

camp. It was near the town of Cintla that we met them on an open plain. So it happened that those warriors were looking for us with the intention of attacking us, and we were looking for them for the very same purpose. I must leave off here, and will go on to tell what happened in the battle, and one may well call it a battle, as will be seen further on.

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#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

How all the Caciques of Tabasco and its dependencies attacked us, and what came of it.

I HAVE already said how we were marching along when we met all the forces of the enemy which were moving in search of us, and all the men wore great feather crests and they carried drums and trumpets, and their faces were coloured black and white, and they were armed with large bows and arrows, lances and shields and swords shaped like our two-handed swords, and many slings and stones and fire-hardened javelins, and all wore quilted cotton armour. As they approached us their squadrons were so numerous that they covered the whole plain, and they rushed on us like mad dogs completely surrounding us, and they let fly such a cloud of arrows, javelins and stones that on the first assault they wounded over seventy of us, and fighting hand to hand they did us great damage with their lances, and one soldier<sup>1</sup> fell dead at once from an arrow wound in the ear, and they kept on shooting and wounding us.<sup>2</sup> With our muskets and crossbows and with

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<sup>1</sup> Alonzo Remón Edition says "a soldier named Saldaña."

<sup>2</sup> Carta de Vera Cruz says that only twenty were wounded in all, and that no one died of their wounds. Gomara says seventy were wounded.

good sword play we did not fail as stout fighters, and when they came to feel the edge of our swords little by little they fell back, but it was only so as to shoot at us in greater safety. Mesa, our artilleryman, killed many of them with his cannon, for they were formed in great squadrons and they did not open out so that he could fire at them as he pleased, but with all the hurts and wounds which we gave them, we could not drive them off. I said to Diego de Ordás "it seems to me that we ought to close up and charge them," for in truth they suffered greatly from the strokes and thrusts of our swords, and that was why they fell away from us, both from fear of these swords, and the better to shoot their arrows and hurl their javelins and the hail of stones. Ordás replied that it was not good advice, for there were three hundred Indians to every one of us, and that we could not hold out against such a multitude,—so there we stood enduring their attack. However, we did agree to get as near as we could to them, as I had advised Ordás, so as to give them a bad time with our swordsmanship, and they suffered so much from it that they retreated towards a swamp.

During all this time Cortés and his horsemen failed to appear, although we greatly longed for him, and we feared that by chance some disaster had befallen him.

I remember that when we fired shots the Indians gave great shouts and whistles and threw dust and rubbish into the air so that we should not see the damage done to them, and they sounded their trumpets and drums and shouted and whistled and cried "Alala! alala!"

Just at this time we caught sight of our horsemen, and as the great Indian host was crazed with its attack on us, it did not at once perceive them coming up behind their backs, and as the plain was level ground and the horsemen were good riders, and many of the horses were very handy and fine gallopers, they came quickly on the

enemy and speared them as they chose. As soon as we saw the horsemen we fell on the Indians with such energy that with us attacking on one side and the horsemen on the other, they soon turned tail. The Indians thought that the horse and its rider was all one animal, for they had never seen horses up to this time.

The savannas and fields were crowded with Indians running to take refuge in the thick woods near by.

After we had defeated the enemy Cortés told us that he had not been able to come to us sooner as there was a swamp in the way, and he had to fight his way through another force of warriors before he could reach us, and three horsemen and five horses had been wounded.

As soon as the horsemen had dismounted under some trees and houses, we returned thanks to God for giving us so complete a victory.

As it was Lady day we gave to the town which was afterwards founded here the name of Santa Maria de la Victoria, on account of this great victory being won on Our Lady's day. This was the first battle that we fought under Cortés in New Spain.

After this we bound up the hurts of the wounded with cloths, for we had nothing else, and we doctored the horses by searing their wounds with the fat from the body of a dead Indian which we cut up to get out the fat, and we went to look at the dead lying on the plain and there were more than eight hundred of them, the greater number killed by thrusts, the others by the cannon, muskets and crossbows, and many were stretched on the ground half dead. Where the horsemen had passed, numbers of them lay dead or groaning from their wounds. The battle lasted over an hour, and the Indians fought all the time like brave warriors, until the horsemen came up.

We took five prisoners, two of them Captains. As it was late and we had had enough of fighting, and we had

not eaten anything, we returned to our camp. Then we buried the two soldiers who had been killed, one by a wound in the ear, and the other by a wound in the throat, and we seared the wounds of the others and of the horses with the fat of the Indian, and after posting sentinels and guards, we had supper and rested.

It is on this occasion that Francisco López de Gomara says that Francisco de Morla set out on a dapple gray horse before Cortés and the other horsemen arrived, and that the sainted apostles Señor Santiago and Señor San Pedro appeared. I say that all our doings and our victories are at the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that in this battle there were so many Indians to every one of us that they could have blinded us with the dust they raised but for the pity of God who always helped us. It may be that as Gomara says the Glorious Apostles Señor Santiago and Señor San Pedro came to our aid and that I, being a sinner was not worthy to behold them. What I saw was Francisco de Morla, on a chestnut horse, who came up at the same time as Cortés, and it seems to me that now as I write I can see again with these sinful eyes all that battle in the very way that it took place, and although I am a poor sinner and not worthy to see either of those glorious apostles, there were there in our company over four hundred soldiers and Cortés himself and many other gentlemen, and it would have been talked about, and evidence would have been taken, and a church would have been built when the town was founded, and the town would have been named Santiago de la Victoria, or San Pedro de la Victoria instead of Santa Maria de la Victoria. If it was as Gomara says we must have all been very bad Christians, when our Lord God sent his holy Apostle to us, not to recognise the great favour that he was showing to us, and not daily to have venerated that church. I wish to God it were as the historian Gomara says, but, until I read

his history, one never heard about it among the conquistadores who were there at the time.

I will leave off here and go on to tell what else happened to us.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

How Cortés sent to summon all the Caciques of those provinces and what was done about it.

I HAVE already said that we captured five Indians during the battle of whom two were captains. When Aguilar spoke to these men he found out from what they said that they were fit persons to be sent as messengers, and he advised Cortés to free them, so that they might go and talk to the Caciques of the town and any others they might see. These two messengers were given green and blue beads, and Aguilar spoke many pleasant and flattering words to them, telling them that they had nothing to fear as we wished to treat them like brothers, that it was their own fault that they had made war on us, and that now they had better collect together all the Caciques of the different towns as we wished to talk to them, and he gave them much other advice in a gentle way so as to gain their good will. The messengers went off willingly and spoke to the Caciques and chief men, and told them all we wished them to know about our desire for peace.

When our envoys had been listened to, it was settled among them that fifteen Indian slaves, all with stained faces and ragged cloaks and loin cloths, should at once be sent to us with fowls and baked fish and maize cakes. When these men came before Cortés he received them graciously, but Aguilar the interpreter asked them rather angrily why they had come with their faces in that state, that it looked more as though they came to fight than to treat for peace; and he told them to go back to the