



THE FIFTH LETTER  
OF  
HERNANDO CORTÉS  
TO THE  
EMPEROR CHARLES V.

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HOLY CATHOLIC CÆSARÉAN MAJESTY—

On the 23rd day of the month of October of last year, 1523, I sent a ship to the Island of Hispaniola from the town of Trujillo, of the Port and Cape of Honduras, and by a servant of mine whom I sent in it, who had to remain in that kingdom [Spain], I wrote to your Majesty about certain events that had taken place in what is called the Gulf of Hibuera, between the Captains whom I had sent there and Captain Gil Gonzáles who went afterwards.

As I was unable, at the time I sent off that vessel and messenger, to give your Majesty a report of my journey and what happened to me on it, from the time I left this great City of Tenochtitlan until I came upon the people of those parts, and they are matters which it is right your Majesty should know, and so as not to fail in the custom which I have followed, which is not to leave anything unexplained to your Majesty, I will relate them shortly as well as I am able, for to detail them as they happened is more than I could do, nor for all that I could say would they be understood there [in Spain]. However, I will relate the most notable and important events that happened to me on the said journey, although it will be no more than a summary, for each event would afford material for a long letter.

When orders had already been given about the affair of Cristóbal de Olid, as your Majesty is aware, feeling that personally I had been idle for a long time and had done nothing new to your Majesty's advantage on account of the injury to my arm, it seemed to me that although I was not free from the hurt, I ought to undertake something. So I set out from this great City of Tenochtitlan on the twelfth day of the month of October of the year 1524, with some persons both mounted and on foot, but no more than those of my household and some of my friends and relations, and with them Gonzalo de Salazar and Pedro Almírez Chirino, your Majesty's Factor and Veedor. I also took with me all the Chieftains of the natives of this country.

I left the care of justice and government to your Highness's Treasurer and Accountant and to the Licentiate Alonzo de Zuazo. I left in the city a full supply of artillery, munitions, and the necessary [force of] men, as well as arsenals well provided with artillery and launches in them ready for action, also an Alcaide and everything fully prepared for the defence of the city, and even to attack anyone were that needful.

With this purpose and resolve I departed from this City of Tenochtitlan and arrived at the town of Espiritu Santo in the Province of Upper Oaxaca,<sup>1</sup> one hundred and ten leagues from this city, and while I was arranging affairs in that town I sent to the Provinces of Tabasco and Xicalango to inform the Chieftains of my coming to those parts, ordering them to come and speak to me or to send persons to whom I could tell what they had to do, [men who] could be trusted to transmit my instructions correctly; and this they did, for the messengers whom I sent to them were well received and they sent me in return seven or eight persons of distinction who were accustomed to act as envoys. I learnt from these men much that I wished to know about the country and they also told me that on the sea coast on the other side of the land called Yucatan, towards the bay which is called "La Asuncion," there were certain Spaniards who did them much injury, for, besides burning many villages and killing the people so that many places were laid waste and the people had fled to the forests, they had done

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<sup>1</sup> Guazaco alto in the text.

even greater damage to the traders, and the whole trade of that district, which was very considerable, had been lost.

From personal knowledge they gave me an account of almost all the towns of that district as far as the place where your Majesty's Governor Pedrarias de Ávila was residing. They also made me a map of it all on a cloth, from which I gathered that I should be able to march through the greater part of the country, or at least as far as the spot pointed out to me as the abode of the Spaniards. Hearing such good news of the road which had to be followed in order to carry out my plans, and bring the natives of the land to a knowledge of our faith and to the service of your Majesty, and knowing that in such a long march many and divers provinces must be crossed, and that people with strange customs would be met with before one could ascertain whether those Spaniards were followers of the Captains whom I had sent out—namely, Diego or Cristobal de Olid, or Pedro de Alvarado or Francisco de las Casas—it seemed to me that in order to carry out the matter satisfactorily it would conduce to the service of your Majesty that I should go there in person, especially as so much unknown country was to be discovered and observed, and much of it might be brought peacefully under your rule, as has since been done. Having realised in my mind the advantages which would follow from my expedition, and regardless of all the labour and expense which it would involve, the consideration of which, as well as of the unforeseen difficulties which might occur, was pressed upon me by others, I determined to follow out this journey as I already had a mind to do when I set out from this city [Tenochtitlan].

At two or three places along the road before my arrival at this town of Espiritu Santo I had received letters from the city, both from those that I had left in charge there and from other persons—and your Majesty's officers who were in my company had received similar communications—to the effect that between the Treasurer and the Accountant there did not exist the agreement which was necessary for the proper discharge of their duties and the responsibility which in your Majesty's name I had placed upon them. I therefore took such steps as seemed to me necessary, writing to reprimand them severely for the error of their conduct and making them aware that if they did not mend their ways I should have to do what would little please them, and

even report them to your Majesty. While waiting in this town of Espiritu Santo arranging my plans, as already stated, I received letters from these same officers and other persons, in which they told me how the ill-feeling between them continued and increased until at a certain council they had even drawn swords on one another. This had caused such great scandal and tumult that not only was one party arming against the other, but that even the natives were arming themselves, saying that the outcry would be turned against them.

Seeing that my reproofs and threats were of no avail, and as I could not return in person to put things right without abandoning my journey, it seemed to me the best course to send the Factor and Veedor, who were with me, back to the city, with powers equal to those which I had delegated before leaving, so that they might preserve peace and find out who was in the wrong. I also gave them authority secretly, so that, if they could not bring the offenders to reason, they might relieve them from the offices with which I had entrusted them, and should assume those offices themselves in conjunction with the licentiate Alonso de Zuazo and then inflict punishment on the offenders.

This being settled and the Factor and Veedor having departed, I felt quite sure that their mission would bear good fruit and would completely calm the passions which had been aroused; this confidence in them fully set my mind at rest.

As soon as the mission had left for the city I held a muster of those who were left to accompany me on my journey, and found that there were ninety-three horsemen besides crossbowmen and arquebusiers and over thirty on foot, making in all a total of two hundred and thirty men. A large caravel lying at anchor in the port, which had been sent to me laden with provisions from the town of Medellin, I filled up with the supplies that I had with me, and with four pieces of cannon, crossbows, guns, and other munitions, and sent it off to await my orders at the Tabasco river. I wrote to a servant of mine who lived in the town of Medellin, telling him to load with provisions and despatch at once two other caravels and a large barque which were there: I also wrote to Rodrigo de Paz, who had charge of my house and affairs in the City [of Tenochtitlan], telling him to set to work at once and send five or six thousand pesos de oro to pay for the provisions which were to be sent to me. I wrote at the same



time to the Treasurer, begging him to lend me that sum, as I had left no money behind me. This he did, and the laden caravels arrived at the River Tabasco soon afterwards according to my orders. However they were not of much use to me, as I was marching some distance inland and it was no easy matter to communicate with the coast, owing to the great swamps which lay between, and get at the provisions and other things needed.

After arranging what things were to be sent by sea, I began my journey along the coast to a province called Copilco, a distance of about thirty-five leagues from Espiritu Santo, and on our way, in addition to many swamps and small rivers over which we threw bridges, we crossed three large rivers, the first at the town of Tonalá, nine leagues from Espiritu Santo, a second called the Agualulco, nine leagues further on—both of these were crossed in canoes, the horses swimming and being led by hand from the canoes. At the third river, as it was too wide for the horses to swim across, we were obliged to find some other means of passage, so a wooden bridge nine hundred and thirty-four paces in length was made half a league up from the sea, and across this both men and horses were able to pass; this bridge was really a marvellous thing to behold.

This Province of Copilco abounds in the fruit called the cacao and other useful products, fish also being plentiful. It has ten or a dozen good pueblos in it without counting villages, the land is low lying and full of swamps, so much so that in the winter [rainy] season one cannot travel on foot but must go about in a canoe; and, although I marched across it in the dry season, in the twenty leagues which we covered while travelling across the province we had to make over fifty bridges to enable us to get along. The people were fairly peaceful though somewhat shy as they had previously seen little of Spaniards; they have remained very peaceful since my arrival, giving willing obedience not only to me and those with me but also to the Spaniards whom I left in charge of them.

From this Province of Copilco, according to the map given to me by the people of Tabasco and Xicalango, I had to go to another province called Zaguatan, and as the people only travel by water they did not know of any road which I could march over, but they pointed out to me the direction which I should follow. I had to send ahead some Spaniards and Indians to find

a way in the direction indicated, and when they had found one to clear the path so that we could pass along it, as it was through a thick forest. It pleased God that the path should be found although it was a very toilsome one, for besides the forest there were many troublesome swamps, and we had to bridge them all or nearly all of them. We had to cross a river of great volume called the "Guezalapa,"<sup>1</sup> which is one of the branches of the Tabasco River, and I arranged to send ahead two Spaniards to the Chiefs of Tabasco and Cunoapa, requesting them to send up the river fifteen or twenty canoes so as to enable us to cross it. And I told them to send these canoes laden with provisions from the caravels, and later on the canoes conveyed the provisions to the principal town of Zaguatan, which I judged to be about twelve leagues higher up the stream than the place where we crossed it; all this was carried out successfully by those Chiefs according to my request.

As soon then as I had found a road to this River Guezalapa which had to be crossed, I departed from the last town of the Province of Copilco called Anaxuxaca,<sup>2</sup> and slept that night in the forest among the lagoons. We arrived at the river early next day but found no canoes in which to cross it, as those that I had begged from the Chiefs of Tabasco had not yet arrived. I found out that the pioneers who had gone ahead were opening a road up the stream on the other bank of the river, for as they had been told that the river passed through the largest town of the province of Zaguatan they followed up the river so as not to miss it, and one of them had gone up the river in a canoe so as to arrive more quickly at the town. When this man reached the town he found all the people in a state of tumult, so he spoke to them through an interpreter who was with them and quieted them somewhat; he then sent the canoe down stream again with some Indians, through whom he let me know what had happened, and he added that he himself was returning with some natives and was clearing a road along which I should be able to march, and that he hoped soon to join with those who were opening the road from this end.

I was greatly pleased both at learning that these people had been pacified and at knowing for certain that a road had been

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<sup>1</sup> Rio Grijalva.

<sup>2</sup> Nacajuca.

found, for I was rather doubtful if one could be opened, and in any case thought that it would be a difficult matter. In that canoe and in rafts made of logs I began to send the baggage across the river which had a very swift current. While we were at work the Spaniards whom I had sent to Tabasco arrived with twenty canoes laden with provisions, which they had brought from the caravel which I had sent from Coatzacoalcos. I learnt from them that the two other caravels and the barque had not yet arrived in the river, as they had remained in Coatzacoalcos ; they were however expected soon. About two hundred Indians of the Province of Tabasco and Cunoapa came in the canoes : we crossed the river in these same canoes without any other accident than the drowning of a negro slave and the loss of two loads of horse-shoes, of which we felt the want later on.

That night I slept with all my people on the other side of the river, and the next day followed after those who were clearing the road up stream with no other guide than the river bank. I marched about six leagues and slept that night in the forest in heavy rain. After dark the Spaniard who had been up the river to the pueblo of Zaguatan arrived from that place with about seventy Indians. He told me that he had cleared a road, but that in order to strike it I must turn back two leagues ; I however told those who were opening the road along the river bank, who were already three leagues beyond the place where I slept, to go on with their work, and a league and a half ahead they came upon some farms belonging to the pueblo, so that we now had two roads open where there had been none before.

I followed the road opened by the Indians, and although we were impeded by some swamps and by the heavy rainfall we arrived that day at a suburb of the town, which although one of the smaller ones was of good size and contained more than two hundred houses. We could not go on to the other parts of the town on account of the rivers which ran between them, which could only be passed by swimming. The whole place was deserted, and as soon as we arrived even those Indians who had come with the Spaniard to see me took to flight, although I had spoken kindly to them and given them some small presents and had thanked them for the work they had done in opening the road for me, and had also told them that I had come to this country at your Majesty's command to let them know that they

should believe in and adore one God only, Creator and Doer of all things, and that they should hold your highness as lord and chief, and all such other matters as it was right to tell them.

I waited three or four days thinking that the people had fled through fear, and that they might return to speak to me, but not one of them appeared. In order to obtain a guide from them, and to leave them settled under your Majesty's rule, and also to learn from them about the direction of the road that I was to follow (for there are no roads at all in that country and not even a sign of anyone having travelled by land, everyone going by water on account of the great rivers and swamps that intersect the country) I sent out two companies of Spaniards, and a few of the natives of Tenochtitlan and its neighbourhood whom I had brought with me, to seek for the natives of this province and to bring them to me, so that I might carry out what I have just stated. In the canoes which had come up the river from Tabasco, and in others which we found at the pueblo, they explored many of these rivers and lagoons (for it was impossible to travel by land), but they found no more than two Indians and a few women from whom I endeavoured to find out whither the Chief and people of the land had fled, and they returned no other answer than that every one had fled into the forest through the swamps and by the rivers, each seeking his own safety. I also asked them about the road to the Province of Chilapa, as that was the route which I should take according to my map; but I could learn nothing from them as they said that they never travelled by land but in canoes by the rivers and lagoons—that travelling thus they could find the way but not over land. The best thing that they could do for me was to point out a Sierra which seemed to be about ten leagues distant, and to tell me that the chief town of Chilapa was near to it; and that a very large river ran by the town and joined lower down with the river of Zaguatan, and that the two flowed together into the Tabasco river. They also told me that up the stream there was another pueblo called Ocumba, but that they knew no road to it by land.

I stayed for twenty days in this pueblo and during all that time never ceased searching for a road which might lead somewhere, but I found none, either great or small, for in which-

ever direction we set out from the pueblo we met with great and terrible swamps which it seemed impossible to pass.

Being now in great straits for want of provisions, we commended ourselves to God and made a bridge across a swamp three hundred paces in length which took many beams of from thirty five to forty feet long, and over these we laid others crosswise. We passed this bridge and journeyed on in the direction in which we were told the pueblo of Chilapa was to be found. I also sent a company of horsemen and some crossbowmen in the other direction to look for the pueblo of Ocumba, and they came upon it that very day and crossed the river by swimming and in two canoes which they found there. The people of the pueblo took to flight at once. There they found a good supply of provisions, but they captured only two men and a few women and returned at once to join me. I camped out that night and thanked God that the country was more open and dry and that we did not meet with so many swamps. The Indians captured in the pueblo of Ocumba guided us towards Chilapa, where we arrived late the next day to find the whole pueblo burnt and the natives fled.

This pueblo of Chilapa is large and well placed; there are many plantations of fruit trees and many fields of maize, but the grain was not yet quite ripe, nevertheless it was a great help to us in our distress. I stayed two days in the pueblo collecting food and searching the neighbourhood for the natives so as to pacify them and also gain some information about the road to be followed; we found however no more than two Indians who had been captured when the pueblo was first entered. I learned something from them about the road to Tepititan, or Tamastepeque as others call it, and although there was no track, and they had to guess at the direction, they led us there in two days. We crossed on the way a very large river called the Chilapa, after which the pueblo was named. The passage of the river was very arduous on account of its breadth and swift current, and as there were no canoes we had to cross on rafts; another slave was drowned in this river, and the Spaniards lost much of their baggage. After crossing this river, which we did a league and a half from the pueblo of Chilapa, and throughout the six or seven leagues which we traversed before arriving at Tepititan we crossed many great swamps, and in all of them the horses

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sank up to their knees and often to their ears. One swamp was especially dangerous and we made a bridge across it, as two or three Spaniards were nearly drowned in it. After two days of hard work we arrived at the pueblo which was burnt and deserted; this doubled our difficulties. We found some fruit in the pueblo and some unripe maize but it was more mature than what we had found at the last pueblo. We also found in some of the burnt houses stores of dry maize; they were however few in number, but were a great help to us in our dire need.

In this pueblo of Tepititan, which is close to a large range of hills, we stayed for six days searching the country round and hoping to communicate with the natives so as to leave them settled in their pueblo, and also to get information about the road which we should follow, but we captured only one man and a few women. From these people we learnt that the Chieftain and the natives of the pueblo had been induced to burn their houses by the people of Zaguatan and that they had fled to the forest.

The man told me that he did not know the road to Istapa, for there was none (this according to my map was the next pueblo which I should pass), but that he could guide me more or less correctly in the direction in which he knew it to lie. With this guide I sent ahead thirty horsemen and thirty men on foot, and told them to get to that pueblo and then to write me a report of the road, and that I would not start until I received their letter. It happened however that after waiting two days without receiving any news of them I was obliged to start on account of the want to which we were reduced, and to follow their trail as our only guide, but it was easy enough to follow their tracks through the swamps, for I can assure your Majesty that even on the tops of the hills the horses sank to their girths when riderless and led by hand. In this manner I marched two days without hearing anything of those who had gone on in front and in the greatest perplexity as to what I ought to do, for to return seemed impossible, and what lay ahead of us was very doubtful. Thank God who helps us in our worst distresses, for while we were camped in the forest, all very sad at the thought that we should surely perish, there arrived two Indians of Tenochtitlan with a letter from the Spaniards who had gone on ahead telling me that they had arrived at the pueblo of Istapa, and that when

they got there they found all the women and goods on the other side of the river which flowed past the pueblo, but that many of the men remained in the pueblo, thinking that they would be unable to cross the great lagoon which lay outside it. When however the natives saw that they were swimming their horses and holding on to the pommels of their saddles, they began to set fire to the pueblo, but did it so hurriedly that not all the houses caught fire and all the natives ran to the river and crossed it either in the numerous canoes that they had there or by swimming. In their haste many of them were drowned, but seven or eight of them were captured—amongst them one who appeared to be a Chief; all of them would be kept prisoners until my arrival.

I cannot tell your Majesty the joy of my people when this letter arrived, for, as I have already said, we had almost given up all hope of relief. Early next day I set out along the trail, guided by the Indians who had brought the letter, and arrived that evening at the pueblo. I found all the people who had gone on ahead very cheerful, for they had found many maize fields, though not very large ones, and also yucas and red peppers<sup>1</sup> which is what the natives of the Islands are accustomed to feed on. As soon as I arrived I had the natives who were captured in the pueblo brought before me, and asked them through an interpreter why they set fire to their houses and pueblos and took to flight, as I never did them any harm whatever; on the other hand to those who waited to receive me I gave presents which I had brought with me. They answered that the Chief of Zaguatan had come there in a canoe and had frightened them very much, making them burn their pueblo and desert it. I made them bring before the Chief all the men and women whom I had captured at Zaguatan, Chilapa and Tepititan, and told them that in order that they might see how that bad man had lied to them, they might learn from these Indians whether I had done them any harm or whether they had been well treated whilst in my company. As soon as they had informed themselves they cried out and said that they had been deceived, and showed their regret at what they had done. To reassure them further I gave

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<sup>1</sup> Agoe in the text: either Aje = a tuber like a yam, Aji = red peppers or Ajo = garlic.

leave to all those men and women, that I had brought from the pueblos we had passed through, to return to their homes, and I gave them some trifling presents and letters, which I told them to keep in their pueblos to show to any Spaniards who should visit them, and that these letters should secure them from molestation. I ordered them to tell their Chiefs what a great error they had committed in burning and deserting their houses and pueblos, and that they should never do such a thing again, for they were quite safe, as no harm would be done to them. On hearing this the Indians of Istapa went away quite contented, and this helped to content the others. After this I spoke to the Indian who seemed to be the most important among them, and told him that he could see that I harmed no one, and that my coming to their country was not to offend them but to teach them what was good for them to know, both for the safety of their persons and property and for the salvation of their souls. I then asked him to send two or three men who were with him, in company with some natives of Tenochtitlan, to summon the Chief and to tell him that he need have no fear, but would certainly benefit greatly by coming to see me. He replied that he was quite willing to do this, so I sent them off at once with the Mexican Indians in company with them. The next morning the messengers returned with the Chief and forty men. The Chief told me that he had fled and ordered his pueblo to be burnt because the Chief of Zaguatan had advised him to set it on fire, and not to await my coming, as I would put everyone to death ; now however he had heard from those of his people whom I had sent to summon him that he had been deceived, and that the Chief of Zaguatan had not told him the truth. He said that he was sorry for what he had done and begged me to pardon him, promising that for the future he would do whatever I ordered. He begged me to give back to him certain women whom the Spaniards had captured on their first arrival, so twenty of them were collected at once and given back to him, at which he was greatly pleased.

It happened that a Spaniard caught one of the Indians, a native of Mexico, who was in his company, in the act of eating a piece of the flesh of an Indian who had been killed in the assault on the pueblo, and he came to tell me of it. I had the offender burnt to death while the Chief of the pueblo was present and I let him know that the cause of punishment was that he had killed and



eaten an Indian—a deed forbidden by your Majesty and which I, in your royal name, had given strict orders should never be permitted; so because this Indian had killed and eaten another he had been burnt to death. It was not my wish that anybody should be killed, for I came here at your Majesty's orders to protect and defend both their property and their persons, and to teach them to acknowledge and adore the one only God, who is in heaven, Creator and Doer of all things and by whose will all things live and are governed; also to teach them to put aside their idols and to abandon the rites which hitherto they had observed, for they were lies and snares of the devil, the enemy of the human race, which he put forth to deceive them and to bring them to everlasting damnation, in which they would suffer great and terrible torments, and to lead them away from the knowledge of God, so that they should be saved and thus enjoy the glory and happiness which God promised and had prepared for those who believed in Him, which happiness the devil himself had lost through his malice and iniquity. I had also come to tell them that your Majesty, whom the universe obeys and serves according to the Divine will, was now lord over the land, and that they had to subject themselves to the Imperial yoke and do that which we, who were here as your Majesty's ministers, should order them to do; that by so doing they would be treated with justice and well looked after, and their property and persons would be protected; but that should they not act thus they would be proceeded against and punished according to the law. I told them much more of the same nature, with which I will not weary your Majesty. The Chief was well satisfied with what he had heard, and immediately ordered some of those that were with him to fetch supplies of food; this they did. I gave the Chief a present of a few trifles from Spain, which he valued greatly, and he stayed contentedly in my company all the time that I remained there. This Chief also ordered a road to be opened to another pueblo called Tatahuitapan, five leagues higher up the river; and as there was a deep river to be crossed on the way he had a good bridge made over which we passed; he also had some very bad swamps prepared so that we could cross them. He also gave me three canoes in which I despatched three Spaniards down stream to the Tabasco river (for this is the largest of the streams which flow into that river) at which place the caravels

were awaiting my orders. By these Spaniards I sent instructions that the caravels should follow the coast until they doubled the point called the Point of Yucatan, and then should go on to the bay of La Asuncion, for there they would meet me or I would send instructions to them as to what they should do next.

