

lance a great cloth banner which they waved as they beckoned to us. And what happened I will tell in the next chapter.

### CHAPTER XIII.

How we arrived at the Rio de Banderas and what happened there.

SOME studious readers in Spain and other people who have been to New Spain, may have heard that Mexico was a very great city built in the water like Venice, and that it was governed by a great prince who was King over many provinces and ruled over all the lands of New Spain, a territory which is more than twice as large as Castille, and that this Prince was called Montezuma, and that as he was so powerful he wished to extend his rule beyond what was possible. He had received news of our arrival when we came first, with Francisco Hernández de Córdova, and of what had happened at the battle of Catoche and at Chanpoton, and also what had happened at the battle at this same Chanpoton during this voyage, and he knew that we soldiers being few in number had defeated the warriors of that town and their very numerous allies, and he knew as well that we had entered the Rio Tabasco and what had taken place between us and the caciques of that town, moreover he understood that our object was to seek for gold, in exchange for the things we had brought with us. All this news had been brought to him painted on a cloth made of *hennequen*<sup>1</sup> which is like linen, and as he knew that we were coasting along towards his provinces he sent orders to his governors that if we should arrive in their

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<sup>1</sup> Hennequen, or Sisal hemp, is a species of Aloe (*Agave Ixtli*) now largely used for cordage.

neighbourhood with our ships that they should barter gold for our beads, especially the green beads, which are something like their *chalchihuites*, which they value as highly as emeralds; he also ordered them to find out more about our persons and our plans.

It is a fact, as we now know, that their Indian ancestors had foretold that men with beards would come from the direction of the sunrise and would rule over them. Whatever the reason may have been many Indians sent by the Great Montezuma were watching for us at the river I have mentioned with long poles, and on every pole a banner of white cotton cloth, which they waved and called to us, as though making signals of peace, to come to them.

When from the ships we saw such an unusual sight we were fairly astonished, and the general and most of the Captains were agreed that to find out what it meant we should lower two of the boats, and that all those who carried guns or crossbows and twenty of the most daring and active soldiers should go in them, and that Francisco de Montejo should accompany us, and that if we should discover that the men who were waving the banners were warriors that we should at once bring news of it and of anything else that we could find out.

Thank God at that time we had fine weather which is rare enough on this coast. When we got on shore we found three Caciques, one of them the governor appointed by Montezuma, who had many of the Indians of his household with him. They brought many of the fowls of the country and maize bread such as they always eat, and fruits such as pineapples and zapotes, which in other parts are called mameies, and they were seated under the shade of the trees, and had spread mats on the ground, and they invited us to be seated, all by signs, for Julianillo the man from Cape Catoche, did not understand their language which is Mexican. Then they

brought pottery braziers with live coals, and fumigated us with a sort of resin.

As soon as the Captain Montejo had reported all that had taken place to the general, he [the captain general] determined to anchor his ships and go ashore with all his captains and soldiers. When the Caciques and governors saw him on land and knew that he was the Captain General of us all, according to their custom, they paid him the greatest respect. In return he treated them in a most caressing manner and ordered them to be given blue and green glass beads and by signs he made them understand that they should bring gold to barter with us. Then the Governor sent orders to all the neighbouring towns to bring jewels to exchange with us, and during the six days that we remained there they brought more than sixteen thousand dollars worth of jewelry of low grade gold, worked into various forms.

This must be the gold which the historians Gómara, Yllescas and Jovio say was given by the natives of Tabasco, and they have written it down as though it were true, although it is well known to eye witnesses that there is no gold in the Province of the Rio de Grijalva or anywhere near it and very few jewels.

When the General saw that the Indians were not bringing any more gold to barter, and as we had already been there six days and the ships ran risk of danger from the North and North East wind, he thought it was time to embark.

So we took [formal] possession of the land in the name of His Majesty, and as soon as this had been done the General spoke to the Indians and told them that we wished to return to our ships and he gave them presents of some shirts from Spain. We took one of the Indians from this place on board ship with us, and after he had learnt our language he became a Christian and was named

Francisco, and later on I met him living with his Indian wife.

As we sailed on along the coast we sighted an Island<sup>1</sup> of white sand which the sea washed over, it appeared to be about three leagues distant from the land, and we called it the Isla Blanca and it is marked thus on the charts. Not far from the Isla Blanca we observed another Island with many green trees on it, lying about four leagues from the coast and we gave it the name of Isla Verde and going on further we saw an Island somewhat larger than the others about a league and a half off the shore, and in front of it there was a good roadstead where the General gave orders for the ships to come to anchor.

As soon as the boats were launched the Captain Juan de Grijalva and many of us soldiers went off to visit the Island for we saw smoke rising from it, and we found two masonry houses very well built, each house with steps leading up to some altars, and on these altars were idols with evil looking bodies, which were the gods of the Indians and that very night five Indians had been sacrificed before them ; their chests had been cut open, and the arms and thighs had been cut off and the walls were covered with blood.

At all this we stood greatly amazed, and gave the Island the name of the Isla de Sacrificios and it is so marked on the charts.

We all of us went ashore opposite that Island, and on the broad sandy beach we put up huts and shelters made with branches of trees and sails taken from the ships.

Now many Indians had come down to the coast bringing gold made into small articles which they wished to barter as they had done at the Rio de Banderas, and, as we

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<sup>1</sup> Bernal Díaz is not quite correct about the comparative size of the Islands. The accompanying chart shows their size and position.

afterwards found out the great Montezuma had ordered them to do so. These Indians who brought the gold were very timid and the gold was small in quantity, for this reason the Captain Juan de Grijalva ordered the anchors to be raised and sail set, and we went on to anchor opposite another Island, about half a league from land, and it is at this Island that the port of Vera Cruz is now established.

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#### CHAPTER · XIV.

How we arrived at the Island now called San Juan de Ulúa, and the reason why that name was given to it, and what happened to us there.

WE landed on a sandy beach, and so as to escape the swarms of mosquitos we built huts on the tops of the highest sand dunes, which are very extensive in these parts.

From our boats we made careful soundings of the harbour and found that there was a good bottom and that under the shelter of the Island our ships would be safe from the Northerly gales.

As soon as this was done the General and thirty of us soldiers, well armed, went in two boats to the Island and we found there a temple where there was a very large and ugly idol which was called Tescatepuca<sup>1</sup> and in charge of it were four Indians with very large black cloaks and hoods, such as the Dominicans or canons wear, or very much like them, and these were the priests of the idols, and they are commonly called Papas in New Spain, as I have said before.

They had this day sacrificed two boys and cut open