

## CHAPTER CCVI.

About the stature and shape of certain of the Captains and brave soldiers and the age they had attained when we came to conquer New Spain.

I HAVE already spoken, in the chapter that treats of it, of the age and the personal appearance of the Marquis Don Hernando Cortés at the time when he died at Castilleja de la Cuesta, and of the rank he held, and other things which will be found written in this narrative.

I have also said, in the chapter that tells about it, how old Captain Cristóbal de Olid was when he went with the fleet to the Hibueras, and about his disposition and personal appearance, and there [the description] can be seen.

I wish now to record the age and appearance of Don Pedro de Alvarado, who was Comendador of Santiago and Adelantado and Governor of Guatemala, Honduras, and Chiapa. He was about thirty-four<sup>1</sup> years old when he came here, of good size, and well proportioned, with a very cheerful countenance and a winning smile,<sup>2</sup> and because he was so handsome the Mexican Indians gave him the name of "Tonatio," which means "the Sun." He was very active and a good horseman,<sup>3</sup> and above all was very frank-hearted and a good talker, and he was very neat in his attire but with rich and costly clothes. He wore a small gold chain round his neck with a jewel, and a ring with a good diamond. As I have already stated where he died and other things about him, I will say no more here.

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<sup>1</sup> Blotted out in the original : "six."

<sup>2</sup> Blotted out in the original : "but grave when necessary."

<sup>3</sup> Blotted out in the original : "and very valiant."

The Adelantado Don Francisco de Montejo was of medium height and cheerful countenance ; he liked merriment, and was a man of business and a good horseman, and was about thirty-five years old when he came. He was open-handed and spent more than his income ; he was Adelantado and Governor of Yucatan and had other titles ; he died in Castile.

Captain Gonzalo de Sandoval was a very valiant Captain, and was about twenty-four<sup>1</sup> years of age when he came here ; he was Chief Alguacil of New Spain and for a matter of ten months was Governor of New Spain together with the Treasurer, Alonzo de Estrada. He was not very tall but was very well made and robust, with a broad and deep chest, as were his shoulders. He was somewhat bow-legged, and was a very good horseman. His countenance tended towards the coarse, and his chestnut hair and beard were rather curly. His voice was not very clear, but slightly hesitating and lisping, more or less so. He was not a man of letters but of good average knowledge, nor was he covetous of anything but to be of good repute and act like a good and valiant Captain. In the wars which we waged in New Spain he always showed consideration for the soldiers who appeared to him to be behaving like men, and he protected and helped them. He was not a man to wear rich apparel but was always plainly clad. He owned the best horse, the best galloper and most easily turned to one side or the other, and they said that its like had never been seen in Castile or elsewhere. It was a chestnut with a star on its forehead and a white stocking on its near hind leg. It was named Motilla, and now when men dispute about good horses it is the custom to say in proof of excellence, "It is as good as was Motilla." I must stop talking about horses

and say about this valiant Captain that he died in the town of Palos, when he went with Don Hernando Cortés to kiss the feet of His Majesty. It was about Gonzalo de Sandoval that the Marquis Cortés said to His Majesty, that besides the brave soldiers whom he had in his company, who were so valiant that one might name them amongst the most notable that the world had known, there was above them all Sandoval, who was already [fitted to be] the commander of many armies both in council and in action. He was a native of Medellin and a gentleman by birth, and his father was Alcalde of a fortress.

Let us go on to speak of another good Captain named Juan Velásquez de Leon, a native of Old Castile; he was about thirty-six years old when he came here. He was of good size and robust with good shoulders and chest, all well proportioned and upstanding. His countenance was a strong one and his beard was somewhat curly and well kept, his voice was harsh and coarse and he stuttered a little; he was very spirited and a good talker, and when at that time he had any possessions he shared them with his comrades. It is said that in the Island of Hispaniola he killed a gentleman of importance, a rich man named Rivas Altias or Altas Rivas, in personal combat, and when he had killed him neither the Magistrates of that Island nor the Royal Audiencia were ever able to catch him to execute justice in the case, but although they went to arrest him he defended himself against the Alguacils, and he came to the Island of Cuba, and from Cuba to New Spain. He was a very good horseman and both on foot and on horseback was a very thorough man. He died at the bridges when we went fleeing from Mexico.

