



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.

in Tlaxcala, they took it for certain, that as soon as we were well, we would come with all the forces of Tlaxcala to overrun the lands of the towns which lay nearest the Tlaxcalan boundary, and for this reason they sent to all the provinces where they thought we might go, many squadrons of Mexicans to keep guard and establish garrisons, and the largest garrison of all was posted in Tepeaca. Mase Escasi and Xicotenga were aware of this, and even stood in fear of them. Then as we were all ready, we began our march. On that expedition we took neither artillery nor muskets, for all had been lost at the bridges, and for the few that were saved, we had no powder. We had with us seventeen horses and six cross-bows, and four hundred and twenty soldiers, most of them armed with sword and shield, and about two¹ thousand friends from Tlaxcala and food for one day, for the country through which we were marching was thickly peopled and well supplied with maize and fowls and the dogs of the country. As was usual with us, we kept our scouts well in advance, and marching in good order, we camped that night about three leagues from Tepeaca. They had already carried off all that was movable from the farms and hamlets through which we passed, for they had heard the news that we were coming to their town. So that nothing should be done without justification, and everything in good order, Cortés sent a message by six Indians of the town of Tepeaca and four of their women, whom we captured for that very purpose in those farms, to say that we were coming to their town to inquire and find out who, and how many, were concerned in the death of more than sixteen Spaniards slain without cause when they were on their way to Mexico; and that we had also come to find out why they had again many squadrons of

¹ Blotted out in the original : "six four."—G. G.


Mexicans with them, in whose company they had been attacking and robbing some farms of the Tlaxcalans who were our allies, and he begged them at once to come in peaceably to where we were camped so as to make friends with us, and to turn the Mexicans out of their town, for if they did not do so we would come against them as rebels and murderers and highway robbers, and punish them by blood and fire, and give them into slavery. So those six Indians and four women from this same town set out, and the threatening messages we sent by them were replied to by much fiercer ones that were brought back to us by the same six Indians and two Mexicans who accompanied them, for they knew well enough that we would do no harm to any messengers who were sent to us, on the contrary we would give them beads so as to attract them. With these [replies] sent by the people of Tepeaca, came the boastful words uttered by the Mexican Captains, because they had been victorious in the battle of the bridges in Mexico. Cortés ordered each messenger to be given a mantle, and he again requested the people to come and see him and to have no fear, for the Spaniards whom they had already killed, could not be brought to life again ; moreover, let them come to him peaceably, and he would forgive them for the deaths that they had caused. He also wrote them a letter on the subject, although he knew that they could not understand it, but when they saw paper from Castile, they knew for certain that it contained some orders. Cortés also begged the two Mexicans who came with the messengers from Tepeaca to go back and bring him a reply. So they went back and the reply they brought was that we should advance no further, but should return whence we had come, otherwise they meant to have a grand gorging on our bodies the next day, better than they had had in Mexico at the Bridges and at Otumba. When Cortés heard this, he repeated it to our captains and

soldiers, and it was agreed that a statement should be drawn up before a Notary which would certify all that had happened, and would give into slavery all the allies of Mexico who had killed Spaniards, because, after they had given their fealty to His Majesty, they had revolted and killed over eight hundred and seventy of our people and sixty horses, and the [people from the] other towns, and because they were highway robbers and murderers of men. When this decree had been drawn up, Cortés sent to let them know about it, threatening them, and demanding peace. They replied that if we did not at once go back, they would come out and kill us, and they got ready to do so, and we did the same.

The next day we had a fine battle with the Mexicans and Tepeacans, on a plain, and as the field of battle was among maize and maguey plantations, although the Mexicans fought fiercely, they were soon routed by those on horseback, and those who had no horses were not behindhand. Then to see with what spirit our Tlaxcalan allies attacked them and followed them up and overtook them! and many of the Mexicans and Tepeacans were slain, but of our Tlaxcalan allies only three were killed, and two horses were wounded, and one of them died, and two of our soldiers were wounded, but not in a manner to cause them any danger.

As soon as the victory was gained, many Indian women and boys joined us and were collected from the fields and the houses; we did not trouble about the men who were carried off as slaves by the Tlaxcalans.

When the people of Tepeaca saw that notwithstanding their arrogance the Mexicans who garrisoned their town were defeated, and they themselves with them, they determined without saying anything to the Mexicans, to come to where we were, and we received them in peace and they gave their fealty to His Majesty, and turned the

Mexicans out of their houses. Then we went to the town of Tepeaca and founded a town there, which was named La Villa de Segura de la Frontera, because it was on the road to Villa Rica, and it stood in a good neighbourhood of excellent towns subject to Mexico, and there was plenty of maize, and we had our allies the Tlaxcalans to guard the frontier. There, Alcaldes and Regidores were chosen, and orders were given that the neighbourhood subject to Mexico was to be raided, especially the towns where Spaniards had been killed. An iron was made with which to brand those whom we took for slaves, it was shaped thus , which means *Guerra* [war]. From the Villa Segura de la Frontera we scoured the neighbourhood which included Quecholac and Tecamachalco, and the town of the Guayavas, and other towns of which I do not remember the names. It was in Quecholac that they had killed fifteen Spaniards in their quarters, and here we made many slaves, so that within forty days we had all these towns punished and thoroughly pacified.

At that time, in Mexico, they had raised up [to the throne] another Prince, because the Prince who had driven us out of Mexico had died of Smallpox. He whom they now made Lord over them was a nephew or very near relation of Montezuma, named Guatemoc, a young man of about twenty-five years, very much of a gentleman for an Indian, and very valiant, and he made himself so feared that all his people trembled before him, and he was married to a daughter of Montezuma, a very handsome woman for an Indian. When this Guatemoc, Prince of Mexico, learned that we had defeated the Mexican squadrons stationed in Tepeaca, and that they [the people of Tepeaca] had given their fealty to His Majesty, and served us and gave us food, and that we had settled there, he feared that we should overrun Oaxaca and other provinces and bring them all into our alliance; so he sent messengers through

all the towns and told them to be on the alert with all their arms, and he gave golden jewels to some Caciques, and to others he remitted their tribute, and above all he despatched great companies and garrisons of warriors to see that we did not enter his territory, and charged them to fight very fiercely against us, so that it should not happen again, as it did at Tepeaca and Quecholac and Tecamachalco, where we had made slaves of all. Where he sent the greatest number of warriors was to Guacachula and Izucar,¹ which were distant from Tepeaca, where we had established our town, about twelve leagues. So that one may distinguish these names clearly, one town is named Cachula [Quecholac] and the other is named Guacachula. I will postpone relating what was done in Guacachula until the proper time and place, and will tell how at that time, messengers came from Villa Rica, to say that a ship had come from Cuba with some soldiers on board.

CHAPTER CXXXI.

How a ship came from Cuba, sent by Diego Velásquez with Pedro Barba as her captain ; and the method which the admiral, whom our Cortés had appointed as guardian of the sea, adopted in order to capture them, and it was in this way.

WHILE we marched about that province of Tepeaca punishing those who were concerned in the death of our companions (that is, those who killed them in these towns) and bringing them to peace, and all were giving their fealty to His Majesty, letters came from Villa Rica to say that a ship had arrived in port, and that her Captain was a gentleman named Pedro Barba, a great friend of Cortés. This Pedro Barba had been a lieutenant of Diego Velás-

¹ Oçucar in the text.