

CHAPTER CXCIV.

How Marcos de Aguilar died, and by his will appointed the Treasurer Alonzo de Estrada as Governor (but he was not to give judgment in the suits of the Factor or Veedor, nor to grant or take away Indians, until His Majesty should ordain what was most to his advantage), in the same way as Luis Ponce had delegated his authority to him.

WHILE Marcos de Aguilar held the government, as I have stated, he was very consumptive and suffering from boils, and the doctors ordered him to be suckled by a woman of Castile, [by which means] and the milk of goats he supported himself for about eight months, then from those diseases and fevers which he caught he died.

In the will which he executed he enacted that the Treasurer Alonzo de Estrada should be sole Governor, with neither more nor less powers than he himself had received from Luis Ponce de Leon.

The Cabildo of Mexico and the procurators of certain cities, who at the time happened to be in Mexico, realised that Alonzo de Estrada would not be able to govern as well as the circumstances required, for the [following] reason: Nuño de Guzman, who two years previously had come from Castile to govern the province of Panuco, occupied the border-lands of Mexico, claiming that they belonged to his province. He came full of fury and regardless of the orders His Majesty had given in the decrees relating to the matter, which he had brought [with him]. Then because a settler from Mexico named Pedro Gonzáles de Trujillo, a man of high birth, had said that he did not wish to stay under his rule but under that of Mexico (because the Indians of his "encomienda" were not natives of Panuco), and on account of other words that passed; without giving him [Pedro Gonzáles] a chance to defend himself, he ordered him to be

hanged. In addition to this, he committed other follies, and hanged another Spaniard in order to make himself feared, and he had no respect for, and took no notice of, the Treasurer, Alonzo de Estrada, although he was Governor, nor did he hold him in such reverence as he was in duty bound to do. When they observed these follies of Nuño de Guzman, the Cabildo of Mexico and other gentlemen residents, in order to inspire Nuño de Guzman with fear, and make him obey His Majesty's commands, entreated the Treasurer to associate Cortés with himself in the government, as it would be to the advantage and to the service of God our Lord and of His Majesty. However, the Treasurer would not do so. Other persons said that Cortés did not wish to accept, in order that no malicious [persons] should [be able to] say that he wanted to assume the government by force, also because there were murmurs that suspicion attached to the death of Márcos de Aguilar, and that Cortés had caused it, and given him the dose from which he died. It was arranged that Gonzalo de Sandoval, who was Chief Alguacil, and a person held in very high esteem, should govern conjointly with the Treasurer, and the Treasurer thought well of it, but other persons alleged that if he agreed, it was in order to marry his daughter to Sandoval, for if the marriage took place he would be far more highly esteemed, and perchance would obtain the Government, for at that time this New Spain was not thought so much of as it is to-day.

During the Government of the Treasurer and Gonzalo de Sandoval, it seems that there were such crazy people in the world that one Fulano Proaño, who, it was said at that time, had gone to Jalisco fleeing from Mexico, and who afterwards became a very rich man, got into a dispute with the Governor Alonzo de Estrada, and made use of discourtesy of such a nature that I will not repeat

it here. Sandoval, who as governor should have arrested Proaño and tried the case, did not do so. Rumour said that he rather encouraged him to commit the atrocious crime and take to flight, whither he could not be got at, in spite of all the great efforts the Treasurer made to arrest him. [Moreover] a few days after this insult had taken place, another most evil crime was committed, in that they placed on the doors of the Treasurer's house some foul and very evil libels, and although it was well known who placed them there, seeing that justice could not be obtained, he [Sandoval] let it pass, and from that time onward the Treasurer was very ill disposed towards Cortés and Sandoval, and he detested them as very evil things.

