

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.

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## 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

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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.

Spaniards that he was bringing with him, and very sad and fretful. At this moment the great Montezuma sent two of his chieftains to beg our Cortés to go and see him, for he wished to speak to him, and the answer that he [Cortés] gave them was "go to, for a dog, who will not even keep open a market, and does not order food to be given us." Then when our Captains, that is Juan Velásquez de Leon, Cristóbal de Olid, Alonzo de Ávila, and Francisco de Lugo, heard Cortés say this, they exclaimed, "Señor, moderate your anger and reflect how much good and honour this king of these countries has done us, who is so good that had it not been for him we should all of us already be dead, and they would have eaten us, and remember that he has even given you his daughters."

When Cortés heard this he was more angry than ever at the words they said to him, as they seemed to be a reproof, and he said, "Why should I be civil to a dog who was treating secretly with Narvaez, and now you can see that he does not even give us food to eat." Our Captains replied, "That is to our minds what he ought to do and it is good advice." As Cortés had so many Spaniards there with him in Mexico, both of our own party and of the followers of Narvaez he did not trouble himself a whit about anything, and he spoke angrily and rudely again, addressing the chieftains and telling them to say to their Lord Montezuma that he should at once order the markets and sales to be held, if not he would see what would happen.

The chieftains well understood the offensive remarks that Cortés made about their Lord and even the reproof that our Captains gave to Cortés about it, for they knew them well as having been those who used to be on guard over their Lord, and they knew that they were good friends of their Montezuma, and according to the way they understood the matter they repeated it to Montezuma.

Either from anger [at this treatment] or because it had already been agreed on that we were to be attacked, it was not a quarter of an hour later that a soldier arrived in great haste and badly wounded. He came from a town close by Mexico named Tacuba and was escorting some Indian women who belonged to Cortés, one of them a daughter of Montezuma, for it appears that he [Cortés] had left them there in charge of the Lord of Tacuba, for they were relations of this same Lord, when we went off on the expedition against Narvaez. This soldier said that all the city and road by which he had come was full of warriors fully armed, and that they had taken from him the Indian women he was bringing and had given him two wounds and that if he had not let them [the women] go, they [the Mexicans] would already have captured him, and would have put him in a canoe and carried him off to be sacrificed, and that they had broken down a bridge.

When Cortés and some of us heard this it certainly depressed us greatly, for we, who were used to Indian fighting, understood thoroughly well what great numbers of them were wont to assemble, and that however well we fought, and notwithstanding the greater number of soldiers we had now brought with us, we should have to undergo great risk of our lives, hunger and hardship, especially as we were in such a powerful city. Let me go on and say that Cortés promptly ordered a Captain named Diego de Ordás to go with four hundred soldiers, and among them most of the crossbowmen and musketeers and some horsemen, and examine into what the soldier had reported who had arrived wounded and had brought the news, and that if he found that he could calm [the Indians] without fighting and disturbance that he should do so.

Diego de Ordás set out in the way that he was ordered with his four hundred soldiers, but he had hardly reached

the middle of the street along which he was to march, when so many squadrons of Mexican warriors fell on him and so many more were on the roofs [of the houses], and they made such fierce attacks that on the first assault they killed eight soldiers and wounded all the rest, and Diego de Ordás himself was wounded in three places, and in this manner he could not advance one step further but had to return little by little to his quarters. During the retreat they killed another good soldier named Lyscano who, with a broadsword, had done the work of a very valiant man.

At that moment, while many squadrons came out against Ordás, many more approached our quarters and shot off so many javelins, and stones from slings, and arrows, that they wounded on that occasion alone over forty-six of our men, and twelve of them died of their wounds; and such a number of warriors fell upon us that Diego de Ordás, who was coming in retreat, could not reach our quarters on account of the fierce assaults they made on him, some from the rear and others in front and others from the roofs.

Little availed our cannon, or our muskets, crossbows and lances, or the thrusts we gave them, or our good fighting, for although we killed and wounded many of them, yet they managed to reach us by pushing forward over the points of our swords and lances and closing up their squadrons never desisted from their brave attack, nor could we push them away from us.

At last, what with cannon and muskets and the damage we did them with our sword-thrusts, Ordás found an opportunity to enter our quarters, and not until then, much as he desired it, could he force a passage with his badly wounded soldiers, fourteen fewer in number. Still many of the squadrons never ceased from attacking us, and telling us that we were like women, and they called us

rogues and other abusive names. But the damage they had done us up to this time was as nothing to what they did afterwards, for such was their daring that, some attacking on one side and some on the other, they penetrated into our quarters and set fire to them, and we could not endure the smoke and the fire until it was remedied by flinging much earth over it, and cutting off other rooms whence the fire came. In truth, they believed that they would burn us alive in there. These conflicts lasted all day long, and even during the night so many squadrons of of them fell on us, and hurled javelins, stones and arrows in masses, and random stones so that what with those [that fell] during the day and those that then [fell] in all the courts and on the ground, it looked like chaff on a thrashing floor.

