

# THE EXPEDITION UNDER JUAN DE GRIJALVA.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

How Diego Velásquez, Governor of the Island of Cuba, ordered another fleet to be sent to the lands which we had discovered and a kinsman of his, a nobleman named Juan de Grijalva, went as Captain General, besides three other Captains, whose names I will give later on.

IN the year 1518 the Governor of Cuba hearing the good account of the land which we had discovered, which is called Yucatan, decided to send out another fleet, and made search for four vessels to compose it. Two of these vessels were two of the three which had accompanied Francisco Hernández, the other two were vessels which Diego Velásquez bought with his own money.

At the time the fleet was being fitted out, there were present in Santiago de Cuba, where Velásquez resided Juan de Grijalva, Alonzo de Ávila, Francisco de Montejo, and Pedro de Alvarado, who had come to see the Governor on business, for all of them held *encomiendas* of Indians in the Island. As they were men of distinction, it was agreed that Juan de Grijalva who was a kinsman of Diego Velásquez, should go as Captain General, that Alonzo de Ávila, Pedro de Alvarado, and Francisco de Montejo should each have command of a ship. Each of these Captains contributed the provisions and stores of Cassava bread and salt pork, and Diego Velásquez provided the four ships, crossbows and guns, some beads and other articles of small value for barter,





and a small supply of beans. Then Diego Velásquez ordered that I should go with these Captains as ensign.

As the report had spread that the lands were very rich and that there were masonry houses there, and the Indian Julianillo whom we had brought from Cape Catoche had said that there was gold, the soldiers and settlers who possessed no Indians in Cuba were greedily eager to go to the new land, so that 240 companions were soon got together.

Then every one of us, out of his own funds, added what he could of stores and arms and other suitable things; and I set out again on this voyage as ensign, as I have already stated.

As far as I can make out the instructions given by the Governor were that we should obtain by barter all the gold and silver that could be procured, and that if it appeared to be advisable to form a settlement, and if we could venture to do so, that a settlement should be made, but if not that then we should return to Cuba.

There came with us, as Veedor of the fleet, a man named Peñalosa, a native of Segovia, and we took with us a priest named Juan Diaz, a native of Seville, and the same two pilots who were with us on the former voyage, namely, Anton de Alaminos of Palos, Camacho of Triana, besides Juan Álvarez el Manquillo, from Huelva, and there was also another pilot who called himself Sopuesta, who came from Moguer.

Before I go any further, as I shall have to speak many times of these *hidalgos* who were our Captains, and it seems to me discourteous merely to give their names, let it be known that later on they all become persons of title; Pedro de Alvarado became Adelantado<sup>1</sup> and Governor of Guatemala and a Commander of the Order of Santiago,

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<sup>1</sup> Adelantado = Governor-in-chief.

Montejo, Adelantado of Yucatan and Governor of Honduras, but Alonzo de Ávila did not have the same luck as the others for he was captured by the French, as I will relate later on in the chapter which treats of the subject. I shall speak of these gentlemen simply by their own names, until such time as His Majesty conferred on them the dignities I have mentioned.

To return to my story ; we set out in the four ships along the north coast to a port called Matanzas, near to the old Havana,<sup>1</sup> (for at that time Havana was not in its present position), and in that port most of the settlers of Havana had their farms whence the ships obtained all the supplies they needed of Cassava and pork, for, as I have already said, there were as yet neither sheep nor cattle in Cuba, for the Island was but lately conquered. Here we were joined by the Captains and soldiers who were going to make the voyage.

Before going on, although it does not concern the story, I wish to say why this port was called Matanzas. I call it to mind because I have been asked the question by a historian in Spain who records matters that have happened, and this is the reason why the name was given it. Before the Island of Cuba was conquered a ship with more than thirty Spanish men and two women on board was driven ashore on the coast near the river and port now called Matanzas. Many Indians from Havana and the neighbouring towns came out with the intention of killing the Spaniards, but as the Indians did not dare to attack them on land, they offered, with fair words and flattery, to ferry the Spaniards in canoes across the river, which is very large and rapid, and to take them to their houses and give them food.

When the middle of the river was reached, the Indians

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<sup>1</sup> Axaruco.

upset the canoes and killed all the Spaniards except three men and one woman who was beautiful and was carried off by one of the caciques concerned in the plot, and the three Spanish men were divided among the other caciques. This is the reason why the place is called Matanzas.<sup>1</sup>

I knew the woman, and after the conquest of Cuba she was taken from the Cacique in whose power she had been, and I saw her married to a settler named Pedro Sánchez Farfan in the town of Trinidad. I also knew the three Spaniards, one was named Gonzalo Mejía, an old man from Jerez, another was Juan Santistéban, a youth from Madrigal, and the other was called Cascorro<sup>2</sup> a seaman, a native of Moguer.

I have delayed too long in telling this old tale, and it will be said that in spinning old yarns I am forgetting my narrative, so let us get back to it :—

As soon as all of us soldiers had got together and the pilots had received their instructions and the lantern signals had been arranged, after hearing mass, we set out on the 8th April, 1518.

