

because they were not assembled and men were out collecting them."

Cortés and all our Captains and soldiers embraced them and told them that we thanked them, and Cortés gave to all the chieftains golden jewels and [precious] stones, and as every soldier had escaped with as much as he could [carry] some of us gave [presents] to our acquaintances from what we possessed. Then what rejoicing and happiness they showed when they saw that Doña Luisa and Doña Marina were saved, and what weeping and sorrow for the other Indians who did not come but were left behind dead. Especially did Mase Escasi weep for his daughter Doña Elvira and the death of Juan Velásquez de Leon to whom he had given her.

In this way we went to the Capital of Tlaxcala with all the Caciques, and Cortés lodged in the houses of Mase Escasi, and Xicotenga gave his quarters to Pedro de Alvarado, and there we tended our wounds and began to recover our strength, but, nevertheless, four soldiers died of their wounds and some other soldiers failed to recover.

I will leave off here, and relate what else happened to us.

CHAPTER CXXIX.

How we went to the Capital and largest town in Tlaxcala, and what happened to us there.

WE stayed one day in the small town of Hueyotlipan and the Caciques of Tlaxcala whom I have named made us those overtures which are worthy of remembrance and of reward as they were made at such a critical time; and after we had gone to the Capital town of Tlaxcala, and they had assigned us quarters as I have said, it seems that Cortés asked for the gold which had been sent there,

which amounted to forty thousand dollars, which gold was the share of the settlers who remained in Villa Rica. Mase Escasi and Xicotenga the elder and one of our soldiers who had remained ill in Tlaxcala and had not been in the affair at Mexico when we were defeated, said that Juan de Alcántara and two other settlers had come from Villa Rica and had carried off all the gold, for they brought letters from Cortés to say that it was to be given to them, and this letter the soldier had produced and left in the possession of Mase Escasi when the gold was given to him. When they were asked how and at what time the gold was taken, and when it was understood from a count of days that it was at the time when the Mexicans were fighting us, we at once realised that they must have killed the Spaniards on the road and have seized their gold. And Cortés was very much troubled about it.¹ We were also uneasy at not knowing about the people at Villa Rica, lest some disaster had happened to them, so Cortés at once wrote to them and sent the letter by three Tlaxcalans, and told them about the great dangers to which we had been exposed in Mexico, and how and in what way we had escaped with our lives, but he did not tell them how many of us were missing, and he admonished them always to be on the alert and to keep a good look out, and [said] that if there were any soldiers among them sound in health, they should be sent to him, and that they should keep a good guard over Narvaez, and [he asked them] whether they had any powder or crossbows, because he wished to return and scour the neighbourhood of Mexico. He also wrote to the officer named Caballero whom he had left there as Captain of the Sea, that he should keep watch that neither Narvaez nor any of the ships should leave for

¹ Blotted out in the original : “because he intended to send to the Island of Jamaica for horses and powder and crossbows.”—G. G.

Cuba, and if he considered the two ships belonging to Narvaez which were in the harbour to be unfit for sea that he should destroy them and send their crews to him with all the arms they possessed.

The messengers went and returned post haste, and brought letters to say that there had been no warfare, and that as neither Juan Alcántara nor the other two settlers whom they had sent for the gold had returned, they must have been killed on the road, that they knew all about the war the Mexicans had made on us, for the fat Cacique of Cempoala had told them about it. The Admiral of the sea named Caballero also wrote and said he would do what Cortés ordered him, that one of the ships was in good condition and he would destroy the other, and would send the men, but there were very few sailors, for they had sickened and died; that he was writing his reply to the letter at once, and would soon despatch the succour they were sending from Villa Rica, numbering seven in all, including four sailors who came from the town. Their Captain was a soldier named Lencero (who owned the Inn which is now called Lencero's), and when they arrived at Tlaxcala, as they arrived thin and ill, we often for our own diversion and to make fun of them spoke of "Lencero's Help," for of the seven that came five had liver complaint and were covered with boils and the other two were swelled out with great bellies.

