

not have sufficed for one day, and this is the reason we did not eat them, besides there was the fear of angering Cortés.

Let us leave this talk and I will relate that in all the pueblos and roads we passed we left crosses placed wherever there were good trees to cut them on, especially Ceibas,¹ on which the crosses remain [clearly] defined and are more permanent when cut on those trees than when made of timber, for the bark grows and the crosses remain perfect. Then we left notices in places where they could be read, and in these it was stated "Cortés passed by here at such a time" and this was done so that if others should come in search of us they might know that we had gone on ahead.

To return to our march to Ciguatpecad, we had with us over twenty Indians from that pueblo of Temastepaque, and they helped us to cross the rivers on rafts and in canoes; moreover they went as messengers to tell the Caciques of the pueblo whither we were going not to have any fear, as we would do them no harm whatever, so many of them remained in their houses, and what happened there I will relate further on.

CHAPTER CLXXVI.

How we had arrived at the town of Ciguatpecad and how he [Cortés] sent Francisco de Medina to meet Simon de Cuenca and proceed with the two vessels already mentioned by me to Triunfo de la Cruz or to the Golfo Dulce, and what else happened.

WHEN we arrived at the town I have mentioned, Cortés cajoled the Caciques and chieftains and gave them good Chalchihuites from Mexico, and asked where the large

¹ Cottonwood (*Bombax Ceiba*).

and rapid river flowed to which ran near the town, and they told him that it ended in some lagoons where stood a pueblo named Gueatasta and near to it was another large pueblo called Xicalango. It occurred to Cortés at once to send two Spaniards in canoes to the north coast to find out about Captain Simon de Cuenca and his two ships which he had ordered to be laden with provisions for the journey I have spoken about, and he wrote to him informing him about our hardships and telling him to go on ahead along the coast, and, after having clearly informed him how he could reach the townships I have mentioned by that river, he despatched the two Spaniards of whom the more important was Francisco de Medina, often named by me before. He gave him authority as Captain jointly with Simon de Cuenca, because Medina was very active and spoke the language of the country, and he was the soldier who caused the revolt of the pueblo of Chamula when we went with Luis Marin to the conquest of Chiapas, as I have related in the Chapter which speaks of it. It would have been better had Cortés never given him that authority, on account of what afterwards happened, which was that he went down the river to where Simon de Cuenca was stationed with his two ships at Xicalango, awaiting news of Cortés, and after delivering Cortés's letters, presented his commission as Captain ; and over the right to command, disputes arose between the two Captains so that they came to blows, and owing to their siding with one or the other all the Spaniards in the ship lost their lives except six or seven.

When the Indians of Xicalango and Gueyatasta saw this strife they fell on these latter and killed them all and burned the ships. However, we knew nothing of this until two years and a half later, and I will stop talking about it and return to the town where we were stationed, named Ciguatpecad, and tell how the Indian

Chieftains told Cortés it was three days journey thence to Gueyacalá, and that there were two rivers to cross on the way and one of them was very deep and broad, and then there were some bad bogs and great swamps, and that unless he had canoes he could not get the horses across, nor even a single soldier of his army. Cortés promptly sent two soldiers, with three Indian Chieftains from the pueblo to show them the road, to examine the river and swamps and see how we could cross, and bring a full report. The two soldiers whom he sent were Martin García the Valencian, the Alguacil of our army, and Pedro de Ribera. Martin García, to whom Cortés gave the principal charge, saw the rivers and with some small canoes which they had in this same river he examined it and saw that by making bridges it would be possible to cross it; however, he did not take the trouble to examine the bad swamps a league beyond, but returned to Cortés and told him that by making bridges they would be able to cross, believing that the swamps were not as difficult as we afterwards found them to be.

Cortés promptly ordered me and one Gonzalo Mexia, whom we nicknamed Rapapelo¹ [the Barber], to go with some chieftains from Ciguatpecad to the towns of Acalá and coax the Caciques, and by pleasant speeches persuade them not to flee, because that settlement of Acalá was composed of more than twenty small pueblos on the main land and others on islands. We did all the journey in canoes by rivers and lagoons, and we took with us the three Indians from Ciguatpecad as guides, and the first night we slept on the road they ran away from us, for they did not dare to go with us, for, as we afterwards learnt, they [the people of Acalá] were their enemies and

¹ Blotted out in the original: "because he was the grandson of a Captain who went robbing in company of a certain Zenteno in the time of King Don Juan."

they were at war with one another. So we had to go forward without guides, and crossing the swamps with difficulty reached the first pueblo of Acalá, and although the people were excited and inclined to be hostile, with friendly speeches and the gift of some beads we cajoled them and begged them to go to Ciguatpecad to see Malinche and take him food. It appears that at the time we arrived this pueblo had heard no news of the coming of Cortés with a large following of horsemen as well as of Mexicans, and next day, when they heard reports through Indian merchants of the great force which Cortés was bringing, the Caciques [then] showed greater willingness to send supplies than [they did] when we arrived, and said that when he should come the pueblos would serve him and do what they were able towards supplying food, but as for going to where he was stationed they did not wish to go because [the people there] were their enemies. While we were engaged in such conversation with the Caciques, two Spaniards arrived with the letters from Cortés, in which he ordered us to set out from thence with all the provisions we could collect, and march back for three days along the road, because all the people of the pueblo at which we had left him had abandoned it and gone away; and he informed me that he was already on his way to Acalá and had brought no maize and could not procure any, and that I should make every effort to prevent the Caciques from making off.

The Spaniards who brought the letter told me that Cortés had sent four Spaniards—three of them men newly arrived from Castile—up the river from Ciguatpecad to ask for supplies from the other pueblos which were said to be near at hand, and that they had not returned and it was believed that they had been killed, and this turned out to be true.

