

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

to order it, and, that this may be clearly understood, interested readers should know that this was the way of it:—Diego Velásquez, Governor of the Island of Cuba, sent a fleet against us, and as Captain of it one Pánfilo de Narvaez, who brought with him thirteen hundred soldiers, among them ninety horsemen, and ninety small cannon (they were called Espingardas at that time), and eighty crossbowmen. He came to capture us and take the country for Diego Velásquez, as I have already stated in my narrative in the chapter that treats of it, and it is necessary that I should now refer to it again so that it may be clearly understood.

To go back to my subject: as soon as our Captain and all of us soldiers knew how Narvaez came in a fury, and about the insolent speeches he was uttering against us, we decided to set out from Mexico and meet him with two hundred and sixty soldiers, and endeavour to defeat him before he could capture us. And because at that time we held the great Montezuma, the Lord of Mexico, prisoner, we left him in charge of a Captain often mentioned by me before, named Pedro de Alvarado, and we left in his company eighty soldiers, for it seemed to us that some of them were suspected of not being willing to help us, as they had been friends of Diego Velásquez, and would be hostile to us.

While we were going against Narvaez the City of Mexico and its subjects rose in revolt, and I wish to recount the cause and reason given by the great Montezuma why they rebelled, and what he said was true. It appears the Mexicans were accustomed at that time to hold a great festival to [in honour of] their Idols called Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca, with rejoicings and dances, and to come out with their treasures of jewels and gold and plumes. The great Montezuma asked permission of Pedro de Alvarado, and he gave it with evidence of

goodwill, but as soon as he saw that nearly all the Caciques of that city were dancing, and other chieftains who had come from other parts to see the dances, Pedro de Alvarado came out suddenly from his quarters with all his eighty well-armed soldiers, and fell on the Caciques who were dancing in the principal court of the great Cue, and killed and wounded some of them [although] they had asked his permission to dance. As soon as the great Montezuma and his chieftains saw this, they were very greatly angered at such a breach of faith, and at once at that very moment<sup>1</sup> they attacked him [Pedro de Alvarado].

The first day they killed eight of his soldiers and wounded nearly all the rest, and burned their quarters, and surrounded him in such a way that he found himself in great straits. They certainly would have succeeded in killing them [all] if they had pressed the attack one day longer. At that moment the great Montezuma commanded his chieftains and Captains to cease the attack, because at that time Pedro de Alvarado threatened to kill Montezuma there where he was in prison, if the attack were continued. Moreover they stopped the attack because his [Montezuma's] spies and chieftains (whom he always sent after us, from the time we left Mexico to go against Narvaez, to ascertain how things turned out) came post haste to tell him how we had defeated him [Narvaez], which he and all his chieftains considered to be most important, for they looked upon it as certain that as we who were with Cortés were few in number, and the followers of Narvaez four times as numerous as we were, they would take us prisoners as scoundrels.

To return to my story : I will state that after we had

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<sup>1</sup> Scratched out in the original : "they rose in rebellion in Mexico."

captured Narvaez we returned to Mexico to rescue Alvarado, and Cortés knew that the great Montezuma had asked permission of Pedro de Alvarado to hold that display<sup>1</sup> and festival; and as soon as he saw that . . . he reprimanded him very severely with very sharp words, and a Captain named Alonzo de Ávila often mentioned by me, who was on bad terms with Pedro de Alvarado, also told him that there would remain in New Spain an evil memory of having done such an unjust deed. To this Pedro de Alvarado made the excuse, taking his oath to it, that he knew for certain from three priests and Caciques,<sup>2</sup> and from other Caciques who were in the company of the great Montezuma, that the festival they were celebrating to their Huichilobos, who was the God of War, was in order that he might give them victory against him and his soldiers and free Montezuma from prison, and afterwards they would make war on those who were coming with Narvaez and those belonging to Cortés who might still be living, and as he [Alvarado] knew for certain that they were going to attack him the next day he got ahead by attacking them first, so that they should be cowed and have to attend to the wounds inflicted on them.

I want to get back to my story: when we came to know how they had him hemmed in and [reduced him to] such straits, we decided to go in haste and rescue him, and we made friendship between the followers of Cortés and those of Narvaez, and went to his [Alvarado's] rescue with more than thirteen hundred soldiers, ninety horsemen and more than a hundred gunners and ninety crossbowmen, and nearly all those I now mention were of the company of Narvaez, for we of Cortés's company did not number more than three hundred and fifty; and

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<sup>1</sup> Areyte.

Blotted out in the original: "whom they captured when ."

it must be remembered that the eighty with Pedro de Alvarado are included in the count. There were also with us two thousand friendly Tlaxcalans, and with this force we entered Mexico with Cortés, who was greatly elated with his victory over Narvaez.

