



BOOK VIII.

THE FLIGHT FROM MEXICO.

CHAPTER CXXV.

How we went by forced marches, Cortés as well as all his captains and all the followers of Narvaez, except Pánfilo de Narvaez himself and Salvatierra who remained prisoners.



WHEN the news came which I have recorded that Pedro de Alvarado was besieged and Mexico in revolt, the commands that had been given to Juan Velásquez de Leon and Diego de Ordás for the purpose of going to form settlements at Panuco and Coat-zacoalcos were rescinded and neither of them went, for all joined with us. Cortés spoke to the followers of Narvaez, for he felt that they would not accompany us willingly, and to induce them to give that assistance, he begged them to leave behind them their resentment over the affair of Narvaez, and he promised to make them rich and give them office, and as they came to seek a livelihood, and were in a country where they could do service to God and His Majesty and enrich themselves, now was their chance; and so many speeches did he make to them that one and all offered themselves to him to go with us, and if they had known the power of Mexico, it is certain that not one of them would have gone.

We were soon on our way by forced marches until we reached Tlaxcala, where we learnt that up to the time that Montezuma and his captains heard that we had defeated Narvaez they did not cease to attack, and had already killed seven of his [Alvarado's] soldiers and burnt his quarters, but as soon as they heard of our victory they ceased attacking him ; but they added that they [Alvarado's company] were much exhausted through want of water and food, for Montezuma had failed to order food to be given to them.

Some Tlaxcalan Indians brought this news at the very moment we arrived, and Cortés at once ordered a muster to be made of the men he had brought with him and found over thirteen hundred soldiers counting both our people and the followers of Narvaez, and over ninety-six horses and eighty crossbowmen, and as many musketeers, and with these it seemed to Cortés that he had force enough to enter Mexico in safety. In addition to this the Caciques of Tlaxcala gave us two thousand Indian warriors, and we at once set out by forced marches to Texcoco which is a great city, and they paid no honour to us there and not a single chieftain made his appearance, for all were hidden away and ill disposed.

We arrived at Mexico on the day of Señor San Juan de Junio¹ 1520, and no Caciques or Captains or Indians whom we knew appeared in the streets, and all the houses were empty when we reached the quarters where we used to lodge. The great Montezuma came out to the courtyard to embrace and speak to Cortés and bid him welcome, and congratulate him on his victory over Narvaez, and as Cortés was arriving victorious he refused to listen to him, and Montezuma returned to his quarters very sad and depressed.

¹ Midsummer day.

When each one of us was lodged in the quarters he had occupied before we set out from Mexico to go to this affair of Narvaez, and the followers of Narvaez [were lodged] in other quarters, we then saw and talked with Pedro de Alvarado and the soldiers who had stayed with him ; they gave us an account of the attacks the Mexicans had made on them, and the straits in which they [the Mexicans] had placed them, and we told them the story of our victory over Narvaez.

I will leave all this and relate how Cortés tried to find out what was the cause of the revolt in Mexico, for we clearly understood that it made Montezuma unhappy if [we should think] it had been his desire or had been done by his advice. Many of the soldiers who had remained with Pedro de Alvarado through that critical time said, that if Montezuma had had a hand in it, all of them would have been killed, but Montezuma calmed his people until they ceased to attack.

What Pedro de Alvarado told Cortés about the matter was that it was done by the Mexicans in order to liberate Montezuma, and because their Huichilobos ordered it, on account of our having placed the image of our Lady the Virgin Santa Maria and the Cross in his house. Moreover he said that many Indians had come to remove the holy image from the altar where we placed it, and were not able [to move it], and that the Indians looked upon it as a great miracle and had said so to Montezuma, who had told them to leave it in the place and altar in which it stood, and not to attempt to do otherwise, and so it was left.

Pedro de Alvarado further stated that because Narvaez' message to Montezuma, that he was coming to release him from prison and to capture us, had not turned out to be true, and because Cortés had told Montezuma that as soon as we possessed ships we should go and embark and leave the country entirely, and we were not going, and it

was nothing but empty words, and because it was evident that many more Teules were arriving, it seemed well [to the Mexicans], before the followers of Narvaez or our own men re-entered Mexico to kill Pedro de Alvarado and his soldiers and release the great Montezuma, and afterwards not to leave one of us or of the followers of Narvaez alive, all the more because they had taken it for granted that Narvaez and his soldiers would conquer us.

