

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

story, Cortés answered them that he marvelled how the Lord Montezuma, having given himself out as our friend, and being such a great Prince, should be so inconstant; that one time he says one thing and another time sends to order the contrary, and regarding what he says about giving gold to our Lord the Emperor and to ourselves, he is grateful to him for it, and what he sends him now he will pay for in good works as time goes on. How can he deem it befitting that being so near to his city, we should think it right to return on our road without carrying through what our Prince has commanded us to do? If the Lord Montezuma had sent his messengers and ambassadors to some great prince such as he is himself, and if, after nearly reaching his house, those messengers whom he sent should turn back without speaking to the Prince about that which they were sent to say, when they came back into his [Montezuma's] presence with such a story, what favour would he show them? He would merely treat them as cowards of little worth; and this is what our Emperor would do with us, so that in one way or another we were determined to enter his city, and from this time forth he must not send any more excuses on the subject, for he [Cortés] was bound to see him, and talk to him and explain the whole purpose for which we had come, and this he must do to him personally. Then after he understood it all, if our presence in the city did not seem good to him, we would return whence we had come. As for what he said about there being little or no food, not enough to support us, we were men who could get along even if we have but little to eat, and we were already on the way to his city, so let him take our coming in good part.

As soon as the messengers had been despatched, we set out for Mexico, and as the people of Huexotzingo and Chalco had told us that Montezuma had held consultations with his Idols and priests whether he should allow us to

enter Mexico, or whether he should attack us, and all the priests had answered that his Huichilobos had said he was to allow us to enter and that then he could kill us, as I have already related in the chapter that deals with the subject, and as we are but human and feared death, we never ceased thinking about it. As that country is very thickly peopled we made short marches, and commended ourselves to God and to Our Lady his blessed Mother, and talked about how and by what means we could enter [the City], and it put courage into our hearts to think that as our Lord Jesus Christ had vouchsafed us protection through past dangers, he would likewise guard us from the power of the Mexicans.

We went to sleep at a town called Iztapalatengo¹ where half the houses are in the water and the other half on dry land, where there is a small mountain, (and now there is an Inn there) and there they gave us a good supper.

Let us leave this and return to the Great Montezuma who, when his messengers arrived and he heard the reply which Cortés had sent to him, at once determined to send his nephew named Cacamatzin, the Lord of Texcoco, with great pomp to bid welcome to Cortés and to all of us, and as we were always accustomed to post sentinels and scouts, one of the scouts came in to tell us that a large crowd of friendly Mexicans was coming along the road, and that to all appearance they were coming clad in rich mantles. It was very early in the morning when this happened, and we were ready to start, and Cortés ordered us to wait in our quarters until he could see what the matter was.

At that moment four chieftains arrived, who made deep obeisance to Cortés and said that close by there was approaching Cacamatzin, the great Lord of Texcoco, a

¹ This is clearly a mistake, the town was Ayotzingo.

nephew of the Great Montezuma, and he begged us to have the goodness to wait until he arrived.

He did not tarry long, for he soon arrived with greater pomp and splendour than we had ever beheld in a Mexican Prince, for he came in a litter richly worked in green feathers, with many silver borderings, and rich stones set in bosses made out of the finest gold. Eight Chieftains, who, it was said, were all Lords of Towns, bore the litter on their shoulders. When they came near to the house where Cortés was quartered, the Chieftains assisted Cacamatzin to descend from the litter, and they swept the ground, and removed the straws where he had to pass, and when they came before our Captain they made him a deep reverence, and Cacamatzin said—

“Malinche, here we have come, I and these Chieftains to place ourselves at your service, and to give you all that you may need for yourself and your companions and to place you in your home, which is our city, for so the Great Montezuma our Prince has ordered us to do, and he asks your pardon that he did not come with us himself, but it is on account of ill-health that he did not do so, and not from want of very good will which he bears towards you.”

When our Captain and all of us, beheld such pomp and majesty in those chiefs, especially in the nephew of Montezuma, we considered it a matter of the greatest importance, and said among ourselves, if this Cacique bears himself with such dignity, what will the Great Montezuma do?

When Cacamatzin had delivered his speech, Cortés embraced him, and gave many caresses to him and all the other Chieftains, and gave him three stones which are called Margaritas, which have within them many markings of different colours, and to the other chieftains he gave blue glass beads, and he told them that he thanked them

and when he was able he would repay the Lord Montezuma for all the favours which every day he was granting us.