We passed the night in dressing wounds and in mending the breaches in the walls that they [the enemy] had made, and in getting ready for the next day. Then, as soon as it was dawn, our Captain decided that all of us and Narvaez' men should sally out to fight with them and that we should take the cannon and muskets and crossbows and endeavour to defeat them, or at least to make them feel our strength and valour better than the day before. I may state that when we came to this decision, the Mexicans were arranging the very same thing. We fought very well, but they were so strong, and had so many squadrons which relieved each other from time to time, that even if ten thousand Trojan Hectors and as many more Roldans had been there, they would not have been able to break through them.

So that it may now be understood, I will relate how it happened. We noted [their] tenacity in fighting, but I declare that I do not know how to describe it, for neither cannon nor muskets nor crossbows availed, nor hand-to-hand fighting, nor killing thirty or forty of them every

time we charged, for they still fought on in as close ranks and with more energy than in the beginning. Sometimes when we were gaining a little ground or a part of the street, they pretended to retreat, but it was [merely] to induce us to follow them and cut us off from our fortress and quarters, so as to fall on us in greater safety to themselves, believing that we could not return to our quarters alive, for they did us much damage when we were retreating.

Then, as to going out to burn their houses, I have already said in the chapter that treats of the subject, that between one house and another, they have wooden draw-bridges, and these they raised so that we could only pass through deep water. Then we could not endure the rocks and stones [hurled] from the roofs, in such a way that they damaged and wounded many of our men. I do not know why I write thus, so lukewarmly, for some three or four soldiers who were there with us and who had served in Italy, swore to God many times that they had never seen such fierce fights, not even when they had taken part in such between Christians, and against the artillery of the King of France, or of the Great Turk, nor had they seen men like those Indians with such courage in closing up their ranks.

However, as they said many other things and gave explanations of them, as will be seen further on, I will leave the matter here, and will relate how, with great difficulty we withdrew to our quarters, many squadrons of warriors still pressing on us with loud yells and whistles, and trumpets and drums, calling us villains and cowards who did not dare to meet them all day in battle, but turned in flight.

On that day they killed ten or twelve more soldiers and we all returned badly wounded. What took place during the night was the arrangement that in two days' time all

the soldiers in camp, as many as were able, should sally out with four engines like towers built of strong timber, in such a manner that five and twenty men could find shelter under each of them, and they were provided with apertures and loopholes through which to shoot, and musketeers and crossbowmen accompanied them, and close by them were to march the other soldiers, musketeers and crossbowmen and the guns, and all the rest, and the horsemen were to make charges.

When this plan was settled, as we spent all that day in carrying out the work and in strengthening many breaches that they had made in the walls, we did not go out to fight.

I do not know how to tell of the great squadrons of warriors who came to attack us in our quarters, not only in ten or twelve places; but in more than twenty, for we were distributed over them all and in many other places, and while we built up and fortified [ourselves], as I have related, many other squadrons openly endeavoured to penetrate into our quarters, and neither with guns, crossbows nor muskets, nor with many charges and sword-thrusts could we force them back, for they said that not one of us should remain [alive] that day and they would sacrifice our hearts and blood to their gods, and would have enough to glut [their appetites] and hold feasts on our arms and legs, and would throw our bodies to the tigers, lions, vipers and snakes, which they kept caged, so that they might gorge on them, and for that reason they had ordered them not to be given food for the past two days. As for the gold we possessed, we would get little satisfaction from it or from all the cloths; and as for the Tlaxcalans who were with us, they said that they would place them in cages to fatten, and little by little they would offer their bodies in sacrifice; and, very tenderly, they said that we should give up to them their great Lord Montezuma, and they said other

things. Night by night, in like manner, there were always many yells and whistles and showers of darts, stones and arrows.

As soon as dawn came, after commending ourselves to God, we sallied out from our quarters with our towers (and it seems to me that in other countries where I have been<sup>1</sup>, in wars where such things were necessary, they were called "Buros" and "Mantas") with the cannon, muskets and crossbows in advance, and the horsemen making charges, but, as I have stated, although we killed many of them it availed nothing towards making them turn their backs, indeed if they had fought bravely on the two previous days, they proved themselves far more vigorous and displayed much greater forces and squadrons on this day. Nevertheless, we determined, although it should cost the lives of all of us, to push on with our towers and engines as far as the great Cue of Huichilobos.

