

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

How we began our march to the City of Mexico, what happened to us on the road, and what Montezuma sent to say.

WE set out from Cholula in carefully arranged order as we were always accustomed to do, the mounted scouts examining the country ahead and some very active foot soldiers accompanying them, so that should they come to any bad ground or other obstacle they might help one another; then [followed] our cannon all ready for action, and the musketeers and crossbowmen, and then the horsemen in parties of three so that they could help one another, then all the rest of the soldiers in good order. I don't know why I call all this so clearly to mind, but when writing about war, one feels obliged to make mention of it, so that it can be seen how we marched always "with chin on shoulder." Marching in this way we arrived that day at some ranchos standing on a hill about four leagues from Cholula, they are peopled from Huexotzingo, and I think they are called the Ranchos of Yscalpan. To this place soon came the Caciques and priests of the towns of Huexotzingo which were near by, and they were friends and allies of the Tlaxcalans, and there also came people from other small towns, which stand on the slopes of the volcano near their boundary line, who brought us food and a present of golden jewels of small value, and they asked Cortés to accept them and not consider the insignificance of the gift but the good will with which it was offered. They advised him not to go to Mexico as it was a very strong city and full of warriors, where we should run much risk. They also told us to look out, if we had decided upon going, for when we had ascended to the pass we should find two broad roads, one leading to a town named Chalco, and the other to another

town called Tlamanalco,¹ both of them subject to Mexico ; that the one road was well swept and cleared so as to induce us to take it, and that the other road had been closed up and many great pines and other trees had been cut down so that horses could not use it and we could not march along it. That a little way down the side of the mountain along the road that had been cleared, the Mexicans (thinking that we must take that road) had cut away a piece of the hill side, and had made ditches and barricades, and that certain squadrons of Mexicans had waited at that point so as to kill us there. So they counselled us not to go by the road which was clear, but by the road where the felled trees were, saying that they would send many men with us to clear it, and as the Tlascalans were also with us, between them they would clear away the trees, and they said that that road came out at Tlamanalco.

Cortés received their present very kindly and told them that he thanked them for the counsel they had given him, and that with God's help he would not abandon his march but would go the way they advised him. Early the next morning we began our march, and it was nearly midday when we arrived at the ridge of the mountain where we found the roads just as the people of Huexotzingo had said. There we rested a little and began to think about the Mexican squadrons on the intrenched hillside where the earth works were that they had told us about.

Then Cortés ordered the Ambassadors of the great Montezuma who came in our company to be summoned, and he asked them how it was that those two roads were

¹ Bernal Díaz seems to have gone wrong in his topography. At the gap between the two volcanoes the roads probably divided, one (to the right) going by way of Tlamanalco to Chalco, the other (more direct) going to Amecameca. The Spaniards probably took the more direct (the blocked up) road to Amecameca, and did not go to Tlamanalco at all. Cortés, in his second letter, says that he went to Amecameca, and does not mention Tlamanalco.

in that condition, one very clean and swept and the other covered with newly-felled trees. They replied that it was done so that we should go by the cleared road which led to a city named Chalco, where the people would give us a good reception, for it belonged to their Prince Montezuma, and that they had cut the trees and closed up the other road to prevent our going by it, for there were bad passes on it, and it went somewhat round about before going to Mexico, and came out at another town which was not as large as Chalco. Then Cortés said that he wished to go by the blocked up road, and we began to ascend the mountain with the greatest caution, our allies moving aside the huge thick tree trunks, by which we had to pass, with great labour, and some of them still lie by the roadside to this very day. As we rose higher it began to snow and the snow caked on the ground. Then we descended the hill and went to sleep at a group of houses¹ which they build like inns or hostels where the Indian traders lodge, and we supped well, but the cold was intense, and we posted our watchmen, sentinels, and patrols and even sent out scouts. The next day we set out on our march, and, about the hour of high mass, arrived at a town which I have already said is called Tlamanalco,² where they received us well and where there was no scarcity of food.

When the other towns [in the neighbourhood] heard of our arrival, people soon came from Chalco and joined with the people of Tlamanalco, and they came from Chimaloacan and Mecameca and from Acacingo³ where the canoes are, for it is their port, and other small towns whose names I cannot now call to mind. All of them together brought a present of gold and two loads of mantles and eight Indian women and the gold was worth over one hundred

¹ Padre Rivera gives the name as Ithualco (*Anales Mexicanos*).

