

guard him, and may he live many years with increase of more kingdoms, commanded, in his Royal Ordinances and Decrees which he has issued for that purpose, that as to the Conquistadores and their children, we are to experience improvement in every sense, and next [in order] that the old married settlers [were to benefit] as will be seen in his Royal Edicts.

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## CHAPTER CCXII.

About other discussions and stories which are here made known and will be pleasant to hear.<sup>1</sup>

WHEN I had finished the fair copy of this my story, two Licentiates begged me to lend it to them for two days so as to know more clearly what we went through during the conquest of Mexico and New Spain, and to see in what way it differed from what the Chroniclers Gomara and Doctor Yllescas had written about the heroic deeds and exploits we accomplished in company with the valiant Marquis Cortés. So I lent them a rough draft, for it seems to me that wise men always [try to] impress a bit of their wisdom on unlearned fools such as I am, and I told them not to alter a single thing,<sup>2</sup> for all that I write is quite true. When they had seen and read it, one of them who was very eloquent and had a very good opinion of himself, after extolling and praising the good memory I must have not to forget any item of all we went through from the time we came to New Spain in the year seventeen [1517] up to that of sixty-eight [1568], said that, as to the style, it followed the customary speech of Old Castile, and that in these times it is accounted the more agreeable because

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<sup>1</sup> See note at end of Chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Blotted out in the original: "neither to add or to subtract."

there are no elaborate arguments nor gilded elegance such as some writers are wont [to display], but all is in plain simple language, and that all really good narration is comprised in this true statement. However, it seemed to him that I praised myself greatly in the accounts of battles and wars in which I was present and the services which I did to His Majesty, and that other persons should make those statements and not I ; also that in order to give greater credibility to what I write I should cite witnesses, as the chroniclers are accustomed to insert and quote proofs from other books dealing with past events, for I am not a witness for myself. To this one can answer, [as is done in] a chapter of my story, that in a letter which the Marques del Valle wrote to His Majesty in the year forty, giving him a report of my person and services, he informed him how I came to explore New Spain on two occasions before he did, and how on the third time I returned in his company ; and as an eye-witness he saw me fight in the wars like a very brave soldier, and come out of them very badly wounded, as well in the capture of Mexico as in many other conquests ; and after we had won New Spain and its provinces how I went in his company to Honduras and the Hibueras (for so it is called in this country), and other particulars which were contained in the letter which, as it is a long story, I will not repeat here. So also Don Antonio de Mendoza, the Viceroy of New Spain (of praiseworthy memory for his many virtues), wrote to His Majesty giving him a report of what had been told to him by the Captains in whose company I served as a soldier ; and it all tallied with what the Marquis had written. Moreover there were the very sufficient proofs which were presented on my behalf to the Royal Council of the Indies in the year forty, and I offer these letters as evidence—two of them were placed before His Majesty and the originals are preserved. If the Marquis and the Viceroy and the

Captains and my proofs are not good enough witnesses, I wish to call another witness, and there is no better one in the whole world, that is our very great Monarch the most Christian Emperor Don Carlos, our Lord of most renowned and glorious memory, who about this matter sent his letters with the [Royal] Seal, in which he ordered the Viceroy, presidents, and governors to give me preference and advantage in everything as one of his servants. Other recommendations were contained in the Royal Letters, and for this reason I intended to include them in this story, and I wish they were preserved in my own hands.

To return to the question which the Licentiate to whom I had lent my rough draft addressed to me, "Why did I praise myself so much for my conquests?" To this I reply that there are matters about which it is not well that men should brag, for their neighbours generally report the virtues and good qualities which individuals possess. Moreover I say of those who neither know nor see nor understand nor are present in them, especially in such affairs as wars and battles and the capture of cities, how can they praise or write about them unless they be Captains and soldiers who were present in such wars together with us. For this reason I am able to state so often, and even to boast of it, that, if I were to rob other valiant soldiers who were present in these same wars of their honour and rank and attribute them to myself, it would be an evil deed and there would be cause to blame me; but if I tell the truth (and His Majesty and his Viceroy, the Marquis, witnesses, and evidence attest it, and moreover the story gives evidence of it) why should I not say so? for it ought to be written in letters of gold. Would they wish the clouds or the birds which passed above at the time to report it? and did Gomara wish to state it, or Yllescas, or Cortés when he wrote to His Majesty? From what I have seen of these writings and of

their Chronicles, [they wrote] solely in praise of Cortés, and they were silent about and concealed our illustrious and famous exploits by which we raised the Captain himself to a Marquisate, and to the possession of a great revenue and the fame and renown which is his.