I ordered the Spaniards, who went in the canoes, to load them, and any other canoes that they could find in Tabasco and Xicalango, with all the supplies that they could carry and to take them up a great river to the Province of Acalá, which is distant forty leagues from this town of Istapa, and said that I would meet them there. When these men had started and the road had been cleared I asked the Chief of Istapa to give me three or four canoes to send up the river with half a dozen Spaniards and some of his own people, one of whom should be a person of some importance, so that they might calm the fears of the people of the pueblos and stop them from burning their houses and taking to flight. This the Chief did with every sign of goodwill, and it bore good fruit, for the people of four or five pueblos up the river were pacified, as I shall presently tell your Majesty.

This pueblo of Istapa is a very large one and is situated on a beautiful river; it is a good site for a Spanish settlement, as there is good pasture along the river bank, excellent farm land, and a good deal of land under cultivation.

I stayed six or eight days in the pueblo of Istapa making the arrangements already recounted, and then continued my march, arriving the same day at Tatahuitalpan, a small pueblo which we found burnt and abandoned. I got in before the canoes which had been sent up the river, as the swift current and the many bends in the stream delayed them. When they did arrive I sent some men across the river to search for the natives of the pueblo, in order that we might reassure them, as we had reassured those in the pueblo below. Half a league from the bank of the river they found about twenty men in a house containing highly decorated idols; these they brought to me, and on being questioned they told me that all of the inhabitants had run away through fear, but that they themselves did not wish to flee, preferring to stay and die beside their gods. As I stood talking to them some of my own Indians went by carrying things which they had torn from the idols. When the Indians of the pueblo

saw this they cried out that their gods were already dead ; on this I spoke to them, pointing out how vain and foolish was their belief that such gods could do them any good, when they were not able even to protect themselves and were so easily overcome. They replied that their fathers before them had held that creed, and that they themselves believed in it and would keep it until they knew a better. From want of time I could not tell them more than I had told to the people of Istapa, but two friars of the order of St. Francis, who were in my company, conversed with them at some length on the subject of religion. I asked some of them to go and call the Chief and people of the pueblo. To reassure them the Chief of Istapa also spoke to them, and told them of the good deeds that I had done in his pueblo ; they thereupon pointed out one of their number and said that he was their Chief, and he at once sent off two of his followers to summon the people ; they however never appeared. Seeing that the people did not come, I asked the man who was said to be the Chief to show me the road to Ciguatapan, as according to my map it was higher up the river and we should have to pass through it. He replied that they did not know the way by land, as everybody went by water, but that they would try to take me through the forest, although they could not be certain of success. I told them to point out the direction from the place where we stood, and I noted it as well as possible. I then ordered the Spaniards in the canoes and the Chief of Istapa to go up the river to the pueblo of Ciguatapan and try to pacify the people there, and also of another pueblo named Ozumazintlan<sup>1</sup> which they would pass on the way. I told them that if I arrived there first I would wait for them, but that if they got there before I did they were to wait for me.

When they had started I set out with my guides by land and as soon as I had left the town I came upon a great swamp more than half a league long. With the help of the friendly Indians, who placed branches of trees and brush in the path, we were able to cross it. Then we came to a deep creek where we had to make a bridge in order to carry over the saddles and baggage, the horses swimming ; and as soon as we were across we came upon another swampy place, more than a league long, where the

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<sup>1</sup> Usumacinta.

horses sank to their knees and often to their girths, but as the ground underneath was hard we got across safely and entered the forest. In this forest I marched for two days, clearing a path in the direction pointed out by the guides, until they confessed that they had lost themselves and did not know where they were going.

The forest was so thick that, standing on the ground and looking up, one could not see the sky, and the trees were so tall and close together that even when one climbed up into them one could not see the distance of a cannon shot. When those who were ahead with the guides clearing the road sent to tell me that they were wandering about aimlessly and did not know where they were, I sent word to them to halt and went forward myself on foot. When I saw the muddle that they were in I told the people to go back to a small swamp which we had passed and where on account of the moisture there was a little pasture for their horses; for they had eaten nothing for two days. There we passed the night suffering much from hunger which we felt the more owing to the little hope we had of reaching a village. Some of the men were more dead than alive, and almost gave up all hope. I then told them to bring me my marine compass which I had brought with me, and which had often helped to guide me, but never yet in such extremity as we now found ourselves in. By the aid of this compass, and calculating the direction in which the Indians said the pueblo should lie, I found that, by travelling in a north easterly direction from where we stood, we ought to hit the pueblo or come close to it, so I ordered those who were ahead clearing the road to take the compass with them and to follow that same bearing, and on no account to depart from it. This was done, and it pleased God that our calculations should turn out so well that by the hour of vespers we came in sight of the idol houses which stood in the middle of the pueblo. All were so overjoyed that, almost out of their senses, they ran towards the pueblo without noticing a great swamp that was in the way. Many horses sank into it and some of them could not be got out until the next day, but thank God none of them were lost. We who came behind crossed the swamp in another part but not without difficulty. The pueblo of Ciguatapan we found burnt down, even to the mosques and idol houses, and completely

deserted, so that we could obtain no news of the canoes which had been sent up the river. We found a great deal of maize much riper than any that we had found before, also yuca and red peppers and good pasture for the horses, for there is good grass on the bank of this beautiful river. Thus refreshed we began to forget our past troubles, although I was still very anxious for news of the canoes which I had sent up the river. As I was walking about looking at the pueblo I found a crossbow bolt planted in the ground and by this I knew that the canoes must have arrived, for all those that went in them were crossbowmen, and I was much distressed at thinking that as they were not to be found they might have been attacked here and all been killed.

In some small canoes which we found I sent some men across the river where they saw much land under cultivation, and passing through it came to a great lagoon. Herè they found all the people of the pueblo in canoes or on some small islands. At the sight of the Christians the Indians approached them with confidence, although they could not understand a word that was said to them.

Thirty or forty of these Indians were brought before me, and when questioned told me that they had burnt their pueblo at the advice of the Chief of Zaguatan and had fled to the lagoon on account of the fright that he had put them into ; but that afterwards some Christians of my party had come there in canoes, accompanied by some natives of Istapa, from whom they learned how well I treated the Indians. This had reassured them, and they told me that the Christians had been waiting for me here during two days, and as I had not arrived they had gone on up stream to another pueblo called Petenecte, and that the brother of the Chief of their pueblo had gone with the Spaniards with four canoes in case the people of Petenecte should wish to harm them. They also told me that they had supplied the Spaniards with plenty of food and all else that they needed.

I was delighted at this news and believed it fully, as they had come to me of their own free will and shown such confidence in me. I asked them to send some men in a canoe at once to look for the Spaniards and to carry a letter from me ordering them to return without delay. This was promptly done and I gave them the letter for the Spaniards. The next day at the hour of vespers

the Spaniards returned with the people of this pueblo who had gone up with them, and four other canoes laden with men and provisions from the pueblo whence they had just come. They told me that after leaving me [at Istapa] they had gone up the stream as far as the pueblo called Usumacinta, which is below this one, and had found it burnt and deserted. The people of Istapa whom they had brought with them went in search of the inhabitants, and having gained their confidence returned with them. These had afterwards furnished provisions and done all that was asked of them, and had been left peacefully settled in their pueblo. They themselves then came on to Ciguatapan, which they had also found abandoned and the people fled to the other side of the river. When however the inhabitants had talked with the Indians from Istapa they all rejoiced and had given the Spaniards a good reception, doing all that they could for them. There they waited for me two days, and as I did not appear thought that I must have come out higher up the river. As they had waited so long they set out in company with some of the people of this pueblo and a brother of its Chief and went on to another pueblo called Petenecte, six leagues distant. This also they found deserted but not burnt down, the inhabitants having fled to the other side of the river.

However the people from this pueblo and from Istapa had made friends with them so that four canoe loads of the inhabitants had now come to see me, and brought me maize, honey, cacao and a little gold. Messengers had been sent to the inhabitants of three pueblos up the river called Zoazacoalco, Taltenango and Teutitan, who would probably come to see me during the next day. And so it turned out, for the next day there came down the river six or eight canoes with people from all these pueblos ; they brought provisions and a little gold. To one and all I spoke very fully, making them understand that they must believe in God and serve your Majesty. All of them offered themselves as subjects and vassals of your Highness and promised for ever to do what they were ordered to. The people of Ciguatapan soon afterwards brought some of their idols, and in my presence broke them to pieces and burnt them. The principal Chief of the pueblo who had not come to me before, now arrived and brought me a little gold, and I gave presents to all of them, on which they became well contented and satisfied.

When I asked these people which road I should take to get to Acalá they expressed different opinions, those of Ciguatapan saying that my road lay through the pueblos higher up the river, and that before the other people had arrived they had already opened six leagues of the road overland, and had thrown a bridge over a river which we had to cross. When the other people arrived they said that that road would take me a long way round through a bad and uninhabited country, and that the nearest way for me to go to Acalá was by crossing the river at the town where we were, and that thence there was a path which the traders were accustomed to use, and by which they would guide me to Acalá. They finally settled among themselves that this would be the best road.

I had already despatched a canoe with a Spaniard and some natives of this pueblo of Ciguatapan to the Province of Acalá by water, to warn the people of my coming and tell them that they had nothing to fear, and to find out whether the Spaniards who had been sent from the brigantine with provisions had already arrived. Later on I sent four Spaniards with guides, who said that they knew the road, with orders to report to me if there was any difficulty or impediment in the way, and I told them that I would stay at Ciguatapan and await their report. After they had set out I found myself obliged to start before they had written to me, so that the provisions which had been collected for the journey should not be eaten up, for I was told that I must travel for five or six days through uninhabited country. I began the passage of the river with a great fleet of canoes, and it was toilsome work owing to the breadth of the stream and the strength of the current; one horse was drowned and some baggage of the Spaniards was lost. As soon as we had got across I sent a company of men on foot, with the guides, to clear the road, then with the rest of the people I followed behind.

For three days we marched through thick forest along a very narrow path, and then came to a large creek more than five hundred paces wide. I set to work to look for a ford both up and down stream, but none could be discovered, and the guides told me that it was useless to look for one unless I journeyed for twenty days towards the mountains. This lagoon or creek placed me in such a difficulty that I cannot find words to express it; to cross it seemed impossible on account of its width and the

want of canoes, and even if we had had canoes for the people and baggage the horses could not have crossed, for on both sides were great swamps with a network of tree roots. No other way could be thought of for getting the horses across. To turn back meant certain death on account of the bad roads which we had passed over and the amount of rain that had fallen, for we well knew that the flood in the rivers must have washed away all the bridges that we had made, yet to rebuild these seemed equally difficult when all the men were exhausted and the thought was pressing on our minds that we had consumed all the provisions prepared for the journey and should find nothing more to eat. The people and horses were both numerous, for in addition to the Spaniards there were more than three thousand Indians with me.

I have already told your Majesty what difficulties there were in the way of our advance, so that no human brain could have suggested a remedy if God, who is the true help and succour of the afflicted and needy, had not aided us. I happened to find a little canoe in which the Spaniards, whom I had sent ahead to examine the road, had crossed over and from this canoe I had soundings taken right across the lagoon and found it to be throughout four fathoms deep; I had some lances tied together so as to test the nature of the bottom, and it was found that besides the depth of the water there was another two fathoms of mud, so that in all it was six fathoms deep. As a last resource I determined to throw a bridge across and at once I ordered wood to be cut to measure, that is nine or ten fathoms long including that part which would remain above the water, and I gave the order for cutting and hauling the timber to the Chiefs of the Indians who were with me—to each one according to the number of his followers. The Spaniards and I with them, from rafts, from the small canoe, and from two other canoes which had since been found, began to drive in the posts. It seemed however to all of us a hopeless task, and they were even saying behind my back that it would be better to turn back before all the men were exhausted or hunger would prevent us returning at all, for the work we were engaged on could never be finished and we should have to turn back whether we wished to or not. There was so much grumbling among the people that they almost dared to tell me this to my face.



As I saw them so greatly discouraged—and in truth they had good reason to be so, both on account of the nature of the work that we were undertaking, and because they had nothing to eat except such roots and herbs as they could find—I told them that they should not be employed on the bridge for I would build it with the Indians alone. I sent at once for all the Chiefs and told them that they could see to what extremity we were reduced and that we must either go forward or perish and I entreated them to make their men complete the bridge, for, once across it, we should be in the great Province called Acalá where there was an abundant supply of food, and that there we should rest; moreover they knew that in addition to the food that the country would furnish I had ordered supplies to be sent to me, from the ships, which would be brought in canoes; they would therefore be abundantly supplied with all that they needed. In addition to this I promised them that when we got back to Tenochtitlan they would be handsomely rewarded by me in your Majesty's name.

They assured me that they would do the work and at once divided it up amongst themselves, and they displayed such energy and quickness that in four days the bridge was finished and all had crossed over it, both men and horses. I believe that this bridge will stand for ten years if not destroyed by the hand of man, and even then it would have to be burnt for it would not be easy to destroy it in any other way. It contained more than a thousand posts, the smallest of them almost as thick as a man's body and nine or ten fathoms long, without counting the smaller pieces of timber; I can assure your Majesty that I do not think anyone could explain, in a way that would be understood, the method by which that bridge was built. It was certainly the most wonderful thing that ever was seen. As soon as the men and horses had crossed the creek we came on a great morass, two crossbow shots in width, the most terrible thing that man ever saw, in which unmounted horses sank to their girths and the more they struggled to get out the deeper they sank, so that we lost all hope of saving a single one of them; nevertheless we set to work to place brushwood and large branches underneath them, in order to prevent their being engulfed, and this helped them somewhat. Owing to our tramping backwards and forwards a little canal of mud and water was opened down

the middle in which the horses were able to swim a little and by this means it pleased Our Lord that they all got through without hurt, although they emerged so tired and exhausted that they could hardly stand. We all gave thanks to Our Lord for the great mercy vouchsafed to us, and at that very moment the Spaniards whom I had sent to Acalá arrived, followed by about eighty Indians of that Province laden with supplies of maize and poultry. God knows how delighted this made us and we were overjoyed at hearing that the people of the country were undisturbed and peaceful, and showed no wish to run away. The Indians of Acalá were accompanied by two persons of distinction, who said they came on behalf of Apaspolon, the Chief of the Province, to tell me that he was delighted at my arrival, and that he had heard of me for some time past through the traders of Tabasco and Xicalango, and was delighted to know me, and he sent by them a little gold. I received it with all the appearances of pleasure that I knew how to show, thanking their Chief for the goodwill that he evinced in your Majesty's service. I gave them a few small presents and sent them back, well contented, in the company of the Spaniards with whom they had come. They marvelled greatly at the building of the bridge, and this went far to establish the security which we afterwards enjoyed among them, for as their country lies amid lagoons and creeks they could easily have hidden themselves in them, but after seeing that wonderful work they thought that nothing was impossible for us to accomplish.

About this time a messenger arrived from the town of San Estevan del Puerto, which is on the Panuco River, bringing me letters from the judges of the town, and with him came four or five Indian messengers who brought letters from the City of Tenochtitlan and from the towns of Medellin and Espiritu Santo and I was very glad to hear that all went well, but I did not hear from the Factor and Veedor, for they had not yet arrived at the city.

This day, after the Spaniards and Indians who went on ahead to Acalá had departed, I followed after them with all my people and slept that night in the forest. The next day, shortly after noon, we came to some farms and plantations of this Province of Acalá, but before arriving at the first of the pueblos, which is called Tizatepelt, [we had to cross a large morass which gave us

some trouble, although we succeeded in getting across at last by making a detour of nearly a league and leading the horses by their bridles. About the hour of vespers we arrived at the pueblo] and found all the natives living peacefully in their houses; we also found food enough both for men and horses to make us forget the want that we had suffered. Here we rested six days and there came to see me a youth, of pleasing appearance, with a goodly following. He said that he was the son of the chief and brought us some gold and poultry and placed his land and person at your Majesty's service. He told me that his father had died, and so I condoled with him on his loss although I could see that he was not speaking the truth. I gave him a necklace of Flemish beads which I was wearing round my neck, and which he valued most highly. I then bade him farewell, he however stayed with me of his own accord for two days.

One of the natives of the pueblo, who was said to be the Chief, told me that near by there was another pueblo, also under his rule, where we should find better accommodation and more food, as it was a larger place and had a more numerous population, and he invited me to go there as it would be more convenient for me. I told him that I was quite willing to go and at once ordered the road to be cleared and lodgings to be prepared, all of which was well done. We then went to this pueblo, which is five leagues distant from the first mentioned, and here also we found all the people living undisturbed in their houses and a part of the pueblo cleared for our accommodation. It is a very beautiful pueblo, called Teutiaca and has most beautiful mosques, especially the two in which we took up our quarters after having thrown out the Idols. At this the natives did not show much distress as I had already spoken to them and shown them the error in which they lived, for there was no other than the one God creator of all things, and all the rest that I could tell them at the time. Later on I spoke more fully on the subject of religion to both Chief and people. I learnt from the people that the more important of these two mosques or houses was dedicated to a goddess in whom they had much faith and hope, and to whom they sacrificed only the most beautiful maidens; and that if this were not done the goddess was highly incensed with them, so that they took the greatest care to find such maidens so as

to satisfy her, and that they brought up the best looking girls from childhood for this purpose. About this I also told them what I thought was right and they seemed pleased at what they heard.

The Chief of this pueblo showed great friendship towards me and held long conversations with me, giving me a full account of the Spaniards of whom I was in search, and of the journey which we should have to make. He also told me in the utmost confidence, praying me to let no one know that the information came from him, that Apaspolon, the Chief of the whole Province, was alive but had ordered him to say that he was dead; that it was true that the youth who had come to see me was his son, and he had given orders that I should be led astray from the direct road that we ought to take, so as to prevent us from seeing their country and pueblos; he added that he told me this because he was well disposed to me and had received good treatment at my hands. He implored me to keep this secret, for if it were known that he had told me, the Chief would have him killed and his land burned up. I thanked him heartily and gave him some small presents in return for his good will, promising to keep his secret, and that in time to come he should be substantially rewarded in your Majesty's name.

I sent at once to summon the son of the Chief, who had been to see me, and told him that I was much surprised at him and at his father for wishing to keep away from me, knowing as they did my good will towards them and my wish to see him and to do him honour, and also to give to him such presents as I had brought with me, because I had been well treated in his country and desired greatly to make him some return. I knew for certain that his father was alive, and should be pleased if he would go and speak to him and persuade him to come and see me, for I felt sure that it would be greatly to his advantage to do so. The son told me that it was quite true that his father was alive, but he had denied it because he was ordered to do so; that he would now go to him and try hard to persuade him to come and see me, and that he believed he would come, for he had a strong desire to see me, knowing, as he now did, that I did not come to do them any harm, on the contrary that I had given them presents of such things as I had brought with me, but that having once denied himself he was now somewhat ashamed to appear before me. I begged him to go and do all

that he could to bring his father, and in this he succeeded, for the next day both of them came to see me and I received them with much pleasure. The Chief gave as an excuse for having denied himself that he was afraid to come until he knew how I was disposed towards him, but as soon as he knew that he wished very much to come; he also confessed that it was true that he had ordered them to guide me away from the pueblos, but that now he begged me to come to the principal pueblo where he himself lived, as in that pueblo there were greater facilities for supplying us with everything that we needed. The Chief stayed with me and I gave orders for a broad road to be cleared to his pueblo; we set out together on the following day.

I mounted him on one of my horses and he was very happy riding it into his pueblo, which is called Izancanac; it is a fine town with many mosques, and it stands on the banks of a great river which flows through the country as far as the port called Terminos de Xicalango and that of Tabasco.

Some of the inhabitants of this pueblo were absent but others were in their houses, and we found a plentiful supply of provisions. The Chief stayed in the same house with me although he had a house of his own, with his own people in it, near by. During the time of my stay he gave me a long account of the Spaniards of whom I had come in search, and made me a map on a cloth of the route that I had to take. He gave me some women and some gold without my asking for them, for up to this time I had not demanded anything from the Chiefs of these countries against their wishes.

We had then to cross a river, and before arriving at it there was a great swamp over which he [the Chief Apaspolon] ordered a bridge to be made. For the passage of the river the Chief gave us all the canoes that we needed, and he supplied guides for our journey. He also gave us guides and a canoe to carry the Spaniard who had brought my letter from Santistéban del Puerto, and for the Mexican Indians who were returning to the Provinces of Xicalango and Tabasco. I sent letters by the Spaniard to the towns and to the officers whom I had left at Tenochtitlan, as well as to ships at Tabasco and to the Spaniards who were coming with provisions, telling them all what they should do. When the letters was despatched I gave presents to the Chief of certain things to which he had taken a liking; he

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seemed well pleased and all the people of his Province were settled and at peace.

I gave the Chief a letter which he had asked for, so that if any Spaniards should arrive they might know that I had passed that way and looked upon him as my friend.

I set out from this Province on the first Sunday of Lent in the year [15]25; the first day we did nothing more than to cross the river, which was no easy matter.