This discourse and account Pedro de Alvarado rendered to Cortés, and Cortés turned and asked him what was the reason that he attacked them when they were dancing and holding a festival, and he replied that he knew for certain that as soon as they had finished the festivals and dances and the sacrifices that they were offering to their Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca, they would at once come and make an attack according to the agreement they had made between themselves, and this and all the rest he learned from a priest and from two chieftains and from other Mexicans.

Cortés said to him, "but they have told me that they asked your permission to hold festivals [areyto] and dances," he replied that it was true, and it was in order to take them unprepared, and to scare them, so that they should not come to attack him, that he hastened to fall on them.

When Cortés heard this he said to him, very angrily, that it was very ill done and a great mistake¹ and that he wished to God that Montezuma had escaped and not heard such an account from his Idols. So he left him and spoke no more to him about it.

Pedro de Alvarado himself also said² that when he

¹ Scratched out in the original : "and not very true."—G.G.

² Scratched out in the original : "I wish to state that Pedro de Alvarado said that when the Mexican Indians fought against him, many of them said that a great *Teclecigata*, that is a great lady, such another as she who was placed in the great Cue, threw earth in their eyes and blinded them, and that a *guy Teule* (a great God) who rode

advanced against them in that conflict, he ordered a cannon, that was loaded with one ball and many small shot, to be fired, for as many squadrons of Indians were approaching to set fire to his quarters he sallied forth to fight them, and he ordered the cannon to be fired but it did not go off, and after he had made a charge against the squadrons which were attacking him, and many Indians were bearing down on him, while he was retreating to the fortress and quarters, then, without fire being applied to the cannon, the ball and the small shot was discharged and killed many Indians; and had it not so happened the enemy would have killed them all, and they did on that occasion carry off two of his soldiers alive.

Another thing Pedro de Alvarado stated, and this was the only thing that was [also] reported by the other soldiers, for the rest of the stories were told by Alvarado alone, and it is that they had no water to drink, and they dug in the courtyard, and made a well and took out fresh water, all [around] being salt; in all it amounted to many gifts that our Lord God bestowed on us.

Concerning this about the water I will add that in Mexico there was a spring where very often and at most times water¹ welled up. These things and others I heard

on a white horse did them great damage, and that had it not been for them they would have killed them all. And it is stated that his chieftains told this to the great Montezuma, and if this were so, they were great miracles and we must always give thanks to God and to the Virgin Santa Maria Our Lady, His Blessed Mother, that he helped us in all things, and to the fortunate Señor Santiago.—G. G.

¹ Blotted out in the original: "somewhat sweeter than the rest. Some persons say that it was through greed to gain the great quantity of gold and jewels of great value which the Indians wore while dancing that Pedro de Alvarado went to attack them. I do not believe it, and never heard such a thing, nor is it credible that he would do such a thing, although the Bishop Fray Bartolomé de las Casas says so. This and other things never happened, for in truth he fell on them to terrify them and so that with the damage he did to them they should have sufficient to recover from and weep over, and would not come to attack him, and as they say "Who attacks conquers." It was appa-

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related by persons of good faith and reliability, who were with Pedro de Alvarado when this happened, so I will leave off here and tell of the great attack that they promptly made on us, which was in the following manner.

CHAPTER CXXVI.

How they made war on us in Mexico, and the attacks they made on us and other things that happened.

WHEN Cortés saw that they had given us no sort of a reception in Texcoco, and had not even given us food, except bad food and with bad grace, and that we found no chieftains with whom to parley, and he saw that all were scared away and ill disposed, and observed the same condition on coming to Mexico, how no market was held and the whole place was in revolt, and he heard from Pedro de Alvarado about the disorderly manner in which he made his attack, and as it appears that on the march Cortés had spoken to the Captains of Narvaez glorifying himself on the great veneration and command that he enjoyed, and how on the road they [the Indians] would turn out to receive him and celebrate the occasion and give him gold, and that in Mexico he ruled as absolutely over the great Montezuma as over all his Captains, and that they would give him presents of gold, as they were used to do, and when everything turned out contrary to his expectations and they did not even give us food to eat, he was greatly irritated, and haughty towards the numerous

rently much worse, for we were also credibly informed that Montezuma never ordered such an attack to be made, and, while they were fighting with Pedro de Alvarado, Montezuma ordered his people to stop. His followers replied that it was unbearable to have him kept a prisoner, or for them [the Spaniards] to come and kill them, as they had done, while they were dancing. They felt bound to release him and to kill all the Teules who were guarding him.—G. G.