

Let us leave off here, for this is what took place and Cortés did not go into the Río de Alvarado, as Gomara says he did.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

Showing that Doña Marina was a *Cacica* and the daughter of persons of high rank, and was the mistress of towns and vassals, and how it happened that she was taken to Tabasco.

BEFORE telling about the great Montezuma and his famous City of Mexico and the Mexicans, I wish to give some account of Doña Marina, who from her childhood had been the mistress and *Cacica* of towns and vassals. It happened in this way :

Her father and mother were chiefs and *Caciques* of a town called Paynala, which had other towns subject to it, and stood about eight leagues from the town of Coatzacoalcos. Her father died while she was still a little child, and her mother married another *Cacique*, a young man, and bore him a son. It seems that the father and mother had a great affection for this son and it was agreed between them that he should succeed to their honours when their days were done. So that there should be no impediment to this, they gave the little girl, Doña Marina, to some Indians from Xicalango<sup>1</sup> and this they did by night so as to escape observation, and they then spread the report that she had died, and as it happened at this time that a child of one of their Indian slaves died they gave out that it was their daughter and the heiress who was dead.

The Indians of Xicalango gave the child to the people of Tabasco, and the Tabasco people gave her to Cortés. I myself knew her mother, and the old woman's son and

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<sup>1</sup> Xicalango, on the southern side of the Laguna de Términos, was an outlying stronghold of the Aztec Empire. (See *Relacion de Melchor de Sta. Cruz.*)

her half-brother, when he was already grown up and ruled the town jointly with his mother, for the second husband of the old lady was dead. When they became Christians, the old lady was called Marta and the son Lázaro. I knew all this very well because in the year 1523 after the conquest of Mexico and the other provinces, when Cristóval de Olid revolted in Honduras, and Cortés was on his way there, he passed through Coatzacoalcos and I and the greater number of the settlers of that town accompanied him on that expedition as I shall relate in the proper time and place. As Doña Marina proved herself such an excellent woman and good interpreter throughout the wars in New Spain, Tlascala and Mexico (as I shall show later on) Cortés always took her with him, and during that expedition she was married to a gentleman named Juan Jaramillo at the town of Orizaba, before certain witnesses, one of whom was named Aranda, a settler in Tabasco and this man told [me] about the marriage (not in the way the historian Gomara relates it).

Doña Marina was a person of the greatest importance and was obeyed without question by the Indians throughout New Spain.

When Cortés was in the town of Coatzacoalcos he sent to summon to his presence all the Caciques of that province in order to make them a speech about our holy religion, and about their good treatment, and among the Caciques who assembled was the mother of Doña Marina and her half-brother, Lázaro.

Some time before this Doña Marina had told me that she belonged to that province and that she was the mistress of vassals, and Cortés also knew it well, as did Aguilar, the interpreter. In such a manner it was that mother, daughter and son came together, and it was easy enough to see that she was the daughter from the strong likeness she bore to her mother.

These relations were in great fear of Doña Marina, for they thought that she had sent for them to put them to death, and they were weeping.

When Doña Marina saw them in tears, she consoled them and told them to have no fear, that when they had given her over to the men from Xicalango, they knew not what they were doing, and she forgave them for doing it, and she gave them many jewels of gold, and raiment, and told them to return to their town, and said that God had been very gracious to her in freeing her from the worship of idols and making her a Christian, and letting her bear a son to her lord and master Cortés and in marrying her to such a gentleman as Juan Jaramillo, who was now her husband. That she would rather serve her husband and Cortés than anything else in the world, and would not exchange her place to be Cacica of all the provinces in New Spain.

All this which I have repeated here I know for certain (and I swear to it.)<sup>1</sup>

This seems to me very much like what took place between Joseph and his brethren in Egypt when they came into his power over the matter of the wheat. It is what actually happened and not the story which was told to Gomara, who also says other things which I will leave unnoticed.

To go back to my subject: Doña Marina knew the language of Coatzacoalcos, which is that common to Mexico, and she knew the language of Tabasco, as did also Jerónimo de Aguilar, who spoke the language of Yucatan and Tabasco, which is one and the same. So that these two could understand one another clearly, and Aguilar translated into Castilian for Cortés.

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<sup>1</sup> The words in brackets are blotted out in the original MS.  
—G. G.

This was the great beginning of our conquests and thus, thanks be to God, things prospered with us. I have made a point of explaining this matter, because without the help of Doña Marina we could not have understood the language of New Spain and Mexico.

Here I will leave off, and go on later to tell how we disembarked in the Port of San Juan de Ulúa.





## BOOK III.

### THE MARCH INLAND.

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

How we arrived with all the ships at San Juan de Ulúa, and what happened there.



**N** Holy Thursday, the anniversary of the Last Supper of Our Lord, in the year 1519, we arrived with all the fleet at the Port of San Juan de Ulúa, and as the Pilot Alaminos knew the place well from having come there with Juan de Grijalva he at once ordered the vessels to drop anchor where they would be safe from the northerly gales. The flagship hoisted her royal standards and pennants, and within half an hour of anchoring, two large canoes (which in those parts are called piraguas) came out to us, full of Mexican Indians. Seeing the big ship with the standards flying they knew that it was there they must go to speak with the captain ; so they went direct to the flagship and going on board asked who was the Tatuán<sup>1</sup> which in their language means the chief. Doña Marina who understood the language well, pointed him out. Then the Indians paid many marks

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<sup>1</sup> Tlatoan.