Here in this Province a thing took place of which it is right that your Majesty should be informed. It is that a respectable citizen of Tenochtitlan, Mesicalcingo by name, now called Cristóbal, came very secretly to me one night and brought me a drawing on paper such as is used in his country, and wished to explain to me what it meant. He told me that Guatemocin, who was the Chief of the City of Tenochtitlan, whom I had held prisoner since the capture of the city as I believed him to be a turbulent person, and whom I had brought with me on this journey together with all the other chiefs whom I thought to be cause of all insecurity and revolt in this country, that is to say Guatemocin, [Guanacaxin] who was Chief of Texcoco, Tetepanquetzal Chief of Tacuba, and a certain Tacitecle who was living at Tlatelulco in the City of Mexico: that they had often spoken and told stories to this Mesicalcingo, saying how they were dispossessed of their lands and lordships, which had been given over to the Spaniards, and that it would be well to seek a remedy to this state of affairs so that they might again hold their lands and rule over them; and that, during their many talks on this subject during the present journey, it had seemed well to them to prepare a plan by which they might kill me and those with me, and to call on the people of those parts to kill Cristóbal de Olid and those with him; then to send messengers to Tenochtitlan to have all the Spaniards who had remained there killed. They thought that this could be easily done, as all those Spaniards who remained in the city were new comers and knew nothing about war. When this had been carried out they proposed to call on the people throughout the land, throughout all the towns and villages where Spaniards might be settled, to kill and destroy them all. This being accomplished they intended to put strong garrisons of men at all the sea ports, so that not a single ship which might arrive should escape, and no news could reach Castile. Thus they would

again become Chiefs as they were before, and, in anticipation, they had already divided up the land among themselves and had given Mesicalcingo the chieftainship of a certain province.

When I was told of this treason I gave many thanks to Our Lord that it had been thus revealed to me, and at dawn I had all the Chiefs taken prisoners and kept apart from each other. I then asked them how this matter came about, and to each one of them I said that the other had told me about it, for no one of them knew what the other had done, and thus all confessed that it was true that Guatemocin and Tetepanquetzal had set the matter on foot, and also that it was true that the rest had heard of it, but that they had never given their consent to the plan ; these two therefore were hanged and I released the others, as they did not seem to have been guilty of more than listening, although that was sufficient for them to have deserved death : the proceedings against them were left open, so that if at any time they should relapse they might be punished. I believe however that they received such a fright (for they never found out through whom I got my information) that they never will relapse. They think that I found them out by some magic art, and that it is quite impossible to hide anything from me. They had seen how, in order to find the way, I had often consulted a map and compass, especially when the road neared the water, and they believed and told many of the Spaniards that it was by the compass that I had found out their plot. Sometimes, even when they were anxious to show their good will towards me, they would implore me to consult the looking-glass and the map so that I should know for certain their good intentions, as it was by those means that I found out everything. I let them believe that this was the truth.

The Province of Acalá is a most important one, for it has many pueblos with many inhabitants, and the Spaniards in my company visited many of them. Food and honey are abundant, and there are numerous traders and people who do business in other provinces. They are rich in slaves and also in other articles of commerce. Acalá is surrounded with watercourses, and all these waterways enter into the bay or port called "Terminos," and by them a great deal of traffic is carried on with Xicalango and Tabasco, and it is believed, although not known for certain, that they cross thence to the other sea, so that this land which they

call Yucatan is an island. I shall try to find out the truth about this matter and will send a trustworthy report of it to your Majesty.

As far as I know there is no other principal Chief than he who is the richest merchant and does the largest trade with his boats by sea, which is this Apaspolon whom I have already mentioned to your Majesty as the principal Chief, and it is because he is so rich and such a great trader that even in the town of Nito (of which I shall speak later on, for there I found certain Spaniards of the company of Gil Gonzales de Ávila) there is one quarter peopled by his agents, and with them a brother of Apaspolon who looks after his affairs. The chief articles of commerce in these parts are cacao, cotton, cloth, colours for use as dyes, another sort of colour with which they stain their bodies as a protection against heat and cold, candle wood for lighting purposes, pine resin for incensing their idols, slaves, and red shell beads which they use much for personal adornment on their festivals and holidays. They also trade a little in gold, but all of it is mixed with copper or some other substance.

To Apaspolon, and to many other worthy natives of this Province who came to see me, I repeated what I had already said to other natives during this journey about their idols and what they should do and believe in order to insure their own salvation, and also what their duties were towards your Majesty. It seemed that they were gratified at what I told them, for they burned many of their idols in my presence and said that from that time forward they would pay them no honour, and they promised to obey any commands that I should give in your Majesty's name. I then took leave of them and set out on my journey as I have already related.

Three days before setting out from the province of Acalá I sent four Spaniards with two guides, given me by the Chief, to examine the road which we were to take to the province of Mazatlan, which in their language is called Quiatleo [Quiacho?] and find out if there were any rivers and swamps to be crossed; for they had told me that there was much uninhabited country and that I should have to sleep four nights in the forest before arriving at the said Province. I ordered all the people to get six days' provisions ready so that we should not be reduced to the want that we had suffered before. This was easily arranged, for there was a plentiful supply of everything needful.



After marching five leagues beyond the crossing of the river, I came upon the Spaniards who were returning from the examination of the road, and the guides whom they had taken with them, and they told me that they had found a very good road although it was through dense forest, but that it was level and free from any rivers or swamps that might impede our march. They had, they said, arrived at some plantations in the said Province without being observed, and had there seen some natives, but had turned back before they were noticed by them. I was greatly delighted at this news, and I ordered that for the future six men on foot and some friendly Indians should go on a league ahead of those who were clearing the road, so that if they met with any wayfarer they should seize him in order that we might reach the province without being noticed, and so catch the people before they could burn their pueblos or take to flight as had so often happened before. That day, near a lagoon of water, we found two Indians, natives of Acalá, who had come from Mazatlan, as they told us, to barter salt for cloth, and this seemed to be the truth as they were laden with cloth. I told them that they would have to return with me, but that they should not suffer through this and would lose none of their merchandise; indeed that I would add to it, and that when we arrived at the Province they should return home, for I was a good friend to all people from Acalá as I had received good treatment both from the Chief and the people of that place. They were quite willing to do what I wanted and returned with me as guides, taking us by another road, and not by the road which the Spaniards whom I had sent ahead were clearing, as this latter led only to some plantations and the former to the pueblo itself.

That night we slept in the forest, and the next day the Spaniards who went ahead as scouts came on four natives of Mazatlan, armed with bows and arrows, who were placed, as it appeared, to act as scouts. As our men came on they discharged their arrows, and wounded one of our Indians, and as the forest was thick only one of them was taken prisoner; he was given in charge of three Indians of our company.

The Spaniards went on ahead, thinking that there were more Indians in front of them, but as soon as they had gone on the three Indians who had taken to flight, but who it seems had hidden themselves close by in the forest, threw themselves on

our friendly Indians who held their companion prisoner, and fought with them and released him; thereupon our Indians pursued them through the forest, and, overtaking them, began another fight in which one of the enemy was wounded in the arm by a severe cut, and was then taken prisoner; the other three fled into the forest as they heard more of our men coming up. From this Indian I learnt that his people did not know of my coming. When I asked him why they were stationed there as sentinels he replied that it was always their custom, for they were at war with many of their neighbours, and in order to insure the safety of the labourers working in the plantations their Chief always kept spies on the road, so that they should not be suddenly attacked.

I went on with my journey as fast as I could, for the Indian told me that we were near by, and as I did not wish his companions to arrive before me I told my men to go on, and that when they reached the first plantations they were to hide in the forest and wait until I came up. It was evening when I arrived, and I hurried on, hoping to get to the pueblo before night. As the baggage had become scattered I ordered a Captain to remain there in the plantation with twenty horsemen in order to collect the baggage, and to sleep there in charge of it and come after me as soon as it had all been collected. I marched on foot, along a narrow path through thick forest, leading my horse by hand, and all those who followed me did the same. We went along till near nightfall, when we came to a swamp which it was impossible to cross without preparation, so I passed the word from mouth to mouth to turn back, and we returned to a small hut a little way in the rear, and there we passed the night, without water either for ourselves or for our horses.

Early next day we made a path across the swamp with many branches of trees and led all the horses across by hand, but it was very toilsome work. About three leagues from the place where we had slept we caught sight of a pueblo on a rock, and thinking that we had not been observed we approached it with great precaution. It was so well fenced that at first we could not find an entrance, and when at last a way in was discovered we found the pueblo to be deserted, but very well supplied with stores of maize, poultry, honey, beans and all the produce of the

land in great quantities. As the inhabitants had been taken by surprise they were able to carry nothing away with them, and it was well stored also on account of its being on the frontier. The pueblo is built on a high rock with a lagoon on one side of it, and a deep stream which runs into the lagoon on the other side. There is therefore only one practicable entrance, and that is protected by a deep ditch and a wooden palisade breast high; behind the palisade is a fence of very thick wooden planks about ten feet high, with loopholes in it through which to shoot arrows. At intervals in the fence were watch towers which rose seven or eight feet above it, where piles of stones were kept ready to throw on their assailants below. The walls, parapets, and all the houses in the pueblo, were loopholed in the same way, and loopholed barricades were placed across the streets. So well planned were these that they could not have been improved upon, having regard to the sort of weapons with which they fight.

I sent some men to search the country for the inhabitants of the pueblo, and they caught two or three Indians; these I sent, in company with one of the traders from Acalá whom we had captured on the journey, to go and look for the Chief, and to tell him not to be afraid but to return to his pueblo, as I had not come there to trouble him; on the contrary I would help him in the wars that he was waging, and leave his country secure and at peace. Two days later these men returned bringing with them an uncle of the Chief, who governed the country, for the Chief was a child and they said that he was afraid to come. I spoke to the uncle and reassured him, and he went with me to another pueblo in the same Province, but which is seven leagues away and is called Tiac. There was war between these two pueblos.

This pueblo was also fenced in the same way as the former, and is much larger though not so strong, as it stands on a plain; its palisades, ditches, and watch towers are stronger and larger, and each of the three divisions of the pueblo is fenced separately, with another fence outside them all. I had sent on ahead to this pueblo two companies of horse soldiers and one of foot; they found the place deserted but with a quantity of food left in it. Near the pueblo they captured seven or eight men, some of whom were released so that they might go and speak to the Chiefs and reassure the people. This had been done, and with such

good effect that before my arrival messengers had come from the Chief bringing supplies and cloth, and after my arrival on two occasions others came to speak to us and bring us food, both on behalf of the Chief of this pueblo and on behalf of five or six other pueblos of this Province, each one of which is independent of the other. All offered themselves as vassals to your Majesty and professed friendship to us, although I could never get their Chiefs to come and see me.

As I had not time for much delay I sent to tell them that I accepted their submission in your Majesty's name, and requested them to give me guides for my journey, which they willingly did. One guide was given to me who knew the road very well as far as the pueblo where the Spaniards were residing, and had seen them there. I left this pueblo of Tiac, and went on to sleep at another called Yasuncabil, which is the last town of the Province and is fenced in the same way as the other towns. Here also the people had fled.

The Chief's house was a very beautiful one although built only of straw. In this town we got ready everything that we needed for the journey, for the guide told us that we had to travel five days through uninhabited country before reaching Itza, which lay in our route; this information proved to be correct. From this Province of Mazatlan or Quiache I sent back the traders whom we had captured on the road, and the guides whom I had brought from Acalá. I gave them some presents, both for themselves and to take back to their Chiefs, and they were well contented. I also sent back to his house the Chief of the first town who had come with us, and gave him also some of his women who had been captured in the forest, and some trifling presents with which he was completely satisfied.

Leaving the Province of Mazatlan I journeyed in the direction of Itza, and slept, at a place in the waste, four leagues along the way—indeed the whole journey lay through waste land and amid forests and hills. The path through the hills was very rough, and as all the rocks and stones consisted of very fine Alabaster we gave it the name of the "Puerto de Alabastro." On the fifth day the scouts who went ahead with the guide saw a great lagoon like an arm of the sea, and this I still believe it to be on account of its size and depth, although the water is fresh. On an island in the lagoon they saw a pueblo which the guide said

was the principal pueblo of Itza, and that to reach it we must go in canoes. The Spanish scouts halted and sent back one of their number to tell me their news. I ordered all the people to halt and went ahead myself on foot, to have a look at the lagoon. When I reached the scouts I found that they had taken prisoner an Indian from the pueblo who had come in a small canoe, carrying his arms with him, to examine the road and see if there were any people about, and although he came along without suspicion of what would happen to him, he would have escaped our men were it not for a dog they had with them, which caught him before he could get to the water.

I questioned the prisoner, who told me that nothing was known about my coming, and on asking him if there were any food in the pueblo he replied that there was none, but that near by, after crossing a small arm of the lagoon, there were some plantations and inhabited houses, and that there he believed we should find some canoes if we could get there without being noticed.

I sent to tell my people to follow me, and went on on foot with ten or twelve crossbowmen and the Indian for a guide. We passed through a long stretch of swamp with water to our waists and sometimes higher, and got to the plantations, but owing to the bad roads it was often impossible to keep hidden, so that we failed to escape detection and arrived just as the people had embarked in their canoes and put off into the lake. I hurried along the edge of the lake for two miles, often through plantations, but everywhere we were observed and the people were already in flight, and as it was getting late it was useless to follow them.

I rested in the plantation and collecting all my people together camped there, taking all the precautions possible as the guide from Mazatlan told me that the Indians were very numerous and very warlike, being feared in all the neighbouring provinces. He told me that he would like to embark in the little canoe in which the other Indian had come and go to the pueblo, which could be seen on the island about two leagues off, and speak to the Chief who was called Canec, whom he knew very well, and tell him of my plans and of the reason of my coming to these parts ; for, as he had come with me and knew my wishes and had seen my doings, he believed that he would be able to reassure the

Chief, who would believe his report, for he knew him very well and had often stayed in his house.

I at once gave him the canoe and the Indian who had come in it, and thanked him for his offer, promising him that if he were successful I would reward him to his entire satisfaction. So he set out and at midnight returned with two men of importance from the pueblo, who said that they had been sent by their Chief to see me and to enquire into what this messenger of mine had told them, and to ask me what I wanted. I gave them a good reception and some small presents, and told them that I had come to these lands by your Majesty's orders to see them and to speak with the chiefs and people on some matters connected with your royal service and their own good; that they should tell their Chief that I requested him to put aside all fear and come to see me, and that for greater security I should like to give them a Spaniard to go back to them as a hostage while the Chief came to me. On this they set out in company with the guide and one Spaniard. The next morning the Chief himself arrived with about thirty of his men in five or six canoes, and with him came the Spaniard whom I had sent as a hostage. The Chief seemed pleased to come and I received him with cordiality, and as he happened to arrive at the hour of mass I ordered one to be chanted with much solemnity to the accompaniment of clarionets and sackbuts. They attended the service with me and paid much attention to the ceremonies. When mass was over, one of the friars who accompanied me preached a sermon through an interpreter, in a way that could be easily understood, about the matters of our faith, explaining to the Chief how there is but one God and pointing out the errors of their native beliefs. From what the Chief said and did he appeared to be convinced, for he said that he should like to destroy his idols at once and believe in that God about whom we told him, and that he would like much to know what should be done to serve and honour Him; and that if I would care to go to his pueblo I should see how he would burn his idols before me, and he desired that I should leave in his pueblo a cross such as he was told that I had left in all the other pueblos that I had passed through. After the sermon I addressed the Chief telling him of your Majesty's greatness and how all the rest of the world were your subjects and vassals and

were obliged to serve you, and that to those who served your Majesty thus were granted great favours and that I, in your Majesty's name, had done so in this country to all those who offered their services and placed themselves under your royal yoke, and that I made the same promise to him. He replied that until this moment he had acknowledged no one as his lord nor had he known that anyone had a right to be so ; that it was true that five or six years ago some people of Tabasco, coming through his country, had told him how a Captain with some people of our nation had come amongst them and vanquished them three times in battle, and had told them that they had to be the vassals of a great Chief and all the rest that I had now told him, and he wished me to tell him if this was one and the same affair. I replied that I myself was the Captain whom the men of Tabasco spoke of as having come into their country and fought with them, and in order that he might assure himself of the truth he might question the interpreter who was speaking to him. This was Marina, she whom I always took with me, for it was in Tabasco that she had been given to me with twenty other women. Marina spoke to him and told him how it was true and how I had since conquered Mexico ; she also named to him all the countries which I hold subject and have placed under your Imperial rule. The Chief showed contentment at this, and said that he wished to become a subject and vassal of your Majesty, and that he considered himself fortunate in becoming the vassal of so great a lord as I described your highness to be. He ordered his people to bring poultry, honey, a little gold, and some beads of red shell, which they value highly, and gave them to me. I gave him some of my things, at which he was greatly pleased. He dined with me with much pleasure, and after dinner I told him how I had come in search of those Spaniards who were on the sea coast and belonged to my company and had been sent there by me, and that it was a long time since I had heard from them and that was why I had come to search for them. I then asked him to tell me any news that he might have heard of them. He replied that he had heard much of them, for near to where they were staying were some vassals of his who worked in cacao plantations<sup>1</sup> for there was good land for them

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<sup>1</sup> The word "Cacaguatales." Cacahual = a plantation of Cacao trees. Cacahuete = a pea-nut.

there ; that from these people and from many traders who came and went daily from his land thither he was continually hearing news of them. He said that he would give me a guide who would take me to where they were, but that he must warn me that the road was very rough, over high and rocky mountains, and that it would be an easier journey if I were to go by sea. I replied that he could see that there would not be boats enough to carry the number of people and horses and the amount of baggage that I had with me, so that I was compelled to travel by land. I asked him to arrange for the passage of the lake and he replied that by going on by land for about three leagues I should get to a place where the water had dried up, and that I could then follow the bank to the road which ran in front of his pueblo. He added that whilst my people were following that route he begged that I would go with him in the canoes to see his house and pueblo also to see him burn his idols and have a Cross made for him. In order to please him, although much against the wishes of my own people, I embarked in the canoes with about twenty men, most of them crossbowmen, and went with him to his pueblo, where I rested pleasantly all day. At nightfall I took leave of the Chief, who gave me a guide, and I got into the canoe and went over to the mainland to sleep. There I found many of my people who had gone round the end of the lake and there we passed the night.

At this pueblo, or rather at the plantations, I left a horse which had run a splinter of wood into its foot and could not travel. The Chief promised to look after and cure him, but I do not know what he will do with him.

The next day, after collecting my people, I started in the direction which the guides pointed out to me and about half a league from our camp came upon a small plain or savannah, and then passed through a wood for a distance of about a league and a half. We then came out on to some beautiful plains, and I sent some horsemen and some men on foot far ahead of the others, so that they might capture any natives whom they might meet, for our guides told us that we should arrive at a pueblo that evening.

On these plains we found many fallow deer, and we speared eighteen of them from horseback. Owing to the heat of the sun, and the many days that the horses had been without proper exercise (for there had been no suitable ground, only hills and forests) two of the horses died and many others were in great



danger. When the hunting was over we went on our way, and soon after I came up with some of the scouts, who had been sent on ahead, awaiting me. They had captured four Indian hunters who were carrying a dead lion and some iguanas, which are great lizards such as are found in the islands. I asked them if they knew of my coming at their pueblo; they said no and pointed out the pueblo which did not look to be more than a league away. I hastened on, thinking that there was nothing in the way to prevent my reaching it. When I thought that I was about to enter the pueblo and could see the people walking about, I came upon a large and deep creek and there was compelled to stop. I began to shout to the inhabitants, and two Indians came over in a canoe bringing about twelve fowls with them. They came close up to me as I was standing with the water up to the horse's girths, but there they stopped and would come no nearer. I stood talking to them for a long time, trying to give them confidence, but they would come no nearer to me, but began to return towards their pueblo in the canoe. Then one of the Spaniards who was on horseback near me spurred his horse into the water, and began to swim after them. In their fright they upset the canoe, and some of my men, hurrying up, swam after them and caught them. While this was going on all the people of the pueblo took to flight. I asked the two Indian prisoners where we could get across, and they showed me a road by which we could avoid the water by going round about a league. We slept that night in the pueblo which is eight long leagues from our starting place that day.

The town is called Thecon [Checan, Macanché] and the Chief is named Amohan. Here we stayed four days, preparing six days' food (for the guides said that we had six days uninhabited country before us) and in the hope that the Chief of the pueblo might come in, for I had sent the two Indians whom I had captured to summon and reassure him, but neither Chief nor Indians appeared. At the end of this time, having collected all the provisions that I could find, I set out and passed on the first day through a very good country, flat and cheerful, with only a few patches of wood, and after marching six leagues at the foot of a range of hills we came on a large house, and close by it two or three smaller houses in the neighbourhood of some plantations. The guides told me that the house belonged to Amohan, the Chief of Thecon, who kept it there as an inn for

the many traders who passed that way. I stayed there the day after my arrival, both because it was a feast day and also to give time to those who had gone ahead to open the road.

In that river we had grand fishing, we cornered in it a number of shad, and caught them all without losing one of those which were inside the fish fence.

Next day I set out, following a rough road all day over hills and through forests, and after seven leagues of this rough road we came out upon a beautiful plain, without any forest but only a few pine trees. This plain was two leagues long, and while crossing it we killed seven deer and we stopped to dine at a cool stream at the edge of the plain. After dinner we began to ascend a small pass which, although not very high, was so rough that we could hardly get the horses up it, leading them by hand. On descending the other side we came to another plain half a league long, and then by another ascent and descent. In this ascent and descent we must have covered two and a half leagues of ground, so rough and so bad that there was not a horse that did not lose a shoe. We slept that night by a stream at the foot of this pass. There we stayed the next day almost up to the hour of vespers, waiting whilst the horses were shod, and although we had two farriers at work, and more than ten men who were helping to drive the nails, they were unable to shoe all the horses on that day. I went on that same evening and slept at a place three leagues ahead, but many of the Spaniards stayed behind both to shoe the horses and to await the baggage, which had been delayed by the badness of the road and the heavy rain that had fallen. The next day I went on as the guides told me that near by was a farm called Asuncapin, belonging to the Chief of Itza, where we could arrive early and pass the night. After marching four or five leagues we arrived at the farm, but found no one there. There I stayed two days awaiting the arrival of all the baggage and collecting some supplies: I then set out and slept at another farm called Taxuytel, five leagues distant from the first, which belongs to Amohan, Chief of Thecon. Here there were many cacao plantations,<sup>1</sup> and some maize though small and green. The guide and the manager of the farm, who had been captured together with his wife and son, told me that we would

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<sup>1</sup> See note on page 381.

have to cross some very lofty and rough mountains, altogether uninhabited, before we arrived at some other farms called Tenciz, belonging to Canec, the Chief of Itza. We did not stay here long, setting off the very next day, and after marching six leagues across the plain we began to ascend the pass, which was the most wonderful thing in the world to behold. To describe the craggy roughness of this pass and these mountains would be impossible, for could the narrator find adequate terms no listener could understand or believe such a description. It is enough to tell your Majesty that it took us twelve days to traverse the eight leagues of the pass, that is to say for the whole of the company to pass through. Sixty eight horses died from injuries or from falls from the rocks, and all the others came through so badly cut and bruised that we did not think that one of them would recover. So there died in that pass of overwork and wounds sixty eight horses, and those that survived took three months to recover. During the whole time that we were marching through the pass it never ceased raining day or night, but the nature of the rock is such that it holds no water to drink, and we suffered much from thirst, and many of the horses died of it. Had it not been that we collected water in kettles and other vessels from the ranchos and huts which we put up every night to shelter us, sufficient for ourselves and the horses, neither man nor beast would have escaped alive from those hills.