² Amecameca according to Cortés.

³ Ayotzingo.

and fifty pesos and they said:—"Malinche, accept these presents which we give you and look on us in the future as your friends." Cortés received them with great good will and promised to help them in whatever they needed, and when he saw them together he told the Padre de la Merced to counsel them regarding matters touching our holy faith, and that they should give up their Idols, and he told them all that we were accustomed to say in all the towns through which we had passed, and to all this they replied that it was well said and that they would see to it in the future. Cortés also explained to them about the great power of our Lord, the Emperor, and how we had come to right wrongs and to stop robbery, for it was for this purpose that our Emperor sent us to these countries.

When they heard this, all these towns that I have named, secretly, so that the Mexican Ambassadors should not hear them, made great complaints about Montezuma and his tax gatherers, who robbed them of all they possessed, and violated their wives and daughters, if they were handsome, before them and their husbands, and carried them off, and made the men work as though they were slaves, and made them carry pine timber and stone and firewood and maize either in their canoes or over land, and many other services such as planting cornfields, and they took their lands for the service of the Idols. They made many other complaints, which, as it was many years ago, I do not remember.

Cortés comforted them with kindly words which he knew well how to say to them through Doña Marina, but added that at the present moment, he could not undertake to see justice done them and they must bear it awhile [and] he would [presently] free them from that rule, and he secretly ordered two of their chiefs to go with four of our Tlaxcalan allies, and inspect the cleared road, which the people of Huexotzingo had told us not to follow, and to

see what ditches and ramparts there were there, and if there were any squadrons of warriors. But the Caciques answered him—"Malinche, there is no necessity to go and see, for it is now all levelled and put right, for you should know that six days ago there was a difficult pass there, for they had cut away the hill so that you could not get by, and many warriors of the Great Montezuma [were stationed there], but we have learnt that their Huichilobos, who is their god of War, advised them to allow you to pass, for when you have entered the city of Mexico there they will kill you. Therefore, we are of opinion that you should stay here with us, and we will give you what we possess, and that you should give up going to Mexico, as we know for certain it is very strong and full of warriors, and they will not spare your lives."

Cortés replied to them, with a cheerful mien, that we had no fear that the Mexicans, or any other nation, could destroy us, only our Lord God in whom we believe, and, so that they should understand, we were going to explain to Montezuma himself and all his Caciques and priests, what our God had commanded. As we wished to start at once, he asked them to give him twenty of their principal men to go in his company; and he would do much for them, and would have justice done to them as soon as he arrived in Mexico, so that neither Montezuma nor his tax gatherers should perpetrate the abuses nor use the violence which they said had been used towards them.

With cheerful faces the people from all these towns I have named gave satisfactory replies to this speech and they brought us the twenty Indians, and just as we were ready to set out, messengers arrived from the Great Montezuma, and what they said I will go on to relate.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

How the great Montezuma again sent other Ambassadors to us with a present of gold and cloths, and what they said to Cortés and what he replied to them.

As we were starting on our march to Mexico there came before Cortés four Mexican chiefs sent by Montezuma who brought a present of gold and cloths. After they had made obeisance according to their custom, they said —“ Malinche, our Lord the Great Montezuma sends you this present and says that he is greatly concerned for the hardships you have endured in coming from such a distant land in order to see him, and that he has already sent to tell you that he will give you much gold and silver and chalchihuites as tribute for your Emperor and for yourself and the other Teules in your company, provided you will not come to Mexico, and now again he begs as a favour, that you will not advance any further but return whence you have come, and he promises to send you to the port a great quantity of gold and silver and rich stones for that King of yours, and, as for you, he will give you four loads of gold and for each of your brothers one load, but as for going on to Mexico your entrance into it is forbidden, for all his vassals have risen in arms to prevent your entry, and besides this there is no road thither, only a very narrow one, and there is no food for you to eat.” And he used many other arguments about the difficulties to the end that we should advance no further.

Cortés with much show of affection embraced the Ambassadors, although the message grieved him, and he accepted the present ; I forget how much it was worth, but, as far as I could see and understand, Montezuma never omitted to send gold, little or much, when he sent messengers, as I have already related. To return to our