I will not relate at length, the fights we had with them in a fortified house, nor will I tell how they wounded the horses, nor were they [the horses] of any use to us, because although they charged the squadrons to break through them, so many arrows, darts and stones were hurled at them, that they, well protected by armour though they were, could not prevail against them [the enemy], and if they pursued and overtook them, the Mexicans promptly dropped for safety into the canals and lagoons where they had raised other walls against the horsemen, and many other Indians were stationed with very long lances to finish killing them. Thus it benefited us nothing to turn aside to burn or demolish a house, it was quite useless, for, as I have said, they all stood in the water, and between house and house there was a movable bridge, and to cross

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<sup>1</sup> The text says "donde me he hallado en guerra," but Bernal Díaz had not been in any wars except wars in America.



by swimming was very dangerous, for on the roofs they had such store of rocks and stones and such defences, that it was certain destruction to risk it. In addition to this, where we did set fire to some houses, a single house took a whole day to burn, and the houses did not catch fire one from the other, as, for one reason, they stood apart with the water between ; and, for the other, were provided with flat roofs (azoteas) ; thus it was useless toil to risk our persons in the attempt, so we went towards the great Cue of their Idols. Then, all of a sudden, more than four thousand Mexicans ascended it, not counting other Companies that were posted on it with long lances and stones and darts, and placed themselves on the defensive, and resisted our ascent for a good while, and neither the towers nor the cannon or crossbows, nor the muskets were of any avail, nor the horsemen, for, although they wished to charge [with] their horses, the whole of the courtyard was paved with very large flagstones, so that the horses lost their foothold, and they [the stones] were so slippery that they [the horses] fell. While from the steps of the lofty Cue they forbade our advance, we had so many enemies both on one side and the other that although our cannon [shots] carried off ten or fifteen of them and we slew many others by sword-thrusts and charges, so many men attacked us that we were not able to ascend the lofty Cue. However with great unanimity we persisted in the attack, and without taking the towers (for they were already destroyed) we made our way to the summit.

Here Cortés showed himself very much of a man, as he always was. Oh ! what a fight and what a fierce battle it was that took place ; it was a memorable thing to see us all streaming with blood, and covered with wounds and others slain. It pleased our Lord that we reached the place where we used to keep the image of Our Lady, and we did not find it, and it appears, as we came to know,

that the great Montezuma paid devotion to Her, and ordered it [the image] to be preserved in safety.

We set fire to their Idols and a good part of the chamber with the Idols Huichilobos and Tezcatepuca was burned. On that occasion the Tlaxcalans helped us very greatly. After this was accomplished, while some of us were fighting and others kindling the fire, as I have related, oh! to see the priests who were stationed on this great Cue, and the three or four thousand Indians, all men of importance. While we descended, oh! how they made us tumble down six or even ten steps at a time! And so much more there is to tell of the other squadrons posted on the battlements and recesses of the great Cue discharging so many darts and arrows that we could face neither one group of squadrons nor the other. We resolved to return, with much toil and risk to ourselves, to our quarters, our castles being destroyed, all of us wounded and sixteen slain, with the Indians constantly pressing on us and other squadrons on our flanks.

However clearly I may tell all this, I can never [fully] explain it to any one who did not see us. So far, I have not spoken of what the Mexican squadrons did who kept on attacking our quarters while we were marching outside, and the great obstinacy and tenacity they displayed in forcing their way in.

In this battle, we captured two of the chief priests, whom Cortés ordered us to convey with great care.

Many times I have seen among the Mexicans and Tlaxcalans, paintings of this battle, and the ascent that we made of the great Cue, as they look upon it as a very heroic deed. And although in the pictures that they have made of it, they depict all of us as badly wounded and streaming with blood and many of us dead they considered it a great feat, this setting fire to the Cue, when so many warriors were guarding it both on the battle-

ments and recesses, and many more Indians were below on the ground and the Courts were full of them and there were many more on the sides ; and with our towers destroyed, how was it possible to scale it?

Let us stop talking about it and I will relate how with great labour we returned to our quarters and if many men were then following us, as many more were in our quarters, for they had already demolished some walls so as to gain an entry, but on our arrival they desisted. Nevertheless, during all the rest of the day they never ceased to discharge darts, stones and arrows, and during the night yells and stones and darts.

Let us leave the great obstinacy and persistency they were always without cessation displaying against our quarters, as I have related, and let me say how that night was passed in dressing wounds and in burying the dead, in preparations for going out to fight the following day, in strengthening and adding parapets to the walls they had pulled down, and to other breaches they had made, and in consulting how and in what way we could fight without suffering such great damage and death, and throughout the discussion we found no remedy at all.

