throat, and was in danger of dying from it, and I still bear the scar. The wound was given me during the Iztapalapa affair, when they tried to drown us. As I was not in this expedition, for this reason, I say in telling the story, "they went" and "they did" so and so, and such a thing "happened to them," and I do not say, "we did" it or "I did" it, nor saw it, nor "I was there." Nevertheless, all that I have written about it, happened as I have stated, for one soon learns in camp what happens on an expedition, and one is not able to leave out or exaggerate anything that happened.

Let us stop talking of this and return to Captain Gonzalo de Sandoval, who on the following day, when he noticed that there was no sound of movement on the part of the Mexican warriors, sent to summon the Caciques of the town, despatching as messengers, five Indians, natives of the place, whom he had captured in battle, two of whom were chieftains. He ordered them to tell the Caciques to have no fear, and to come and make peace and he would pardon them for all that had happened, and used other good arguments. The messengers who were sent, treated for peace, but the Caciques did not dare to come in for fear of the Mexicans.

The same day, Sandoval sent to another large pueblo called Yecapixtla,¹ about two leagues distant from Oaxtepec, to tell the people to consider what a good thing it was to be at peace and not desire war and that they

¹ Acapistla in the text.

should bear in mind and take warning from what had happened to the squadrons of Culuas stationed in the pueblo of Oaxtepec, how they had all been defeated, and he told them that they had better make peace and expel the Mexican garrisons who were guarding their country, and that if they did not do so he would come and make war on them and chastise them. The answer returned was that they [the Spaniards] might come when they liked, for they were looking forward to feast on their flesh and provide sacrifices for their Idols.

When this reply was given, the Caciques from Chalco, who were with Sandoval, knew that there must be a large force of Mexicans in garrison at Yecapixtla ready to make war on Chalco as soon as Sandoval should retire; and for this reason they begged him to go to Yecapixtla and drive the Mexicans out of the place. However, Sandoval was not willing to go, one reason being that many of his soldiers and horses were wounded, and the other that he had already fought three battles and he did not wish to exceed the instructions that Cortés had given him. Moreover, some of the gentlemen whom he had brought in his company, men from the army of Narvaez, advised him to return to Texcoco and not go to Yecapixtla, which was strongly fortified, lest some disaster should befall him. However, the Captain, Luis Marin, counselled him not to fail to go to that fortress and do what he could, for the Caciques from Chalco said that if he turned back without defeating the force which was assembled in that fortress, that as soon as they saw or heard that he had returned to Texcoco, the enemy would at once attack Chalco.

As it was only two leagues from Oaxtepec to Yecapixtla, Sandoval decided to go there and gave orders to his soldiers and they set out. As soon as he came in sight of the town, before reaching it, a host of warriors came out and began to shoot darts and arrows and cast stones

from their slings, so that they fell like hail, and three horses and many soldiers were wounded without our men being able to do any harm to the enemy. Then the enemy climbed up among their crags and strongholds and from thence shouted, yelled and whistled and sounded their trumpets and drums. When Sandoval heard this, he ordered some of his horsemen to dismount, and the rest to remain in the fields where it was open ground and to keep on the alert to see that no reinforcement of Mexicans should reach Yecapixtla whilst he was attacking the town. When he observed that the Caciques from Chalco and their Captains and many of the Indian warriors were manœuvring round about without daring to attack the enemy, on purpose to try them and to see what they would answer, Sandoval said to them, "What are you doing: why don't you begin to fight and get into the town and fortress, for we are here and will defend you." They replied that they did not dare to do it, that the enemy were in a stronghold, and it was for this very purpose that Sandoval and his brother Teules had come with them and that the people of Chalco had come under his protection relying on his help to drive the enemy out.

So Sandoval and all his soldiers and musketeers and crossbowmen began the attack and ascent and many were wounded as they clambered up and Sandoval himself was again wounded in the head, and many of our allies were wounded, for they too entered the town and did much damage to it, and it was the Indians from Chalco and our allies from Tlaxcala who did most damage to the enemy, for our soldiers after breaking up their ranks and putting them to flight, would not give a sword-thrust at the enemy, for it seemed to them mere cruelty, and they were chiefly occupied in looking out for pretty Indian women or seeking for plunder, and they frequently quarrelled with our allies on account of their cruelty, and took the Indian

men and women away from them to prevent their being killed.

Let us stop talking about this and say that the Indian warriors in order to defend themselves, took refuge among the crags down below, which were near the town, and as many of those who went to hide themselves in the gorge of the river were wounded and bleeding, the water became somewhat turbid with blood but the discolouration did not last long, not half an Ave Maria, but it is here that the historian Gomara says in his history that our soldiers were parched with thirst because the river ran red with blood. I say that there are so many springs and so much clear water below there, that there was no need of more water.¹

I must go on to say that when this was over, Sandoval and all his army returned to Texcoco with much spoil, especially of good looking Indian women.

