

We filled our casks with water, but we could not carry them away on account of the great number of warriors who fell on us. I will stop now and tell later on about the attack they made on us.

CHAPTER IV

Concerning the attack made on us as we stood among the farms and maize fields already mentioned.

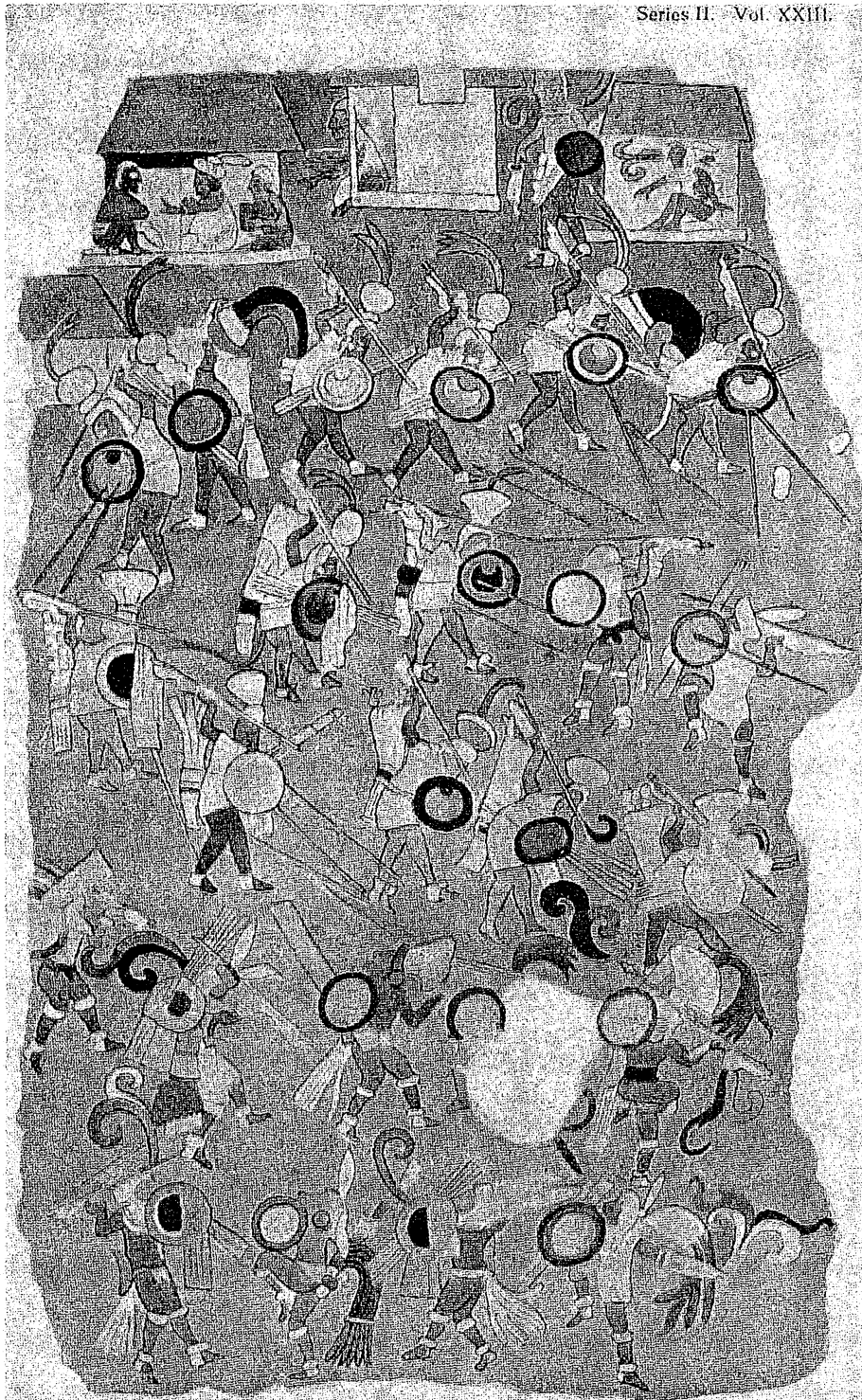
AS we were filling our casks with water there came along the coast towards us from the town of Potonchan¹ (as it is called) many squadrons of Indians clad in cotton armour reaching to the knees, and armed with bows and arrows, lances and shields, and swords like two handed broad swords, and slings and stones and carrying the feathered crests which they are accustomed to wear. Their faces were painted black and white, and ruddled and they came in silence straight towards us, as though they came in peace, and by signs they asked whether we came from where the sun rose, and we replied that we did come from the direction of the sunrise. We were at our wits end considering the matter and wondering what the words were which the Indians called out to us for they were the same as those used by the people of Lázaro, but we never made out what it was that they said.

the Lord of this town was called Tabasco the province is called Tabasco."

Santa Maria de la Victoria appears to have lost both its original native and its Spanish name, and soon became known as the town of Tabasco, and is so marked on the map of Melchor de Santa Cruz (1579); not long afterwards the town itself disappeared.

Chanpoton has retained its name, and when Bernal Díaz mentions Chanpoton or Potonchan he invariably intends to indicate the site of the modern Champoton, between Campeche and the Laguna de Términos, the "Costa de Mala Pelea" of the expedition under Francisco Hernández de Córdova.

¹ Here written Pontuchan in the original text = Chanpoton.