These writers are the same who were not present in New Spain and, not hearing a true account, how can they write it down without going wrong only from the flavour of their palates—unless it were through the conversations they held with the Marquis himself? This I assert that when in the beginning Cortés wrote to His Majesty, instead of ink, pearls and gold flowed from his pen, and all in his own praise and not about us valiant soldiers. Let those who wish to see it observe to whom their histories were dedicated, if not to his son and heir to the Marquisate. Although Don Hernando Cortés was in all things a very valiant and spirited Captain, and may be counted among the most famous the world has seen, the chroniclers of these times should have had the consideration to introduce us, and make a report in their histories about our brave soldiers and not leave us entirely ignored, as we should have remained if I had not taken a hand in recording and assigning to each one his [share of] honour and glory, and, if I had not stated exactly what happened, persons who saw what the Chroniclers Yllescas and Gomara had written would believe that their version was the truth.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to what I have recorded it is right that I should again in this place make a statement to ensure noteworthy remembrance of my person, and of the many and distinguished services which I have rendered to God and His Majesty and to all Christendom, in the manner

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<sup>1</sup> Blotted out in the original: "just as they wrote it, they being very eloquent."

of the writings and reports of the Dukes, Marquises, Counts and illustrious men who served in wars [in time past]; also in order that my children, grandchildren and descendants can dare to say with truth "my father came to discover and conquer these lands at his own expense and expended what property he possessed in doing it, and was one of the foremost in the conquest." Furthermore I wish here to advance another argument to prove that I do not praise myself as much as I ought, and it is that I was present in many more battles and warlike encounters than those in which the writers say Julius Cæsar was engaged, [that is] in fifty three battles, and to record his exploits he had consummate chroniclers, but he was not satisfied with what they wrote about him, so Julius Cæsar himself with his own hand made a record in his Commentaries of all the wars he was personally engaged in. Therefore it is not unreasonable that I should write down the heroic deeds of the brave Cortés and my own, and those of my comrades who were fighting in [our] company. Moreover I assert that of all those praised and extolled deeds which the Marquis himself accomplished, and of the seven heads of kings which he has on his coat of arms, and of the blazon and inscription which he placed on a cannon called the Phoenix, which was cast in Mexico to send to His Majesty, and was made of gold and silver and copper, and the words on it said

"Esta ave nació sin par  
Yo en serviros sin segundo  
Y Vos sin ygal en el mundo

This bird born without an equal,  
I second to none in serving you,  
Your Highness without equal in  
the world."

I am entitled to a share of the seven kings' heads, and of what is written on the culverin "I second to none in serving you," for I assisted him in all the conquests and

in winning that honour and glory which is well exemplified in his very valiant person.

Returning to my statement—when I said that I was present in more battles than Julius Cæsar, I again assert it, and interested readers may find and note in this my narrative in the chapters that treat about it, how and in what manner they took place. So that nothing should be concealed which is not stated and made manifest there, and so that it should be more clearly seen, I wish to quote them here as a record, so that it shall not be said that I speak with reserve about myself, for if so many of the Conquistadores had not witnessed them, and if they had not obtained so much fame in this New Spain, malicious slanderers [who are never wanting] might possibly have referred to me in regard to them as an obscure person.

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#### RECORD OF THE BATTLES AND ENCOUNTERS IN WHICH I WAS PRESENT.

At Cape Catoche when I came with Francisco Hernández de Córdova the first discoverer — in one battle.

In another battle in the affair of Chanpoton, when they killed fifty-seven of our soldiers and we all came out wounded, in company with the said Francisco Hernández de Córdova.

In another battle when we went to get water in Florida, in company with the said Francisco Hernández de Córdova.