Diego de Ordás was a native of Campos de Valverde or Castro Verde; he was probably forty years old when

he came here, and was Captain of sword and shield soldiers, for he was no horseman; he was brave and judicious. He was of good height and sturdy and had a very strong face with a thin blackish beard. In his speech he pronounced certain words imperfectly and with something of a stammer. He was frank and a good talker, a Comendador of [the order of] Santiago, and died in the affair of Marañon when he was Captain or Governor, but I do not know very well about that.

Captain Luis Marin was of fair size, robust and vigorous; he was bow-legged and his beard was reddish and his face long and pleasing, except that he had scars as though he had had smallpox. He was about thirty years old when he came here. He was a native of San Lucar, lisped a little like a Sevillano, was a good horseman, and a good talker<sup>1</sup>; he died in the affairs of Michuacan.

Captain Pedro de Ircio was of middle height and limped, he had a cheerful face and talked to excess, and so it would come about that he was always telling stories about Don Pedro Giron and the Conde de Hurueña; he was cunning and so we called him "Sour grapes" without works, and without having done anything worth recording he died in Mexico.

Alonzo de Ávila was a Captain for a certain time in the affair of Mexico, and was the first Accountant that Cortés chose until our Lord the King should choose otherwise. He had a good figure and pleasing face, and in talking he expressed himself very clearly and with good judgment. He was very daring and valiant, and about thirty-three years old when he came here. There was another [good] point, that he was very frank with his comrades, but he was so arrogant and fond of commanding and not being commanded, and somewhat jealous, besides being proud

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<sup>1</sup> Blotted out in the original : "he did not know how to read."

and quarrelsome, that Cortés could not endure him, and this was the reason why he sent him to Castile as Proctor, together with one Antonio de Quiñones, a native of Zamora. With them he sent the personal effects and riches of Montezuma and Guatemoc, and the Frenchmen stole them, and they captured Alonzo de Ávila (for Quiñones was already dead in Terceira). Two years later Alonzo de Ávila returned to New Spain and died either in Yucatan or Mexico. This Alonzo de Ávila was uncle to the gentlemen who were beheaded in Mexico, who were the sons of Gil Gonzáles de Benavides, which event I have already spoken about and reported in my history.

Andrés de Monjaras was a Captain during the war in Mexico ; he was of fair height and pleasing countenance with a black beard, he was good company, but because he was very ill with boils he did not do anything worth recording, but I place his name in this report so that it may be known that he was a Captain. He was about thirty years old when he came here, he died from the pain of his boils.

Let us go on to a very valiant soldier named Cristóbal de Olea, a native of the land of Medina del Campo ; he was about twenty six years old when he came here, was well made and robust, neither tall nor short, and had a good chest and shoulders ; he had rather a coarse face, but was amiable, his beard and hair were inclined to be curly, and his voice was clear. This soldier was so valiant in all that we saw him do, and so quick with his arms that we held him in great good will and honoured him. It was he who saved Don Hernando Cortés from death in the affair at Xochimilco, when the Mexican squadrons had dragged him from his horse "El Romo" and had seized him to carry him off to be sacrificed. He also rescued Cortés another time on the small causeway, when a

number of Mexicans had grappled with him to carry him off for sacrifice. They had already wounded Cortés himself in one leg and had carried off sixty-two soldiers, when this brave soldier performed wonders in personal combat, and, although he was very badly wounded, killed and slashed and stabbed all the Indians who were carrying Cortés off and made them release him, and this saved his life, but Cristóbal de Olea gave up his life there through saving him.

I wish to speak of two soldiers named Gonzalo Domínguez and a certain Lares. I assert that they were so valiant and daring that we esteemed them equally with Cristóbal de Olid. They were big men and sturdy, with pleasant faces, good speakers and very well conducted, and, so as not to waste more words in their praise, they may be numbered amongst the most valiant soldiers that Castile has produced ; they died in the battle of Otumba—I speak of Lares—Domínguez [died] in the battle of Huastepaque, from a horse rolling on top of him.

Let us go on to another good Captain and valiant soldier named Andrés de Tápia. He was about twenty-four years old when he came here, his face was rather ash-coloured and not very pleasing, he was well made and had a thin and scanty beard, and was a good Captain both on foot and on horseback ; he died a natural death.

