

Lopes de Gómara, and those of the Doctor Yllescas and of Jovio, in which they treat of the conquest of New Spain. I feel bound to declare that, wherever it appears to contradict the others, my story represents events clearly and truly, and runs very differently from what the historians I have named have written.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

Concerning some errors and other things written by the Historians Gómara and Yllescas about affairs in New Spain.

WHILE I was writing this story, I saw by chance, what had been written by Gómara, Yllescas and Jovio, about the conquest of Mexico and New Spain, and when I had read their accounts and saw and appreciated their polished style, and thought how rudely and lamely my story was told, I stopped writing it, seeing that such good histories already existed. Being in this perplexed state of mind, I began to look into the arguments and discourses which are told in these books, and I saw that from beginning to end they did not tell correctly what took place in New Spain. When they begin to write about the great cities, and the great number of the inhabitants, they are as ready to write eighty thousand as eight thousand. Then about the great slaughter which they say we committed:—As we were only four hundred and fifty soldiers who marched to that war, we had enough to do to defend ourselves from being killed or defeated and carried off; and even had the Indians been craven cowards, we could not have committed all the slaughter attributed to us, more particularly as the Indians were very bold warriors who had cotton armour which shielded their bodies, and were armed with bows, arrows, shields, long lances, and two-handed stone-edged swords, which cut better than our swords did,

Nevertheless, the historians say that we made as great a slaughter and committed as great cruelties as did Alaric, that bravest of kings, and the haughty warrior Attila, on the battlefields of Catalonia. To go back to my story, they say that we destroyed and burnt many cities and temples, that is their *Cues*, and in saying this, they seem to think that they are giving pleasure to those who read their histories, and they do not understand when they write, that the conquerors themselves, and the inquisitive readers, who know what really took place, could tell them clearly that if they write other histories in the way they have written that of New Spain, such history will be worthless. The amusing part of it is, that they exalt some captains, and belittle others, and they speak of some, who were not even present at the conquest, as though they were there, and they make many other statements of equal value, but there are so many matters about which they are ignorant, that I cannot note them all. But there is one thing that they say worse than all and that is that Cortés sent secret orders to scuttle the ships, on the contrary, it was on the distinct advice of most of the other soldiers and my own, that he sent to have the ships sunk without any concealment whatever, and it was done so that the sailors who were in them might help to keep watch and make war. Indeed, in all they write, they speak with prejudice, so why should I go on dipping my pen to mention each item separately, it is merely wasting ink and paper, moreover I should say it badly, for I have got no style.

Let us leave this discussion and get back to my theme. After having carefully examined all that I have said as to the nonsense that has been written about the affairs of New Spain, I continued writing my own story, for it is the truest politeness and the most courteous style to tell the truth in what one writes, and knowing this, I made up my mind to carry out my plan, with such embellishments

and discourses as will be seen further on, so that the conquest of New Spain may be brought to light and may be clearly seen in the way it ought to be seen.

I wish to return to my story pen in hand as a good pilot carries his lead in hand at sea, looking out for shoals ahead, when he knows that they will be met with, so will I do in speaking of the errors of the historians, but I shall not mention them all, for if one had to follow them item by item, the trouble of discarding the rubbish would be greater than that of gathering in the harvest.

I say that upon this story of mine the historians may build up and give as much praise as pleases them to the valiant captain Cortés and to the sturdy Conquistadores. It was a great enterprise that was accomplished by our hands, and what historians may write about it, we, who were eye witnesses will certify when it is true, as we now certify to the errors, and as so much daring and zeal has been shown in writing falsely and with prejudice, we appreciate how holy and blessed is the truth, and that all that is said against it is cursed.

Moreover it appears that Gómara<sup>1</sup> was inspired to write with such laudation of Cortés, for we look upon it as certain that his palms were greased, for he dedicated his history to the present Marquis, the son of Cortés, insisting on his right so to dedicate and recommend it before our lord the King, and the members of the Royal Council of the Indies ought to have had the mistakes erased that are written down in his books.

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<sup>1</sup> Alonzo Remón Edition adds :—" Not only did Gómara write down so many mistakes and things that are not true, but he misled many writers and historians who since his time have written about the affairs of New Spain, such as the Doctor Yllescas and Pablo Jovio who copy his very words."

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## CHAPTER XIX.

How we came again with another fleet to the newly discovered lands with the valiant and energetic Don Hernando Cortés (who was afterwards Marqués del Valle) as captain of the fleet, and the attempts that were made to prevent his going in command.

AFTER the return of the Captain Juan de Grijalva to Cuba, when the Governor Diego Velásquez understood how rich were these newly discovered lands, he ordered another fleet, much larger than the former one to be sent off, and he had already collected in the Port of Santiago, where he resided, ten ships, four of them were those in which we had returned with Juan de Grijalva, which had at once been careened, and the other six had been got together from other ports in the Island. He had them furnished with provisions, consisting of Cassava bread and salt pork, for at that time there were neither sheep nor cattle in the Island of Cuba, as it had been only recently settled. These provisions were only to last until we arrived at Havana, for it was at that port that we were to take in our stores, as was afterwards done.

I must cease talking of this and tell about the disputes which arose over the choice of a captain for the expedition. There were many debates and much opposition, for some gentleman said that Vasco Porcallo, a near relation of the Conde de Feria, should be captain, but Diego Velásquez feared that he would rise against him with the fleet, for he was very daring; others said that Agustin Bermudez or Antonio Velásquez Borrejo, or Bernadino Velásquez, kinsman of Diego Velásquez should go in command.

Most of us soldiers who were there said that we should prefer to go again under Juan de Grijalva, for he was a good captain, and there was no fault to be found either with his person or his capacity for command.

While things were going on in the way I have related,