In another when I was with Juan de Grijalva on the same errand in Chanpoton.

When the very valiant and courageous Captain Hernando Cortés came, in two battles—in the affair of

Tabasco with the said Cortés, the other in the affair of Cingapacinga with the said Cortés.

Also in three battles which we fought in the affair of Tlaxcala, under the said Cortés.

In the affair of Cholula when they wanted to kill us and eat our bodies—I do not count this as a battle.

Another when Captain Pánfilo de Narvaez came from the Island of Cuba with fourteen hundred soldiers, horsemen as well as musketeers and crossbowmen, and much artillery. They came to seize us and take the country in the name of Diego Velásquez, and with two hundred and sixty-six soldiers we defeated him and captured Narvaez himself and his Captains. I am one of the sixty soldiers whom Cortés ordered to attack and capture the artillery, which was a deed of the greatest danger, which is described in the chapter that treats of it.

Also in three very perilous battles which they fought against us in Mexico as we marched along the bridges and causeways, when we went to the aid of Pedro de Alvarado, and took to flight; for of the thirteen hundred soldiers, including the men of Pánfilo de Narvaez, who went with Cortés to the rescue, as I have already said, the greater number died at these same bridges, and were sacrificed and eaten by the Indians.

Another very hazardous battle which is called that of Otumba, with the said Cortés.

Another when we attacked Tepeaca, with the said Cortés.

Another when we went to scour the neighbourhood of Cachula.

Another with the said Cortés, when we went to Texcoco and the Mexicans and Texcocans came out to attack us.

Another when we went with Cortés to Iztapalapa, and they tried to drown us.

Three other battles when we went with Cortés to make a circuit of all the great pueblos round about the lake, and I was present at Xochimilco in three very perilous battles which I have mentioned, when the Mexicans pulled Cortés off of his horse and wounded him, and he was much exhausted.

Also two other battles at the rocky hills which are named after Cortés, when nine soldiers were killed and all came out of them wounded owing to Cortés's want of forethought.

Another when Cortés sent me with many soldiers to defend the corn fields which the Mexicans were taking from the pueblos friendly to us.

Besides all of these, when we invested Mexico and during the ninety-three days we besieged it, I was present in more than eighty battles, for a great multitude of Mexicans attacked us every day ; we estimate that they [the combats] numbered eighty.

After the conquest of Mexico in company with Captain Luis Marin, I was present at two battles in the province of Cimatán, which is in the land of Coatzacoalcos ; I came out of one of them with three wounds.

In the Sierras of the Zapotecs and Mijes, with Captain Luis Marin, I was present in two battles.

In the affair of Chiapa in two battles against the Chiapanecs with Luis Marin.

Another with Luis Marin in the affair of Chamula.

Another when we went to the Hibueras with Cortés—a battle we fought in a pueblo named Zulaco where they killed my horse.

After returning to New Spain from the expedition to Honduras and Hibueras, (for so it is called) I went to assist in bringing to peace the province of the Zapotecs and Mijes and other lands. I do not count the battles and skirmishes which we had with them, although it



would be well to mention them, nor the skirmishes at which I was present in this province of Guatemala, for they certainly are not warriors but only shout and yell and make a noise and dig pits<sup>1</sup> in very deep ravines ; but notwithstanding all this they gave me an arrow wound at a ravine between Petapa and Joanagasapa,<sup>2</sup> for there they waited for us. In all these battles in which I have recorded that I was present, there were also present the valiant Captain Cortés and all his Captains and brave soldiers, and most of them died there. Others died in the affair of Panuco, at which I was not present, and at Colima and Zacatula. I was not present in the affair of Michoacan, [when] all those provinces were made peaceable, nor in the affair of Tututepeque, nor in that of Jalisco, which they call New Galicia, which also became peaceable ; nor was I present in all the south coast, for we had plenty to do in other parts, for New Spain is so large that we soldiers were not able to go all together to one part or the other, but Cortés sent to conquer the districts that were at war.

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So that it may be clearly understood when the greater number of Spaniards were killed, I will state it step by step. In the battles and skirmishes<sup>3</sup>: at Cape Catoche and in the affair of Chanpoton, when I came with Francisco Hernández the first discoverer, they killed fifty-eight soldiers in two battles, which was more than half of those who came.