Let us leave this and I will relate that at that time, when the plan was afoot which I have already mentioned for associating Cortés in the Government with the Treasurer—and they gave him Sandoval as a colleague, as I have related—Alonzo de Estrada was advised to go post haste in a ship to Castile and to give an account of it to His Majesty, and they even persuaded him to say that it was by force that they gave him Sandoval as an associate, as I have already related, because he did not wish and would not consent to Cortés governing with him. In addition to this, certain persons who were not on good terms with Cortés wrote other letters on their own account, and in them stated that Cortés had ordered poison to be administered to Luis Ponce de Leon and to Marcos de Aguilar and also to the Adelantado Garay¹; for it was believed that in some curds which they gave him at a pueblo named Iztapalapa, there was realgar, and on that account a friar of the order of Santo Domingo would

¹ Blotted out in the original: and they even made the ecclesiastic named Fray Tomas Ortiz write this, he who was Provincial of Santo Domingo and had come from Castile with Luis Ponce de Leon.

not eat them¹; and all this that they wrote was abomination and treachery which they stirred up against him.

They also wrote that Cortés wished to kill the Factor and Veedor.

At that time there also went to Castile the accountant Alborno, who was never on good terms with Cortés. When His Majesty and the members of the Royal Council of the Indies saw the letters I have mentioned speaking evil of Cortés, and made enquiries of the accountant Alborno regarding the affair of Luis Ponce and that of Marcos de Aguilar, it told very heavily against Cortés. Besides, they had heard about the defeat of Narvaez and about Garay and Tápia and the story of Catalina Juarez la Marçayda, his first wife, and they were misinformed about other matters and believed what they [the enemies of Cortés] had now written to be true. His Majesty promptly ordered by decree that Alonzo de Estrada should be the sole governor, and approved whatever he had done and the assignment of Indians he had made. He also ordered the Factor and Veedor to be released from their prisons and cages and their property to be returned to them. A ship came post haste with the decrees, and, in order to punish Cortés for the crimes of which he was accused, he [the Emperor] ordered a gentleman named Don Pedro de la Cueva, Grand Commander of the order of Alcántara, to proceed at once and to take with him three hundred soldiers at the expense of Cortés, and if he found him guilty to cut off his head, and [the heads] of those

¹ Blotted out in the original: and in addition to this they sent with the letters some copies of defamatory libels against Cortés which they found on one Gonzalo de Campo, in which it was said: "Oh! Fray Hernando Provincial, more complaints go about your person before His Majesty than those of the Duque de Arxona before his general," and I omit quoting five other documents which they wrote against him, for they are not fit to be advanced against a brave man such as Cortés.

who, together with him, had done any wrong to His Majesty, and to give the pueblos taken from Cortés to us, the true Conquistadores. He also ordered a Royal Audiencia to be ready to come, thinking that by this means true justice would be done. While the Comendador Don Pedro de la Cueva was preparing to set out for New Spain, either owing to certain discussions which took place later on at court, or because they did not give him as many thousand ducats as he demanded for the voyage, or because they believed that justice could be done through the Royal Audiencia [alone], or [may be] because the Duque de Bejar went surety for us as he had done on other occasions, his voyage was put off.

I must return to the Treasurer, who, when he saw himself thus favoured by His Majesty, and, having been so many times governor, that now again His Majesty had ordered him to be sole governor—and they had even made the Treasurer believe that our Lord the Emperor had been told that he was a son of the Rey Católico—became puffed up with pride and had reason for it. The first thing he did was to send a cousin of his, named Diego de Mazariegos, as Captain to Chiapa, with instructions to take the Residencia of Don Juan Enríquez de Guzman, who had been sent as Captain by Marcos de Aguilar, and it was found that he had committed more robberies and quarrels than he had bestowed benefits on that province. He also sent to conquer and bring to peace the pueblos of the Zapotecs and Mijes, and they were to go in two divisions so that they [the pueblos] might more easily be brought to peace. [In command of] the division [marching] from the north he sent a Fulano de Barrios, reported to have been a Captain in Italy and very valiant, who had recently come to Mexico from Castile (I do not mean the Barrios of Seville who was Cortés's brother-in-law), and he gave him over one hundred soldiers and among them

many musketeers and crossbowmen. When this Captain reached the pueblos of the Zapotecs, which are called the Tiltepeques, the native Indians of those pueblos sallied out one night and fell on the Captain and his soldiers, and so sudden was the attack that they killed Captain Barrios and seven other soldiers and wounded most of the others, and, if they had not all quickly taken to their heels¹ and found refuge in some friendly pueblos, all would have fallen. Here one can see the superiority of old Conquistadores over those recently come from Castile, who know nothing about warfare with Indians nor of their cunning. This put an end to that conquest.

