

seemed as though he had addressed these remarks to Cortés to ensure his taking him as intercessor and petitioner, so that the decree should not be carried out against him, and in order that Cortés should give him some bars of gold for it. Other persons reported that Luis Ponce told it to Cortés in order to frighten him, so that he should implore not to be beheaded. When Cortés perceived this, he replied to the Friar with much courtesy and with great promises that he would give him the wherewithal to return to Castile, and Cortés told him that he had confidence that His Majesty, as a most Christian King, would send to confer favours [on him] for his many and great services which he had always rendered him, and would not find that he had done him any disservice whatever; this confidence which he held he likewise placed in Señor Luis Ponce de Leon as a person who would not go beyond what His Majesty had commanded him. When the Friar heard this, and found that Cortés did not beg him to become his intercessor with Luis Ponce, he became disconcerted, and I will relate what more happened, for Cortés never gave him any of the money he had promised him.

CHAPTER CXCI.

How the Licentiate Luis Ponce, after he had exhibited the Royal Decrees and met with obedience, ordered the Residencia of Cortés and those who had held judicial office to be proclaimed, and how he fell ill of sleeping sickness and died of it, and what else happened.

AFTER he [the Licentiate] had exhibited the Royal Decrees, and they had been obeyed with much reverence by Cortés, by the Municipality, and by the rest of the Conquistadores, he ordered a Residencia General to be proclaimed against Cortés and against those who had

held judicial office, and had been Captains. Since many persons were ill-disposed towards Cortés, and others were in the right in what they petitioned, what haste they made to lodge complaints of Cortés and to present witnesses, so that the city was seething with lawsuits and claims made against him! Some said that he did not give them the share of gold they were entitled to, others brought action because he did not give them Indians in accordance with His Majesty's commands, but gave them to servants of his father, Martin Cortés, and to other unworthy persons, servants of noblemen of Castile; others claimed for horses killed in the wars, for although there had been much gold with which he could have paid them, he had not satisfied them, in order to keep the gold himself. Others lodged complaints on account of personal insults that they suffered by order of Cortés, and one Juan Juarez, his brother-in-law, brought a wicked claim against him on account of Cortés's wife Doña Catalina Juarez la Marcayda. At that time a Fulano de Barrios had arrived from Castile, and Cortés married him to a sister of Juan Juarez and sister-in-law of his [own], and that claim which Juan Juarez had brought was settled for the time.

This Barrios is the man with whom one Miguel Díaz had a lawsuit about half the pueblo of Mestitan, as I have stated in the chapter that speaks about it.

To return to our Residencia—As soon as the Residencia was begun it pleased our Lord Jesus Christ on account of our sins and misfortune that the Licentiate Luis Ponce fell ill of sleeping sickness, and it happened in this way: coming from the Monastery of Señor San Francisco, after hearing Mass, he got a very severe fever and took to his bed and remained four days unconscious and out of his right mind, and most of the day and night he was asleep. When this was observed by

the doctors who attended him, namely the Licentiate Pero López and Doctor Ojeda, and another physician whom he [Luis Ponce] had brought from Castile, they unanimously agreed that it would be advisable for him to confess himself and receive the Holy Sacraments, and the Licentiate himself desired it most willingly.¹ After receiving them with humility and with great penitence he made his will, and appointed as his Lieutenant Governor the Licentiate Marcos de Aguilar, whom he had brought with him from the Island of Hispañola. Others say that this Marcos de Aguilar was a Bachelor and not a Licentiate, and that he had not the qualities for command. He [Ponce] left the power to him with this condition, that all the matters of lawsuits and contentions and Residencias, and the Edicts concerning the Factor and Veedor, should remain in the condition he left them until His Majesty had been informed of what had happened, and that they should at once send a messenger in a ship to His Majesty. When his will was made and his soul composed, on the ninth day after he had fallen ill he gave up his soul to Our Lord Jesus Christ. As soon as he was dead, the mourning and grief which the Conquistadores, one and all, felt was very great, and they wept for him as though he had been the father of them all, for he certainly came to assist those whom he should find to have served His Majesty faithfully, and he made this public before he died, and it was found in the decrees and instructions which he brought from His Majesty, that he was to give the best assignments of Indians to the Conquistadores, so that they should experience improvement in everything.

Cortés and most of the gentlemen of that City put on

¹ Blotted out in the original: "for he was a very good Christian of very many virtues."

mourning, and they carried him [the body] to bury it with great pomp at [the monastery of] Señor San Francisco, and with all the wax [candles] that could then be obtained. His burial was most solemn considering those times.

I have heard it said, by certain gentlemen who were present when he fell ill, that, as Luis Ponce was a musician and a man of naturally cheerful disposition, in order to cheer him up they went to play a guitar to him and give him a serenade, and he ordered them to play him a dance, and as he lay in bed he beat time with his fingers and feet and moved them about until the dance was finished, and at the very moment the dance ended he lost power of speech.

When he was dead and buried as I have related, one could hear the muttering there was in Mexico among persons who were hostile to Cortés and Sandoval, for they said and declared that they had given him [Luis Ponce] poison from which he died, and that he had done the same to Francisco de Garay, and he who insisted on it most was Fray Tomas Ortiz, already mentioned by me before, who came as Prior of certain Friars whom he [Luis Ponce] brought in his company, who also died of sleeping sickness within two months, as well as some of the other Friars. I also wish to state that it appears that the pestilence was caught in the ships in which Luis Ponce came, for more than one hundred persons who came in them caught sleeping sickness and disease of which they died at sea, and, after disembarking, many others died in the town of Medellin. Even of the Friars, very few survived, and among those who died was the Provincial or Prior who died within a few months; and there was a report that sleeping sickness spread in Mexico.

CHAPTER CXCIIL.

How, after the death of the Licentiate Luis Ponce de Leon, the Licentiate Marcos de Aguilar began to govern, and the disputes that arose about it; and how Captain Luis Marin and all those of us who were in his company chanced to meet Pedro de Alvarado who was marching in search of Cortés, and how both parties rejoiced, because the country was hostile and could not be traversed without great danger.

WHEN Marcos de Aguilar undertook the Government of New Spain in accordance with the will of Luis Ponce de Leon, many persons who were on bad terms with Cortés and all their friends and the majority of the Conquistadores wished the Residencia to be proceeded with as the Licentiate Luis Ponce de Leon had begun it, but Cortés objected that he [Aguilar] could not deal with it under the authority of Luis Ponce de Leon's last will, however, if Marcos de Aguilar desired to go on with it, that he was welcome to do so.

Another objection was raised by the Municipality of Mexico urging that Luis Ponce had no power to dispose in his will that the Licentiate Aguilar should govern alone, firstly because he was very old, in his dotage, and crippled with tumours, and had little authority and showed this in his appearance, and he knew nothing about the affairs of the country nor had he informed himself about them, nor about the persons who were worthy. Moreover, they would neither respect him nor dread him. It might [therefore] be best for him to take Cortés as his colleague in the government, until His Majesty should order otherwise, in order that all should fear [him] and the justice of His Majesty be greatly revered.

Marcos de Aguilar replied that he would depart neither much nor little from what Luis Ponce ordered in his will, and that he must govern alone, and that if they intended