In this pass a nephew of mine broke his leg in three or four places, and to the damage that he suffered by the accident was added increased labour for us all, owing to the great difficulty we experienced in bringing him out of the mountains. To add further to our troubles, a league before arriving at Tenciz we came on a great river which was so swollen by the recent rains that we could not cross it, so the Spaniards who went ahead had gone upstream until they found a ford, the most wonderful that I have ever heard of or could imagine. The river at that place was flooded until it was two-thirds of a league wide as the course was blocked by some large rocks. In the narrows between these rocks the river rushed with terrifying swiftness, these narrows are numerous, for the water cannot escape otherwise than between the rocks, so here we felled huge trees by which to pass from one rock to another. Thus we passed over at the greatest risk, aided by some lianes which we tied across ; the

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least slip in crossing would have been fatal. There were over twenty of these narrows which had to be passed, and two days were occupied in the passage. The horses crossed by swimming lower down the stream where the current was not so swift, and many of them took three days getting to Tenciz, not more than a league distant ; so much had they suffered in the mountains that it was almost necessary to carry them as they could not walk.

I arrived at these farms of Tenciz on Easter eve [1525] and many of the men did not come in for another three days, that is those who owned horses and had to look after them. The Spaniards who were sent ahead as pioneers had arrived two days before me and had found inhabitants in three or four of the houses, and had captured over twenty of them as they knew nothing of our approach. I asked these people if they had any supplies of food, and they said no, and that none would be found in the country. Thus we were in worse straits than when we arrived, as for the last ten days we had nothing to eat but the kernels of palms and palmitos, and even of these we had few as we had not the strength to cut down the trees.

The Chief of the hamlet told me that a day's journey up stream, going back by the way we had come, there were many people belonging to a Province called Tahuycal, where there was an abundance of maize, cacao and poultry, and that he would give me a guide to take me there. I at once arranged to send a Captain and thirty men on foot, and over a thousand Indians who were with me. There it pleased Our Lord that they should find an abundance of maize but the inhabitants had taken to flight ; so we drew our supplies from that source, but as it was a long way off we provisioned ourselves with difficulty.

From these plantations I sent out some of the Spanish cross-bowmen with a native guide to examine the road which we had to take to a Province called Acuculin, and to go as far as a village of the same Province which was ten leagues from the place where we were camped and six leagues from the chief pueblo of the Province ; this is called as I have said, Acuculin, and the Chief's name is Acahuilguin. They arrived without being noticed, and in one house captured seven men and a woman, then they returned and told me that the road as far as they had gone was very toilsome, but that it seemed to them excellent in comparison with those we had already travelled.

The Indians whom the Spaniards brought with them gave me news of the Christians of whom I was in search. Amongst these Indians was one who was a native of the Province of Acalá, who said that he was a trader and had had his storehouse for merchandise in the pueblo where the Spaniards whom I was seeking lived, the name of which is Nito, and that there is much trade with all parts. That the traders belonging to Acalá had a quarter of the pueblo to themselves, and had with them a brother of Apaspolon the Chief of Acalá. He also told me that the Christians had attacked the pueblo in the night and had captured it, seizing all the merchandise that was in it. This was a large amount as there were traders from all parts. That since that time all the traders had gone off to other Provinces, and that he himself and other traders of Acalá had asked permission of Acahuilguin, the Chief of Acuculin, to settle on his land, and that they had built in a certain place which he had assigned to them a small pueblo, where they lived and whence they traded. They said that trade had suffered greatly since the arrival of the Spaniards, for the trade route ran by their town and the natives dared not pass by there. This man said that he would guide me to the place where the Spaniards were living, but that it would be a ten days' journey over many bad ranges of hills, and that just before arriving we should have to cross a large arm of the sea.

I was greatly delighted to get such a good guide and did him much honour; the guides whom I had brought with me from Mazatlan and Itza talked to him, telling him how well they had been treated by me and what a good friend I was to Apaspolon their Chief; this seemed to give him more confidence. Being sure that he was trustworthy, I ordered him to be set free and also those who had been brought with him. Feeling thus secure I allowed the other guides whom I had with me to return home, giving them some small presents for themselves and their Chiefs, and thanking them for the work that they had done. After this they set off very contented. I then sent four natives of Acuculin and two others from the hamlet of Tenciz to go and speak to the Chief of Acuculin, and reassure him so that he should not keep away. After these I sent the men who were clearing the road.

I set out myself from this place two days later, as provisions

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were running short, although we had had little rest and it was very hard on the horses. However we started leading the greater number of the horses by hand and that very night before the dawn the guides and those natives who were with him took to flight. God knows how I felt at having dismissed the other guides. However I continued my journey and slept in the forest after a march of five leagues, passing on the way some very bad places, at one of which a horse which up to the present had escaped injury was hamstrung. Next day we marched six leagues and passed two rivers, one by means of a fallen tree which reached from bank to bank ; out of this we made a bridge so that the people could cross without falling. The horses swam across and two mares were drowned. The other river we crossed in canoes, the horses swimming, and that night we slept in a small hamlet of about fifteen houses, all of which were newly built. I knew this to be the place where the traders from Acalá had settled after leaving their town on the coming of the Christians. Here I stayed a day, getting the people and baggage together, and I sent ahead two companies of horsemen and one of foot to the pueblo of Acuculin, whence they wrote to tell me that they had found it deserted, and that in a large house which belonged to the Chief they found two men, who said they had remained there by the Chief's orders to await my arrival and advise him of it, for he knew of my coming by the messengers whom I had sent from Tenciz. He said that he would be delighted to see me and that he would come in as soon as he knew that I had arrived. One of the men went off to summon the Chief and bring some supplies, while the other remained where he was. They added that they had found cacao on the trees, and that there was fair pasture for the horses, but they had found no maize. As soon as I arrived at Acuculin I asked if the Chief had come in, or if the messenger had returned, and they replied no. I then spoke to the native who had remained behind, asking him why they had not come. He said that he did not know, and that he was also waiting for them, but it might be that the Chief was waiting to know that I had come in person, and by this time he would be assured of it. I waited two days and as the Chief did not come I spoke to the man again. He replied that he could not think why the Chief had not arrived, and he asked me to give him

some Spaniards to go with him, as he knew where the Chief was staying and would go and tell him to come. Ten Spaniards were sent with him, and he led them five leagues through the forest to some huts which they found empty, though according to the Spaniards they showed signs of recent occupation. That night the guide ran away and the Spaniards returned to me. We were now left guideless, which doubled our labours. I sent a company of my people with Spaniards and Indians all over the forest, and though they scoured it for eight days they saw no man and not even tracks of them. They captured only a few women, who were almost useless, as they neither knew the road nor could tell us anything about the chief or the people of the Province. One of the women said that she knew a pueblo two days' journey away called Chianteca, where there were people who could tell us about the Spaniards whom we were seeking; there were many traders among them, and people who trafficked in all directions. I sent out some people with this woman as guide, and although it was a long two days' journey through a rough and unpeopled country the inhabitants of the pueblo had already been warned of my approach, and nobody could be captured to serve as a guide. When I had almost abandoned hope, as we had no guide and the compass was useless to us, hemmed in as we were with rough and intricate mountains such as we had never met with before, and not seeing a loophole of escape except over the road by which we had come, it pleased God that a boy of about fifteen years of age should be found in the forest who, on being questioned, said that he could guide us to some plantations of Taniha, which I remembered as the name of another Province that we had to pass through. The boy said that it was two days' journey to the plantations, and with him as guide we set out, and in two days arrived at the plantation, where the pioneers who went on in front captured an old Indian, and he guided us to the pueblos of Taniha, which are two days' journey farther on. In these pueblos four Indians were captured, and as soon as I questioned them they gave me very distinct news of the Spaniards whom I was seeking, saying that they themselves had seen them, and that they were distant two days' journey at that very pueblo, which was called Nito; which is very much frequented by traders and one often hears mentioned in many places; it was of it that they told me in the Province of

Acalá, as I have already informed your Majesty. Two women were brought to me, natives of this very pueblo of Nito where the Spaniards lived, and they confirmed the news, for they said that at the time that the Spaniards captured the pueblo they were living in it, and as the assault was made by night they had been taken prisoners with many others, and that they had been in the service of certain Christians whom they named. I cannot tell your Majesty the joy with which I and all those of my company heard the news which the natives of Taniha gave us, and at finding ourselves so near to the end of such a doubtful enterprise.

During those last four days' journey from Acuculin we had gone through innumerable labours and hardships, for we were among pathless rugged mountains and precipices, where some of the few horses left to us fell from the rocks. My cousin Juan de Ávalos and his horse rolled together down the mountain side, he breaking his arm, and had it not been for the plates of his armour which he had on and which protected him from the rocks he would have been dashed to pieces; as it was it was a very difficult matter to haul him up again. There were many other hardships which we met with, and which would take too long to recount, especially that of hunger, for, although I had with me some of the pigs which I had brought from Mexico, when we arrived at Taniha we had had no bread to eat with our meat for eight days, only cooked palmitos and some palm kernels without salt, for that had been wanting for many a day. We found nothing to eat in these pueblos of Taniha, for owing to their being in the neighbourhood of the Spaniards they had been abandoned for some time past, as the natives thought that they would be attacked by them; however from this they were quite secure judging from the state which I found the Spaniards to be in.

At the news of finding ourselves so near we forgot all our past troubles and strengthened ourselves to endure the present, especially that of hunger which was the worst, for even of the palm cores without salt there were not enough, for they were cut with much difficulty from palms with tall stems, and it took two men the whole day to cut one of them, and they could eat the whole of it in half an hour.

These Indians who gave me the news of the Spaniards told me



that there was a two days' march over a bad track to get to them, and that near the town of Nito, where the Spaniards were living, there was a great river which could not be crossed without canoes, for it was so wide that it was impossible to swim across. I at once sent off fifteen men of my company on foot, with one of these men as guide, to inspect the road and the river. I told them to try and get some speech of these Spaniards, without saying who they were, so as to tell me what men they were, whether of those whom I had sent with Cristóbal de Olid or Francisco de las Casas, or of the party of Gil González de Ávila; so they set out and the Indian guided them to the river, where they took a canoe from some traders and then kept in hiding for two days. At the end of this time a canoe with four Spaniards, who were going fishing, put out from the pueblo of the Spaniards on the other side of the river; they were all captured and as none escaped no news of the capture reached the pueblo. These prisoners were brought to me, and I learned that the Spaniards who were there were of the party of Gil González de Ávila, and that they were all ill and almost dead of hunger. I despatched two of my servants, in the canoe in which the Spaniards had come over, with a letter to the pueblo, to give notice of my arrival and to say that I was about to cross the river, and begging them to send me all the boats and canoes that they could collect and so to help me across. I set out at once with all my followers to the river crossing, and was three days in reaching it; there I was met by one Diego Nieto, who said that he was there as a punishment. He brought me a boat and a canoe in which with ten or a dozen followers I passed over that night to the pueblo. Even yet I was not free from great difficulty, for a heavy squall struck us in the passage and, as the river is very broad close to its entrance to the sea where we crossed it, we were in great danger of being lost, but it pleased Our Lord that we should reach the port in safety. On the next day I had another boat got ready and found some more canoes, which I tied together two and two, and after these preparations we brought across all the people and horses in five or six days.

The Spaniards whom I found in this place numbered sixty men and twenty women, whom the Captain Gil González de Ávila had left there. I found them in such a condition that one was moved to compassion on seeing them and

observing the joy which they showed at my arrival, and in truth had I not arrived not one of them would have survived. Not only were they few in number, unarmed and without horses, but they were all very sickly and almost starved to death. All the supplies they had brought with them from the Islands and those that they found in the pueblo when they took it were exhausted, and they did not know where to look for more, for they were not in a condition to go out and search the country for them. The pueblo was so situated that there was no way out that they knew of or were able to find and only with much difficulty was one discovered afterwards. Seeing the great straits these people were in and the little chance that they had of getting out in any direction—for they had never gone further by land than half a league from where they were living—I determined to seek some way of supporting them until I could send them back to the Islands, where they could regain their health, for among them all there were not eight of them fit to settle in the land. I sent some of my own people in different directions by sea in two boats which were found, and in five or six canoes. The first expedition which they made was to the mouth of a river called Yasa [Lanlá], ten<sup>1</sup> leagues distant from the pueblo where I had found the Christians, and in the direction whence I had come; for I had information that pueblos and plentiful supplies were to be found there. The people set out and after arriving at the river ascended it six leagues, and there came on some very large plantations. The natives of the country had however had notice of their coming and had carried off all the food, which they had stored in some houses near the plantations, and with their women, children and belongings had hidden themselves in the forest. When the Spaniards arrived at the store houses a heavy rain began to fall, and they took shelter in the largest house which they found there, and being wet through they carelessly laid aside their arms, and many of them took off their clothes to dry them and warm themselves at the fires which they had lighted. While thus resting the natives fell upon them, and as they caught them unprepared they wounded many of them so badly that they were obliged to

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<sup>1</sup> Two leagues, in another copy of the letter, which would be correct.

retreat to their boats, and came back to me with less food than they had started with. God knows what I felt both at seeing them wounded—some dangerously—and at the confidence which the natives would gain, as well as at the little that they had done towards helping us in our dire necessity.

I at once sent off another Captain and more men in the same boats and canoes, both Spaniards and Mexicans, and as they could not all go in the canoes I made some of them cross the great river which flows near to this pueblo, and ordered them to march along the coast. I also ordered the boats and canoes to keep close in shore so that those who were marching might be ferried across the bays and rivers, which are numerous. In this way they arrived at the mouth of the river where the first party of Spaniards had been wounded, but they came back without doing anything or bringing any supply of provisions; all they did was to capture four Indians who were travelling by sea in a canoe. When asked why they had thus returned they replied that, owing to the heavy rains, the river was coming down in such a heavy flood that they had never been able to ascend it more than a league, and that thinking that it would run down they waited near the mouth for eight days without either fire or food beyond the fruit of some wild trees. Some of the men came back in such a condition that it was almost impossible to restore them to health.

I found myself in such straits that had it not been for some few of the pigs which had been saved during the journey, and were now used with the greatest economy without either bread or salt, we should all have perished. Through an interpreter I asked the Indians who had been captured in the canoe if they knew of any place where we could go and look for provisions, promising to set them at liberty and to give them presents if they could show us where any were to be obtained. One of them, who said that he was a trader and that the others were his slaves, told me that he had been here many times trading in his canoes, and that he knew a waterway which went from here to a large river which all the traders made use of in the stormy season when they could not travel by sea, and that on that river there were many settlements of people who were well off and had large supplies of food. He said that he would guide us to some pueblos where we could obtain all the provisions that we needed, and he added, in order

that I might be sure that he was not lying, that I might take him bound to a chain so that he could not run away, and so that if he were not speaking the truth I might give him the punishment he deserved.

I at once ordered all the canoes and boats to be got ready and put in them all the sound men who were left in my company, and sent them off with that guide. At the end of ten days they came back just as they had gone, saying that the guide had taken them into swamps where neither boats nor canoes could pass, and that they had done all they could to get through, but that they had never been able to accomplish it. On my asking the guide why he had deceived me he replied that he had not done so, and that those Spaniards with whom I had sent him did not wish to go on any further ; that they were very near the sea whence the river led inland, and many of the Spaniards owned that they had heard the noise of the sea quite distinctly and that it could not have been far from the point they had reached.<sup>1</sup>

I cannot express what I felt at finding myself so helpless and almost without hope, knowing as I did that not one of us would escape starvation. In the midst of this perplexity God our Lord, who always takes care to find a remedy for such distress, even in the case of such an unworthy person as myself—for he has many times helped and succoured me in my extremity, because He knows that I am working in the service of your Majesty,—sent there a ship which came from the islands without the slightest expectation of meeting me. This vessel carried thirty men besides the crew, thirteen horses, over seventy pigs, twelve casks of salt meat, and thirty loads of the bread used in the Islands. We gave thanks to our Lord who had succoured us in our distress and I bought all these supplies and the ship, which cost me in all four thousand dollars. I had already given orders to repair a caravel which the Spaniards of the place had allowed to go almost to pieces, and also to build a launch out of some others that were lying there half broken up. At the time of the arrival of the ship the caravel was already repaired, but we could never have

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<sup>1</sup> The guide doubtless wished to take the expedition to the mouth of the R. Motagua by way of the natural Canal which divides the Island forming the east side of the Gulf of Amatique from the mainland.

completed the launch had the ship not come, for in her came a man who, although not a carpenter by trade, proved to be a very good hand at the work. After we had scoured the country in all directions, a small path was found across some very rough hills which at a distance of eighteen leagues came out at a village called Leguela, where a plentiful store of food was found; but as it was so far distant and over such a bad road we could not supply ourselves thence. From some Indians who were captured at Leguela we learnt that Naco was the pueblo where Francisco de las Casas, Cristóbal de Olid, and Gil Gonzalez de Ávila resided, and where the said Cristóbal de Olid died, as I have already reported to your Majesty and will repeat presently. I had already heard of this from the Spaniards whom I had found in that pueblo [Nito, otherwise San Gil de Buena Vista], so I hastened to open a road, and sent off a Captain with all the men and horses, keeping with me only the sick, my household servants, and some persons who preferred to stay with me and go by sea. I instructed that Captain to go to the pueblo of Naco and try to pacify the people of the Province, for it had been somewhat disturbed from the time that these other Captains had been stationed there, and I told him that as soon as he arrived he was to send ten or twelve horsemen and the same number of cross-bowmen to the bay of San Andrés, which is about twenty leagues from that pueblo, as I intended to go to San Andrés by sea in the ship with all the invalids and others who remained with me. I also told him that if I arrived there first I should await the men that he was sending, and that he should tell them that if they arrived first they should wait for me, so that I might tell them what to do.

When these men had set out and the launch was finished, I wished to embark on the ships and put to sea, but I found that although we had a supply of meat, there was no bread, so that it would be very risky to put to sea with so many sick people, for if we were detained by bad weather they would all die of hunger instead of recovering. While I was thinking over what should be done, the man who acted as Captain of those people (whom we had met at Nito) told me that when they had first arrived there they were about two hundred in number, and had come in a very good launch and four ships, which was the whole fleet that Gil Gonzalez de Ávila had brought with him. That in the launch

and the ships' boats they had gone up the great river and had found in it large gulfs of fresh water, and around them many pueblos and plenty of food. He said that they had gone to the end of the lakes, and that fourteen leagues up stream the river had begun to narrow and had such a strong current that during the six days that they were trying to go up it they were not able to ascend more than four leagues, and that there the water was still deep and they had not solved the secret of it. He thought that there was a plentiful supply of maize in that direction, but said that I had not men enough to go there, for when they went eighty of them landed at one village without being noticed, and, although they captured it shortly afterwards, when the natives had assembled they fought them and wounded them, so that they were compelled to take to their boats again.

However, considering the extreme difficulty in which we were placed, and thinking that it was more dangerous to go to sea without food than to go and search for it on land, I determined to ascend that river, for, apart from the search for food with which to feed the people, it might happen that God our Lord would be served by my finding some hidden knowledge which would be of service to your Majesty. I counted up the number of men who were fit to go with me and found that they numbered forty Spaniards; although not all of them were able bodied, they were strong enough to guard the ships when I landed, and with these men and about fifty Mexican Indians who had remained with me we went on board the launch, which was already finished, and two boats and four canoes. In the town I left a caterer with orders to give food to the sick who remained there. So I set out on my journey up the river, which was hard work on account of the swift current, and at the end of two nights and a day came out at the first of the two lakes, which was about three leagues from where I had started and which extends for about twelve leagues. Round this lake there is no population at all, as the country is subject to inundations. I was a whole day crossing this lake before arriving at the other place where the river narrows again; we passed through it and the next morning came to the other lake. It is the most beautiful thing in the world to see how, amidst the roughest and most forbidding mountains possible, there should be a sea so extensive that it measures more than thirty leagues. We coasted along until nightfall, when we

found the beginning of a road ; two thirds of a league inland this led to a pueblo whence it seemed we had been observed, for it was altogether abandoned and had nothing in it. In the country round we found much green maize, which we fed on that night and next morning, but seeing that we could get no provisions here, of the kind that we were seeking, we took with us enough green maize to eat and returned to our boats without having met anyone, or even caught sight of the natives of the place. After embarking we crossed the lake, occupying some time in the passage, for it was very hard work and one canoe was lost, though the crew, with the exception of one Indian who was drowned, were rescued by the other boats. We reached the shore when it was already late and near nightfall, and were not able to land until next morning ; then the boats and canoes ran up into a little rivulet which opens there and the launch remained outside.

