APPENDIX A.

THE MARCH OF HERNANDO CORTÉS FROM MEXICO TO HONDURAS.

THE march of Hernando Cortés from Mexico to Honduras was not the least important exploit of that great Captain, but it has received comparatively little attention at the hands of historians. Prescott devotes a few pages to it, but makes no attempt to follow it in detail; he states in a note :[1] "I have examined some of the most ancient maps of the country by Spanish, French, and Dutch cosmographers in order to determine the route of Cortés. . . . . I can detect on them only four or five of the places indicated by the General."

Don Pascual de Gayangos, in an Introduction to his translation of the Carta Quinta, the Fifth Letter of Cortés to the Emperor Charles V, says that "few are the indications — and those very slight — of the route they (the Spaniards) followed," and he makes no attempt to define it. However, a careful comparison of the only two accounts of the march, that by Cortés himself in the Carta Quinta, and that given by Bernal Díaz, and some personal knowledge of the country traversed, makes it possible to trace the line of march for a considerable part of the way with some hope of accuracy.

Cortés left the City of Mexico on the 12th October, 1524. The Carta Quinta was written on his return to the City, and is dated 3rd September, 1526. Bernal Díaz wrote his account of the march about 1566, when he was

[1] Book VII, ch. iii, *Conquest of Mexico.*

an old man, and although he possessed a wonderfully retentive memory, it is safer to trust for all details to the account written by Cortés so soon after the events.

From Mexico City to Coatzacoalcos the journey was over country already well known, and the expedition may be considered as starting from the latter town.

The force numbered about 400 Spaniards, 130 of whom were horsemen, and some 3000 Mexican Indians.

The Indians of Coatzacoalcos provided Cortés with a map, painted on cloth, showing some of the pueblos he was likely to pass through on his journey.

The first part of the route lay across the innumerable interlacing waterways, lagoons and swamps forming the deltas of the great rivers flowing from the mountain ranges of Chiapas and Guatemala.

There were few paths or tracks which could be followed, as the Indians travelled by water in their canoes, and consequently they could give little or no information how to get from place to place by land.

The route followed from Coatzacoalcos to the pueblo of Copilco is fairly clear, and Bernal Díaz and the Spaniards from Coatzacoalcos had already traversed it several times. Many rivers and streams had to be crossed, some of them in canoes, and Cortés states that he made fifty bridges, one of them 934 paces in length.

Bernal Díaz, as we have seen, states that in after years Spaniards spoke of "the Bridges of Cortés" as they would speak of "the Pillars of Hercules."

In the map of Tabasco by Melchior de Alfaro Santa Cruz, which, with the memorandum accompanying it, dated 1575, was discovered some years ago among the Archives of the Indies at Seville by my friend the late Dr. Sebastian Marmion, there is written along the course of the Rio Guimango the following legend :—"In this river, which is the Rio Guimango, there is to-day beneath the water the

timber of a bridge built by the Marquis, which is preserved low down in the water."

Bernal Díaz, who had been sent on ahead to Cimatan, was to have returned to meet Cortés at Iquinuapa; however, Cortés makes no mention of that pueblo, and it seems more probable that they met at the neighbouring pueblo of Copilco.

From Copilco Cortés marched to Nacajuca and then went on, crossing many streams and swamps, until he struck the River Grijalva, which he calls the Quezalapa.[1] This river was crossed (probably near the site of the modern town of San Juan Bautista) in canoes sent up stream by the Indians of Tabasco, and the march was continued up the right bank of the river as far as the pueblos of Zaguatan.

Zaguatan is not marked on any modern map, but on the Santa Cruz map the "tres pueblos llamados Çaguatanes" are shown in a position which makes it certain that they must have stood on the Rio Tacotalpa, a branch of the Rio Grijalva, ten or fifteen miles to the south of San Juan Bautista, and these pueblos are mentioned in the memorandum accompanying the map as Astapa, Xaguacapa and Xalapa, three pueblos which still exist. Here the expedition rested for twenty days. This was followed by a two days' march from Zaguatan to Chilapa and thence another two days' march to Tepititan or Tamastepeque, as Cortés calls it, near the foot-hills of the mountains of Chiapas.