Let us leave the jokes and I will tell what happened to us there in Tlaxcala with Xicotenga the younger and his ill will,—he who had been Captain of all Tlaxcala when they were fighting us, often mentioned by me in the chapter that treats of that subject. The truth is that when it became known in that City that we were fleeing from Mexico, and that the Mexicans had killed a great number of soldiers, both our own men and the Tlaxcalan Indians who had left Tlaxcala in our company, and that we were

coming for aid and shelter to that province, Xicotenga the younger went about appealing to all his friends and relations and to others who he thought were on his side, and said to them that on the night or day when they might be best prepared for it they should kill us and make friends with the Lord of Mexico, who by that time had been elected King, who was named Cuitlahuac,¹ and that in addition to this they should rob us of the cloaks and cloth which we had left in Tlaxcala to be taken care of, and the gold that we were now bringing from Mexico, and they would all become rich with the spoil.

This came to the ears of the elder Xicotenga, his father, who quarrelled with him and told him that no such thought should have entered his head, that it was disgraceful, and that if Mase Escasi and Chichimecatecle and the other lords of Tlaxcala should come to hear of it they would possibly slay him and those who were in league with him ; but much as his father rebuked him he paid no heed nor did it stop him from talking about and working at his evil purpose. This reached the ears of Chichimecatecle, who was the mortal enemy of Xicotenga the younger, and he told it to Mase Escasi and they determined to enter into consultation and agreement about it, and they called together Xicotenga the elder and the chiefs of Huexotzingo, and ordered Xicotenga the younger to be brought prisoner before them. Then Mase Escasi made a speech to them all and asked if they could remember or had heard it said that during the last hundred years there had ever been throughout Tlaxcala such prosperity and riches as there had been since the Teules had arrived in their country, or if in any of their provinces they had ever been so well provided for. For they possessed much cotton cloth and gold and they ate salt, and that wherever the

Coadlavaca in the text.

Tlaxcalans went with the Teules, honour was paid to them out of respect to the Teules, and although many of them had now been killed in Mexico, they should bear in mind what their ancestors had said to them many years ago, that from where the sun rises there would come men who would rule over them. Why then was Xicotenga now going about with these treasons and infamies, scheming to make war on us and kill us? It was evilly done, and there was no excuse to be made for the knavery and mischief which he always had hidden in his breast, and now at the very moment when he saw us coming back defeated, when he ought to help us to recover ourselves, so as to turn again upon his enemies the towns of Mexico, he wished to carry out this treachery.

To these words that Mase Escasi and his father Xicotenga the elder said to him, Xicotenga the younger replied, that what he had said about making peace with the Mexicans was a very wise decision, and he said other things that they could not tolerate. Then Mase Escasi and Chichimecatecle and the old man, his father, blind as he was, arose and took Xicotenga the younger by the collar and by his mantle and tore it and roughly pushing him and with reproachful words they cast him down the steps, with his mantle all torn, and had it not been for his father they would have slain him. The others who had been in his confidence were made prisoners. As we were all taking refuge there, and it was not the time to punish him, Cortés said nothing more about it.

I have called this to mind so that it may be seen how loyal and good were these people of Tlaxcala, and how much we are indebted to them, and especially to the good Xicotenga the elder, who is said to have ordered his son to be killed when he knew of his plots and treason.

Let us leave this, and I will relate how we remained twenty-two days in that town curing our wounds and

recovering. Then Cortés determined that we should go to the province of Tepeaca which was near by, for there and in another town close to Tepeaca named Cachula they had slain many of our soldiers and those of Narvaez who had come to Mexico. When Cortés told this to our Captains, and they were preparing the soldiers of Narvaez to go to the war, for these men were not accustomed to fighting, and having escaped from the defeat at Mexico and at the bridges, and from the battle of Otumba, could hardly await the time for returning to the Island of Cuba, to their Indians, and their gold mines, they cursed Cortés and his conquests. Especially was this the case with Andrés de Duero, the partner of Cortés, for interested readers will have already understood, as I have twice described it in former chapters, how and in what way the partnership was formed. They cursed the gold which he [Cortés] had given to Duero and to the other Captains, all of which had been lost at the bridges, and as they had seen the fierce attacks the enemy made on us, they were very well content to have escaped with their lives. So they agreed to tell Cortés that they did not want to go to Tepeaca nor to any fighting, but wished to go back to their homes, and that they had already lost enough by leaving Cuba. Cortés talked the matter over with them very quietly and kindly, thinking to persuade them to go with us on the expedition to Tepeaca, but for all his speeches and reproaches they would not go. When they saw that words had no effect on Cortés, they drew up a formal requisition before a King's Notary demanding that he should go at once to Villa Rica and abandon the war, giving as a reason that we had neither horses nor muskets, crossbows nor powder, nor thread with which to make [crossbow] strings, nor stores, that we were all wounded, and out of all our company and the soldiers of Narvaez there only survived four hundred and forty, and that the Mexicans would hold

the strongholds, sierras and passes against us, and that if we delayed any longer the ships would be eaten by worms¹, and many other things were stated in this petition.