As soon as the speech-making was over, we at once set out, and as the Caicques whom I have spoken about brought many followers with them, and as many people came out to see us from the neighbouring towns, all the roads were full of them.¹

The next day, in the morning, we arrived at a broad Causeway,³ and continued our march towards Iztapalapa, and when we saw so many cities and villages built in the water and other great towns on dry land and that straight and level causeway going towards Mexico, we were amazed and said that it was like the enchantments they tell of in the legend of Amadis, on account of the great towers and cues and buildings rising from the water, and all built of masonry. And some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream? It is not to be wondered at that I here write it down in this manner, for there is so much to think over that I do not know how to describe it, seeing things as we did that had never been heard of or seen before, not even dreamed about.

Thus, we arrived near Iztapalapa, to behold the

¹ Blotted out in the original—"So that we could not proceed and the Caciques themselves told their vassals to make room for us, and to remember that we were Teules, and that if they did not make room we would be angry with them. On account of these words that were said they cleared the road for us, and we went on to sleep at another town, which is built in the water, which I think was called Mezquique,² and was afterwards named Venezuela, and it had many whitened towers and Cues, and the Cacique and chieftains treated us with much honour and gave Cortés a present of gold and rich mantles, and the gold was worth four hundred dollars and Cortés gave them many thanks for it. There we told them things about our holy faith as we did in all towns we came to. It seemed that the people of that town were on very bad terms with Montezuma on account of the many injuries he had done them and they complained of them and Cortés told them that he would soon remedy their ills if it should please God that we should soon reach Mexico."

² Mexquic.

³ The Causeway of Cuitlahuac separating the lake of Chalco from the lake of Xochimilco.

splendour of the other Caciques who came out to meet us, who were the Lord of the town named Cuitlahuac,¹ and the Lord of Culucan, both of them near relations of Montezuma. And then when we entered that city of Iztapalapa, the appearance of the palaces in which they lodged us! How spacious and well built they were, of beautiful stone work and cedar wood, and the wood of other sweet scented trees, with great rooms and courts, wonderful to behold, covered with awnings of cotton cloth.

When we had looked well at all of this, we went to the orchard and garden, which was such a wonderful thing to see and walk in, that I was never tired of looking at the diversity of the trees, and noting the scent which each one had, and the paths full of roses and flowers, and the many fruit trees and native roses, and the pond of fresh water. There was another thing to observe, that great canoes were able to pass into the garden from the lake through an opening that had been made so that there was no need for their occupants to land. And all was cemented and very splendid with many kinds of stone [monuments] with pictures on them, which gave much to think about. Then the birds of many kinds and breeds which came into the pond. I say again that I stood looking at it and thought that never in the world would there be discovered other lands such as these, for at that time there was no Peru, nor any thought of it. [Of all these wonders that I then beheld] to-day all is overthrown and lost, nothing left standing.

Let us go on, and I will relate that the Caciques of that town and of Coyoacan² brought us a present of gold, worth more than two thousand dollars, and Cortés gave them hearty thanks for it, and showed them much affection, and he told them through our interpreters things concerning

¹ Coadlabaca in the text.

² Cuyuacan in the text.

our holy faith, and explained to them the great power of our Lord, the Emperor, and as there were was much other conversation, I will not repeat it.

I must state that at that time this was a very large town, half of the houses being on land and the other half in the water, and now at this time it is all dry land and they plant corn where it was formerly lake, and it is so changed in other ways that if one had not then seen it, one would say that it is impossible that what are now fields planted with maize, could at one time have been covered with water.

I will leave off here and will tell of the solemn reception given by Montezuma to Cortés and all of us when we entered the great city of Mexico.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

About the great and solemn reception which the Great Montezuma gave Cortés and all of us at the entering of the great City of Mexico.

EARLY next day we left Iztapalapa with a large escort of those great Caciques whom I have already mentioned. We proceeded along the Causeway which is here eight paces in width and runs so straight to the City of Mexico that it does not seem to me to turn either much or little, but, broad as it is, it was so crowded with people that there was hardly room for them all, some of them going to and others returning from Mexico, besides those who had come out to see us, so that we were hardly able to pass by the crowds of them that came; and the towers and cues were full of people as well as the canoes from all parts of the lake. It was not to be wondered at, for they had never before seen horses or men such as we are.

Gazing on such wonderful sights, we did not know what to say, or whether what appeared before us was real, for on