Then I also wish to speak of the maledictions that the followers of Narvaez hurled at Cortés, and the words that they used, cursing him and the country and even Diego Velásquez who had sent them there when they were peacefully settled in their homes in the Island of Cuba, and they were crazy and out of their minds.

Let us go back to our story. It was decided to sue for peace so that we could leave Mexico, and as soon as it was dawn many more squadrons of Mexicans arrived and very effectually surrounded our quarters on all sides, and if they had discharged many stones and arrows before, they came much thicker and with louder howls and whistles on this day, and other squadrons endeavoured to force an entrance

in other parts, and cannon and muskets availed nothing, although we did them damage enough.

When Cortés saw all this, he decided that the great Montezuma should speak to them from the roof and tell them that the war must cease, and that we wished to leave his city. When they went to give this message from Cortés to the great Montezuma, it is reported that he said with great grief, "What more does Malinche want from me? I neither wish to live nor to listen to him, to such a pass has my fate brought me because of him." And he did not wish to come, and it is even reported that he said he neither wished to see nor hear him, nor listen to his false words, promises or lies. Then the Padre de la Merced and Cristóbal de Olid went and spoke to him with much reverence and in very affectionate terms, and Montezuma said, "I believe that I shall not obtain any result towards ending this war, for they have already raised up another Lord and have made up their minds not to let you leave this place alive, therefore I believe that all of you will have to die."

Let us return to the great attacks they made on us; Montezuma was placed by a battlement of the roof with many of us soldiers guarding him, and he began to speak to them [his people], with very affectionate expressions [telling them] to desist from the war, and that we would leave Mexico. Many of the Mexican Chieftains and Captains knew him well and at once ordered their people to be silent and not to discharge darts, stones or arrows, and four of them reached a spot where Montezuma could speak to them, and they to him, and with tears they said to him: "Oh! Señor, and our great Lord, how all your misfortune and injury and that of your children and relations afflicts us, we make known to you that we have already raised one of your kinsmen to be our Lord," and

there he stated his name, that he was called Cuitlahuac,<sup>1</sup> the Lord of Ixtapalapa, (for it was not Guatemoc, he who was Lord soon after,) and moreover they said that the war must be carried through, and that they had vowed to their Idols not to relax it until we were all dead, and that they prayed every day to their Huichilobos and Texcatepuca to guard him free and safe from our power, and that should it end as they desired, they would not fail to hold him in higher regard as their Lord than they did before, and they begged him to forgive them. They had hardly finished this speech when suddenly such a shower of stones and darts was discharged that (our men who were shielding him having neglected their duty [to shield him] for a moment, because they saw how the attack ceased while he spoke to them) he was hit by three stones, one on the head, another on the arm and another on the leg, and although they begged him to have the wounds dressed and to take food, and spoke kind words to him about it, he would not. Indeed, when we least expected it, they came to say that he was dead. Cortés wept for him, and all of us Captains and soldiers, and there was no man among us who knew him and was intimate with him, who did not bemoan him as though he were our father, and it is not to be wondered at, considering how good he was. It was stated that he had reigned for seventeen years and that he was the best king there had ever been in Mexico, and that he had conquered in person, in three wars which he had carried on in the countries he had subjugated. Let us continue.

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<sup>1</sup> Coadlabaca in the text.

## CHAPTER CXXVII.

When Montezuma was dead Cortés decided to tell the news to his Captains and chieftains who were making war on us, and what else took place about it.

I HAVE already told about the sorrow that we all of us felt about it when we saw that Montezuma was dead. We even thought badly of the Fraile de la Merced because he had not persuaded him to become a Christian, and he gave as an excuse that he did not think that he would die of those wounds, but that he ought to have ordered them to give him something to stupefy him. At the end of much discussion Cortés ordered a priest and a chief from among the prisoners to go and tell the Cacique whom they had chosen for Lord, who was named Cuitlahuac<sup>1</sup>, and his Captains, that the great Montezuma was dead, and they had seen him die, and about the manner of his death and the wounds his own people had inflicted on him, and they should say how grieved we all were about it, and that they should bury him as the great king that he was, and they should raise the cousin of Montezuma who was with us, to be king, for the inheritance was his, or one of his (Montezuma's) other sons, and that he whom they had raised to be king was not so by right, and they should negotiate a peace so that we could leave Mexico; and if they did not do so, now that Montezuma was dead, whom we held in respect and for that reason had not destroyed their city, we should sally out to make war on them and burn all their houses and do them much damage. So as to convince them that Montezuma was dead, he ordered six Mexicans who were high chieftains, and the priests whom we held as prisoners, to carry him out