It is quite impossible to reconcile the accounts of the journey from Zaguatan to Tepititan with the latest maps. Undoubtedly the Spaniards passed through Chilapa before reaching Tepititan, but this may not be the Chilapa

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[1] Probably the same as Mezcalapa, the name now confined to an upper branch of the same river.

marked on the recent maps (Alfaro Santa Cruz mentions Chilapa as between Macuspana and Tepititan). Both accounts state that the river Chilapa was crossed after leaving the pueblo of that name, and that four days were occupied in its passage, and as no mention is made of crossing the river at Tepititan, that pueblo must have been on the right bank of the river and not on the left bank as now located.

Then followed three days' march through dense forests and swamps to Ystapa (or Istapa), a name that has altogether disappeared from modern maps.

If Cortés took an easterly course he would have struck the Rio Usumacinta somewhere near the Laguna de Catasajá, and we may safely locate Ystapa in that position. Ystapa is marked on the map of Santa Cruz (which, however, is in this part hopelessly out of drawing) as higher up stream than Jonuta, which is still an inhabited village.

A halt of eight days was made at Ystapa, followed by one day's (?) march to Tatahuitalpan on the Usumacinta, which I locate near the modern village of Monte Cristo.

Cortés then asked the way to Ciguatecpan, a name that is not to be found on any map, and he tells us that it is higher up stream than the pueblo of Usumacinta, which is still marked on the maps. He received the usual answer from the Indians, that they did not know the way by land as they always travelled by water. However, they undertook to do the best they could as guides, with the result that after crossing a deep creek, which I take to be the Rio Chacamas, the expedition became hopelessly lost in the dense forest,[1] and the men became exhausted and in danger of starvation, until on the third or fourth day, by

[1] Bernal Díaz records the long march during which they lost their way as between Ystapa and Tamastepec (Tatahuitalpan). Cortés records it as between Tatahuitalpan and Ciguatecpan, and the latter is probably correct.

following a compass bearing in a north-easterly direction, they again struck the Rio Usumacinta near the pueblo of Ciguatecpan, which is not marked on any map, but must be somewhere near the modern Tenosique.

From Ciguatecpan Cortés wished to get to Acalá. This name has completely disappeared. However, I feel fully confident that the province of Acalá was on the Rio San Pedro Martir, an affluent of the Rio Usumacinta, both from the subsequent course of the route followed, and from the fact that Cortés sent canoes down stream from Acalá to the Gulf of Mexico.

The only later mention of Acalá that I can find is in Villagutierre's *History of the Conquest of Itzá* (Lib. I, cap. vii), where it is stated that Acalá was subdued thirty years after the conquest of Mexico by an expedition under Captain Francisco Tamayo Pacheco, which started from Merida in Yucatan, and that Acalá was soon abandoned by the Spaniards owing to the near neighbourhood of the unconquerable Lacandones.

After crossing the Rio Usumacinta in canoes the expedition marched for three days through dense forest and was then stopped by a wide river, which must have been the Rio San Pedro in flood, for heavy rain had fallen.

It was certain destruction to turn back, so, having had the good luck to find three small canoes, Cortés set about constructing another of his wonderful bridges, and with the help of his 3000 Indian followers accomplished the work in four days, cutting and using, as he says, more than a thousand posts the smallest of them almost as thick as a man's body and nine or ten fathoms long.

Bernal Díaz tells us that some men died of hunger while the bridge was being built. Fortunately a small supply of food reached the expedition soon after the river was crossed, and two days later the expedition reached Tizatcpelt, the first pueblo of Acalá.

After resting for six days, a march of five leagues brought the expedition to the pueblo of Teutiaca, and another day's march to Izancanac on the Rio San Pedro.

The execution of Guatemoc probably took place at Izancanac.