In ten days we doubled the point of Guaniguanico which is also called San Anton and after eight days sailing we sighted the Island of Cozumel,<sup>3</sup> which was then first discovered, for with the current that was running we made much more lee-way than when we came with Francisco Hernández de Córdova, and we went along the south side of the Island and sighted a town with a

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<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, the place of killing.

<sup>2</sup> The Alonzo Remón Edition adds : “The cacique with whom he stayed married him to his daughter, and he had his ears and nose pierced like an Indian.”

<sup>3</sup> This would imply that land was first sighted on the 26th April. The *Itinerario* says that the fleet left Cuba on the 1st May, and that land was sighted on the 3rd May, and as it was the day of Santa Cruz they gave the land that name.

few houses, near which was a good anchorage free from reefs.

We went on shore with the Captain and a large company of soldiers, and the natives of the town had taken to flight as soon as they saw the ships coming under sail, for they had never seen such a thing before.

We soldiers who landed found two old men, who could not walk far, hidden in the maize fields and we brought them to the Captain. With the help of the two Indians Julianillo and Melchorejo whom Francisco Hernández brought away, who thoroughly understood that language (for there is not more than four leagues of sea between their land and the Island of Cozumel, and the language is the same) the captain spoke kindly to these old men and gave them some beads and sent them off to summon the cacique of the town, and they went off and never came back again.

While we were waiting, a good-looking Indian woman appeared and began to speak in the language of the Island of Jamaica, and she told us that all the men and women of the town had fled to the woods for fear of us. As I and many of our soldiers knew the language she spoke very well, for it is the same as that spoken in Cuba, we were very much astonished, and asked the woman how she happened to be there ; she replied that two years earlier she had started from Jamaica with ten Indians in a large canoe intending to go and fish near some small islands, and that the currents had carried them over to this land where they had been driven ashore, and that her husband and all the Jamaica Indians had been killed and sacrificed to the Idols. When the Captain heard this it seemed to him that this woman would serve very well as a messenger, so he sent her to summon the people and caciques of the town, and he gave her two days in which to go and return. We were afraid that the

Indians Melchorejo and Julianillo if once they got away from us would go off to their own country which was near by, and on that account we could not trust them as messengers.

To return to the Indian woman from Jamaica, the answer she brought was that notwithstanding her efforts she could not persuade a single Indian to approach us.

We called the town Santa Cruz because it was the day of Santa Cruz when we first entered it; we found there very good hives of honey and many sweet potatoes, and herds of the pigs of the country which have the navel<sup>1</sup> above the spine.

There are three townships on the Island, the one where we landed being the largest and the other two smaller, and each one stood at one end of the island, these I saw and visited when I returned the third time with Cortez.

The Island is about two leagues<sup>2</sup> in circumference.

I must go on to say that as the Captain Juan de Grijalva saw that it would be merely losing time to wait there any longer, he ordered us to go on board ship, and the Indian woman went with us, and we continued our voyage.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A scent gland.

<sup>2</sup> This must be a misprint for "twenty leagues," for the island is at least fifty-five miles in circumference.

<sup>3</sup> From the accounts given in the *Itinerario de Grijalva* and in the letter written to Charles V by the Municipality of Vera Cruz (10th July, 1519) it seems clear that on leaving Cozumel, Grijalva sailed for about fifty miles southwards along the east coast of Yucatan until he reached the Bay of Ascension, which he named, and then turned north again and rounded Cape Catoche. In this passage the author of the *Itinerario* says, "Arrived at the coast we saw three large towns separated about two miles one from the other, and we saw in them many stone houses and very high towers, and many houses of thatch."

Possibly this town was what is now known as the Ruins of Tulum.

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## CHAPTER IX.

How we followed the same course that we had taken with Francisco Hernández de Córdoba ; how we landed at Chanpoton and how an attack was made on us, and what else happened.

AS soon as we were all on board we kept on the old course, the same that was followed by Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, and in eight days we reached the neighbourhood of the town of Chanpoton which was the place where the Indians of that province had defeated us, as I have already related in a former chapter. As the tide runs out very far in the bay, we anchored our ships a league from the shore and then making use of all the boats we disembarked half the soldiers close to the houses of the town.

The Indians of the town and others from the neighbourhood at once assembled, as they had done on the other occasion when they killed over fifty-six of our soldiers and wounded all the rest, as I have already related, and for that reason they were now very proud and haughty, and they were well armed in their own manner with bows, arrows, and lances, some of them as long as our lances and some of them shorter, and shields and *macanas* and two-handed swords and slings and stones, and they wore cotton armour and carried trumpets and drums, and many of them had their faces painted black and others red and white. They were drawn up in array and awaited us on the shore, ready to fall on us as we landed. As we had already gained experience from our former expedition, we had brought with us in the boat some falconets and were well supplied with crossbows and guns.

As we approached the shore they began to shoot arrows and hurl lances at us with all their might, and although we did them much damage with our falconets, such a hail storm of arrows fell on us before we could land that half of us were wounded. As soon as all the soldiers got on shore