In another battle in Florida, when we went to get water, they carried off one soldier alive, and we were all wounded.

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

<sup>2</sup> Cuajiniquilapa ?

<sup>3</sup> Blotted out in the original : "when I was present."

In another when we went with Juan de Grijalva to this same Chanpoton, ten soldiers [were killed] and the Captain was badly wounded and his teeth were broken.

When we came with the very brave and spirited Captain Hernando Cortés, six or seven soldiers died in two battles in the affair of Tabasco.

In the three very hazardous and perilous battles we fought in Tlaxcala four soldiers died.

Again when Captain Narvaez came from the Island of Cuba with fourteen hundred soldiers, cavalry, musketeers, and crossbowmen, we defeated them and captured Narvaez and his Captains; with the artillery which Narvaez had posted against us, he killed four soldiers.

In three very hazardous battles which they fought against us in Mexico at the bridges and causeways, and in that of Otumba, when we went to rescue Pedro de Alvarado and we fled from Mexico, of the thirteen hundred soldiers, counting those of Narvaez who went with Cortés, after nine days fighting there remained alive only four hundred and sixty-eight, all the others died at the bridges and were sacrificed and eaten by the Indians, and nearly all the rest of us were wounded; may God have compassion [on us].

In another battle when we went with Cortés against Tepeaca they killed two soldiers.

In another, when we went to scour the neighbourhood of Cachula and Tecamachalco, two more Spaniards died.

In another, when we went with Cortés to Texcoco and the Mexicans and Texcocans sallied out to meet us, they killed one soldier.

In another, when we went with Cortés to Iztapalapa, and they tried to drown us, two or three died of their wounds, but I do not remember clearly how many they were.

In three other battles when we went with Cortés to

all the great pueblos round about the lake—and these battles were very dangerous, for the Mexicans pulled Cortés off of his horse and wounded him and he was very much exhausted (this was at Xochimilco)—eight Spaniards died.

In two other battles on the rocky hills named after Cortés, they killed nine soldiers and we all were wounded through the carelessness of Cortés.

In another, when Cortés sent me with many soldiers to defend the cornfields which the Mexicans were seizing, which [fields] belonged to our friends at Texcoco, one Spaniard died of his wounds within nine days.

Besides all this that I have recorded above when we invested Mexico during the ninety-three days of the siege, I was present in more than eighty battles, for every day from dawn until dusk we had against us a great host of Mexican warriors who attacked us, and of all the soldiers who were present in those battles there died sixty-three of the company of Cortés, nine in that of Pedro de Alvarado, six in that of Sandoval—we calculate that they fought eighty battles against us in ninety-three days.

After the Conquest of Mexico I was present in two battles in company with Captain Luis Marin in the province of Cimatan, which is in the land of Coatza-coalcos, in which three soldiers were killed.

In two other battles, in company with Luis Marin in the Sierras of the Zapotecs and Mijes, which are very lofty, and where there are no roads, they killed two soldiers.

In the Province of Chiapa, when in company with Luis Marin, in two very perilous battles with the Chiapanecs two soldiers were killed.

In another battle, when in company with Luis Marin, in the affair of Chamula, one soldier died of his wounds.

Again when we went to Hibueras and Honduras with Cortés, in a battle with a pueblo named Zulaco they killed one soldier.

I have already recounted [the names of] those who died in the battles at which I was present. I do not include the battles at Panuco because I was not present, but there is trustworthy report that they killed more than three hundred soldiers of the company of Garay, and others who had lately come from Castile, [including those] whom Cortés took with him to pacify that province, and those taken by Sandoval when the province again rose in rebellion.

I was not present at what we call the affair of Almeria, but I know for certain that they killed the Captain Juan de Escalante and seven soldiers. I also state that in the affairs of Colima, Zacatula, Michoacan, Jalisco and Tututepeque certain soldiers were killed.