I happened to come on a path and so landed there, with thirty men and all the Indians, and sent back the boats and canoes to the launch. After following the path for about a quarter of a league from the place where we had landed, I came to a pueblo which seemed to have been deserted for some time as the houses were full of weeds ; there were however some very good orchards of cacao and other fruit trees. I walked about the pueblo searching for a road which might lead somewhere, and found one very much overgrown which appeared not to have been used for a long time, and as no other road was to be found I travelled along it for five leagues along mountains which we had to ascend on hands and feet, so overgrown was the trail. I then came on a maize plantation, which had a house in it in which we captured three women and a man, the owners of the plantation. They guided us to others where we captured two more women, and they led us by a path so as to take us to where there was another large plantation with forty small houses in the middle of it, all of which seemed to have been newly built ; we must however have been observed before we arrived for all the inhabitants had fled to the forest, but as they were taken by surprise they were not able to collect all their possessions, but had left us something, such as poultry, pigeons, partridges and pheasants kept in cages, but we were unable to find either ripe corn or salt. I stayed there that night and we satisfied our hunger to some extent, for

we found some green corn with which to eat the birds. When we had been in that little village for about two hours two of its Indian inhabitants arrived, little expecting to find such guests in their houses. The sentries took them prisoners and on my asking if they knew of any pueblo in the neighbourhood they replied yes, and that they would take me there next day, but it would be almost night before we arrived. Next day we set out with these guides and they took us along a path worse than that which we had travelled the day before, for, besides being overgrown we had to cross a river at every crossbow shot, every one of them flowing towards the lake. At the great junction of waters running from these mountains are formed those lakes and swamps from which the river flows in great volume to the sea, as I have already told your Majesty. Keeping on our way we marched seven leagues without reaching habitation, during which time we crossed forty five rushing streams without counting small rivulets. On the road we captured three women who came from the pueblo whither the guides were taking us, and as they were carrying bundles of maize it was a proof to us that the guide had spoken the truth. Just as the sun was setting or had already set we heard a noise of people, and I asked these women what it was; they told me that a feast was being celebrated in the pueblo that day. I made all my people hide in the bush as well and as secretly as possible, and I placed my spies, some close to the pueblo, and others in the path, so that any Indians who passed might be captured. There I stayed all that night through the heaviest rain that I ever saw, and with the worst plague of mosquitoes that it was possible to imagine. The forest was so thick, the path so obscure and the night so stormy that on two or three occasions on which I thought of starting to attack the pueblo I could never hit on the road, although we were so near the pueblo that we could almost hear the people in it talking; we were therefore obliged to wait till morning, and we started early and caught all the people asleep. I had given orders that no one should enter a house or utter a sound, but that we should surround the principal houses, especially the Chief's house and the great arsenal, in which the guides told us that all the warriors slept. It so happened that the first house that we came upon was the one which held the warriors, and as it was growing light and one could observe everything one of my company, seeing so



many men and arms thought that it was good, seeing how few in number we were and how numerous the enemy appeared to him although they were asleep, to call for help and began in a loud voice to call Santiago, Santiago. At this the Indians awoke, and some seized their arms and others did not, but as the house had no walls at all only posts supporting the roof they ran out as they chose, for we were not able to surround the house altogether. I assure your Majesty that if that man had not cried out we might have captured them all without one escaping, which would have been the finest booty seen in these parts, and might have been the cause of leaving the whole country quieted by letting them all go free, and telling them the cause of my coming to the country, and reassuring them so that, seeing that we did no harm, on the contrary that we had released them after holding them prisoners, it might have borne much fruit, but now it was all the other way. We captured about fifteen men and twenty women and ten or twelve who would not let themselves be captured were killed; among them fell the Chief without being recognised, but his dead body was shown to me afterwards by one of the prisoners. Nevertheless we found nothing in this pueblo which served our purpose, for although we found green maize it was of no use for supplies such as we were seeking.

I stayed two days in this pueblo to rest my men, and I asked the Indians who had been made prisoners whether they knew of any pueblo where there was a supply of ripe maize. They said yes, that they knew of a pueblo called Chacujal, a very large and ancient pueblo, which was supplied with every sort of provisions. After two days I set out, guided by those Indians, for the pueblo which they told me about, and that day we marched six long leagues over bad paths and across many rivers and arrived at some very large plantations, which our guides said belonged to the pueblo which we were going to. We skirted these plantations for quite two leagues, marching in the forest so as not to be observed. We captured eight men—wood cutters, hunters and others who were wandering through the forest and came on us unexpectedly—and as I always had spies out in advance we captured them without one of them getting away. About sunset the guides told me to halt, as we were close to the pueblo, so I halted and we stayed in the forest until three hours after nightfall; then we continued our way and came upon a river, which ran

breast high and was very swift. It was very dangerous work crossing it, but by roping ourselves together we passed it without accident. When we were across the river the guides told me that the pueblo was quite near, so I halted the men and went ahead with two companies until we could see the houses and hear the people talking, and it seemed to me that they were unsuspecting and that we had not been observed. I returned to my followers and told them to rest themselves, and I posted six men on either side of the road in sight of the pueblo and then went myself to take some rest with the others.

I had hardly laid myself down on some straw when one of the spies whom I had posted came to tell me that a number of armed men were coming down the road, talking as they came and apparently unconscious of our arrival. I roused my people as quietly as I could, for as it was only a short distance to the pueblo the villagers soon came on my outposts, and when they observed them they discharged a flight of arrows and turned to warn the pueblo. They retreated, fighting as they went, and we entered the pueblo together, and as it was dark they were soon lost among the streets. I would not allow my people to separate as it was night, and as we must have been observed an ambush might have been laid for us, so with all my people well together I entered the great plaza where the natives have their mosques and oratories. When we saw the mosques and buildings around them, like those at Culua, we were more astonished than we had been hitherto, for nowhere since we had left Acalá had we seen anything of this sort. Many of my people expressed the opinion that we should turn round at once and escape from the pueblo, and recross the river that very night before the inhabitants of the pueblo could find out how few in number we were. In truth it was not bad advice, for there was every reason for fear after seeing as much as we had of the pueblo. We halted in that plaza for a considerable time, but heard no sound of the natives. To me it appeared that it would not be well to leave the town in the way suggested, for perhaps the Indians, seeing that we had stayed there, would fear us the more and if we should retreat it would show them our weakness and increase our danger, and so it pleased God that it should happen, for after waiting for a long time in the plaza I collected my men together in one of their large chambers, and set some of my people to walk through the pueblo

and see if they could find out anything. As they could not hear the slightest sound they entered some of the houses, for there was fire burning in all of them. They found copious supplies of provisions and came back to us well contented and happy. So there we stayed that night in the greatest possible safety.

As soon as it was day I examined the whole pueblo, and found it to be well laid out with good houses built close together; in them we found much cotton yarn and cotton ready for spinning, much good cloth of the sort that they use, an abundance of ripe corn, cacao, beans, red peppers, salt, poultry and pheasants in cages, partridges, and dogs of the kind that they breed for food (which are very good), and every sort of provisions. So much was there that if the ships had been here, so that we could put it on board, I should have been able to provision them for many days. However in order to profit by it we should have had to carry it twenty leagues on our backs, and we were in such a condition that unless we could rest here for some days it would be all that we could do to carry ourselves, without any other burdens, back to the ships.

That day I sent a native of the pueblo, one of those whom we had captured in the plantations, and who seemed to be something of a Chief judging from his dress when captured—for he was taken prisoner while out hunting with his bow and arrows and was very well equipped according to their ideas. I spoke to him through an interpreter, and told him to go and look for the Chief and the people of the pueblo, and to tell them from me that I did not come to do them any harm, on the contrary that I came to speak to them about things of great importance to them, and that either the Chief or some of the principal inhabitants should come to me to hear the reasons of my coming there; that it was quite certain that if they came it would be greatly to their advantage, but that a refusal to come would harm them very much. So I sent him off with a letter of mine—for they are much taken with letters in these parts—although it was against the wishes of some of my company who said that it was not good policy to send him, as he would report what a small company we were, and that the township being both strong and populous, as the number of houses in it proved, it might well follow that when they knew how few of us there were they might join with the people of other pueblos and attack us. I saw that there was some sense in this, but I was

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very anxious to find some means of obtaining a supply of provisions, and I thought that if the people should come with peaceable intentions they might help me to carry some of the food, so I resolved to do all that I could to bring that about. In truth the danger of the Indians attacking us was not greater than that which we should experience from hunger if no provisions were procured, and on this account I determined to send off the Indian, arranging that he should return the next day as he knew where the chief and people were most likely to be found. The following day when he should have returned, as two Spaniards were making the round of the pueblo and examining the neighbourhood they found my letter fixed on a stick in the path and so we knew for certain that no answer to it would be received. And so it turned out, for neither that Indian nor any other ever came back although we stayed in the pueblo for eighteen days, resting ourselves and seeking some way of carrying off the provisions. While thinking the matter over it occurred to me that it would be wise to follow the river which flowed by the pueblo down stream, and to find out whether it ran into the large river which flows into the fresh water lakes where I had left the launch, boats, and canoes. I questioned the Indians whom we held prisoners, and they said yes, that it did, but we could not understand them well nor they us, for they spoke a different language from the Indians whom we had hitherto met; however by signs and by some words of the language that we could understand I asked two of them to go with ten Spaniards to show them the mouth of the river. They said that it was close by, and that they would go and return the same day. It pleased God that after walking for two leagues through beautiful orchards of cacao and other fruit trees they came to the big river, and the guides said that was the river which flowed into the lakes where I had left the launch, boats, and canoes, and they also called it by its name, which is Apolochic. Asking them how many days it took to go from the place where we were to the lake they replied five days. I at once despatched two Spaniards with a native guide who promised to conduct them by byways to the launch. I ordered them to bring the launch, boats, and canoes to the mouth of the large river, and to try with one boat and the canoe to ascend the large river to its junction with the other river. As soon as they had started I had four rafts made of wood and very large canes, each one of which

would carry forty fanegas of maize, ten men and many other things such as beans, red peppers and cacao, which each one of the Spaniards added to the store when the rafts were finished. It took us eight days to make the rafts, and by the time that the supplies were stored on board, the Spaniards who had been sent to the launch returned, and told me that it was six days since they began the journey up the river, and as the boat could not be brought so far up the river they had left it at a place five leagues distant with ten Spaniards to guard it; they added that being wearied with rowing they had not been able to come all the way in the canoe, so they had hidden it about a league off. As they had come up the river some Indians had fallen on them and fought with them, but they were few in number; it was probable however that they would have collected more men and be waiting for us on our return journey.

I at once sent some men to fetch the canoe and, placing it alongside the rafts, loaded it with all the food that we had collected, and I furnished the crew with long poles to protect us against the snags which made the navigation of the river very dangerous. I then appointed a Captain over the men who remained behind and ordered them to return by the road by which we had come, telling them that should they arrive first at the place at which we had disembarked they were to await me as I would go there to take them on board, and that if I arrived first I would await their coming.

I went on board the canoe and started with the rafts, accompanied by the only two crossbowmen we had with us. Although it was a dangerous journey owing both to the great strength and impetuosity of the current and to the certainty that the Indians would lie in wait for us on the way, I was anxious to go myself, as I could then keep better watch over the provisions. Commending myself to God I set off down stream, and so fast did we travel that in three hours we reached the place where the boat had been left. We wished to lighten the rafts by putting some of the cargo into the boat, but the current was so rapid that it was impossible to stop the rafts, so I got into the boat and ordered the canoe, which was well supplied with paddlers, to keep always ahead of the rafts and to look out for Indians in canoes, and also to warn us of our approach to any bad places.

I stayed in the boat behind taking care that the rafts should

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keep ahead of me, for if any accident happened I could assist them by coming down stream to them better than I could by rowing up stream.

About sunset one of the rafts struck on a snag below the water and it was partly overturned, but the rush of water freed it again with the loss of about half its cargo. Keeping on our course about three hours after nightfall I heard ahead of us a great shouting of Indians, but so as not to leave the rafts behind me I did not go ahead to see what was the matter, however in a little while the noise ceased and was not heard again for a time. After a little while the noise was again heard and it seemed to be nearer and then it ceased ; one could not find out what it meant as the canoe and three rafts had gone ahead while I stayed behind with the raft which did not travel so quickly. So going on our way a little less on the alert than before—for it was a long time since we had heard any shouts—I took off the helmet that I was wearing and rested my head on my arm, for I had a very bad attack of fever. As we were going on thus a sudden current seized us at a turn of the river, and with a force which we could not resist threw both the boat and the raft against the bank, and it was there it seemed to me that the shouts we had heard had come from, for the Indians knowing the river well, having been brought up on it, had kept a watch on us knowing that the current was bound to throw us there and were waiting for us in force at that place. As the canoe and the rafts which were ahead had struck where we afterwards struck, the Indians had shot arrows at them, and had wounded almost all the crews. Knowing that we were coming on behind they did not attack them as fiercely as they did us ; the canoe had been unable to warn us of the danger as it was impossible for it to return against the stream. As we touched the bank the Indians raised a great shout and let fly such a shower of arrows and stones that we were all of us wounded : I myself was wounded in the head, the only part of me that was unprotected. It pleased God that the bank of the river was very steep, and it was owing to this that we were not captured, for those of the Indians who tried to jump down into the raft and boat did not jump straight, and as it was dark they fell into the river and I doubt if any of them were saved. The current carried us away from them so fast that in a short time we could hardly hear their cries ; thus we travelled on

all night without more happening than a few shouts from canoes some distance off and an occasional cry from the banks of the river, for both banks are inhabited and there are beautiful orchards of cacao and other fruit trees.

At dawn we were five leagues from the mouth of the river where it opens into the lake where the launch was waiting for us, and we reached it that same day at midday, so that in one whole day and one night we travelled twenty long leagues down that river. When we began to unload the rafts, so as to store the provisions in the launch, we found that nearly all the provisions were damp, and, knowing that if they were not dried they would all be spoiled and all our labour lost, I had all that was dry picked out and stored on board the launch and placed what was damp in the two boats and two canoes and sent it as quickly as possible to the pueblo to have it dried there, for around the lake there was no place where it could have been dried owing to the inundations.

So the boats and canoes set off and I ordered them to be brought back as soon as possible to help me to carry my people, for the launch and the one canoe which was left were not able to hold them all. When the boats and canoes had departed I set sail, and went to the place where I was to meet those who were coming overland. On arrival there I waited three days, and at the end of that time they arrived all well with the exception of one Spaniard who, they said, had eaten certain herbs on the way and had died suddenly ; they brought one Indian with them, who had been captured as he walked unsuspectingly into the pueblo where I had left them. As he differed from the people of that land both in speech and in dress, I questioned him partly by signs and partly through one of the Indian prisoners who understood him, and he said that he was a native of Teculutlan. When I heard the name of that pueblo it seemed to me that I had heard it before, and when I returned to the pueblo I looked up certain memoranda which I had with me and I found that it was true that I had heard the name mentioned, and it seems that from the place which I had reached to the South Sea, where I had stationed Pedro de Alvarado, there would not be more than seventy eight leagues to travel. According to these memoranda it would appear that a Spaniard from Pedro de Alvarado's company had been in that pueblo of Teculutlan, and this was confirmed by the Indian. I was delighted to know about that route.

When all the men had arrived, as the boats had not yet returned and we were eating up the small amount of food which had been kept dry, we all got on board the launch with much difficulty—for there was not room for all of us—with the idea of going across to the pueblo where we had first landed, for we had left the maize plants there with the grains well formed and as we had been away for twenty five days we expected to find much of it ready for use ; and so it proved. As we were going along one morning in the middle of the lake we saw the boats coming, and so we went to the pueblo altogether. As soon as we touched land the whole of my party, Spaniards as well as friendly Indians and more than forty Indian prisoners, went together to the pueblo. There we found excellent maize plantations and much of the grain ripe, and no one there to defend it, so Christians and Indians every one of them made three journeys that day as the distance was short, and thus I loaded the launch and the boats and set off for the pueblo. I left behind me all my people to carry maize, and soon after sent back to them the two boats and one other which had been taken from a ship which had been lost on the coast while on its way to New Spain, and four canoes. All my people came back in them and brought much grain ; this was such a great help to us that it repaid all the labour that it had cost, for had it not been for this maize we should without doubt all have died of hunger.

I had all the provisions put on board ship and at once embarked myself with all the people in the pueblo, that is those of Gil Gorizalez and those who had remained of my own company, and set sail on the — day of the month of —, and went to the port in the Bay of San Andrés.<sup>1</sup> First of all putting on shore on a point of land all the men who could walk, and two horses which I had brought with me in the ship, so that they could go by land by a road already known to us to the said port and bay, where we should find or await the people who were to come from Naco ; it would have been impossible for these men and horses to have been taken in the ships without adding to the danger, for we were already too heavily laden. I sent a boat along the coast to ferry them across certain rivers which they would have to pass on the way. When I arrived at the port I found that the men

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<sup>1</sup> Puerto Caballos.



from Naco had arrived there two days before me, and from them I learnt that all the others were well, and that they were fully supplied with maize, red peppers, and many fruits of the land, but that they had no meat or salt, and had not seen such things for two months.

I stayed at this port for twenty days, trying to arrange for the future of the people at Naco and looking for a site for a town, as this is the best port in all the known coast of Tierra-firme from the Gulf of Pearls to Florida, and it pleased God that I should find a good and suitable site. I had the streams examined, and though ill prepared for the task we found good samples of gold in a stream about two leagues from the site of the town. On account of this discovery, and because there was such a beautiful harbour and such a good and well peopled neighbourhood, it seemed to me that a settlement there would be of great service to your Majesty, so I sent to Naco where the people were, to know if any of them would like to settle at San Andrés, and as the land is good about fifty of them were willing, the majority being those who came in my company. So in your Majesty's name I founded here a town, and as the day on which we began to fell the trees was the feast of the nativity of Our Lady I gave that name to the town, and I also appointed Alcaldes and Regidores, and I left them clergy and church ornaments, and all that is necessary for the celebration of mass. I also left mechanics, such as a blacksmith with a very good forge, a carpenter, a shipwright, a barber and a tailor. There were amongst these settlers twenty horsemen and a few crossbowmen, and I left them some artillery and powder.

When first I arrived at this pueblo I heard from the Spaniards who had come from Naco that the natives of that pueblo and of the neighbouring pueblos were somewhat disturbed, and had left their houses for the hills and forests, and that although some of them had been reasoned with they refused to be pacified from fear of the treatment that they had received at the hands of the followers of Gil González and Cristóbal de Olid. I wrote to the Captain in charge there and told him to do all that he could to capture some of the natives by whatever means he could devise, and to send them to me so that I could speak to them and reassure them. This he did, and he sent me certain natives whom he had captured during an expedition

which he had undertaken, and I talked to them and gained their confidence, and let them talk with some of the native Chiefs from Mexico whom I had brought with me. These Chiefs told them who I was, what I had done in their country, and what good treatment they had received from me when once we were friends, and how they were protected and governed in justice—they and their property, their wives and children—and the punishment that those received who rebelled against the service of your Majesty, and many other things which they told them. After this they regained confidence, although they still told me that they had some fear that they were not being told the truth, for those Captains who had come in advance of me had told them the same things and more to the same effect, and that they had lied to them and had carried off their women whom they had sent to them to make bread, and that the men who accompanied them had been forced to carry loads, and they believed that I would do the same. Nevertheless, with the assurances which the Mexicans and the Interpreter whom I had with me gave them, and seeing those of my company happy and well treated, they were somewhat reassured. I sent them off to speak to the Chiefs and people of the pueblos, and in a few days the Captain at Naco wrote to me that some of the neighbouring pueblos had become peaceful, particularly the chief pueblos which are : Naco, where the Spaniards are residing, Quimiztlan, Sula, and Tholoma [Cheloma]—the smallest of these has more than two thousand houses—and other villages which were subject to them ; and that the envoys said that the whole country would soon be at peace, for they had sent messengers to pacify the people, telling them of my arrival among them and all that I had said to them, and also what they had heard from the natives of Mexico ; they added that they greatly desired that I would go to Naco, as my arrival there would give confidence to the people. This I would have done with good will, had it not been very necessary for me to continue my journey in order to arrange that which I shall explain to your Majesty in the following chapter.

When, Invincible Cæsar, I arrived at the pueblo of Nito, where I found the followers of Gil Gonzalez de Ávila abandoned and starving, I learnt from them that Francisco de las Casas, whom I had sent to find out about Cristóbal de Olid as I have already told your Majesty elsewhere, had left at a port which the pilots

call the Port of Honduras,<sup>1</sup> sixty leagues further down the coast, some Spaniards who had settled there, and soon after I arrived at this pueblo and bay of San Andrés, where there is founded in your Majesty's name the town of "La Natividad de Nuestra Señora," and whilst I was detained there, founding and settling the town, and arranging the affairs of the Captain and people who are settled at Naco, and deciding what should be done for the pacification and safety of the neighbourhood, I sent the ship, which I had purchased, to this Port of Honduras with orders to find out about the settlers there and to return with such information as could be obtained. I had already finished the arrangement of affairs when the vessel returned, and there came in her the Procurator of the town and one of the Regidores, and they begged me fervently to go to their assistance as they were in the greatest distress because the Captain whom Francisco de Las Casas had left with them, and an Alcalde also appointed by him, had gone off in a ship and taken with them fifty men out of the one hundred and ten settlers, and that from those left behind they had carried off all arms, tools, and almost everything that they possessed, so that they were in daily terror lest the Indians might massacre them or that they would be starved to death, as they had now no means of procuring food. They told me that a settler from the Island of Hispaniola called the Bachelor Pedro Moreno had brought a ship to them and they had prayed him to assist them, but this he would not do, as I learnt more fully when I went to their town. In order to put these matters right I embarked in the ships with the remainder of the sick, for some had already died, so as to get them out of the country, and later on I sent them to the Islands and to New Spain. I took with me some of my servants and I ordered twenty horsemen and ten crossbowmen to go by land, for I knew that the road was good, although there were some rivers which had to be crossed on the way. I was nine days making the passage, for we had some changes of weather, and on letting go the anchor in this Port of Honduras I got into a boat with two friars of the Order of Saint Francis, whom I have always taken with me, and ten of my servants, and went ashore. All the people of the pueblo were in the plaza waiting for me, and when I came near they all ran down into the water and

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<sup>1</sup> Trujillo.

carried me ashore from the boat, showing in every way the greatest delight at my arrival. We then went together to the pueblo and to the church which they had built, and, after having returned thanks to God, the people asked me to be seated as they wished to give me an account of all that had happened, for they thought that I might be angry on account of some evil stories which had been told me, and they wished me to know the truth before I passed judgment upon them. I did as I was asked, and the priest whom they had chosen as spokesman made the following speech:—"Sir, you already know how all or the greater number of those present were sent from New Spain with your Captain Cristóbal de Olid to settle this country in the name of his Majesty, and to all of us you gave orders that we should obey this same Cristóbal de Olid as we would yourself in all matters which he should command us to do. So we set out with him for the Island of Cuba to procure some provisions and horses which we needed. On arriving at Havana, which is a port of that Island, letters were written to Diego Velásquez and the officials of his Majesty who reside in the Island, and who sent us some men.