When the lord of Mexico, who was called Guatemoc, heard of the defeat of his armies it is said that he showed much resentment at it, and still more at the thought that the people of Chalco, who were his subjects and vassals, should dare to take up arms three times against his forces.

He was so angry that he resolved that as soon as Sandoval should return to his camp at Texcoco he would send out a great force of warriors, which he at once assembled in the city of Mexico, and another force which was got together from the lake, equipped with every sort

¹ Bernal Díaz need not have fallen foul of Gomara over this incident, although it was probably a gross exaggeration, for Cortés himself in his 3rd letter to the Emperor says "and as our Indian Allies pursued them, and the enemy saw that they were conquered, so great was the slaughter at the hands of our people, and of those thrown down from above, that all who were there present affirm that a small river which almost surrounds the town was tinged with blood for more than an hour and prevented them from drinking, and as it was very hot, they were in great need of water."

of arms, and would despatch this force, numbering over twenty thousand Mexicans, in two thousand large canoes to make a sudden descent on Chalco, to do all the damage that it was possible to do.

This was all accomplished with such skill and rapidity that Sandoval had hardly arrived at Texcoco and spoken to Cortés, when again messengers came in canoes across the lake begging help from Cortés, telling him that more than two thousand canoes carrying over twenty thousand Mexicans had come to Chalco, and they begged him to come at once to their assistance.

At the very moment that Cortés heard this news Sandoval came to speak to him and to give him an account of what he had done during the expedition from which he had just then returned, but Cortés was so angry with him he would not listen to him, believing that it was through some fault or carelessness on his part that our friends at Chalco were experiencing this trouble, and without any delay, and without listening to him, Cortés ordered Sandoval to leave all his wounded men in camp and to go back again in all haste with those who were sound.

Sandoval was much distressed at the words Cortés used to him, and at his refusal to listen to him, but he set out at once for Chalco where his men arrived tired out with the weight of their arms and their long march. It appears that the people of Chalco, learning through their spies that the Mexicans were coming so suddenly upon them, and that Guatemoc had determined that they should be attacked, as I have already said, before any help could reach them from us, had sent to summon aid from the people of the province of Huexotzingo which was near by, and the men from Huexotzingo arrived that same night, all equipped with their arms, and joined with those from Chalco, so that in all there were more than twenty thousand of them. As they had already lost their fear

of the Mexicans they quietly awaited their arrival in camp and fought like brave men, and although the Mexicans killed many of them and took many prisoners, the people of Chalco killed many more of the Mexicans and took as prisoners fifteen captains and chieftains and many other warriors of lesser rank. The Mexicans looked upon this battle as a much greater disgrace, seeing that the people of Chalco had defeated them, than if they had been defeated by us.

When Sandoval arrived at Chalco and found that there was nothing for him to do, and nothing more to be feared as the Mexicans would not return again to Chalco, he marched back again to Texcoco and took the Mexican prisoners with him.

Whereat Cortés was delighted but Sandoval showed great resentment towards our captain for what had happened, and did not go to see or speak to him, until Cortés sent to tell him that he had misunderstood the affair, thinking that it was through some carelessness on the part of Sandoval that things had gone wrong, and that although he had set out with a large force of soldiers and horsemen he had returned without defeating the Mexicans.

I will cease speaking about this matter, for Cortés and Sandoval soon became fast friends again and there was nothing Cortés would not do to please Sandoval.

I will stop here and tell how we resolved that all the men and women slaves should be branded, for they were becoming very numerous, and how at that time a ship arrived from Spain, and what else happened.

CHAPTER CXLIII.

How the slaves were branded in Texcoco, and how the news came that a ship had arrived at the Port of Villa Rica, and what passengers had come in her and other things that happened, which I will go on to relate.

AS Gonzalo de Sandoval had arrived in Texcoco with a great booty of slaves and there were many others which had been captured in the late expeditions, it was decided that they should at once be branded. When proclamation was made that they were to be taken to a certain house to be branded, most of us soldiers took those slaves that we possessed to be marked with the brand of His Majesty, which was a G. which was meant to signify Guerra (war), in the way that we had already arranged with Cortés, as I have already related in the Chapter that treats of that subject. We thought that they [our slaves] would be returned to us after the Royal fifth had been paid, and that a price would be put on the women slaves in accordance with the value of each one of them. However it was not so done, and if the affair was badly managed at Tepeaca, it was managed much worse here at Texcoco; for after the Royal fifth had been deducted, another fifth was deducted for Cortés, and another fraction for his captains, and during the night when the slaves had been collected together, the best looking Indian women disappeared. Cortés had stated and promised us that the best looking women should be sold by auction for what they were worth, and those that were not so attractive for a lower price, but he made no such arrangement, and the Royal officials did just as they pleased, so that if wrong was done the first time, this time it was much worse. From this time on many of us soldiers when we captured good looking Indian women, so that they should not be taken