I have forgotten to mention sixty-six soldiers and three Castilian women, whom the Mexicans killed in a pueblo named Tustepeque<sup>1</sup>; they stayed in that pueblo in the belief that they would be provided with food, for they belonged to the company of Narvaez and they were invalids. So that the names of the pueblos may be clearly understood one is Tustepeque . . . north, and the other is Tututepeque on the south coast; so that it may not be argued that I make a mistake and give one pueblo two names. It will also now be said that there is great prolixity in what I write about, placing in one section the battles at which I was present, and then again reporting [the names of] those who died in each battle, which I might have given at the same time. Interested readers will also ask, how was I able to know [the names of] those who died in the battles which took

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<sup>1</sup> Tuxtepec.

place in each part [of the country]. To this I reply that it is very easily understood. Let us make a comparison. Let us say that a valiant Captain leaves Castile to make war on the Moors and Turks and fight battles against other enemies, and takes with him more than twenty thousand soldiers. When he has fixed his camp he sends off one Captain in one direction and another in another direction and goes with them as Commander, and after the battles and skirmishes he returns with his men to camp, then they render an account [to him] of those who were wounded or died in the battle or were taken prisoners. So we that accompanied the valiant Cortés into battle knew who had fallen and who had returned wounded, and in a like manner about the others who were sent to other provinces, and thus it is no great thing that I have a remembrance of all that I have stated, and write it so clearly. Let us leave this part.

Bernal Díaz del Castillo.

[*rúbrica*.]<sup>1</sup>

This history was finished in Guatemala on the 14th November, 1605.<sup>2</sup>

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#### NOTE TO CHAPTER CCXII.

*The following rough draft of this Chapter is added to the original.—G. G.*

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#### CHAPTER CCXII.

About other discussions and stories which are here made known and will be pleasant to hear.

WHEN I had finished the fair copy of this my story, two Licentiates begged me to lend it to them, so as to know more completely what happened in the Conquest of Mexico and New Spain, and to see in

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<sup>1</sup> *Rúbrica* = the flourish which is an essential part of a Spanish signature.

<sup>2</sup> One can read the same statement written in modern script a little lower down.

what [points] the writings of the Chroniclers Francisco López de Gomara and Doctor Yllescas on the heroic exploits achieved by the Marquis del Valle differs from what I write in this narrative. So I lent it to them, for it seems to me that some of the sense of wise men may adhere to unlearned fools such as I am. I told them not to touch, in way of emendation, anything about the conquests, nor to add or delete, for all that I write is quite true. When the two Licentiates to whom I lent it had seen and read it, one of them, who was very eloquent, and has a very good opinion of himself, after extolling and praising the good memory I must have not to forget a single item of all we went through from the time when we twice came to discover before Cortés came, and the last time when I came with Cortés himself. (The first time was in the year seventeen [1517] with Francisco Hernández de Córdova, and in the year eighteen with one Juan de Grijalva already often mentioned by me, and in the year nineteen I came with the good Captain Hernando Cortés who afterwards as time went on became Marques del Valle.)

To return to my story, the Licentiates told me that, as to the style, it followed the customary speech of Old Castile which in these times is accounted the more agreeable because there were no flowery arguments nor ornamental phrases such as the Chroniclers who have written of wars and battles are wont to employ, but all is written in a straightforward way and by speaking truthfully the best arguments are included. Moreover they also told me that it appears to them that I praise myself a great deal [when speaking] of the battles and war-like skirmishes at which I was present, and about the great services I have rendered to his Majesty, and that other persons ought to say that and write about it first, and not I.

Also that in order to give more credit to what I have stated I should cite witnesses and quote the accounts of such Chroniclers as may have written about it, as those who write and prove by other books about past events are accustomed to insert and quote, and not to say so curtly as I do, "I did this," and "such a thing happened to me," for I am not a witness for myself. To this I answered and now repeat [what I said] in the first Chapter of my Narrative, that in a letter which the Marques del Valle wrote from the great city of Mexico to His Majesty in Castile in the year fifteen hundred and forty giving him an account of my person and my services, he told him how I came to explore New Spain twice before he did, and the third time returned in his company, and as an eye-witness he very often saw me fighting in the Mexican wars, and at the capture of other cities, like a brave soldier doing many notable deeds, and often coming out of the battles badly wounded, and how I went in his company to Honduras and Hibueras (for so they call it in this country),

and other things were contained in the letter which to avoid prolixity I will not quote here.

