

CHAPTER CCIII.

About a fleet which the Adelantado Don Pedro de Alvarado fitted out from a port called Acajutla in the province of Guatemala.

IT is right to call to mind, so that it should not be forgotten, another fleet which the Adelantado Don Pedro de Alvarado fitted out in the year fifteen hundred and thirty-seven in the province of Guatemala, where he was Governor, at a port called Acajutla on the South Coast, and it was done to fulfil certain contracts made with His Majesty during the second time that he returned to Castile and returned married to the lady named Doña Beatriz de la Cueva, the sister of a certain Doña Francisca de la Cueva, who was extremely beautiful (and had been the first wife of Don Pedro de Alvarado), who died at Vera Cruz in New Spain. The contract arranged with His Majesty was that Don Pedro de Alvarado should provide certain ships, pilots, sailors and soldiers, provisions and all that was needed for that fleet at his own cost, and it was proposed that he was to send and explore the western route to China and the Moluccas, or any other of the Spice Islands, and according to what he should discover His Majesty promised to grant him certain favours in these same lands. However, as I have not seen the contract I omit it, and for that reason I do not include it in this narrative. To go back to my story he cleared for sea twelve ships of considerable size, well provisioned with bread and meat, barrels of water, and everything that could be provided at that time, well armed with cannon and with good pilots and sailors.

say no more about it, however I have heard it said that the heirs of the Adelantado never recovered anything either on account of the ships or of the provisions, but lost it all.

Let us leave this subject—I was not engaged in it and do not know much about it ; other gentlemen will report it more fully.

It was indeed a powerful fleet, although the port of Vera Cruz was so far off, a matter of one hundred and fifty leagues from where the ships were built, for at that time the iron for the nails, and anchors and casks and other things necessary for the fleet, were brought from Vera Cruz; for as yet there was no question of Puerto de Caballos.

He expended on them [the ships] many thousands of pesos de oro, with which in Seville they would have been able to build more than eighty ships; yet all the riches he brought from Peru, and the gold which they extracted from the mines in the province of Guatemala, and the tributes from his pueblos, and what he borrowed from friends and relations, and what he got on credit from merchants, did not suffice him [to cover expenses]. What he spent on horses and Captains, soldiers, arquebuses, crossbows, and all kinds of arms, was a great sum in pesos de oro. When his ships were ready to sail, each one with its royal standard [hoisted] and pilots and Captains appointed, and instructions given about what they had to do both by night and day, and the courses they were to follow, and the signals of the lamps if a storm should rise during night time; after hearing Mass of the Holy Spirit, and after their banners had been blessed by the Bishop of that Province, with the Adelantado himself as Captain General of the fleet, they set sail in the year fifteen hundred and thirty-seven or thirty-eight (I do not clearly remember [which year]) and went sailing on their course to the port called la Purificacion, which is in the province of Jalisco. At that port they had to take in water and provisions and more soldiers, although they already carried over five hundred and fifty soldiers in the ships. When the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza heard about this powerful fleet, for in these parts it might be called a very great one,

and about the great number of soldiers and horses and cannon that it carried, he regarded it as a matter of great importance—and he had reason so to consider the collection and arming of thirteen ships on the south coast, and that so great a number of soldiers should have joined him so far from the port of Vera Cruz and from Mexico ; for, as I have already noted, ships with merchandise from Castile did not come to the Puerto de Caballos as they do now, and it is a matter for reflection for persons who have a knowledge of these countries and know about the expenses that are incurred.

When the Viceroy Don Antonio was informed that it [the expedition] was for the discovery of China, and understood from pilots and cosmographers that it [China] might certainly be discovered towards the west, and one of his relations named Villalobos, who knew much about latitudes and the art of navigation, assured him of it ; and moreover he learned that the valorous Hernando Cortés, before he went to Castile and became a Marquis, had sent three ships to discover these same Islands ; he determined to write from Mexico to Don Pedro de Alvarado with offers and favourable promises to induce him to give orders that he should become a partner with him in the fleet. So as to bring this about, Don Luis de Castilla and a Mayordomo of the Viceroy named Augustin Guerrero went to settle the bargain.

As soon as the Adelantado beheld the messages they were bringing on this account, and had fully discussed the business, it was agreed that the Viceroy and the Adelantado should have an interview at a pueblo named Chiribitio, which is in the province of Mechuacan and was in the Encomienda of one Juan de Alvarado, a relation of Don Pedro de Alvarado himself ; and in this pueblo it was settled that both together should go and inspect the fleet.

