

## CHAPTER CLXXXIX.

How the Treasurer and many other gentlemen prayed the Franciscan Friars to send one Fray Diego Altamirano, a relation of Cortés, in a ship to Trujillo to make him [Cortés] return, and what happened about it.

THE Treasurer and other gentlemen who were partizans of Cortés saw that it was advisable for Cortés to return at once to New Spain, for factions and parties were already springing up, and the Accountant was not content that the Factor and Veedor should remain prisoners, and above all the Accountant stood in great fear of Cortés, when he should hear of what he [the Accountant] had written about him to His Majesty, as I have already stated in parts of former Chapters which tell about it. So they decided to go and beg the Franciscan Friars to grant leave for Fray Diego Altamirano to go to Trujillo in a ship, which they had ready for him well provisioned and with a good crew, and make Cortés come back, for that Friar was his kinsman and before he had become a Friar had been a soldier, a man of war who understood negotiation, and the Friars approved of it and Fray Diego Altamirano was quite willing to go.

We need not dwell on the voyage of the Friar, who was making his preparations, and I will relate that while the Factor and Veedor were prisoners, the Accountant, as I have repeatedly mentioned, apparently behaved very trickily and with ill will when he saw that the affairs of Cortés were on the mend. As the Factor used to have as friends many men who were brigands and always on the look-out for disputes and revolutions, and were well disposed towards the Factor and Chirinos because they gave them golden pesos and Indians, a number of them agreed to unite, and certain persons of quality and of all

sorts besides decided to release the Factor and Veedor and to kill the Treasurer and the jailors, and it is said that the Accountant knew about it and was delighted at it. In order to carry out their plans they spoke very secretly to a locksmith named Guzman, who was a maker of crossbows, a low fellow who made scurrilous jokes, and told him secretly to make them keys to open the gates of the prison and of the cages where the Factor was [confined] and they would pay him very well, and they gave him a piece of gold as a retainer for the making of the keys, and they warned him and charged him to be very secret. The locksmith replied with very flattering and cheerful expressions that he was glad to do it, and that they should be more careful of the secret than they were, for this affair upon which so much depended they had revealed to him knowing who he was, but they must not disclose it to others; and he was delighted that the Factor and Veedor should come out of prison, and he asked them who and how many were in the plot, and where they were to meet when they went to do that good deed, and what day and at what hour, and they told him everything clearly about the way they arranged it. The locksmith began to forge some keys in the shape of the pattern they brought him for the keys to be made from, but not with the intention of perfecting them or making them of any use for unlocking, and he did this on purpose, and mischievously made the keys so that they could not unlock, in order to induce them to come and go to his shop on the matter of the keys being made to fit properly, and meanwhile to get at the root of the conspiracy that had been made. The longer he delayed the making of the keys, the more thoroughly he gained this knowledge, and when the day came for him to deliver the keys which he had perfected, and all were ready posted with their arms, the

locksmith went quickly to the house of the Treasurer Alonzo de Estrada and reported the affair to him. When the Treasurer knew about it, he sent secretly without delay to collect all the partizans of Cortés, and without letting the Accountant know of it they went to the house where those were assembled who were about to release the Factor; and they quickly arrested as many as twenty of them who were all armed, and the others fled and could not be captured. When enquiry had been made for what purpose they had assembled there, it was found to have been in order to release those I have named, and to kill the Treasurer. Then it was also found out that the Accountant had approved of it. As there were among them three or four men very seditious and bandits, who had been concerned in all the revolts and discords that had taken place in Mexico at that time, and even during one of them had violated a Castilian woman, after a suit had been brought against them (this was done by a Bachelor named Ortega, who was acting as Chief Alcalde and came from the same district as Cortés), Ortega sentenced three of them to be hanged and others to be flogged, and the names of those who were hanged were Pastrana, the second Balverde and the third Escobar, and I do not remember the names of those who were flogged. The locksmith hid himself for many days, for he feared the partizans of the Factor would kill him for having revealed what they had told him under such great secrecy.

Let us stop talking of this, for the men are already dead, and although it is taking a great jump which I seem to make outside of my story, yet what I shall relate now falls into its place. It is that, when the Factor had sent a ship with all the gold he could obtain to His Majesty, as I have stated in former Chapters, and had written to His Majesty that Cortés was dead,

and how they had paid him funeral honours, and had informed him about other things which suited him, and was sending to beg His Majesty to grant him the favour of the Governorship, there went, it appears, in the same ship in which he sent his despatches, other letters well concealed, so that the Factor knew nothing about them, and these letters were for His Majesty so that he should know all that was happening in New Spain, and of the atrocities and injustice which the Factor and Veedor had committed.