"After taking in all the supplies needful, which were furnished us very plentifully by your servant Alonzo de Contreras, we set out and continued our journey. Passing over certain things, too long to relate, which happened on the way, we arrived on this coast 14 leagues below Puerto Caballos, and as soon as we landed the said Cristóbal de Olid took possession on behalf of your Excellency in the name of his Majesty, and founded a town with the Alcaldes and Regidores who came from New Spain, and did certain acts respecting the possession and peopling of the town, all in your Honour's name and as your Captain and Lieutenant. A few days later he joined himself with some servants of Diego Velásquez, who had come with him, and went through certain formalities which showed disobedience to your Honour, and although this seemed wrong to some or rather the majority of us we did not venture to oppose it, as we were threatened with the gallows. On the contrary we consented to all that he wished, and even some relations and servants of your Honour who lived with him did the same, for they did not dare to do otherwise than to comply. When this was done, as he knew that certain followers of Gil González de Ávila had to pass by the place we

were in (this he knew from six messengers whom he had captured) he stationed himself at a ford in the river where they had to pass so as to take them prisoners, and he stayed there several days waiting for them. As however they did not come he left a detachment there under a Maestro de Campo, and he himself returned to the town and began to get ready two caravels which he had there, and also to place on board them artillery and ammunition so as to make a descent on a Spanish town which Gil González de Ávila had founded further up the coast. While he was getting this expedition in readiness Francisco de las Casas arrived with two ships, and as soon as Cristóbal de Olid knew who it was, he ordered his two ships to fire at him, and although the said Francisco de las Casas dropped his anchor and hoisted his flags of peace and cried out saying that he came from your Honour, Cristóbal de Olid told them not to cease firing, and ten or twelve more shots were fired, one of which struck the side of Francisco's ship and went right through it. When Las Casas saw these evil intentions and knew that the suspicion that he had of Cristóbal de Olid was true, he got out and manned his boats and began to make play with his guns, and captured the two caravels with all their guns, and the crews fled to the shore. As soon as his vessels were taken Cristóbal de Olid began to propose terms of peace, not with any intention of carrying them out but to gain time for the arrival of the men whom he had left posted in the hope of capturing the followers of Gil González, and he thought by so doing to deceive Las Casas, who with good will did all that was asked of him. Thus he went on treating with Las Casas without anything being settled until a severe gale began to blow, and as there was no harbour and only a rough coast the ships of Las Casas went ashore and thirty men were drowned and all the cargo lost.

“Francisco de las Casas and all that remained of his followers escaped naked, and so buffeted by the sea that they could hardly stand. Cristóbal de Olid took them all prisoners, and before he would allow them to enter the pueblo, he made them all swear on the Evangelists that they would obey him, and acknowledge him as their Captain, and never rebel against him. Close on this came the news that his Maestro de Campo had captured fifty seven of Gil González's men under an Alcaide Mayor, and that later on he had released them, they going in one direction and he in

another. Olid was greatly angered at this and at once went inland to the town of Naco, which he had already visited, taking Francisco de las Casas along with him and also some of those who had been captured with him. The remainder he left behind in that town with a Lieutenant and an Alcaide. Many times Francisco de las Casas begged Olid in the presence of us all to allow him to go and join your Honour and to give an account of all that had happened, or, if he would not permit him to go, that he would take good care of him and not trust him not to escape ; Olid would however never give him leave to go. Shortly afterwards Olid heard that Gil González de Ávila was at a port called Tholoma attended by only a few men, so he sent some men there who fell upon Gil González by night and captured him and all the men with him, and brought them in as prisoners. He held both these Captains prisoners for many days without releasing them, although they often begged to be released, and he made all the followers of Gil González swear to acknowledge him as their Captain in the same way that he had done with those of Francisco de las Casas. Many times after the said Gil González was captured, Francisco de las Casas in the presence of all of us would beg Olid to release them, and said that if he would not do so he should be on his guard against them, for they would certainly kill him ; he would not however let them go.

“ At last, when Olid’s tyranny was felt by all, these three Captains being together one night in a room discussing certain matters, with many people about them, Francisco de las Casas seized Olid by the beard, and thrust at him with a pen knife which he had in his hand—for he had been waiking up and down cutting his nails and he had no other weapon—crying out “ One cannot suffer this tyranny any longer ” then Gil González and other servants of your Honour also fell on him and seizing the arms of his guard they wounded him, and the Captain of the Guard, the Alferez, the Maestro de Campo, and others who ran to his assistance ; and they finally captured them all and took away their arms without any one being killed. Cristóbal de Olid escaped in the tumult and ran away and hid himself.

“ Within two hours the two Captains had all of Olid’s principal followers in custody, and the rest of the people pacified. It was then announced by the voice of the crier that whoever knew where Cristóbal de Olid lay hid should come and tell it, under

pain of death. The Captains soon found out where he lay concealed and seized him and placed him under guard. The following morning they put him on his trial and the two Captains together condemned him to death, and the sentence was carried out by striking off his head.

“The people were well pleased to regain their liberty, and the Captains issued a proclamation to the effect that all those who wished to stay and settle in the land should say so, and that likewise those who wished to go and settle in other parts should make known their wishes. It was found that one hundred and ten men were willing to settle on the land, and that the remainder said they preferred to accompany Francisco de las Casas and Gil González, who were going to seek your Honour. Those who chose to remain are those who now live in this town, and among us there were twenty horsemen. Francisco de las Casas gave us everything in which we stood in need and appointed a Captain over us, and told us to come to this coast to form a settlement for your Honour in his Majesty’s name. He also appointed Alcaldes and Regidores, a Notary, a Procurator of the Town Council, and an Alguacil. He told us to name the town Trujillo and he promised us, and gave us his word of honour as a gentleman, that he would see to it that your Honour before long should add other settlers to our number, and that you would supply us with arms, horses, stores, and all that was necessary for the pacification of the country. He left with us two interpreters, one an Indian woman and the other a Spaniard who knew the language well. So we parted from him to come and do what he had told us to do.

“Francisco de las Casas then despatched a brigantine to inform your Honour as quickly as possible of what had been done, for the news could be carried most rapidly by sea and therefore your Honour would succour us with less delay. When we arrived at the Port of San Andrés or Caballos we found a caravel which had come from the Islands, and as it did not seem to us that that port was a suitable place for a settlement, and as we had received information about the Port of Trujillo, we made arrangements with the caravel to carry our baggage, and we placed everything on board and the Captain and forty men embarked in her, and all the horsemen and others of our party remained on shore with only the clothes which we had on, so as to travel lightly and

freely in case anything should happen to us on the way. The Captain delegated his authority to one of the Alcaides, the same who is now present, and told us to obey him during the time that we were separated, for the other Alcaide went with the Captain in the caravel. So we parted from each other with the intention of meeting at this port. On the road we had some encounters with the natives, who killed two of the Spaniards and some of the Indians in our service. When we arrived at this Port ourselves, worn out and with our horses unshod, but happy at the thought that we should find our Captain, arms, and the baggage which we had sent in the caravel, we found absolutely nothing. We were in despair at thus finding ourselves without clothes, arms, or horseshoes, for the Captain had taken them all in the caravel and we were in the most desperate position, not knowing what to do. Finally we agreed to wait for succour from your Honour, for we felt sure that it would come. So we founded our town and took possession of the land for your Honour in the name of his Majesty. The foundation of the town was made by an official act before the Notary of the Cabildo, as your Honour can verify.

“ Five or six days later at the break of day we descried a caravel anchored off the port at a distance of about two leagues, and an Alguacil went off at once in a canoe to find out what caravel it was. He brought us back news that it was under the command of the Bachelor Pedro Moreno, a resident of Hispaniola who came to these parts under the orders of the judges who live in that Island, to enquire into certain matters between Cristóbal de Olid and Gil González de Ávila, and that he had brought arms and plentiful supplies in the caravel, all of which belonged to his Majesty. We were all delighted at this news and gave thanks to God, thinking that we were saved from our perils. The Alcaide, Regidores, and some of the settlers set out at once for the caravel, to tell of our necessities and to beg that we might be supplied with what was needful. As soon as they arrived the people of the caravel armed themselves and would not allow any one of us to go on board; the utmost that they would allow was that four or five of us should go on board without arms and it was thus that they went. Before anything else they announced that we were settled here by your Honour in the name of his Majesty, but as our Captain had gone off in a caravel with all



that we possessed we were in dire need of food, arms, and horse-shoes, as well as of clothes and other things, and that God seemed to have sent them here to our assistance as what they had on board belonged to his Majesty, and we begged and prayed them to succour us as that would be doing his Majesty a service, and besides we would undertake to pay for all that they gave to us.

“Pedro Moreno replied that he had not come here to succour us nor would he give us of what he possessed unless we paid him at once in gold, or gave natives of the land as slaves in exchange. Two merchants who had come in the ship with him, and a certain Gaspar Troche, an inhabitant of the Island of San Juan, told him that he ought to give us all that we asked for and that they would undertake to repay him at a fixed date what he might demand up to five or six hundred Castellanos ; that he knew that they were good for the money and that they wished to do this as a service to his Majesty, and that they knew for certain that your Honour would repay them, and would be very grateful to them as well. Not even after this would Moreno let us have anything, on the contrary he dismissed us saying that he wanted to go on his way and turned us out of the caravel. He sent after us a certain Juan Ruano whom he had brought with him, a man who had been the chief factor in the treason of Cristóbal de Olid : this man spoke secretly to the Alcaide and Regidores and to some of us, and said to us that if we would do what he told us he would so manage that the Bachelor would give us all that we needed, and would so arrange with the Judges who reside in Hispaniola that we should pay nothing for what was given us ; and that he would return to Hispaniola and arrange with the Judges to supply us with men, horses, arms, food, and everything that was needed, and that the said Bachelor would return with it all as soon as possible and with a commission, from the Judges, as our Captain. On our asking what it was that we were to do, he answered that the first thing of all was that we should refill the Royal offices which were held by the Alcaide, Regidores, Treasurer, Accountant, and Veedor, as they had been filled by men appointed by your Honour, and that we should ask the Bachelor to make him, Juan Ruano, our Captain, and that we should ask to be placed under the authority of the Judges and not under that of your Honour ; that we should draw up a petition and should swear to obey him,

Juan Ruano, as our Captain; and that if any messengers or orders came from your Honour we would not obey them, and if force were employed that we should use arms to resist it.

“We answered that we could not do these things as we had already sworn to do otherwise, and that we were here as his Majesty’s subjects in the name of your Honour as his Majesty’s Captain and Governor, and that we could not do otherwise. Then Juan Ruano told us that we must either do as he wished or be left to die, for if we did not comply with his wishes the Bachelor would not give us so much as a cup of water, and that we might be quite sure that when he knew that we would not comply with his wishes he would go away and leave us to perish, and on this account he advised us to give the matter our full consideration.

“So we again consulted together and, forced by our dire necessity, we agreed to do all that he asked so as to escape starvation or massacre by the Indians, being as we were unarmed. So we answered Juan Ruano that we were content to do all that he asked. On this he returned to the caravel and the Bachelor came ashore with many armed men, and the said Juan Ruano had the petition drawn up in which we begged him to be our Captain, and the majority of us signed it and took the oath, and the Alcaldes, Regidores, Treasurer, Accountant, and Veedor laid down their offices. The name was then taken from the town and it was renamed “Ascension,” and certain acts were performed placing us under the judges instead of under your Honour, and then we were given all that we needed. Pedro Moreno then made an expedition and captured some Indians, whom he branded as slaves and carried them off with him, not even paying the Royal fifth due to his Majesty. He said that no Treasurer, Accountant, or Veedor need be appointed, to collect the Royal dues, except Juan Ruano, whom he left with us as our Captain, and who would receive them all himself without any necessity for book accounts or explanations. So Pedro Moreno departed leaving the said Juan Ruano as our Captain, and leaving us a certain form of injunction to be issued if any of your Honour’s people should arrive, and promising us that he would speedily return with such a force that none would be able to resist him.

“After he had gone away we, seeing that what had been done was not to the advantage of his Majesty and would only lead to

fresh scandals, took the said Juan Ruano prisoner and sent him to the Islands, and the Alcaide and Regidores took up their offices as before and we have been and still are under the authority of your Honour in his Majesty's name, and we beg you, Sir, to pardon us our deeds in the time of Cristóbal de Olid, for then as on this other occasion we were compelled by force."

I replied to them that I pardoned in your Majesty's name all past acts under Cristóbal de Olid, and that in what they had done since they were not to blame, for they had been forced to it by necessity ; but that from this time on they must not be the authors of such like occurrences or scandals, as they were displeasing to your Majesty, and that in future they would be punished for them. In order that they might feel sure that I had forgotten and blotted out from my memory their past deeds, and so as to assure them that, if they behaved as loyal servants of your Majesty, I would help them as much as lay in my power, I would now in your Majesty's name confirm in their offices the Alcaide and municipal officers whom Francisco de las Casas as my lieutenant had appointed on my authority. At this they were well pleased, as it freed them from all fear of enquiry into their past faults.

As they assured me that the Bachelor Pedro Moreno with many men and with authority from the Judges of Hispaniola would soon arrive, I did not at this time wish to leave the Port to go into the interior of the country, but from information given me by the settlers I learnt that there were some native pueblos six or seven leagues distant from the Port, and that when the settlers had been hunting for food they had skirmished with the inhabitants of these pueblos. However it was thought that if an interpreter could be found, so that they could understand one another, these Indians would come to terms, for they showed signs of good will although the settlers had not behaved well to them ; on the contrary they had captured some women and boys, whom the Bachelor Moreno had branded and carried off in his ship.

God knows how this weighed on me, for I knew the great harm that would follow from it, so by the ships which I despatched I wrote to those Judges and sent them full proof of all that the Bachelor had done in this town, and with it an official letter

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requiring them in your Majesty's name to send me here the Bachelor as a prisoner well guarded, and with him all the natives of this land whom he had carried off as slaves ; for his acts were contrary to all law as they would see from the evidence that I was sending them. I do not know what they will do in this matter, but whatever their reply may be I will report it to your Majesty.

Two days after my arrival at this Port and town of Trujillo I sent a Spaniard who spoke the language, with three Indians of Culua, to those towns about which the settlers had spoken to me, and I impressed on the Spaniard and the Indians what to say to the Chief and people of those pueblos, and especially to make it known that it was I myself who had come to this country ; for owing to the considerable traffic which exists in many of these places they have heard of me and Mexican affairs through the traders. Among the first of the towns that they visited was one called Chapagua and another called Papayeca, seven leagues distant from Trujillo and two from the one to the other. They are towns of importance as has been proved since, for Papayeca has eighteen pueblos subject to it and Chapagua ten. It pleased our Lord who takes especial care to guide your Majesty's officers, as we learn by experience every day, that the natives listened to the embassy with much attention, and sent back with the messengers some of their own men to see for certain that what had been told them was true. When they came I gave them a good reception and a few trifling presents, and I spoke to them through the interpreter whom I had brought with me, for the language of Culua and that spoken here were almost the same, differing only in a few words and in pronunciation. I confirmed what had been said to them on my behalf, and told them other things which it seemed to me would give them confidence, and I begged them to ask their chiefs to come and see me ; they left me well contented.

Five days later there came to me on behalf of the people of Chapagua a person of importance named Montamal, Chief of one of the pueblos subject to Chapagua named Telica, and on behalf of the people of Papayeca came the chief of another subject pueblo named Cecoatl, and some of its inhabitants, and they brought supplies of maize, poultry, and fruit, and told me that they came on behalf of their Chief to learn what I wanted and the cause of my coming to their country ; and they added that the Chiefs would

not come to see me as they were in fear of being carried off in the ships—a thing which had happened to those who were captured by the first Christians who came here. I told them how much I regretted that act, and that they might feel sure from now on no harm should be done to them ; on the contrary I would send and seek for those who had been carried away and would have them brought back. Pray God that those lawyers will not make me break my word, but I am in great fear that they will not send them back but will find some excuse for acquitting the said Bachelor Moreno, who carried them into slavery, of all blame ; for I cannot believe that anything which he did here was done without instructions from them and not at their commands. In reply to what the messengers had asked me regarding the cause of my coming to this land, I told them that I believed they had already heard how eight years ago I had come to the Province of Culua, and how Montezuma, who was at that time Lord of the great City of Tenochtitlan and of all the country round, was informed by me that I had been sent by your Majesty, to whom all the world was subject, to visit and examine these countries in your Excellency's Royal name, and had at once given me a good reception and had recognised what was due to your Greatness, and that all the other chiefs in the land had done the same. I also gave them an account of all the other things which had happened in Mexico, such as seemed to me to be appropriate to the occasion, and I told them that I had received your Majesty's commands to visit and examine the whole country, omitting none of it, and also to establish towns of Christians to instruct them how they should order their lives, both for the preservation of their persons and property, and for the salvation of their souls ; and that this was the reason of my coming, and that they might feel sure that great advantages and no harm would arise from it. That those who were obedient to your Majesty's Royal commands would be well treated and maintained in justice, but that those who rebelled against them would be chastised. I told them much more to the same effect, but so as not to trouble your Majesty with too long a letter, and as it is not of great importance, I will not relate it here. I gave as presents to the messengers some small articles which they think much of, although they are of little value to us, and they went off very happily and returned some days afterwards, as I had asked

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them to do, with supplies of food and men to fell trees on the site of the town, for it was covered with thick forest. The Chiefs however did not come to see me, but I took no notice of this as though it was a matter of no importance, but I asked them to send messages to all the neighbouring pueblos to report what I had said to them and to ask them on my behalf to come and help to build the town. This they did, so that in a few days' time people from fifteen or sixteen pueblos arrived, or rather I should say from fifteen or sixteen lordships in the neighbourhood. All showed signs of good will and offered themselves as subjects and vassals to your highness, and they came in sufficient numbers both to supply us with food on which we could live until the ships which I had sent to the islands could bring us stores, and to clear the forest from the site of the town.

At this time I despatched three ships and later on I bought and despatched another which had arrived in Port, and in them I sent all the sick and wounded who had remained alive. One of these ships sailed for the ports of New Spain, and I wrote fully to your Majesty's officers whom I had left there in my place, and to all the councils giving them an account of what I had done here and telling them how necessary it was for me to stay for some time longer in these parts ; begging them to be steadfast in their duty and giving my advice about certain matters where it was needed. I gave orders that this vessel should go by way of the Island of Cosumel and should bring thence some Spaniards whom a certain Valenzuela, who had made off with the ship and robbed the town which Cristóbal de Olid had first founded, had left abandoned there, and were said to be more than sixty persons. The other ship which I bought later [in a small bay near the town] I sent to the Island of Cuba to the town of Trinidad, to bring meat, horses and men and to return as soon as possible. The other vessel I sent to the Island of Jamaica for the same purpose. The caravel and the launch which I built I sent to the Island of Hispaniola, with a servant of mine in it by whom I wrote to your Majesty and to the lawyers who live there. As it afterwards appeared not one of these vessels made the voyage which I had ordered : the ship which should have gone to Trinidad in Cuba went to the port of Guaniguanico and they had to send fifty leagues by land to the town of Havana to look for cargo. It was the first to return, and when it arrived it brought me news

that the ship which had gone to New Spain had taken the people from the Island of Cosumel and had afterwards gone ashore on the Island of Cuba at the point called San Antonio or Corientes; everything on board had been lost and the Captain, a cousin of mine named Avalos, and two Franciscan friars who had been with me, and over thirty other persons whose names they brought me, had been drowned. Those who escaped to land wandered about in the forest not knowing whither they were going, and almost all had died of hunger, so that out of more than eighty persons only fifteen remained alive. By good fortune the survivors had reached the port of Guaniguanico, where the other ship of mine was at anchor, and where there was a farm of a settler from Havana, whence my ships were being loaded; for there were plentiful supplies there, and there those who had survived were cared for. God knows how deeply I felt this loss, for besides losing kindred and servants I lost many corselets, guns, and crossbows, not to mention other arms which were in the ship. I regretted above all that my despatches had not reached their destination, and this your Majesty will understand later on. The other ship which should have gone to Jamaica, and that which should have gone to Hispaniola, got to Trinidad in the Island of Cuba and there they found the Licentiate Alonzo de Zuazo whom I had left as a Justicia Mayor, and one of the Governors of New Spain. There was also in the port a ship which the lawyers who reside in Hispaniola had despatched to New Spain to verify the news of my death which was current there and when the Captain of this ship heard about me he changed his destination and brought me thirty two horses, some saddlery, and some stores of food, thinking to sell them better where I was living. By this ship the Licentiate Alonzo de Zuazo wrote to tell me that there were many scandals and disturbances among the officials of your Majesty in New Spain, and that the report had been spread abroad that I was dead; that two of the officials had proclaimed themselves Governors and had made the people swear allegiance to them, and had taken the same Licentiate Alonzo de Zuazo and two other officials prisoners, as well as Rodrigo de Paz to whom I had left the charge of my house and estate, which they had plundered. That they had turned out of office the two judges whom I had appointed and installed others of their own party in their places, and he told me of many other things

which they had done, but it is a long story, and as I send your Majesty the letters in the original, so that you may see them, I will not repeat them here.