I must tell now about the other Captain who went by way of Oaxaca. He was named Figueroa, a native of Cáceres, and was also reported to have been a very valiant Captain in Castile, and a great friend of the Treasurer, Alonzo de Estrada. He also took with him one hundred soldiers newly arrived in Mexico from Castile, many of them musketeers and crossbowmen, and ten of them even cavalrymen. When they reached the province of the Zapotecs he sent to summon one Alonzo de Herrera, who was stationed in those pueblos as Captain of thirty soldiers by order of Marcos de Aguilar while he was governor, as I have related in the chapter which treats of the subject. Alonzo de Herrera, having obeyed the summons (for it seems that Figueroa brought authority to place him [Herrera] under his orders), on certain disputes taking place and because he would not remain in his [Figueroa's] company, they came to drawing swords, and Herrera wounded Figueroa and three of his soldiers who came to his assistance.

When Figueroa saw that he was wounded and one of his arms maimed, he did not dare to penetrate into

1 ♡ ★ ¹ "Tomaran Calzas de Villadiego" (adage).

the mountains of the Mijes, which were very lofty and difficult to take; moreover, the soldiers he had brought with him knew nothing about conquering such countries. He determined to undertake the excavation of the graves in the burial places of the Caciques of those provinces, for he found in them a quantity of golden jewels which it was the custom in olden days to bury with the chieftains of those pueblos, and he attained such dexterity that he took out from them over five thousand pesos de oro, in addition to other jewels obtained from the pueblos. So he determined to abandon the conquest, and he left some of the pueblos in which he stayed more hostile than he found them, and he went to Mexico and thence to Castile, and the soldiers went each his own way.

When Figueroa had embarked at Vera Cruz, and was already on his way to Castile with his gold, such was his luck that the ship in which he sailed met with a furious head gale near Vera Cruz, and he and his gold were lost, and fifteen passengers were drowned, and everything was lost. Thus ended the expeditions which the Treasurer sent to make conquests, and those pueblos were never pacified until we settlers from Coatzacoalcos conquered them.

As the mountains are so lofty that horses cannot be used, I racked my body on the three occasions that I was present at those conquests, for although we might bring them to peace in the summer, as soon as the rains began they again rebelled, and killed such Spaniards as they were able to catch straying. However, as we always followed them up, they were brought into subjection and a town was founded [there] named San Alifonso.

Let us get on, and stop calling to mind disasters of Captains who did not know how to conquer, and I will relate that when the Treasurer knew that they had wounded his friend Captain Figueroa, he sent promptly

to arrest Alonzo de Herrera, but was not able to capture him because he fled to the mountains, and the Alguacils whom he sent after him brought back as prisoner a soldier, one of those whom Herrera used to have with him, and when he arrived in Mexico, without granting him a hearing, the Treasurer ordered his right hand to be cut off. The soldier was named Cortejo and he was a gentleman by birth.

In addition to this, at that time a page of Gonzalo de Sandoval had some dispute with one of the Treasurer's servants, and stabbed him, at which the Treasurer was very wroth and ordered his hand to be cut off; and this happened at a time when neither Cortés or Sandoval were in Mexico, for they had gone to a great pueblo named Cuernavaca, and they went there so as to remove themselves from Mexico from tumults and gossip, and also to settle certain questions which had arisen between the Caciques of that pueblo.

Then, as soon as Cortés and Sandoval learned by letter that Cortejo and the page were prisoners, and that they intended to cut off their hands, they at once came to Mexico, and when they had spoken and found that there was no help for it, they felt this affront which the Treasurer had put both on Cortés and Sandoval deeply. It is said that Cortés addressed such words to the Treasurer in his presence that he would not listen to them, and was even afraid that they intended to kill him, and on account of this fear the Treasurer summoned soldiers and friends to protect him, and he released the Factor and Veedor from the cages, so that as officials of His Majesty they might help one another against Cortés.

