

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,¹ 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

¹ Blotted out in the original : "and reputation."

divided it among the gentlemen and soldiers who were present at its conquest, and since those times they own their coats of arms and they are powerful. The same when Granada was captured, and Naples at the time of the Great Captain. The Prince of Orange in the affair of Naples also gave lands and lordships to those who assisted them in the wars and battles. I have called this to mind so that there can be seen our many good and notable services which we rendered our Lord the King and all Christendom; let them be placed in the balance and everything measured in proportion, and it will be found that we are worthy and deserving to be placed and rewarded like the gentlemen just mentioned by me. Although to the valiant soldiers whom in these latter pages I have called to mind many other brave and vigorous comrades could be added, all gave me the reputation of being a good soldier.

To go back to my story, let interested readers observe my narrative with attention and they will see in how many battles and encounters and wars I have been present since I came to explore,¹ and how I have been twice seized and grabbed by many Mexican Indians, with whom at the time I was fighting, who intended to carry me off to be sacrificed, and at the same moment they carried off many others of my companions, to say nothing of other great perils and hardships, both from hunger and thirst and infinite toil, which are sure to happen to those who undertake similar explorations in new countries, which will be found described point by point in this my story. I do not wish to dip my pen further into this but will record the benefits which have followed on our illustrious conquests.

¹ Blotted out in the original: "and how full of wounds I have been."

CHAPTER CCVIII.

How the Indians throughout New Spain practised many sacrifices and vices, and [how] we did away with these and instructed them in the holy matters of good doctrine.

I HAVE given an account of events which should be clearly told, such as the benefits which have accrued both to the service of God and of His Majesty through our glorious conquests, costly as they were in the lives of the majority of my comrades, for very few of us are still alive, and those who died were sacrificed, and their hearts and blood offered to the Mexican idols named Tezcatepuca and Huichilobos.

I wish to begin by speaking about the sacrifices which we found in the countries and provinces we conquered. These [provinces] were full of sacrifices and iniquities, for they slew every year in Mexico alone, and certain neighbouring pueblos on the Lake, over two thousand¹ persons big and little, as was found from the count which the Franciscan Monks made (and they were the first to come to New Spain, four and a half years before the Dominicans came), and these Franciscans were very good monks and [men] of holy principles.

In other provinces many more would be added to this count, and they practised other vices of sacrifice, and these were in so many ways I should never finish writing about them in detail, but those which I saw and took note of I will call to mind. They were accustomed to sacrifice the foreheads, ears, tongues, and lips, the breasts, arms, thighs and legs, and even the genital parts, and in some provinces they were circumcised and had flint knives with which to circumcise. The oratories,

¹ Blotted out in the original: "and five hundred."