In addition to this, His Majesty already had a report through the Royal Audiencia of Santo Domingo and the Geronimite Friars, who were Governors of the Indies, that Cortés was alive and was serving his royal crown by conquering and settling the province of Honduras. When the Royal Council of the Indies and the Chief Commander of Leon knew this they informed His Majesty of it. Then it is reported that the Emperor our Lord said "All that has been done in New Spain has been badly done in that they have rebelled against Cortés, and they have done me much disservice. However he is alive, and I have this opinion of him, that they will be punished in retribution for their evil deeds when he arrives in Mexico."

To go back to my story, the Friar Altamirano embarked at the port of Vera Cruz as it was arranged, and meeting with good weather arrived in a few days at the port of Trujillo where Cortés was residing.

As soon as the townspeople and Cortés observed a powerful ship sailing towards the port they at once guessed the truth that it was coming from New Spain to carry him to Mexico. As soon as it made the port and the Friar had landed, accompanied by all those whom he had brought with him, and Cortés knew some of them whom he had seen in Mexico, they all went to kiss his

hands, and the Friar embraced him, and with holy and good words all went to the Church to say their prayers, and thence to their quarters, where the Padre Fray Diego Altamirano told him that he was his cousin, and related all that had happened in Mexico, as I have already fully written it down, and what Francisco de las Casas had done for Cortés and how he had gone to Castile.

All that the Friar told him Cortés already knew through the letter of the Licentiate Zuazo, as I have related in the chapter that treats of it, and he showed great concern at [hearing] it and said that it pleased our Lord that it had so happened, and he gave great thanks to Him for it and for Mexico being already at peace, and that he wished to go there at once by land, as he did not dare to go by sea, for, as was already known by Zuazo's letter, he had already embarked twice, and he could not lay his course because the sea was beset by strong and adverse currents and it was always laborious sailing, moreover he was sickly. When the pilots told him that as it was the month of April there were no currents and the weather was fair at sea, he agreed to embark. He could not set sail at once, not until Captain Gonzalo Sandoval should arrive, whom he had sent to some pueblos called Olancho, which were distant fifty-five leagues, and he had only just started to eject from that district one of Pedrarias' Captains named Rojas, whom Pedrarias had sent from Nicaragua to explore the country and seek for mines, after he had beheaded Francisco Hernández as I have related. It appears that the Indians of that province of Olancho came to complain to Cortés that certain soldiers from Nicaragua were seizing their wives and daughters and stealing their poultry and all else they possessed. Sandoval promptly set out and took sixty men with him, and wished to capture Rojas, but through certain gentlemen, who

mediated between one party and the other, they were made friends, and Rojas even gave Sandoval [a present of] an Indian page to wait upon him. Just at that time Cortés' letter arrived [ordering him] to come back without delay with all his soldiers, and telling him of the coming of the Friar and all that had happened in Mexico. When Sandoval heard this he was very pleased and could hardly await the hour to turn back, but came post haste after having ejected Rojas from there [the district].

Cortés was delighted at Sandoval's return, and gave instructions to Captain Sayavedra, who remained behind as his lieutenant in that province, as to what he was to do. He then wrote to Captain Luis Marin, and to all of us, at once to take the road to Guatemala, and he told us about all that had happened in Mexico, in the way it is mentioned here, and of the coming of the Friar and about the imprisonment of the Factor and Veedor. He also ordered Captain Godoy, who was stationed at Puerto de Caballos [engaged in] forming a settlement, to go to Naco with all his people. These letters he gave to Sayavedra with orders to send them to us with all speed, and Sayavedra, out of spite, did not want to forward them and neglected his duty, and we learnt that in fact he would not deliver them, and we never knew about them.

To go back to my story, Cortés embarked with all his friends, and with favourable weather laid his course for Havana, for the wind was more favourable for that course than for New Spain. There he disembarked, and all the settlers at Havana who were his acquaintances rejoiced at it, and they took refreshment and heard the news (brought by a ship which had come to Havana from New Spain a few days before) that Mexico was pacified, and that the Indians who had fortified the hill of Coatlan and were waging war against the Spaniards, as soon as they knew that Cortés and we Conquistadores were alive, had made peace with the Treasurer on certain conditions. I will now go on with my story.

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## BOOK XV.

### THE RETURN TO MEXICO.

#### CHAPTER CXC.

How Cortés embarked at Havana to go to New Spain and with favourable weather arrived at Vera Cruz, and the delight shown by all at his coming.



AFTER Cortés had rested five days in Havana he could hardly await the hour when he would be in Mexico, and he promptly ordered all his people to embark and set sail, and with good weather he arrived in two days near to the Port of Medellin, opposite to the Island of Sacrificios. There he ordered the ships to be anchored (for the wind was not favourable for going any further), and so as not to sleep that night at sea, Cortés, with twenty soldiers who were friends of his, went ashore and marched on foot about half a league, and, as luck would have it, came on a drove of horses which had come to the port with certain passengers who were about to embark for Castile, and they went to Vera Cruz, a matter of five leagues, on the horses and mules of this drove. He ordered that no one should go and give notice that he was coming by land, and about two