The day after we arrived the Mexicans made so many attacks . . . . on us and wars, that of the thirteen hundred soldiers who came in [with us], within eight days they had killed, sacrificed and eaten over eight hundred and sixty-two Spaniards, both those who had come with Cortés and those whom Narvaez brought, and they also sacrificed and ate over a thousand Tlaxcalans. This took place in the city and on the causeways and bridges and in a pitched battle which in this country we call [the battle of] Otumba.


From that rout [only] four hundred and forty soldiers and twenty-two horses escaped, and if we had not taken to flight in the middle of the night we should all have been left there [dead]. We who escaped were [all] badly wounded, but, with the help of God who favoured us, we went to [seek] aid at Tlaxcala, which received us like good and loyal friends.

Within five months we got certain reinforcement of soldiers, which came in three vessels with Captains sent by Don Francisco de Garay from the Island of Jamaica to the Rio Panuco, to assist his fleet. Three months later we received other reinforcement from two other ships which came from Cuba, and in them came twenty and odd horses which Diego Velásquez sent for the use of his Captain Pánfilo de Narvaez, he thinking that he had already defeated and taken us prisoners. When we possessed the reinforcements and ships already mentioned, and with the gold saved in the flight from Mexico, Cortés decided, with the consent of all of us Captains and soldiers, that we should send a report of

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
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all our conquests to the Royal Audiencia and Geronimite Friars who were the Governors in the Island of Santo Domingo. For this purpose we sent two ambassadors, persons of quality, named Captain Alonzo de Ávila and one Francisco Álvarez Chico, who was a man of business. We sent them to beg consideration of the reports already mentioned, and of the attacks made on us, and that they should grant us permission to make slaves of the Mexican Indians and natives of the pueblos who had risen in revolt and killed Spaniards<sup>1</sup> (and who after we had summoned them three times to make peace, would not come in, but [continued to] make war,) and to brand them in the face [with a mark] like this . What the Royal Audiencia and the Geronimite Friars decreed about this was to grant us permission (subject to a warrant with certain chapters of the order which were to be obeyed) to brand slaves; and according to the directions laid down in the warrant slaves were branded in New Spain. In addition to this which I have stated, the Royal Audiencia and Geronimite Friars informed His Majesty, who was in Flanders, what had been done, and he approved of it, and the members of his Royal Council of the Indies sent another decree on the subject.

I wish here also to call to mind how within about a year we sent our Ambassadors from Mexico to Castile, and report was made to His Majesty how before we came to New Spain with Cortés, and also at that very time, the Indians and Caciques commonly held a number of Indian men and women as slaves, and sold them and traded with them as one trades with any merchandise, and Indian merchants went from place to place and from market to market selling them and bartering them for gold and cloths and cacao, and brought batches of fifteen

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

to twenty or more for sale<sup>1</sup> tied together with collars and ropes [in a] much worse [way] than the Portuguese bring the Negroes from Guinea. Our Ambassadors took proofs of good faith and credit for all this, and took certain Mexican Indians as witnesses, and with these preparations we sent to beg His Majesty that he would do us the favour to grant us permission to pay them as tribute, and to buy them by barter in the same way as the Indians bought and sold them, and His Majesty was pleased to grant it, and ordered honest and competent persons to be appointed to take charge of the iron with which the branding was done. After the royal decree which His Majesty had ordered about this had been brought to New Spain or Mexico, it was arranged, so that there should be no misunderstanding<sup>2</sup> about the branding, that an Alcalde and the senior Regidor and a Priest should have charge of the branding iron in each city or town, and that they should be persons of good repute. The iron which they then used for branding the slaves which they received in barter was like this .

I also wish to write down here, that it would have been more profitable . . . . . we should send to beg His Majesty to grant us favour, for if . . . . . as was most Christian, or the Lords who at that time directed the Council of the Indies could know what afterwards happened about it, and as in all that they decreed they desired to do right, His Majesty would never have given such permission nor would it have been agreed to by the Royal Council of the Indies, for certainly great frauds were perpetrated over the branding of the Indians.

Men are not always very just, on the contrary there

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<sup>1</sup> Blotted out in the original: "Some merchants more and others less."

<sup>2</sup> Scratched out in the original: "and that there should be exactitude."

are many of evil disposition, and at that time there came from Spain and from the Islands many poor Spaniards, greatly covetous and insatiable and ravenous to acquire riches and slaves, who took such measures that they branded the free.

So that this matter may be more clearly understood, at the time that Cortés was governing, before we went with him to the Hibueras, there was justice about the branding of slaves, for they were not branded without ascertaining quite clearly whether they were free [or not]. After we set out from Mexico and went with Cortés to Honduras (for so they call it in this country), and were delayed in going and returning to Mexico two years and three months while we were conquering those provinces and bringing them to peace, during the time we were absent there took place in New Spain so many injustices, and revolts, and scandals among those whom Cortés had left as his Lieutenant-Governors that they took no care whether Indians were branded with good or bad title, but only looked after their own parties and interests. The persons who then governed did not look to see whether those who at that time had charge of the branding were of evil repute and covetous, and they gave the office to their friends to make profit for themselves, and these branded many free Indians who were not slaves.