After they had been released about eight days, the Treasurer was advised by the Factor and other persons who were not on good terms with Cortés that in any

case he should at once banish Cortés from Mexico, for as long as he [Cortés] remained in the city he could never govern properly or secure peace, for there would always be bands of robbers and factions. As soon as this banishment was signed by the Treasurer they went to notify Cortés, who said that he would comply with it very readily, and that he thanked God that, in being banished from the land and city which he and his companions had discovered and gained, through the shedding of much blood and the deaths of so many soldiers, he was thus repaid by persons who were in no way worthy of the offices which they held from His Majesty, and that he would go to Castile to report it to His Majesty and demand justice against them, and that it was gross ingratitude on the part of the Treasurer who was forgetful of the favour [he] Cortés had shown him. He left Mexico at once and went to one of his towns named Coyoacan, and thence to Texcoco, and a few days later to Tlaxcala.

At that time the wife of the Treasurer named Doña Marina Gutiérrez de la Cavalleria, certainly worthy of good remembrance for her many virtues, when she learned what her husband had done in releasing the Factor and Veedor from the cages and in banishing Cortés, on account of the great anxiety she felt, said to her husband, the Treasurer: "Pray God that the things you have done will not turn out badly," and she reminded him of the benefits and favours which Cortés had conferred on them, and the Indian pueblos which he had given them, and [said] that he should endeavour to make friends with him again so that he could return to the City of Mexico, and that he should take great care that they did not kill him; and she said so many things to him that, according to what many persons report, the Treasurer repented of the banishment and even of having released those named by me from the cages, for

in every matter they restrained him and were very hostile to Cortés.

At that time there came from Castile Don Fray Julian Garçes, who was the first Bishop of Tlaxcala and a native of Aragon, and, in honour of the most Christian Emperor our Lord, called himself Carolense; he was a great preacher, and as soon as he came to his Bishopric of Tlaxcala and knew what the Treasurer had done in banishing Cortés, it appeared to him very wrong, and so as to make peace between them he came to a city often mentioned by me, named Texcoco, and, as it is close to the lake, he set out with two large canoes in company with two priests and a friar and his baggage, and came to the City of Mexico. Even before his arrival they had heard in Mexico of his coming, and they went out to receive him with great pomp, and with all the Crosses, and Clergy and religious orders, and the Cabildo and Conquistadores and gentlemen and soldiers, who could be found in Mexico.

After the Bishop had rested for two days, the Treasurer put him forward as mediator to go to the place where Cortés was residing at that time and make them friends again, as he was repealing the decree of banishment so that he [Cortés] could return to Mexico.

The Bishop went off and discussed this [proposed] friendship, but he could effect nothing with Cortés; on the contrary, as I have said, he went on to Texcoco and Tlaxcala accompanied by many gentlemen and other persons.

What Cortés was engaged on was the collection of all the gold and silver he could gather together in order to go to Castile, and in addition to what they gave him as tribute from his pueblos, he pledged other rents and those of his friends and Indians who were willing to assist him. Captain Gonzalo de Sandoval and Andrés de Tápia made

the same preparations and gathered together and collected all the gold and silver they were able from their pueblos, for these two Captains went in company with Cortés to Castile.

While Cortés was at Tlaxcala, many of the settlers from Mexico and other cities went to see him, also soldiers who had no assignment of Indians, and the Caciques from Mexico went to offer their services, and, as there are always turbulent men ready for strife and novelty, these went to advise him that, if he wished to raise himself to be King of New Spain, now was his opportunity, and that they would help him to do so. Cortés made prisoners two of the men who came with this suggestion, and treated them severely, calling them traitors, and was about to hang them. There was also brought to him a letter from other bandits which was sent to him from Mexico, in which they told him the same thing, and, according to rumour, this was done to tempt Cortés so as to catch him in some expressions which might fall from his lips concerning this evil opportunity. As, however, Cortés was always faithful to His Majesty, he uttered threats against those who came to him with these proposals, that they should not come before him again with these suggestions of treason or he would order them to be hanged, and he promptly wrote to the Bishop that he should tell the Treasurer, who, as Governor, should order the traitors who came with these proposals to be punished, [to see to it], otherwise he would himself order them to be hanged.