After they had inspected it, differences arose as to who should go as Captain General, for Don Pedro wished it to be a nephew of his named Juan de Alvarado (I do not speak of him of Chiribitio but another who bore the same name), and the Viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza wished his nephew who was a great cosmographer named Villalobos to go. Finally it was arranged that Alvarado and Villalobos should go as Captains.

Then Don Pedro de Alvarado went to the port of Natividad, for so it was called, where at that time all his ships and soldiers were then assembled, so that he himself should despatch them. When they were already prepared to set sail, a letter reached him sent by one Cristóbal de Onate, who was Captain of the soldiers on some rocky hills called Nochistlan, and what he sent to say was that, being a matter of His Majesty's service, he [Pedro Alvarado] must come and help them in person and bring soldiers, for they were surrounded in a place where if help did not reach them they could not defend themselves from the many squadrons of excessively valiant Indian warriors who were posted in strong fortified positions and rocky hills, and had killed many of the Spaniards who were in his company, and he feared greatly that they would finally defeat him. He made known in the letter many other misfortunes and [said] that should the Indians emerge victorious from those rocky hills New Spain would be in great danger. When Don Pedro de Alvarado saw the letter and the words recorded by me, and other Spaniards told him of the danger they were in, promptly without any delay he ordered some soldiers whom he had brought in [his company] to get ready, horsemen as well as musketeers and crossbowmen, and he went post haste to render that assistance.

When he reached the camp, those hedged in were so

exhausted that had it not been for his coming they would have been much more so; however, on his arrival, the Indian warriors slackened somewhat in their attack—not that they ceased to wage fierce war as they did before. While a company of soldiers were posted on some rocky hills to prevent the warriors entering that way, and were defending that pass, it seems that a horse of one of the soldiers came rolling down the hill with great impetus, and by bounds, to where Don Pedro de Alvarado was standing, and he was not able nor did he have time to move away at all, and the horse struck against him in such a way that it injured him and crushed his body, for it fell upon him. He at once felt very sick, and, so as to aid and cure him, thinking that his injury was not so serious, they carried him on a litter to be treated at the town nearest to the camp, called la Purificacion; but on the road he fainted, and when he reached the town he was at once confessed and received the Holy Sacraments, but he made no will, and he died and was buried there with as great pomp as was possible. Let us cease speaking of his death, may God pardon him, Amen.

I will go back to say that Cristóbal de Onate found himself in the greatest exigency on those rocky hills and was on the point of being defeated, had not the Viceroy sent in all haste the Licentiate Maldonado, the Oidor of the Royal Audiencia of Mexico, with many soldiers [to his assistance].

Let us leave this subject and relate what was done and in what the fleet ended, and it is this, that when they of the fleet saw that their Captain was dead, each one went off on his own account. A year later the Viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza ordered three of the best ships to be taken (the newest of the thirteen which the Adelantado sent on the voyage of discovery), and appointed his relation, already mentioned by me, named Fulano de

Villalobos, in command of them, to follow the same course by which they had [before] agreed to send and explore ; what happened on that voyage I do not well know, except that I have heard rumours, and it is believed to be true, that he went to some Islands where there were Captains of the King of Portugal who traded there, and they took him prisoner and he went to Castile. The same thing happened when the valiant Don Hernando Cortés sent a Captain named Alvaro de Sayavedra Ceron in command of three other ships ; thus all that the Adelantado spent was lost and his heirs never recovered anything at all.

CHAPTER CCIV.

What the Marquis did when he was in Castile.

WHEN His Majesty returned to Castile after punishing Ghent, he prepared a great fleet to go against Algiers, and the Marquis del Valle went to serve in it and took with him his firstborn son, who was heir to his estate ; and he also took Don Martin Cortés, his son by Doña Marina, and many esquires and servants, and horses and a great company and attendance, and embarked in a fine galley in company with Don Enrique Enríquez. It pleased God to cause such a fierce storm to arise that a great part of the Royal fleet was lost and the galley in which Cortés and his sons sailed was wrecked, and they and most of the other gentlemen who were in her escaped with great risk of their lives. At the same time, when there was not such [calm] reflection as there ought to have been, especially when death stares one in the face, the servants of Cortés alleged that they saw him tie in a handkerchief twisted round his arm certain jewels of