Your Majesty may imagine what I felt at hearing this news, especially at hearing how these people were requiting my services, robbing my house as a reward, even if it were true that I was dead. They even said to give colour to their acts that I owed your Majesty over sixty thousand gold dollars, and they know well that it is not the case; on the contrary I am owed more than one hundred and fifty thousand gold dollars which I have spent, and not spent amiss, in the service of your Majesty.

I at once began to consider how I could right this wrong. On the one hand it seemed to me that I had better put myself on board that ship and go and correct and punish such insolence, for all there seemed to think that when holding office abroad "Si no hacen befa no portan penacho." Just in the same way another Captain whom the Governor Pedro Arias sent to Nicaragua also revolted from his obedience, as I will tell your Majesty more fully later on. On the other hand it grieved me to leave the country I was visiting in the circumstances then affecting it, for that would be to ensure its ruin, and I feel certain that your Majesty will draw great profit from it and that it will prove a second Culua, for I have received information of great and rich provinces under the rule of powerful Chiefs, especially of a province named Eneitapalan,<sup>1</sup> in another language called Xucutaco, which I have heard about for the last six years, and throughout my journey I have come in the direction in which it lies, and I now hear for certain that it is only eight or ten days' journey from the town of Trujillo, that is to say fifty or sixty leagues distant.

About this place there are such reports that one wonders at the stories told, even if two thirds of them be false, such as that it is much richer than Mexico and equals it in the grandeur of its pueblos and the number and civilization of its people. So, being in this state of perplexity, I bethought me that nothing could be well done and well planned if it is not done by the hand of the Doer and Planner of all things, so I ordered masses to be said and processions and other sacrifices to be made, praying God to

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<sup>1</sup> Hueitapalan in other copies.



set me on the road which would lead best to his service. After this had continued for some days it seemed to me that I ought to postpone all else, and go to repair the damage which had been done. So I left in that town thirty five horsemen and fifty foot, and in charge of them as my lieutenant I left a cousin of mine named Hernando de Saavedra, brother of Juan de Avalos who died in the ship which was coming to this city. After giving him his instructions and preparing everything as well as I could for his government, and after saying farewell to those native chiefs who had come to visit me, I went on board the ship with my household servants and I sent to tell the people of Naco to go overland by the route which Francisco de las Casas had taken, that is by the South coast, so as to come out where Pedro de Alvarado is stationed, for that road was already well known and safe, and they were a large enough party to travel anywhere without danger. I sent to the other town of Natividad de Nuestra Señora instructions for the people there to follow them. After this I embarked in good weather but after having the last anchor weighed the breeze dropped so that we could not start.

Next morning news reached the ship that among the people left in the town there was some grumbling from which trouble might arise as soon as I had gone; so on this account and because it was not weather for sailing I went on shore again and made enquiries, and after I had punished some of the ringleaders everything settled down quietly. I was two days on shore as there was no wind to carry us out of the harbour, and on the third day, the weather being favourable, I went on board and set sail, and after sailing two leagues and doubling the point which runs out on one side of the harbour, the main yard broke and I was obliged to return to port for repairs. I was there another three days repairing and then set out again in very good weather, which continued for two nights and one day, but after making over fifty leagues we were struck by a heavy Norther, right in our teeth, which carried away the mizzen mast near the mast head, and we were compelled to run for port, which was done with much difficulty. On our arrival in port we all gave thanks to God, for it had seemed as though we must be lost.

I and all those with me arrived so worn out that some rest was

necessary, so while the weather was settling and the ship was being repaired I landed with all my people. Seeing that after going to sea three times in good weather I was each time turned back I began to think that it was not the will of God that I should leave this country, and I thought this the more because some of the Indians who had been peacefully disposed were now giving trouble. I therefore turned again and commended myself to God and ordered processions to be made and masses to be said, and I came to the conclusion that by sending in that ship, in which I had intended to go to New Spain, full powers from me to my cousin Francisco de las Casas, and by writing to the Councils and Officials of your Majesty reprimanding them for their mistakes, and also by sending some of the Indian Chiefs that were with me so that the natives might know for certain that I was not dead as had been reported, all might yet be set right, and an end put to the troubles which had begun in Mexico. I therefore made my arrangements but omitted to provide for many things which I should have provided for, had I known at that time of the loss of the first ship which I had despatched. These omissions were owing to my already having given very full instructions which should have been received many days before; in particular this was the case with regard to the despatch of ships to the South Sea, for which instructions had been sent in the ship which was lost. After sending off this ship to New Spain, as I was suffering from the hardships which I had endured at sea, and am suffering from them still, I was not able to make any journeys inland, and as I had also to await the arrival of the ships coming from the Islands and had many other matters to attend to, I sent the lieutenant, whom I had left in charge of the town, with thirty horsemen and some others on foot to make an expedition into the country. They travelled thirty five leagues from the town through a beautiful valley with many large pueblos in it, abounding in all the products of the country and well suited for rearing cattle and for the cultivation of all our own plants. They had no hostile encounters with the natives, and by talking to them through an interpreter and through those natives of the country who were already on friendly terms with us, they gained their goodwill, and more than twenty Chiefs of the principal pueblos came to visit me, and with every evidence of being well disposed offered themselves as subjects to your Highness, promising obedience to your

Royal commands; and these promises they have kept and still keep, and up to the day of my departure I was never without some of them in my company, as they were coming and going every day, bringing supplies of food and doing everything that we asked them to do. May it please God so to keep them that they may come to that state and condition which your Majesty desires and which I believe they will attain, for from such a good beginning one cannot look for a bad ending unless it should come from the fault of those who have charge of them.

The Province of Papayeca and that of Chapagua had been as I have said, the first to offer themselves for your Majesty's service and to become our friends nevertheless it was they who began to give trouble when I embarked; on my return they were somewhat scared, and I sent messengers to them to restore their confidence. Some of those of Chapagua came in, but they were not chiefs, and the women and children left their pueblos and carried off their property although some men were left behind and came to our town to work. I made many appeals to them to return to their own pueblos but they would never come, but answered saying "Not to day but to morrow." I managed to lay hands on their Chiefs, who are three in number, one called Thicohuytl, another called Poto, and the third Mendereto, and made them prisoners and gave them a certain time within which I told them that their people must leave the mountains and come back to their pueblos, and I made them understand that should they not do so they would be chastised as rebels. The people returned to their homes and I released the Chiefs, and now they are peaceably settled and work very well. The people of Papayeca never wished to come back, particularly their Chiefs, and all their people remained in the forest with them and left their pueblos desolate, and although many efforts were made to persuade them to do so they never cared to come under our rule. So I sent among them a company of horse and foot accompanied by many Indians who were natives of the country. One night they surprised one of the two Chiefs of the country, whose name was Pizacura, and took him prisoner. On my asking him why he continued hostile and did not wish to come under our rule, he said that he would have already come in had it not been for his companion named Mazatl, who had the larger following and who would not consent to it. He said that if we would free him he would act as

a spy and help us to capture Mazatl, and that if he were hanged the people would be pacified and return to their pueblos, for he could collect them if Mazatl were not there to oppose him. So he was released, and this was the cause of more harm as has since been found out. Certain friendly Indians, natives of that country, spied out the said Mazatl and guided some Spaniards to his hiding place, where they captured him: when Mazatl was told what his companion Pizacura had said of him, and was also told that within a certain named time his people must leave the mountains and return to live in their houses, he refused to accept any terms, so he was put on his trial and sentenced to death, which sentence was carried out on his person. It was a great lesson to the others, and at once some of the people from pueblos which were disposed to revolt returned to their houses, and there is now no pueblo which is not settled, with women and children living in it, except that of Papayeca, which has never been resettled. After Pizacura was released a suit was instituted against the tribe, and war was made on them and about a hundred prisoners was taken, who were enslaved, and among them Pizacura himself was captured. I did not wish to sentence him to death although, in accordance with the suit brought against him, I could have done so, I preferred to take him with me to the City of Tenochtitlan, together with two other Chiefs of other pueblos, which had been somewhat rebellious, in order that they might see how matters are managed in New Spain, and then to send them home again so that they might tell their countrymen how natives are treated there and how they serve us, so that they might follow their example. Pizacura died of an illness, but the other two Chiefs are well and I will send them home on the first opportunity. With the capture of this man and of another who seemed to be his natural heir, and with the punishment inflicted by enslaving over one hundred prisoners, all that Province was made secure, and when I left all the pueblos were inhabited, settled, and divided among the Spaniards, and appeared to serve them with good will.

At this time there arrived at that town of Trujillo a Captain and about twenty men, some of them belonging to the Company which I had left in Naco under Gonzalo de Sandoval, while the others were of the Company of Francisco Hernández, a Captain

whom Pedro Arias de Ávila, your Majesty's Governor, had sent to the Province of Nicaragua, from whom I learnt that there had arrived at Naco a Captain of the said Francisco Hernández with about forty men, both horse and foot, who were on their way to the port in the Bay of San Andrés to seek the Bachelor Pedro Moreno, whom the Judges who reside in the Island of Hispaniola had sent to these parts as I have already told your Majesty. It appears that Pedro Moreno had written to the said Francisco Hernández advising him to rebel against the Governor, as he had already done to the people who were left behind by Gil González and Francisco de las Casas, and that this Captain was coming to speak to him on behalf of the said Francisco Hernández, and to consult with him about shaking off his allegiance to the Governor and transferring it to the Judges who reside in the Island of Hispaniola; for so it appears from certain letters which they were carrying. I sent them back at once and wrote to Francisco Hernández and to all the people who were with him, and particularly to some of the Captains of his Company who were known to me, reprimanding them for their breach of faith and pointing out how that Bachelor had deceived them, and how badly your Majesty was served by such conduct, and other things which I thought proper to write to them in order to lead them away from the wrong path which they were taking. Because one of the reasons which they gave as warranting their proposal was that the said Pedro Arias de Ávila was so far away that to provide themselves with the necessaries of life was a great trouble and expense, and that they were still ill provided for and were always in great need of provisions and other things from Spain; and that from those ports which I had founded in your Majesty's name they could obtain them more easily; and that the Bachelor had written to them that he had left all that coast settled under the authority of the Judges and was coming back himself immediately with many men and plentiful supplies—I wrote to him that I would leave orders at those pueblos that they should be supplied with all the things that they might send for, and that they should be treated on a friendly footing in matters of business, and that one and all we were and are your Majesty's vassals and in your Royal service and that they were to understand that this offer was made on condition that they remained obedient to their Governor, as they

were bound to do, and on no other condition whatever. As they told me that at the present time their greatest want was shoes for their horses and tools for mining, I gave them two mules of my own laden with horseshoes and iron tools and then sent them off. When they arrived where Gonzalo de Sandoval was stationed he gave them two more mules of mine, laden with horseshoes which I had stored there.

As soon as these men had departed there came to me some natives of the Province of Huilacho, which is sixty five leagues from this town of Trujillo, from whom I had received messages some time before offering themselves as your Majesty's vassals. They told me that twenty horsemen and forty men on foot had arrived in their country with many Indians from other Provinces whom they brought as friends, and that they had received insults and damage at their hands, and that their wives, children, and property had been seized by them; and they prayed me to assist them as they had offered themselves as my friends, and I had promised to support and defend them against anyone that did them harm. Soon after this Hernando de Sandoval, my cousin, whom I had appointed my lieutenant in these parts, who was at that time pacifying the Province of Papayeca, sent me two men of the company against whom these Indians had come to lodge their complaint. They said they were coming at their Captain's orders to search for this town of Trujillo, and that the Indians had told them that it was near and that they could come without fear as all the country was at peace. From these men I learnt that they were of the Company of Francisco Hernández and that they came in search of this port, and that they had as Captain Gabriel de Rojas. I at once despatched with these two men, and the Indians who had come to complain, and an Alguacil with an order to the said Gabriel de Rojas to leave the Province at once, and to restore to the natives all the men, women, and goods, which had been taken from them, and in addition to this I wrote him a letter saying that if he were in need of anything he should let me know as I would willingly let him have it if I had it to give. When Gabriel de Rojas read the letter and received my orders he at once obeyed them and the natives of the Province became quite contented, although some time afterwards the same Indians returned to tell me that after the departure of the Alguacil whom I had sent with them

some of their people had been carried off as prisoners. I wrote again to Francisco Hernández offering, if it were in my power, to supply him with anything that he or his people were in need of—for I thought that that would be doing good service to your Majesty—and enjoining on him obedience to his Governor. I do not know what took place there later on, I only know from the Alguacil whom I sent there, and from those who went with him, that when they were all there together a letter reached Gabriel de Rojas from his Captain, Francisco Hernández, in which he begged him to join him in all haste, as there was much dissension among the men who had remained with him, and that two of his Captains had risen against him, one named Soto and the other Andrés Garabito, who said that they had risen against him because they knew that he wished to shake off his obedience to the Governor. Affairs were in such a condition that misfortune was bound to follow both to the Spaniards and to the Natives, and your Majesty can judge how great is the evil which follows from these discords, and how necessary it is to punish those who cause and promote them.

I wished to go at once to Nicaragua, hoping to put matters right, as it would have been a great service to your Majesty if I had been able to accomplish it, and as I was making my preparations, and having a road opened through a rather rough pass, the ship which I had sent to New Spain arrived at the Port of Trujillo, having on board a cousin of mine, a friar of the Order of San Francisco called Brother Diego Altamirano, from whom and from the letters which he brought me I heard of the many disturbances, scandals, and dissensions, which had occurred and were occurring among the officers of your Majesty whom I had left in my place, and of the great need that there was for my returning to put a stop to them. On this account I gave up my journey to Nicaragua and my return by the Southern coast, where I think that God and your Majesty might have been well served on account of the many and great Provinces which lie on the road, and although some of them are at peace they could have been better organized in your Majesty's service by my passing through them, especially those of Utatlan and Guatemala where Pedro de Alvarado is stationed, and where, since they rebelled against certain illtreatment which they received, they have never been pacified; on the contrary they have done and are doing

much damage to the Spaniards who are settled there and to the friendly Indians in the neighbourhood. It is a rough country and the people are numerous, brave, and cunning in warfare, and they have invented many methods both of offence and defence, such as pits and other ingenious devices for killing horses, and they have succeeded in killing many of them. So skilfully do they fight that although Pedro de Alvarado has made war on them, and is still waging it, with more than two hundred horsemen and five hundred foot soldiers and five thousand and at times as many as ten thousand friendly Indian allies, he has never been able to bring his foes into obedience to your Majesty and is not yet able to do so; on the contrary every day they fortify their positions more strongly and recruit their ranks with new comers. I believe however that, had God been willing I should go there, by persuasion or by some other method I could bring them to a right way of thinking, for in some Provinces which revolted on account of the illtreatment received during my absence, and against whose people over one hundred horse and three hundred foot with much artillery and a great number of Indian allies have been sent under the command of the Veedor, who was acting as Governor, nothing could be done; on the contrary ten or twelve Spaniards and many friendly Indians were killed and no good was effected. Yet on my sending a messenger to say that I was coming, when they heard news of my arrival, without the least delay the chief personages of the province which is called Coatlan came to see me and told me the cause of their rising which was quite a just one, for the Spaniards who held them in encomienda had burnt eight of their Chiefs, of whom five had died at once and the others a few days afterwards, and when the people demanded justice it was not given to them. I consoled them in a way which left them contented and they are now peaceably settled and render their services, as they did before I left Mexico, without fighting or any other risk. The same thing I think will happen to some other pueblos in the same condition in the Province of Coatzacoalcos, for on hearing of my return to this country they will become peaceable again without my even having to send a messenger to them.

Already most Catholic Lord, I have told your Majesty about certain Islands, which are opposite the Port of Honduras, called "Los Guanajos," and how some of them are deserted



because the fleets which have visited them have carried off many of the Natives as slaves, and how in some of them there still remain some Natives. Now I learnt that, from the Islands of Cuba and Jamaica, a new expedition was being prepared against them, to carry off the remainder of the Natives and to pillage and destroy them. In order to put a stop to this I sent a caravel to seek out the ships of this expedition at the Islands, and to order them in your Majesty's name not to proceed against or to do any harm to the Natives, as I intended to settle them peaceably and bring them under obedience to your Majesty; for by means of some of the Natives who had come over to live on the mainland I had come to an understanding with them. The caravel came upon one of the ships of the expedition commanded by Rodrigo de Merlo at one of the Islands called Huitila, and the Captain of the caravel brought him with him, and also his crew and all the people whom they had captured in the Island, to the place where I was living. I at once had the Natives carried back to the Islands where they had been captured, but I did not proceed against the Captain as he produced a licence for his proceedings signed by the Governor of the Island of Cuba; power to grant such licences having been given by the lawyers who reside in Hispaniola. So I dismissed him and his crew without other punishment than taking away from them the Natives whom they had captured for slaves in the Islands. The Captain and the greater number of those who came in his company remained as settlers in these towns, as the land seemed to them to be good.

When the Chiefs of those Islands knew of the good deed that I had done for them, and heard from the Natives of Tierra-firme the good treatment that I had accorded to them, they came to me and thanked me for my kindness and offered themselves as subjects and vassals of your Highness, and begged to know in which way they could serve you. In your Majesty's name I ordered them to plant many corn fields for in truth they can be of no use in any other way, and they carried to each Island a written notification for any Spaniards who might come there, in which I assured them in the name of your Majesty that they should not in any way be molested. The people begged me to send them some Spaniards, one to be stationed on each Island, but on account of my approaching departure I could not arrange

for this but left orders with my Lieutenant Hernando de Saavedra to see to it.

I embarked in the ship which had brought me the news from Mexico, and in it and in two other vessels which I had there I embarked some of those men whom I had brought in my company, amounting to twenty men and horses, and of the rest some of my followers remained as settlers in those towns and others were awaiting me on the road, believing that I would return by land. To them I sent orders that they should return to Mexico, telling them of my departure and of the cause of it. Up to the present they have not arrived but I have news of their coming.

Having settled matters in those towns which I had founded in your Majesty's name, with the greatest grief and regret at not being able to finish my work and leave them in a condition in which I should like to see them, on the 25<sup>th</sup> April I put out to sea with those three ships and the weather was so favourable that in four days I found myself within one hundred and fifty leagues of the Port of Chalchicuela. There a heavy gale struck us and we could make no headway; thinking that it would subside I kept the sea for a day and a night, but the weather was so bad that it began to damage the ships and I was obliged to bear away for the Island of Cuba, and in six days reached the Port of Havana, where I went ashore and was well received by the inhabitants of that town; for there were among them many of my old friends whom I knew when I was living in the Island.

As the ships in which we had come had suffered from the bad weather at sea it was necessary to overhaul them, and this detained me ten days. In order to hasten my journey I bought another ship which was in port being careened, and I left behind the ship in which I had come as it was leaking badly.

The day after my arrival at that port a ship came from New Spain and the next day another arrived and on the third day still another, and from them I learnt that the city had settled down into peace and tranquillity after the death of the Factor and Veedor, although I was told that there had been some riots for which the ringleaders had been punished. I was delighted to hear this news for I had been very much distressed at having to turn aside when on the way to Mexico and it had caused me much uneasiness.

From Havana I wrote a short letter to your Majesty and then put to sea on the 16<sup>th</sup> May, and I took with me about thirty natives of Mexico, whom the ships (which had arrived in Havana) had brought here secretly, and in eight days I arrived off the Port of Chalchicuela, but I could not go into harbour because of the change in the weather and so I anchored two leagues off the shore. Towards evening we set out in the ship's boats and in a brigantine which we had found abandoned at sea, and I got on shore that night and went on foot to the town of Medellin, four leagues from where we landed, without any one of the town knowing of our arrival. I went at once to the church to give thanks to God, and when this was known the townspeople came and rejoiced with me and I with them. That night I despatched messengers both to the City of Mexico and to all the towns in the land, telling them of my coming and arranging certain matters which it seemed to me would promote the service of your Majesty and the good of the country.

Resting from the fatigues of the journey I stayed in that town eleven days, and there came to me many of the Chiefs of pueblos and other natives of those parts, who expressed delight at my return, and then I set out for this City and was fifteen days on the road. All the way I received visits from large numbers of natives, some of whom came more than eighty leagues to see me, for all had couriers stationed at intervals on the road so as to be warned of my arrival and be awaiting me; so that they arrived very quickly from all parts and great distances to greet me, and they were moved to tears as I was also. They made many pitiful speeches, telling me of the troubles they had suffered in my absence and the illtreatment that they had received, so that it wrung the hearts of all those who heard them. As it would be difficult to give your Majesty an account of all that they told me, though some of the stories are well worthy of being written down, I will leave them to be told by word of mouth. When I arrived at the City, the Spanish settlers and the natives from all parts of the country who had come together received me with great signs of happiness and rejoicings, as though I had been their own father. Your Majesty's Treasurer and Accountant came out to meet me, with many people on horse and on foot in procession, showing the same good will as the others had done. Thus we proceeded to the church and monastery of

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San Francisco to give thanks to God for having safely brought me through so many dangers and hardships to a haven of rest, and permitting me to see this land, which was torn by dissensions, restored to peace and order.

I stayed with the friars for six days, confessing my sins to God. Two days before leaving the monastery a messenger came from the town of Medellin to tell me that certain ships had arrived in port, and that it was said that on board of one of them there was a Judge of Enquiry who had come at your Majesty's commands. The messenger could tell me no more about the matter and I therefore thought that, hearing of the dissensions which had occurred amongst the officers whom I had left in charge of the country and not knowing of my return to Mexico, your Majesty had sent to enquire into matters. God knows how rejoiced I was to hear of it, for it would be most painful for me to be the judge in this case; for as I have myself suffered personally and my property has been destroyed by the acts of these tyrants, I believe that whatever judgment I should give would be thought by the evil-minded to be dictated by passion, which is a thing I most detest, although judging by my acts I could not be so much moved by passion as to make it possible for me to punish them in excess of their faults. On receipt of this news I at once despatched a messenger to the port to ascertain the truth, and to order the Lieutenant and Justices of the town of Medellin that, in whatever capacity that Judge might be coming, as he came at your Majesty's commands he should be properly received, and lodged and entertained in a house which I own in that town, whither I sent orders that everything should be put at the disposal of the Judge and of his followers; but I afterwards learnt that he did not wish to receive such attentions.