In addition to this there were other evils among the Caciques, who, in paying tribute to their encomenderos, took poor Indian boys and girls and orphans and gave them as slaves. So great was the disillusion that resulted from this that the first to break away from the branding for barter was the town of Coatzacoalcos, where at that time I was a settler, for when this happened more than a year had elapsed since we had returned to that town from the journey we had made with Cortés.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Scratched out in the original : "to the Hibueras."



As the Senior Regidor and a person of trust, they had handed over the branding iron to me, and to a Curate of that town named Benito López, so that I should have charge of it. When we saw how the [natives of] the province were decreasing and the cunning which the Caciques and some encomenderos were practising to induce us to brand Indians as slaves (and they were not doing it very secretly), we broke the branding iron, without informing the Chief Alcalde or the Cabildo, and sent a messenger post haste to the President Don Sebastian Ramírez, then Bishop of Santo Domingo, who was a good President and an upright man of cleanly life, and informed him how we had broken the branding iron, and implored him, as a matter of sound counsel, at once to order distinctly that no more slaves should be branded in any part of New Spain. When he had seen our letters, he wrote to us to say that we had acted as very trustworthy servants of His Majesty and, sincerely thanking us, made offers to assist us.

In agreement with the Royal Audiencia he promptly ordered that no more Indians should be branded in any part of New Spain, nor in Jalisco, Tabasco, Yucatan or Guatemala, and this which he decreed was good and holy.

As there are men who do not possess that zeal which they ought to have for the service of God and of His Majesty, and who would not consider the wrong which was being done in branding free Indians as slaves, when they got to know in our town of Coatzacoalcos that I and my companion the Curate Benito López had broken the branding iron, they asked why we prevented them enjoying the favours which His Majesty had vouchsafed us, and they went on to say that we were bad citizens and did no benefits to the town<sup>1</sup> and that we ought to

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

be stoned. We laughed at all they said and took no notice of it, and took pride in having done such a good deed. Then the same President, together with the Royal Audiencia, sent a commission to me and to the Curate already named by me, as Inspectors-General of two towns, namely Coatzacoalcos and Tabasco, and sent us instructions as to the manner of our inspections and how many pesos we were authorized to inflict [as fines] in the judgments we should give, which amounted to fifty thousand maravedis, and that we should refer crimes and murders and other atrocious acts to the said Royal Audiencia. They also sent us a commission to prepare a description of all the lands and pueblos of the two towns which we visited, as well as we were able, and to send them a copy of the judicial records and the description of the provinces and a report of all we had done. In reply he [the President?] stated that he was very well satisfied and that he would inform His Majesty of it [what we had done], so that he might grant us favours, and that if anything occurred to me he would report it, because he always had a strong desire to assist me. At that time His Majesty sent to summon him [the President, to Castile], and he went there.<sup>1</sup> When I was in Mexico as Proctor-Syndic of the town of Coatzacoalcos talking to him [the President] about the business of the conquest of New Spain, [going] from one subject to the other, he told me that before he became Bishop of Santo Domingo he had been Inquisitor in Seville.

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<sup>1</sup> Blotted out in the original: "So when he arrived in Castile they gave him the bishopric of . . . Tuy, and he was President of the Royal Audiencia of Granada, and at that time the bishopric of Leon fell vacant and they promoted him, and then the bishopric of Cuenca was vacant, so that the mails met which brought him the Bulls of the bishoprics one with the other, and then they passed him on to the Royal Audiencia of Valladolid, and at that time and season our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to take him to His holy Glory."

I wish to leave this subject which has been very long and prolix, but in it can be seen the permission we had from His Majesty and the Lords of his Royal Council to brand slaves.

Let us leave this and I will speak of the Governors who ruled New Spain.<sup>1</sup>

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## CHAPTER CCXIV.

About the Governors who have been in New Spain up to the year fifteen hundred and sixty-eight.

THE first Captain and Governor was the valorous and good Captain Hernando Cortés, who as time went on became Marques del Valle and held other titles, and all three were well deserved. He governed very well and peaceably for more than three years, [and then he went to the] Hibueras and Cape of Honduras [and left behind as Governors] and lieutenants to carry on the Government the Treasurer Alonzo de [Estrada, a native] of Ciudad Real, in company with the Accountant Rodrigo de Albornoz . . . . or of Ramaga, and they ruled for a matter of three months. Then the Factor Gonzalo de Salazar, a native of Granada, in company with the Veedor Peralmirez Chirinos<sup>2</sup> of Ubeda, assumed the Government, and the way in which they ruled I have already described in the chapter which tells about it, and the scandals that arose in Mexico over the question whether or no they should govern ; they remained Governors for more than a year and a half.

When Cortés came to know about the strife that had

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<sup>1</sup> Immediately after this last line there is a note which says "this is not to be written below," it is the beginning of the following chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Scratched out in the original : "Native."