The expedition left Izancanac, the last of the Acalá pueblos, on 15th March, 1525, and crossing to the south side of the river marched for three days through the forest to a pueblo of the Mazatecas, standing between a lagoon and a stream.

A day's march took them to Tiac, a fortified pueblo on a plain, and another day's march to Yascumbil, the last pueblo of the province.

On leaving the land of the Mazatecas the expedition marched for three days through an uninhabited country of hills and forests, passing the "Puerto de Alabastro," as the Spaniards called it, "as all the rocks and stones consisted of fine alabaster." This would not be far from a small lake now marked on the map as the Laguna del Yeso (Gypsum).

This journey brought the expedition to the borders of the Lake of Peten Itzá at its western extremity, and while his followers marched along the southern shore, Cortés visited the Island pueblo of Tayasal.

Between Tepititan and the Lake of Peten not one place mentioned by Cortés or Bernal Díaz is to be found on a modern map.

The course of the Rio San Pedro Martir, as laid down on the maps, is probably taken from a canoe survey, and the land on either side of it is unsurveyed and unmapped; yet I feel confident that the route I have sketched out is not far from the true one.

From Tayasal a day's journey brought the Spaniards to a pueblo on a lake which Cortés calls Checan. I have no doubt this is the small lake on Macanché, where I have

passed a night myself after leaving Tayasal, or Flores as it is now called.

From this point the expedition must have turned to the south-east, through unmapped country, and after six days of actual marching, the very rough range of hills was met with, which the Spaniards named the Sierra de los Pedernales—that is, of stones as hard as flints. Cortés states that it took the expedition twelve days to cross the eight leagues of this Sierra, and seventy horses were lost in the passage. It is evidently a range of limestone formation, and although it rained hard all the time, the water sank through the rock and had to be collected in kettles and other vessels for use. After passing the Sierra a river was met with in high flood, and two days were occupied in crossing it, and the expedition then reached a farm called Tenciz on the 14th May.

The Sierra de los Perdernales must be the high land close to the boundary line, between Guatemala and British Honduras, and the flooded river would be the Santa Ysabal (or Rio Sepusilha), the upper water of the Rio de la Pasion.

The river was probably crossed about Lat. 16° 30′ N., where the river leaves British territory.

This latter part of the journey took place during the height of the rainy season, and the rain that year was evidently exceptionally heavy.

With regard to the difficulty experienced in crossing the range, I may say that when I was making almost a parallel journey, fifteen or twenty miles to the west of Cortés's route, during the dry season, we had to lead our horses and mules by hand for nearly a week, although we were following a known trail, and we frequently had to cut away interlacing roots of trees and lianes, and to use the backs of our axes to break off the sharp points and edges of the limestone rock to enable our animals to pass.

On the low ground, owing to some showers which came after we expected the rainy season to be over, I have been all day wading through the forest knee-deep in water, and we were only enabled to get our baggage across a stream by crawling with it across the trunks of tall trees, which the Indians ingeniously felled on each side of the river, so that the branches should interlace and form a bridge.

The remainder of the march, as far as the Rio Sarstoon, must have been through what is now British territory, but with the exception of the course of the rivers the map is a blank, and none of the names given by Cortés are now known.

A further march of about fifteen miles from the Rio Sarstoon brought the expedition to the mouth of the Rio Dulce.

Cortés found the Spaniards of whom he had come in search at San Jil de Buena Vista on the sea-coast about two leagues from the mouth of the Rio Dulce,[1] and he found them in a more starved condition, if that were possible, than his own followers. Many and toilsome exploring expeditions had to be made in search of food, but I will mention only one of these, which was led by Cortés in person.