The day after the despatch of this messenger was the feast of St John, and as we were keeping holiday, watching bullfights jousting with reeds, and [holding] other games, another messenger arrived, bringing me a message from the said Judge and one from your Sacred Majesty, from which I learnt the reason of his coming and how your Sacred Majesty had sent him to make enquiry into my acts during the time that your Majesty had been trusting me with the government of this country. At this I was truly delighted, both at the great mercy vouchsafed to

me by your Sacred Majesty wishing to be informed of my services and my faults, and at the benignity with which your Highness let me know in your letter your Royal intention and willingness to grant me grace, for the one and the other I kiss the royal feet of your Catholic Majesty a hundred thousand times, and may it please God to turn to His use the great honour done me, and that I may deserve even a small part of the mercies granted me in that your Catholic Majesty should know my wishes, for the fact that you knew my wishes would in itself be to me no small reward.

In the letter that Louis Ponce, Judge of Residencia, wrote to me, he told me that he was leaving for this City immediately, and as there are two principal roads by which it can be approached, and he did not tell me in his letter by which he would come, I at once sent out along each of the roads servants of mine to attend on him, accompany him, and show him the way. But so great was the haste with which Louis Ponce travelled that although I made these arrangements with all speed my servants met him only twenty leagues from the City, and although my messengers say that he expressed pleasure at seeing them he would not accept their services. I regretted his not accepting them for he had real need of them on account of the rapidity with which he travelled; on the other hand I was pleased, for it showed him to be a just man who wished to exercise his office in an upright manner, and as he was coming to take my Residencia did not wish to give any cause for suspicions. Arriving within two leagues of the City he slept there that night, and I made preparations for his reception on the following morning. He sent to tell me that I should not come out to meet him in the morning as he wished to stay there to dine; he asked me to send him a chaplain to say mass. This I did, but suspecting (as it proved to be) an excuse to avoid a public reception I was on my guard, but he was up so early in the morning that although I wasted no time I met him when he was already within the City, and we went together to the monastery of San Francisco to hear mass.

When mass was over I told him that if he would like to exhibit his commission he could do so, for all the Municipal Officers of the City were there present with me, as were also your Majesty's Treasurer and Accountant. However he did not wish to present

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his commission, saying that he would defer it to another day, and so it happened that the next day in the morning we all came together in the Cathedral, all the Municipal Officers, your Majesty's Officers, and myself, and there the commission was presented and by me and by all the officials was accepted, kissed, and placed on our heads as orders of our King and natural Chief, to be obeyed and fulfilled in their entirety and by all, as your Sacred Majesty sent them to us to be treated. Then all the wands of office were laid down and all the other formalities complied with, as your Catholic Majesty may learn from the detailed account sent by the Notary of the Cabildo who kept the record. Then my "residencia" was publicly proclaimed in the Market Square and I remained seventeen days in the City without any questions being asked me, and during this time the said Louis Ponce, Judge of Residencia, fell ill and all those who came in the fleet with him and God willed that he should die of that disease, and more than thirty more of those who came in the fleet with him, among them two Friars of the Order of Santo Domingo who accompanied him, and at the present time there are still many people ill and in danger of death, for this disease which they brought with them seems almost like the plague. Some of the people living here have caught it and two of them have died, and there are many more who have not yet recovered.

As soon as the said Louis Ponce departed this life he was buried with all the solemnity and honour due to an Envoy sent by your Majesty. Then the municipality of this city and the deputies from all the towns who were here present, most earnestly requested me, on behalf of your Catholic Majesty, to resume charge of the Government and the Administration of Justice as I had before held it under your Majesty's command and Royal instruction ; giving me their reasons for wishing it and pointing out the inconvenience which would arise from my not accepting it. All of this your Sacred Majesty can see from the copy of the proceedings which accompanies this letter. I answered, excusing myself from the task, as will be seen in the same copy. Later on other petitions were made to me and there were pointed out to me other and more pressing difficulties which would arise if I did not accept the office. Against all I have kept my resolve up to the present, and have not accepted office although it has not escaped my observation that the course that I am following presents some

difficulties. Wishing however that your Majesty should feel quite certain of honesty and fidelity in your Service, and holding this to be the most important thing of all—for if this is not believed of me the good things of this world would be worthless to me, and I should prefer to die—I have subordinated all to this end, and have given all possible support to maintain in office one Márcos de Aguilar whom the said Licenciado Louis Ponce had appointed his Chief Alcalde, and I have begged him to continue my Residencia to the end. This however he does not wish to do, saying that he has no authority to do so, which has caused me great grief, for it is not without sufficient reason that I have the greatest desire that your Majesty should be fully informed of my services and my faults, and so sure am I that on this account your Catholic Majesty will grant me great and increasing favour, not judging from the little that my talents are capable of accomplishing, but from the much that your Majesty is bound to give to one who has served you with the fidelity with which I have served you.

I therefore humbly beseech your Majesty, with all the earnestness of which I am capable, not to let this matter remain in suspense, but that the evil and the good of my services should be clearly declared and made public, for as this is a point of honour, to reach which I have suffered great hardships and risked such great dangers, God could not will it nor could your Sacred Majesty's goodness permit that I should lose it through the foul tongues of the envious and ill-disposed. I therefore beg and pray your Majesty that in payment of my services I should receive no other favour than this, and I pray God that if I am wanting in honour I may cease to live.

In my opinion, most Catholic Prince, from the time that I first entered into these transactions I have had many powerful rivals and enemies, but however great their hostility and malice it has not been sufficient to obscure the fame of my services and my fidelity; so being hopeless of effecting it they have sought two means by which it seems to me they have been able to place a mist or darkness before the eyes of your Highness, by which they have moved your Majesty from the Catholic and Holy purpose which your Majesty has always acknowledged of recompensing and paying me for my services.

**One way is to accuse me before your Highness of the crime of**

treason, saying that I have not obeyed your Majesty's commands, and that I do not hold this land in your powerful name but in a tyrannical and unspeakable way, giving as proof of this some depraved and diabolical reasons formed from false and not from true assumptions; but these people if they should see my true works and were true judges would see that they had a very different meaning, for up to now there has never been, nor will there be so long as I live, any letter or command of your Majesty which has come to me or has been brought to my notice which has not been, is not, and will not be, fulfilled and obeyed in every respect. At this present time the malice of those who spread such reports is most clearly shown, for had they been true I should not have travelled six hundred leagues from this City over dangerous roads and through desert country and have left this land in the care of your Majesty's officials, whom one would naturally believe to be the persons most zealous in the service of your Highness, although their deeds did not correspond to the confidence which I placed in them. The other way of discrediting me is to say that I hold a great or the greater number of the natives of this land as my slaves, from whom I benefit and profit and from whom I have drawn great sums of gold and silver which I have stored away, and that I have spent over sixty thousand gold dollars from the rents due to your Catholic Majesty without any reason for such outlay and that I have not sent to your Excellency the whole of the gold which is due as Royal Rent, but that I keep it here under specious pretences for purposes which I cannot accomplish. I can readily believe that, such rumours being current about me, they would have done their best to give colour to them, but I am fully confident that they are only such as when put to the test will prove to be false. As to the report that I own a large portion of the land, I own it to be true and that I have for my share a large amount of gold, but I declare that it has not been so much as to prevent my being poor, and at the present time in debt for five hundred thousand pesos de oro without having a Castellano with which to pay it; for if I have had much I have spent more, not in buying estates or other properties for myself, but in extending in this City the lordship and Royal property of your Highness by the aid of this wealth, and by personally undergoing many hardships, risks, and dangers I have conquered



and annexed many kingdoms and lordships for your Excellency, and these deeds not even the viperous tongues of the ill-disposed could hide or obscure. Looking over my account books it will be seen that more than three hundred thousand pesos de oro were spent out of my own fortune on these conquests, and when what I owned was exhausted I spent sixty thousand pesos de oro belonging to your Majesty—not for my own use, for they never passed through my hands—in the payments of my warrants for the costs and expenses of these later conquests, and whether or not they were profitably spent the facts are patent to all. As to what they say about my not having sent the rents to your Majesty, it is easy to show how false it is, for in the short time that I have been in this land I maintain as a fact that I have sent to your Majesty from this country more treasure than all the Islands and Tierra-firme put together, although they have been discovered and settled for thirty years and their discovery and settlement cost the Catholic Sovereigns, your Ancestors, a great expenditure of treasure, which has not been the case in this conquest.

Not only has that been sent to your Majesty which was yours by right, but also that which belonged to me and to those who aided me, and we have sent in abundance and have not counted what we spent of our own in your Royal service. When I sent the first account of our expedition to your Majesty by the hands of Alonso Hernández Portocarrero and Francisco de Montejo, not only did I send the Royal Fifth part of the spoil, but all that was captured, for it seemed just that your Majesty should enjoy the first fruits of the conquest. Afterwards, of all that was taken in the City when Montezuma its Chief was alive, a fifth part of the gold amounting to over thirty thousand Castellanos was given to your Majesty; I speak of that which was melted into ingots. The jewels should have been divided so that the soldiers should have had their shares, but both they and I were delighted to renounce our shares so that they could all be sent to your Majesty, and they were worth more than five hundred thousand pesos de oro. Both gold and jewels were lost, for they were taken from us when the natives rose and drove us out of the City at the time of the landing of Narvaez; but that, although I may have deserved it for my sins, was not on account of my negligence.

When later on the City was conquered and brought under your Majesty's rule, the same thing was done, the Royal Fifth of the gold melted down was put aside for your Majesty, and I persuaded my companions that all the jewels which had been taken should be given without division to your Majesty, and these were not of less value than those taken on the first occasion; and thus with all care and despatch I sent them all with thirty three thousand pesos de oro in bars in the care of Julian Alderete, who at that time was your Majesty's Treasurer, but they were captured by the French. That was not my fault but rather the fault of those who did not provide in time a fleet to go for it to the Azores, as they should have done for a remittance of such importance.

At the time that I left this City for the Gulf of Higuera I sent to your Majesty sixty thousand pesos de oro by Diego de Ocampo and Francisco de Montejo, and more was not sent because it seemed to me, and also the officers of your Catholic Majesty, that in sending so much at a time we were exceeding and avoiding the orders which your Majesty had sent to these parts about the shipment of gold, but we ventured to do it, knowing the need of treasure that your Majesty had at that time. With this I myself sent to your Highness by Diego de Soto, a servant of mine, all that I possessed so that I had not a peso de oro left. I sent it in the form of a silver cannon which cost me in the making and other expenses thirty five thousand pesos de oro, and I also sent some jewels of gold and stones which I owned. I sent them not so much on account of their intrinsic value—although that was not a small matter to me—as because the French had carried off the first ones which I had sent and it weighed on my mind that your Sacred Majesty had not seen them, and so that you should see a specimen, however poor, you might know from it what the rest of it was like. As it is therefore clear that I wished to serve your Catholic Majesty with zeal, goodwill, and all that I possessed, I do not know what reason there can be to suppose that I should keep for myself that which belongs to your Highness.

I have also heard, Powerful Lord, that your Sacred Majesty has been informed that I hold in this land two hundred millions of rent from the provinces which I have assigned to myself, and as my wish has always been that your Catholic Majesty should know

for certain my devotion to your Royal Service—in fact that you may be satisfied that I always have told and will tell the truth—I could not do a better thing to prove it than to make over this over-estimated payment of rent to your Majesty. By doing this I hope to gain many things, but above all that your Majesty should lose all suspicion, which it is here publicly said that your Majesty entertains of me. On this account I beg your Majesty to receive for your own service all that I possess here and grant me the favour of twenty millions of rent in those kingdoms [Spain] and there will remain to your Majesty the one hundred and eighty millions, and I will do service in your Majesty's Royal presence where I think no one will surpass me in devotion, nor will they be able to throw doubt on my services. In matters concerning this country I think that I shall be of use to your Majesty, for I shall know as one who has been an eye witness how to advise your Majesty as to what tends most to the advantage of the Imperial service, and how to avoid being deceived by false reports. I can assure your Majesty that it will be no slight service that I shall be able to render at Court by advising what should be done to preserve this land, and to bring the natives of it to a knowledge of our religion, and to insure to your Majesty a large permanent and increasing revenue, which may continually go on increasing and not diminish as have done those of the Islands and Tierra-firme owing to the want of good Government, and because the Catholic Sovereigns your Excellency's parents and predecessors received advice from those not zealous in their service, but swayed by personal interest, as indeed has always been the case with those who have given information to their Highnesses and to your Majesty about these countries. What was the use of conquering them and supporting them all this time, and in overcoming so many obstacles and difficulties to that end, if nothing is left in them to develop.

There are two things which make me long for your Majesty to allow me to serve you at Court, the first and most important is to satisfy your Majesty and all the world of my loyalty and fidelity to your service, and I place this the first of all the advantages that may accrue to me in this world, for it is to gain the name of a servant of your Majesty and of the Imperial and Royal Crown that I have gone through so many and so great perils, and have

suffered incomparable hardships, and this not for greed of treasure. If indeed such a desire had influenced me I had already gained sufficient for a squire such as I am, and I would not have spent it nor given up my desires in order to follow this other end which I have held as the great object to be attained. Nevertheless for my sins I have not been able to attain it, nor do I think that in the present instance I shall be able to do myself justice if your Majesty will not do me this great favour which I entreat of you. And so, as it shall not appear as though I were asking your Excellency too much on purpose to give you a reason to refuse it, and although it may be all that falls to my lot, and it is small enough for one to come without dishonour after having held in this country the charge of Government in your Majesty's name, and having so greatly increased the patrimony and Royal rule of your Majesty in these parts, placing under your Imperial sway so many provinces containing such noble towns and cities, and doing away with so many idolatries and other offences offered to our Creator, and bringing many of the natives to a knowledge of Him and planting in them our Sacred Catholic faith so securely that, if there be no opposition from those who think ill of such efforts and would direct their zeal to other ends, in a short time there could be established in these lands a new church where God our Lord would be served better than in any church in the world. I repeat that if your Majesty will grant me the favour to order me to be paid ten millions of rent within those kingdoms [Spain] I renouncing all that I have here, and that I may go there [to Spain] to serve you, it will be to me no small favour, for in this way my desire will be satisfied which is to serve your Majesty in your Royal presence, so that your Celestial Highness may be assured of my fidelity and may accept my humble services.

The other thing is—and I have no doubt about it whatever—that on hearing from me about the affairs of this land and even of the Islands you will be able more readily to govern them in a way that will conduce to the service of God and of your Majesty, for there [in Spain] I should be given credit for what I said, which is not given to me when I write from here where all that I do will always be attributed, as it has been hitherto, to passion and personal interest, and not to the zeal which as a

vassal of your Majesty I owe to your Royal Service ; and so great is my desire to kiss your Majesty's royal feet and to serve in your presence that I know not how to give expression to it.

If your Greatness cannot do or has not the opportunity of doing me the favour which I ask, which is that your Majesty will support me in Spain and allow me to serve you there as I long to do, may I beg your Highness to do me the favour to allow me to retain in this land all that I already possess here or whatever my agents may ask of your Majesty in my name, making it my legal heritage for myself and my heirs, so that I should not return to Spain begging my bread.

I shall consider it a distinguished favour if your Majesty will send me permission to depart and satisfy my longing, for I trust to the Catholic Conscience of your Sacred Majesty not to leave me in poverty when the loyalty of my deeds and intentions is clearly established.

The arrival of the Judge of Residencia seemed to afford me a good opportunity to fulfil my desire, and I even began to put it into execution, but there were two things which stopped me, one of which was the want of money for expenses on the way ; because my house had been robbed and plundered as I believe your Majesty has already been informed. The other was a fear lest a rising of the Natives should take place if I left the country, and that quarrels would arise between the Spaniards themselves which, judging from what had happened before, was quite possible.

Whilst I was writing this despatch to your Sacred Majesty a messenger came from the South Sea with a letter, from which I learn that a vessel has arrived on the coast near a town called Tehuantepec, and according to a letter which the Captain of the ship sent me, which I forward to your Majesty, this vessel is one of the fleet which your Sacred Majesty sent to the Islands of Maluco under the Captain Loaisa.

As your Majesty will learn the incidents of the voyage from the letter written by the Captain of the ship I will not repeat the story, and will only tell your Majesty what I did in the matter, which was to send a person at once to the place where the ship had arrived with orders that if the Captain wished to return home at once he should be supplied with everything necessary for his voyage, and that nothing should be denied him ; that the

messenger should obtain from the Captain a very full account of his late voyage and the route that he had followed, so that I could send it to your Majesty and that your Majesty should receive full particulars as early as possible. In case the ship should stand in need of repairs I sent a pilot to take her to the Port of Zacatula (where I have three ships ready to start), so that she may be repaired there and everything done which may conduce to your Majesty's service and the success of the voyage. I will send your Majesty the report about the ship as soon as it comes to hand, so that your Majesty may be fully informed and may send your Royal Commands in the matter.

My ships in the South Sea are, as I have informed your Majesty, quite ready to start on their voyage, for as soon as I arrived in this City I pressed on their preparation and they would already have started had it not been for the want of certain arms, artillery and ammunition, which are being brought from Spain to place in them, so that they will start well found, and I trust in God that on behalf of your Majesty I shall be doing a great service by means of this voyage. Even if we do not discover a Strait I think that we shall discover this way a route to the Spice Islands so that your Majesty may be kept informed within the year of all that happens in that land.

If your Majesty would be pleased to grant me those favours which I asked for in a certain petition which I made to your Majesty concerning this discovery, I offer myself to discover from here all the spice and other Islands there may be between Maluco, Melaca and China, and so to arrange matters that your Majesty should not obtain the spices by way of exchange as the King of Portugal does, but hold them as your own property, and that the natives of those Islands should own and serve you as King and Natural Lord, for I offer, if the said grants are made, to go in person or to send such a fleet that it will be possible to subdue them, found settlements, build forts, and supply them with artillery and munitions of war, so that they can be defended against native princes and even against others from a distance.

If your Majesty will grant me the favour of entrusting me with this expedition and conceding me what I have petitioned, I believe that it will redound to your Majesty's service, and I submit that if it does not turn out as I say your Majesty should have me punished as one who lies to his King.

Since my return I have also arranged to send expeditions, both by land and sea, to form settlements on the Rio Tabasco, which is also called the Rio Grijalva and to conquer many provinces in its neighbourhood so that God and your Majesty may be served. The ships which come from and go to those parts will be better protected when those places and coast are better settled and brought to order, for many ships have gone ashore there and, as the inhabitants have not been conquered, the shipwrecked crews have been murdered.

I have also sent to the Province of the Zapotecs, about which your Majesty has already been informed: three companies have entered the province from different directions so as to finish the conquest as quickly as possible; this will certainly be most advantageous both because the natives of the province do great damage to the other natives who are friendly to us, and because it is the land richest in mines in all New Spain, and when it is conquered your Majesty will receive great benefit from it.

I have also arranged an expedition and have collected the people needed to form a settlement on the Rio de las Palmas, which is on the North coast below the Rio Panuco towards Florida, as I have heard that there is good land and a good harbour there, and I have no doubt but that God and your Majesty will be well served there as in all other parts, as I have very good reports of that country.

Between the North Coast and the Province of Michoacan there is a settlement of people known as the Chichimecas. They are a barbarous people and not so civilized as those of these Provinces, so I have now sent sixty horse and two hundred foot soldiers, accompanied by many friendly Indians, to learn the secret of that Province and people. They have been instructed that they are (if they find among the people any aptitude for living as these other Indians live, accepting our Religion, and acknowledging the service which they owe to your Majesty) to bring about a peaceful settlement and take them under your Majesty's rule, and to settle themselves among them on the land which seems most suitable; but that if on the other hand they do not find them such as I have described above, and they show no signs of submission, they are to make war upon them and capture them for slaves, for there is no alternative in this country. These barbarians must either acknowledge their

service to your Majesty or else be brought in as slaves, and as they are an almost savage people, in the latter case your Majesty would be served and the Spaniards benefited, for they could be used to bring gold out of the mines, and by contact with us it is possible that some of them may be converted and saved.

I have learnt that amongst these people there is a district thickly populated, where there are many fine pueblos in which the Indians live in the same way as the Indians do here, and it is reported that some of these pueblos have been visited by Spaniards; I think it most probable that we shall make a settlement in that district, as there are most favourable reports of its richness in silver.

Most powerful Lord, I despatched, two months before I left this City for the Gulf of Higuera, a Captain to the town of Coliman, which is on the South Sea one hundred and four leagues from this city, with orders to march down the South Coast for a distance of one hundred and fifty or two hundred leagues for the purpose of finding out the secret of that coast, and to ascertain if there were any harbours. This Captain did as I had ordered and marched one hundred and thirty leagues through the land, and sent me accounts of the many harbours which he found on the coast—a service of no small importance as so few had been discovered up to that time; and he sent news of many large pueblos and a numerous population, very skilful in war, with whom he had had some encounters, and had brought many of them to peace. He did not proceed further, as his force was small and he found no forage for his horses.

In the report which he brought me was the account of a very large river which the natives had told him was ten days further on; about it and the people living in its neighbourhood they told him many strange things. I am about to send him back again with a stronger force better equipped for war so that he may go and find out the secret of that river which from the size and breadth ascribed to it might turn out to be a strait. When he returns I will let your Majesty know what he finds out about it.

Nearly every one of the Captains of these expeditions is ready to set out; I pray God to guide them to His service. For my own part, although I may not meet with your Majesty's



approval I shall not cease to work in your service and I do not think it possible that in the course of time your Majesty will fail to recognise my fidelity ; but if this should not happen I must be satisfied with doing my duty and knowing that my services, and the loyalty with which I have performed them, are patent to all the world, and I would wish for no other inheritance for my children.

Invincible Cæsar, may the Lord God preserve the life and high estate of your sacred Majesty for all time, as your Majesty may wish.

From this City of Temuxtitan [Tenochtitlan], September 3<sup>rd</sup>,  
1526.





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