In the same way the Most Illustrious Viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza wrote to His Majesty reporting to him what he had been told by the Captains in whose company I had at that time served as a soldier, and it agreed with all that the Marques del Valle had written. Moreover very sufficient proofs were presented on my behalf in the Royal Council of the Indies in the year five hundred and forty [1540]. So the Señores Licenciados can see whether the Marques del Valle and the Viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza and my proofs are sufficient evidence. If this is not enough I wish to call another witness, and there is none better in the world, which is the Most Christian Emperor our Lord of Glorious Memory, Don Carlos the fifth, who by his Royal letter, closed and sealed with his Royal Seal, orders the Viceroys and Presidents to have respect for the many good and loyal services which it is clear to him that I have rendered, that I and my children should have preference and advantage ; which said Royal letter he sent to me, and I have all the originals of these letters preserved, and the copies remain at the Court in the archive of the Secretary Ochoa Luyando. I say this as an excuse and a witness of what the Licentiates represent to me.

To return to my argument, by chance the Chronicler Francisco de Gomara wished [so] to write it, [but neither he] nor the Doctor Yllescas in what they wrote about the heroic deeds of . . . . . we should remain unmentioned if I had not told this true story. As to what they say that I praise myself too much and that others should do that, I answer there are occasions when certain neighbours are wont to praise the virtues and goodness of others and not their own, but for one who is not present in a war, and does not see it or understand it, how is he able to do it? Are the clouds to utter praise or the birds that flew over us when we were fighting our battles? Only the Captains and soldiers who were present [could do so.] If in my story I had taken the honour and glory from some of the valiant Captains and brave soldiers who were my companions and were present at the Conquest and given it to myself, it [the allegation] would be right, and would take away my standing ground, but I have not even praised myself as well as I ought.

The Marquis Cortés says, and an inscription which he placed on the Culverin of the bird Phœnix, which was a cannon cast in Mexico of gold, silver and copper, which we sent to His Majesty : the letters of the inscription said

Esta ave nació sin par  
Y yo en serviros sin segundo  
Y Vos sin igual en el Mundo.

This bird born without an equal,  
I second to none in serving you,  
Your Highness without equal in  
the world.

I am clearly able to say that I am entitled to part in this praise and inscription, for I helped Cortés to accomplish those loyal services. In addition to this, when Cortés went the first time to Castile to kiss the royal feet of His Majesty, he reported to him that he had such valiant and brave Captains and comrades that he believed none more spirited had been heard of in past history than those with whom he conquered New Spain and the great City of Mexico. I am also entitled to a share of this praise. When he went to serve His Majesty in the affair of Algiers, and certain things happened about striking camp on account to the great tempests which occurred, it is said that he spoke many praises of his valiant companions. So I also claim a share of that.

It is for this reason I write and wish to place here a comparison, although it is a comparison between a very distinguished man and a soldier like myself. I assert that I was present in New Spain fighting in more battles than the great Emperor Julius Cæsar was present in, and his historians say of him that he was very ready with his arms and very valiant in giving battle—and when he had time he wrote down his heroic exploits, for although he had many and great chroniclers he was not satisfied with these, so himself wrote them with his own hand. It is not unreasonable that now in this story I mention the battles myself, for I was present at all the battles in which the Marquis Cortés took part, and many others, when he sent me with other Captains to conquer other provinces and cities, which will be found noted in this my chronicle and narrative, when and where, and in what provinces I was fighting, and at what times. Moreover I say that if [in addition to] all the praises and eulogy which Francisco de Gomara and Doctor Yllescas repeat in their books, they wish for further evidence, let them look at New Spain which is four times as large as our Castile! and let them observe the many cities and towns that are inhabited and . . . . .

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## CHAPTER CCXIII.

Why many Indian men and women were branded as slaves in New Spain, and the story I tell about it.

CERTAIN monks have asked me to tell them and explain why so many Indian men and women were branded for slaves throughout New Spain, and whether we branded them without reporting it to His Majesty. To this I replied, and repeat it now, that His Majesty sent twice