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[1] The following quotations from Bishop Pedraza's account of Honduras show that the original position of San Jil de Buena Vista (the Nito mentioned in Cortés's Fifth Letter) was on an island in what is now known as the Golfete, between the Rio Dulce and the Golfo Dulce. This site was soon abandoned for a position about two leagues from the right bank of the Rio Dulce on the sea-coast. "Esta casi 30 leguas adelante del Puerto de Caballos costa a costa el Golfo Dulce, el qual esta adelante de un rio que se dice Lanlá, entre el qual rio y el golfo Dulce, casi encima del Golfo que es el dicho Golfo como un seno esta una ysleta que se dice S. Jil de Buena Vista donde fueron aportar los mismos cristianos que per aquellas partes fueron que fue ante que fuese el Marques por alli los quales cristianos yban en compania de un capitan que se dezia Gil Gonzáles de Ávila."—*Relacion de la Provincia de Honduras y Higueras escrita por el licenciado D. Cristobal de Pedraza Primer Obispo de Honduras*, 1544; *Relaciones de Yucatan*, vol. ii, p. 403.

Embarking in a launch and some canoes, he and his party went up the Rio Dulce, and crossed the Golfo Dulce or Lake of Ysabal to somewhere near the mouth of the Rio Polochic, where the party landed and travelled for three days along the northern side of the Sierra de las Minas, finally arriving at a town which Cortés calls Chacujal.

Wishing to identify this site, I made many enquiries and heard of some ruins on the south side of the Polochic which answered the requirements as to position; but I could learn nothing of the name Chacujal, until, to my repeated questions, one of my half-cast canoemen on the Rio Polochic replied, "Chaki jal, that, Señor, is the name the Indians of these parts use for ripe maize." Cortés tells us that some Indians, whom he had captured in the forest, led him to the town of Chacujal; what they did was doubtless to lead him to a place where food could be found, for it could have needed no interpreter to see that the Spaniards were hungry.

Chacujal was indeed well stored with ripe maize, which Cortés loaded on rafts and conveyed down stream to his starving followers on the Rio Dulce.

I was able to make only a short visit to the ruins of Chacujal, which are completely overgrown with forest, but it was long enough to see that the buildings could have been of no great importance, although Cortés says that it was the most important town he had seen since leaving Acalá.

It is quite clear from the account given by Bernal Díaz, as well as that given by Cortés, that during their long march the Spaniards met with no evidence of the higher Maya civilization.

At Tepititan and at Catasajá they were within a short distance of Palenque; at Peten and Macanché they were at no great distance from Tikal and still nearer to Yaxhá

and to the group of ruins discovered by Mr. Maler. Just before crossing the Sierra de los Pedernales they must have been near Ixkun, and on the southern shore of the Golfo Dulce they were within twenty miles of Quirigua, all sites rich in the remains of stone buildings and sculptured ornament and inscriptions.

Had these been still living towns and cities, the Spaniards, when they were scouring the country in search of food, could not have failed to come across roads leading to them.

The whole journey from Coatzacoalcos to the Rio Dulce occupied about six months. The incidents and hardships of this remarkable march are well described in Cortés's Fifth Letter and in the vivid narrative of Bernal Díaz del Castillo.

APPENDIX B.

THE BURIAL OF CORTÉS.

CORTÉS left instructions in his will for his body to be buried in the church of the parish in which he died, and at the end of ten years for his bones to be carried to New Spain and interred in a Franciscan convent to be called La Concepcion, which he ordered to be founded at Coyoacan. However, his body was not buried in the parish church, but was placed in the tomb of the Dukes of Medina Sidonia in the Convent of San Isidro extra Muros at Seville. His bones were taken later to New Spain in accordance with his will, but as the convent which he had ordered to be founded at Coyoacan had not been built, they were placed in the Church of San Francisco at Texcoco. Thence they were removed and buried with great pomp in the Church of the Monastery of San Francisco in Mexico City on the 24th February, 1629.

In 1794 the remains of Cortés were removed to the Hospital de Jesus, which Cortés had himself founded and endowed, and were interred within a monumental tomb.

Here it might be supposed that his bones would have been allowed to remain in peace. However, during the heat of the revolution against the dominion of Spain, everything Spanish was abhorred, and it was even proposed in Congress that the bones of Cortés should be dug up and burnt. In the year 1823 this sacrilege would have been consummated but for the care of the authorities of the Hospital, who secretly exhumed the coffin and buried it in another part of the church and removed the