Let us leave Cortés in Tlaxcala getting ready to go to Castile, and return to the Treasurer and the Factor and Veedor, for just as men who were bandits and longed for disturbances and to mix in tumults came to Cortés, so they went to the Treasurer and Factor and said that Cortés was collecting men to come and kill them, although

he spread the report that he was going to Castile, and it was for that reason that all the Caciques of Mexico and Texcoco and nearly all the pueblos around the lake were in his company, waiting to see when he should order them to begin the attack.

Then the Factor and Veedor were in great fear, believing that he [Cortés] was going to kill them, and in order to enquire and find out if it were true they again importuned the same Bishop to go and see what was the matter, and they wrote with great concern to Cortés asking pardon. The Bishop thought that going to visit Tlaxcala with the intention of creating friendship was a worthy act, and as soon as he arrived where Cortés was staying (after the whole province had come out to receive him), and observed the great loyalty of Cortés and what he had done in arresting the bandits, and the words he had written on that subject, he promptly sent a messenger to the Treasurer and said that Cortés was a very loyal gentleman and faithful servant of His Majesty, and that one might place him in the list of the most famous servants of the Royal Crown of our times, and as for his present occupation it was to provide for his journey and go before his Majesty, and they might drop all suspicion of what had been in their minds. He also wrote that he thought it ill-advised to have banished him [Cortés] and that he [the Treasurer] did not hit the mark on that occasion. It is reported that he said in the letter he wrote : "Oh, Señor Tesorero Alonzo de Estrada, how you have spoiled and muddled this affair."

Let us leave this affair of the letter, for I do not remember whether Cortés returned to Mexico to leave instructions with the persons to whom he gave authority to look after his estate and house, and demand tribute from the pueblos of his encomienda, except that he left a general power of attorney to the Licentiate Juan

Altamirano, a person of great repute, and to Diego de Campo, Alonzo Valiente, and Santa Cruz Burgales, but above all the others to Altamirano. He had already collected many birds differing from those found in Castile, which was a thing well worth seeing, and two tigers and many kegs of coagulated liquid amber and balsam, and another of oil; and four Indians skilful in juggling with a stick with their feet, which in Castile and in all other places would be a thing worth seeing, and other Indians, distinguished dancers, who were accustomed to use some sort of contrivance, so that to all appearance they seem to fly in the air while dancing; and he took three Indian humpbacks who were monstrosities, for their bodies appeared broken and they were very dwarfish. He also took Indian men and women who were very white, and owing to their great whiteness they did not see well. Then the Caciques of Tlaxcala begged him to take in his company three sons of the principal chieftains of that province, and among them was a son of the old blind Xicotenga, who was afterwards called Don Lorenzo de Vargas, and he took other Mexican Caciques.

When his departure was arranged, he received news from Vera Cruz of the arrival of two good and swift ships which brought him letters from Castile, and I will go on to relate their contents.

CHAPTER CXCIV.

How letters came to Cortés from Spain from Don Garcia de Loaysa, Cardinal of Sigüenza, who was President of the [Council of] the Indies and soon afterwards Archbishop of Seville, and from other gentlemen, [advising him] in any case to come at once to Castile, and they brought the news that his father Martin Cortés was dead, and what he did about it.

I HAVE already related in the last chapter what took place between Cortés, the Treasurer, the Factor, and the Veedor, and the reason of his banishment from Mexico, and how the Bishop of Tlaxcala came on two occasions to attempt a reconciliation, and how Cortés, who would not [allow himself to] be influenced in the least by letters or in any other way, got ready to go to Castile. At that very moment letters came to him from the President of the Indies, Don Garcia de Loaysa, and from the Duque de Bejar and other gentlemen, in which they told him that, during his absence, complaints against him had been laid before His Majesty, and the complaints contained reports of many ill deeds and deaths which he had caused to be inflicted on those who had been sent out by His Majesty, and that in all events he should return to defend his honour. They also brought him news that his father Martin Cortés had died, and when he saw those letters he was greatly grieved both on account of the death of his father and also for what they falsely said that he had done; and he put on mourning, although he already wore it for the death of his wife Doña Catalina Juarez la Marcayda. He showed great grief about his father and paid him as great funeral honours as he was able, and if hitherto he had been eager to go to Castile, from this time forward he made the greater haste about it, for he at once ordered his Mayordomo, named Pedro Ruiz de Esquivel, a native of Seville, to go to Vera Cruz and buy the