Part of a Mural Painting of a
BATTLE FROM THE BALL COURT TEMPLE CHICHÉN ITZA, YUCATAN.
After a drawing by Miss Adela Breton.
Reproduced and printed for the Hakluyt Society by Donald Macbeth, 1908.

Plate 2.

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All this happened about the time of the Ave Maria, and the Indians then went off to some villages in the neighbourhood, and we posted watchmen and sentinels for security, for we did not like such a large gathering of Indians.

While we were keeping watch during the night we heard a great squadron of Indian warriors approaching from the town and from the farms, and we knew well that their assembly boded us no good, and we took council together as to what should be done. Some of the soldiers were of opinion that we should embark without delay; however as always happens in such cases, some said one thing and some said another, but the Indians being in such numbers it seemed to most of my companions that if we made any attempt to embark they would be sure to attack us, and we should run great risk of losing our lives. Some others were of opinion that we should fall upon the Indians that very night, for, as the proverb says "who attacks conquers". On the other hand we could see that there were about two hundred Indians to every one of us. While we were still taking council the dawn broke, and we said one to the other "let us strengthen our hearts for the fight, and after commending ourselves to God let us do our best to save our lives."

As soon as it was daylight we could see, coming along the coast, many more Indian warriors with their banners raised, and with feathered crests and drums, and they joined those warriors who had assembled the night before. When their squadrons were formed up they surrounded us on all sides and poured in such showers of arrows and darts, and stones thrown from their slings that over eighty of us soldiers were wounded, and they attacked us hand to hand, some with lances and the others shooting arrows, and others with two-handed

knife edged swords,¹ and they brought us to a bad pass. We gave them a good return of thrusts and cuts and the guns and crossbows never ceased their work, some being loaded while the others were fired. At last feeling the effects of our sword play they drew back a little, but it was not far, and only enabled them to shoot their stones and darts at us with greater safety to themselves.

While the battle was raging the Indians called to one another in their language "*al Calachuni, Calachuni*" which means "let us attack the Captain and kill him," and ten times they wounded him with their arrows; and me they struck thrice, one arrow wounding me dangerously in the left side, piercing through the ribs. All the other soldiers were wounded by spear thrusts and two of them were carried off alive, one named Alonzo Boto, and the other an old Portuguese man.

Our captain then saw that our good fighting availed us nothing; other squadrons of warriors were approaching us fresh from the town, bringing food and drink with them and a large supply of arrows. All our soldiers were wounded with two or three arrow wounds, three of them had their throats pierced by lance thrusts, our captain was bleeding from many wounds and already fifty of the soldiers were lying dead.

Feeling that our strength was exhausted we determined with stout hearts to break through the battalions surrounding us and seek shelter in the boats which awaited us near the shore, and proved to be a great assistance to us; so we formed in close array and broke through the enemy.

Ah! then to hear the yells, hisses and cries, as the

¹ *Macana* or *Macuahuitl*, a wooden sword edged with sharp flint or obsidian.

enemy showered arrows on us and hurled lances with all their might, wounding us sorely.

Then another danger befell us ; as we all sought shelter in the boats at the same time and there were so many of us they began to sink, so in the best way we could manage hanging on to the waterlogged boats and half swimming, we reached the vessel of lightest draught which came in all haste to our assistance.

Many of us were wounded while we embarked, especially those who were sitting in the stern of the boats, for the Indians shot at them as targets, and even waded into the sea with their lances and attacked us with all their strength. Thank God ! by a great effort we escaped with our lives from the clutches of those people.

When we got on board the ships we found that over fifty of our soldiers were missing, among them two who had been carried off alive. Within a few days we had to cast into the sea five others who died of their wounds and of the great thirst which we suffered. The whole of the fighting occupied only one hour.

The place is called Potonchan,¹ but the pilots and sailors have marked it on the chart as the "Costa de Mala Pelea" (the coast of the disastrous battle). When we were safely out of that affray we gave hearty thanks to God.

As the wounds of the soldiers were being dressed, some of them complained of the pain they felt, for they began to be chilled and the salt water caused considerable swelling, and some of them began to curse the pilot Anton de Alaminos and his voyage and discovery of the Island, for he always maintained that it was an Island and not the main land.

Here I must leave off and I will tell what happened to us later on.

CHAPTER V.

How we agreed to return to the Island of Cuba and of the great hardships we endured before arriving at the Port of Havana.

AS soon as we got on board ship again, in the way I have related, we gave thanks to God, and after we had attended to the wounded (and there was not a man among us who had not two, three or four wounds, and the Captain was wounded in ten places and only one soldier escaped without hurt) we decided to return to Cuba.

As almost all the sailors also were wounded we were shorthanded for tending the sails, so we abandoned the smallest vessel and set fire to her after removing the sails, cables and anchors, and we divided the sailors who were unwounded between the two larger vessels. However, our greatest trouble arose from the want of fresh water, for owing to the attack made on us at Chanpoton, and the haste with which we had to take to the boats, we could not carry away with us the casks and barrels which we had filled with water, and they were all left behind.

So great was our thirst that our mouths and tongues were cracked with the dryness, and there was nothing to give us relief. Oh! what hardships one endures, when discovering new lands, in the way we set out to do it; no one can appreciate the excessive hardships who has not passed through them as we did.

We kept our course close to the land in hope of finding some stream or bay where we could get fresh water, and at the end of three days we found a bay where there appeared to be a river or creek which we thought might hold fresh water. Fifteen of the sailors who had remained on board and were unwounded and three soldiers who were out of danger from their wounds went ashore, and