When they had presented the requisition and read it to Cortés he replied to the many words it contained with far more numerous contradictions, besides most of us who had come over with Cortés, told him not to give permission to any of the followers of Narvaez nor to any one else to return to Cuba, but that we should all endeavour to serve God and the King, for that was the right thing to do and not to return to Cuba.

After Cortés had given his answer to the requisition, the men who were pressing their demands upon him saw that many of us, who stood firmly by Cortés, would put a stop to the importunity with which they expressed their demands merely by insisting that it would be neither to the service of God nor His Majesty to desert their captain during war time. At the end of much discussion they gave their obedience so far as to go with us on any expeditions that might be undertaken, but it was on condition that Cortés promised that when an opportunity should occur he would allow them to return to the Island of Cuba, but not even with this did they leave off murmuring against him and his conquest, which had cost them so dearly in leaving their homes and their ease, and coming to intrude where even their lives were not safe. Moreover they said that if we entered on another war with the forces of Mexico, which sooner or later would be unavoidable, they believed and considered it certain that we could not hold our own against them in battle, as they had seen in the affair of Mexico and the bridges, and in the famous battle of Otumba. Moreover they said that

¹ Worms : In the text the word is "broma," which is the shipworm, *Teredo navalis*.

our Cortés only aimed to keep the command and always be a lord, and we bore with him, and were his servants, because we had nothing to lose but our lives, and they said many other tactless things, but we none of us took any notice considering the circumstances in which they spoke. But not many months passed before Cortés refused them leave to return to their homes and the Island of Cuba which I will relate at the proper time and place.

Let us omit repetitions and speak of what the historian Gomara says, although I am very tired of pointing out the nonsense which he says was given him as information, for things did not happen as he writes. So as not to be detained at every chapter by going over it all again and calling to mind how and in what way it happened, I have avoided writing about (his errors), but in this matter of the requisition which he says was presented to Cortés, he does not say who those were who made it, whether they were our people or the followers of Narvaez, and it seems to me that he does this to exalt Cortés and to debase us, who stood by him. Let it be known that the true "conquistadores" when we saw this written, knew for certain that gold and other gifts must have been given to Gomara in order that he should write in this way, for in all the battles and encounters it was we who supported Cortés, and now this chronicler humbles us by what he says. Gomara also states that Cortés, in his reply to this same requisition said, so as to encourage and animate us, that he would send to summon Juan Velásquez de Leon and Diego de Ordás, one of whom he said was settling at Panuco with three hundred soldiers, and the other was making a settlement at Coatzacoalcos with as many more soldiers. There is no truth in what he says, for as soon as we set out for Mexico to the assistance of Alvarado, the arrangements which had been made for Juan Velásquez to go to Panuco, and for Diego de Ordás to Coatzacoalcos were cancelled, as I have

extensively explained in a former chapter where I have told all about it. Those two Captains went to Mexico with us to succour Pedro de Alvarado, and in the rout Juan Velásquez de Leon was left dead at the bridge, and Diego de Ordás came out of it with three severe wounds that were given him in Mexico, and I have already related how and when it happened. If therefore the Chronicler Gomara's success in telling the truth about what happened were as excellent as the style in which he writes, it would be a very good thing. Moreover I notice that he says concerning the battle of Otumba, that if it had not been for Cortés himself we should all have been defeated, and that he alone won the battle by making (as he did) the charge against the Chieftain who carried the standard and emblem of Mexico. I have already said and will repeat it again that Cortés deserves all honour as a valiant Captain, but above all we must give thanks to God who in His great Mercy always helped us and supported Cortés by giving him such brave and valiant Captains and brave soldiers as he had with him ; for we gave him his mettle and broke up the squadrons and supported him, so that with our help and that of our Captains he might fight in the way that we fought, as I have already related in the chapters which treat of the subject.