If it were necessary to describe all the features and forms of our Captains, and brave soldiers, who came with Cortés it would be a long story, for as all were valiant and of great repute, we were worthy to be recorded in letters of gold. I do not include here other<sup>1</sup> Captains who belonged to the Company of Narvaez, for my intention since I began to tell my story was to record only the doings and adventures of us who came with Cortés, and I only wish to place

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<sup>1</sup> Blotted out in the original: "many valiant."

here [the name of] Captain Panfilo de Narvaez, him who came against us from the Island of Cuba with thirteen hundred soldiers, and with all these<sup>1</sup> [at his back] we defeated him with two hundred and sixty-six soldiers, and how and when and in what way that deed was done, may be seen in my narrative.

To go back to my story, Narvaez was by appearance about forty years old, tall and strong limbed, his face long, with a red beard, and an agreeable presence. His speech and voice was deep as though it came from a cavern. He was a good horseman, said to be brave, a native of Valladolid or of Tudela de Duero, and was married to a lady named Maria de Valenzuela. He was a Captain in the Island of Cuba and a rich man, but said to be very parsimonious. When we defeated him he lost an eye; he made use of good arguments in what he said. He went to Castile to complain to His Majesty of Cortés and of us, and His Majesty granted him the government of certain lands in Florida and there he spent and lost whatever he possessed.

Two interested gentlemen have seen and read the foregoing record of all the Captains and soldiers who came over to New Spain from the Island of Cuba with the daring and valiant Don Hernando Cortés, which I have written down with the qualities both of their bodies and faces, their ages and the rank they held, and where they died and what country they belonged to, and they [the two gentlemen] have told me that they marvel at me, how after so many years I have not forgotten and [still] recollect them. To this I answer that it is no great matter that I now remember their names, although we were five hundred and fifty comrades, for we always

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<sup>1</sup> Blotted out in the original: "not counting among them the sailors."

discussed matters together, on expeditions as well as when keeping watch and in the battles and encounters of the wars, and [noted] those of us who were killed in the battles, and how they were carried off to be sacrificed. In this way we told [these things] to one another, especially when we came out wounded from some very bloody and indecisive battles and missed those who remained there dead, and for this reason I include them in this narrative. It is not to be wondered at, for in past times there were great Kings and valiant Captains who, when going to war, knew the names of their soldiers and recognised them and called them by name, and even knew of what provinces or countries or regions they were native. In those days each one of the armies they led often numbered more than thirty thousand men, and the historians who have written about it say that Mithridates, the King of Pontus, was one of those who knew [the men of] his armies, another was the King of Egypt, and another the King of Epirus, otherwise called Alexander. They also say that Hannibal, the great Captain of Carthage, knew all his soldiers, and in our time the valiant and great Captain Don Gonzalo Hernández de Córdoba, and many other brave commanders have done so. Moreover I say that if I knew how to paint and carve as did that famous Apelles or those of our own times Berruguete and Michael Angelo, and the famous man of Burgos whom they say is a second Apelles, I have in my mind and sense and memory their bodies and forms and heights and manners and faces and features [so fixed] that I could draw all those I have mentioned true to nature, and even how each one entered on a battle and the great spirit they displayed. Thanks to God and our Lord Jesus Christ that I escaped being sacrificed to the Idols, and was freed from many perils and snares, so that I can now write this memorial or narrative.



## CHAPTER CCVII.

About the matters dealt with herein, concerning the merits which we the true conquistadores possess, which will be pleasant to hear.

I HAVE already enumerated the soldiers who came with Cortés and where they died, and if one wishes to know about us, we were most of us gentlemen, although all could not be of such illustrious lineage, for it is evident that in this world men are not born equal either in rank or in virtue. Leaving this talk aside, in addition to our ancient nobility we performed heroic deeds and great exploits in the wars, fighting by day and night serving our Lord and King, discovering these lands until we conquered New Spain and the Great City of Mexico and many other provinces at our own cost,<sup>1</sup> when we were far away from Castile and had no other help save that of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the true help and support that inspires us more than ever. If we read the ancient scriptures which speak of it, and if it is as they say, many gentlemen were in past times exalted and placed in high position, both in Spain as well as in other countries, serving, as at that time they served, in the wars, and for other duties which were acceptable to the Kings who then reigned. I also have noted that some of those gentlemen, who then rose until they held titles of estates and honours, did not go to such wars, nor did they join in the battles, without first being paid wages and salaries. Besides their being paid they were given towns and castles and great lands in perpetuity, and privileges with exemptions which their descendants hold. In addition to this, when the King Don Jaime de Aragon conquered and captured a great part of their kingdom from the Moors, he

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<sup>1</sup> Blotted out in the original : "and reputation."