Let us return to Cortés, who began his march and in

two days reached the great river which I have already mentioned, and at once worked hard at building a bridge—and it was built with such toil, and with such huge and thick timbers, that after it was made the Indians of Acalá marvelled to see the timbers so placed. It took four days in the making. When Cortés started with all his soldiers from the pueblo already mentioned by me many times, they brought neither maize nor [other] provisions and during the four days that we remained in the pueblo while Cortés was building the bridge, there were deaths from hunger, although some of the old soldiers supported themselves by felling some lofty trees which appeared to be palm trees and had fruit which looked like very thick-shelled nuts, these they roasted and broke open and ate. Let us stop talking about the hunger and say that the very night on which they finished the bridge I and my three companions arrived with one hundred and thirty loads of maize and eighty fowls, and honey and beans, salt and eggs and fruits. Although I came at night time, and it was already dark, nearly all the soldiers were watching for the food, for they already knew that I had gone to fetch it, and Cortés had said to his Captains and soldiers that he had hope in God that they would soon all have something to eat as I had gone to Acalá to bring it, if the Indians had not killed me as they had killed the four other Spaniards he had sent out.

So as I arrived with the maize and provisions at the bridge when it was night time, the soldiers fell on it and seized it all and left nothing at all for Cortés and his Captains. There were shouts of "Leave this, for it is for the Captain Cortés," so too his Mayordomo Carranza (for so he was called) and the steward Guinea cried out, grasping the maize in their arms and saying that they must leave at least one load for them, but as it was night time the soldiers told him "You and Cortés have

been eating fat pigs” and they did not mind a bit what was said, but seized all of it. When Cortés heard how they had seized it and left nothing for him he cursed with impatience and stamped his foot, and was so furious that he said he would make enquiry who had taken it, and they told him what was said about the pigs, and when he saw and reflected that his anger was useless and merely “lifting up his voice in the wilderness” he ordered me to be called, and asked me very angrily why I had not guarded the provisions better. I replied that His Excellency should have endeavoured to send guards ahead to take charge of them, but that even had he himself been in charge of them they would have been seized, for God preserve him from hunger which respects no laws. When he saw that matters could not be mended, and he was in great need [of food], he flattered me with honeyed words in the presence of Captain Gonzalo de Sandoval and said :—“Oh Señor and brother Bernal Días del Castillo, for love of me, if you have left anything hidden on the road share it with me. I have great belief in your forethought, and that you have brought something for yourself and for your friend Sandoval.” When I heard his words and noted the way in which he spoke them, I was sorry for him, and Sandoval also said to me, “I swear that I too have not a handful of maize with which to make Cazalote.” Then I thought it over and said that it would be all right, and to-night towards dawn when the camp was asleep we would go for twelve loads of maize and twenty fowls and three jars of honey and beans and salt, and the two Indian women who had been given to me in those pueblos to make bread, but we must go by night lest the provisions be snatched from us on the road, and I would divide the food between His Excellency and Sandoval and myself and my people. Cortés was freed

from anxiety and he embraced me, and Sandoval said that he wished to go with me that night for the food; so we brought it and their hunger was appeased, and I also gave Sandoval one of the Indian women. All this I call to mind so that it may be understood what hardships Captains go through in new countries, and that even for Cortés, who was so greatly feared, they [his followers] left no maize to eat, and that the Captain Sandoval went with me himself to bring his share of the food, and would trust no one else, although he had many soldiers whom he could have sent.

Let us cease talking about the great labour in building the bridge, and of the hunger we went through, and I will tell how at the distance of a league we came on the very bad swamps already mentioned, and they were of such a nature that they could not attempt to place timber or branches or employ other devices to enable the horses to pass, and they sank in the mire of the great swamps until their whole bodies were submerged, and we thought that not one would escape, but all would be left there dead. Still we persisted in going forward, because about half a crossbow shot ahead there was firm ground and a good road, and we made a passage through this swamp of mud and water, which they got through without too much difficulty although at times they were half swimming in that swamp and water. As soon as we reached dry land we gave thanks to God for it, and Cortés promptly ordered me to return in haste to Acalá and impress strongly on the Caciques that they should keep the peace, and should at once send provisions along the road. This I did, and the very day that I arrived at Acalá I sent by night three Spaniards who accompanied me with over one hundred Indians laden with maize and other things. And when Cortés sent me for this purpose I said to

him that he should take care that His Excellency in person should take charge of the food, so that it should not be seized as on the last occasion; this he did, and went ahead together with Sandoval and Luis Marin and took possession of all of it and divided it up, and the next day about midday they reached Acalá, and the Caciques went to bid him welcome and carried food to him, and I will leave them there and will relate what else happened.

CHAPTER CLXXVII.

What Cortés attended to after reaching Acalá, and how, in another pueblo further ahead, subject to this same Acalá, he ordered Guatemoc the Great Cacique of Mexico, and another Cacique, the lord of Tacuba, to be hanged, and the reason why he did it, and other things that happened.

WHEN Cortés had arrived at Gueyacala—for so it is called—the Caciques of that pueblo approached him peaceably and he spoke to them through Doña Marina the interpreter in such a way that to all appearance they were satisfied, and Cortés gave them articles from Spain, and they brought maize and provisions, and then he ordered all the Caciques to be summoned and asked them for information about the road we had to take, and questioned them whether they knew of other men with beards like us and with horses, and whether they had seen ships sailing on the sea. They replied that eight days' journey from there were many men with beards, and women from Castile, and horses and three Acales, for in their language they call ships Acales. Cortés was delighted to hear this news, and, on asking about the pueblos and the road along which we must go, they brought it to him all drawn on some cloths, even to