For all the Captains whom I have named always kept in company with Cortés, and I will here name them again, they were Cristóbal de Olid, Gonzalo de Sandoval, Francisco de Morla, Luis Marin, Francisco de Lugo, Gonzalo Domínguez and other good and valiant soldiers who did not own horses, for originally sixteen horses and mares were all that came from the Island of Cuba with Cortés, and they no longer existed.

And as to what Gomara says in his history, that it was Cortés himself alone who won the battle of Otumba, why did he not relate the heroic deeds that we his captains and

valiant soldiers performed in that battle? For these reasons we have obtained the certainty that, so as to induce him to praise Cortés alone, they must have greased his palms, for he makes no mention of us; if not, let inquiry be made about that very valiant soldier named Cristóbal de Olea, how many times he came to the assistance of Cortés and saved his life up to the time of our return to Mexico, when he and many other soldiers lost their lives at the bridge in order to save that of Cortés. I had forgotten the other occasion when he saved Cortés' life in the affair at Zochimilco and he himself was badly wounded, and that my statement may be clearly understood, I will add that there was both a Cristóbal de Olea and a Cristóbal de Olid.

Then as to what the historian says about the blow that Cortés gave the Mexican captain with his horse, which made him drop the banner; it is true enough, but I have already said it was Juan de Salamanca, a native of the town of Ontiveros (who, after Mexico was conquered, became chief Alcalde of Coatzacoalcos), who gave him the lance thrust that slew him, and took from him the rich plumes and the standard that he was carrying, and presented it to Cortés, and some time afterwards His Majesty granted it to Salamanca as his coat of arms.

I have called this to mind here, not to avoid praising our Captain Hernando Cortés and holding him in the highest esteem, for he deserves all honour and glory for all the battles and conquests until we gained this New Spain, such as we are used to bestow on the most famous Captains in Spain, and such triumphs as the Romans accorded to Pompey and Julius Cæsar and the Scipios, and our Cortés is more worthy of praise than these Romans. This same historian Gomara also says that Cortés secretly ordered Xicotenga the younger to be killed in Tlaxcala for the treachery that he was plotting in order to kill us, as I

have already related, but it did not happen as he says it did, for when he ordered him to be hanged it was in a town near to Texcoco as I shall relate further on. This historian also says that so many thousands of Indians opposed us in our expeditions; there is neither calculation nor sense in the great numbers that he gives; he also speaks of the cities and towns and villages where there were so many thousands of houses, when there was not the fifth part of them; and if one were to add up all that he puts in his history it would come to more millions of men than the universe contains; he does not mind whether he says eight thousand or eighty thousand, and he then brags, thinking that his history will be very pleasing to those who hear it, and does not relate what really took place. Let the interested reader observe the distance between the truth in this tale of mine and the falsehood¹ by comparing events word by word, and let him ignore eloquence and ornate language which is evidently pleasanter than my coarse [manner], but the truth as it is written can support even my bad wording and [lack of] polished eloquence.

Let us leave this recounting and remembering of evident mistakes, and enough of the stories he has written, although they have given occasion for Dr. Illescas and Pablo Jovio to follow his words, for I am more bound to tell the truth about all that happened than to flatter. Let us go back to our story, and I will relate how we decided to go to Tepeaca, and what happened on the expedition.

¹ Blotted out in the original: "of his history."





BOOK IX.

THE HALT AT TEPEACA.

CHAPTER CXXX.

How we went to the province of Tepeaca, and what we did there, and other things that happened.



S Cortés had asked the Caciques of Tlaxcala (whose names have already been given) for five thousand warriors, in order to overrun and chastise the towns where Spaniards had been killed, namely Tepeaca and Quecholac¹ and Tecamachalco, distant from Tlaxcala six or seven leagues, they got ready four thousand Indians, with the greatest willingness; for if we had a great desire to go to those towns, Mase Escasi and Xicotenga the elder had a still stronger desire to supply them [the Indian auxiliaries], because they [the people of Tepeaca, etc.] had come to rob some of their farms, and they were willing to send men against them. The explanation was as follows:—When the Mexicans turned us out of Mexico (in the way I have described in former chapters which give an account of it), and knew that we had taken shelter

Cachula in the text.