

## CHAPTER XL.

How Cortés sent to look for another harbour and site where to make a settlement, and what was done about it.

AS soon as the messengers had been sent off to Mexico, Cortés despatched two ships to go and explore the coast further along, and placed Francisco de Montejo in command of them and ordered him to follow the course we had taken with Grijalva (for Montejo had accompanied us during Grijalva's expedition) and to seek out a safe harbour, and search for lands where we could settle, for it was clear that we could not settle on those sand dunes, both on account of the mosquitoes and the distance from other towns. Cortés ordered Alaminos and Juan Álvarez el Manquillo to go as pilots as they knew the route, and told them to sail as far along the coast as was possible in ten days. They did as they were told and arrived at the Rio Grande, which is close to Panuco,<sup>1</sup> which we had reached during the expedition under the Captain Juan de Grijalva. They were not able to proceed any further on account of the strong currents. Seeing how difficult the navigation had become, they turned round and made for San Juan de Ulúa, without having made any further progress, or having anything to tell us, beyond the news that, twelve leagues away, they had seen a town looking like a fortified harbour which was called Quiahuitztlan, and that near that town was a harbour where the pilot Alaminos thought that the ships would be safe from the northerly gales. He gave to it an ugly name, that of Bernal, for it is like another harbour in Spain of that name. In these comings and goings Montejo was occupied ten or twelve days.

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<sup>1</sup> The expedition under Grijalva did not pass beyond Cape Rojo.

I must now go back to say that the Indian *Pitalpitoque*, who remained behind to look after the food, slackened his efforts to such an extent that no provisions reached the camp and we were greatly in need of food, for the cassava turned sour from the damp and rotted and became foul with weevils and if we had not gone hunting for shell fish we should have had nothing to eat. The Indians who used to come bringing gold and fowls for barter, did not come in such numbers as on our first arrival and those who did come were very shy and cautious and we began to count the hours that must elapse before the return of the messengers who had gone to Mexico. We were thus waiting when *Tendile* returned accompanied by many Indians, and after having paid their respects in the usual manner by fumigating Cortés and the rest of us with incense, he presented ten loads of fine rich feather cloth, and four *chalchihuites*, which are green stones of very great value, and held in the greatest esteem among the Indians, more than emeralds are by us, and certain other gold articles. Not counting the *chalchihuites*, the gold alone was said to be worth three thousand dollars. Then *Tendile* and *Pitalpitoque* approached (the other great cacique, *Quintalbor*, fell ill on the road and did not return) and those two governors went aside with Cortés and *Doña Marina* and *Aguilar*, and reported that their prince *Montezuma* had accepted the present and was greatly pleased with it, but as to an interview, that no more should be said about it; that these rich stones of *chalchihuite* should be sent to the great Emperor as they were of the highest value, each one being worth more and being esteemed more highly than a great load of gold, and that it was not worth while to send any more messengers to Mexico. Cortés thanked the messengers and gave them presents, but it was certainly a disappointment to him to be told so distinctly that we could not see *Montezuma*,

and he said to some soldiers who happened to be standing near: "Surely this must be a great and rich prince, and some day, please God, we must go and see him"—and the soldiers answered: "We wish that we were already living with him!"

Let us now leave this question of visits and relate that it was now the time of the Ave Maria, and at the sound of a bell which we had in the camp we all fell on our knees before a cross placed on a sand hill and said our prayers of the Ave Maria before the cross. When Tendile and Pitalpitoque saw us thus kneeling, as they were very intelligent, they asked what was the reason that we humbled ourselves before a tree cut in that particular way. As Cortés heard this remark he said to the Padre de la Merced who was present: "It is a good opportunity, father, as we have good material at hand, to explain through our interpreters matters touching our holy faith." And then he delivered a discourse to the Caciques so fitting to the occasion that no good theologian could have bettered it. After telling them that we were Christians and relating all the matters pertaining to our holy religion, he told them that their idols were not good but evil things which would take flight at the presence of that sign of the cross, for on a similar cross the Lord of Heaven and earth and all created things suffered passion and death; that it is He whom we adore and in whom we believe, our true God, Jesus Christ, who had been willing to suffer and die in order to save the whole human race; that the third day He rose again and is now in heaven; and that by Him we shall all be judged. Cortés said many other things very well expressed, which they thoroughly understood, and they replied that they would report them to their prince Montezuma. Cortés also told them that one of the objects for which our great Emperor had sent us to their countries was to abolish human sacrifices, and the other

evil rites which they practised and to see that they did not rob one another, or worship those cursed images. And Cortés prayed them to set up in their city, in the temples where they kept the idols which they believed to be gods, a cross like the one they saw before them, and to set up in the same place an image of Our Lady, which he would give them, with her precious son in her arms, and they would see how well it would go with them, and what our God would do for them. However, as many other arguments were used and as I do not know how to write them all out at length I will leave the subject and recall to mind that on this latest visit many Indians came with Tendile, who were wishing to barter articles of gold, which, however, were of no great value. So all the soldiers set about bartering, and the gold which we gained by this barter we gave to the sailors who were out fishing in exchange for their fish so as to get something to eat, for otherwise we often underwent great privations through hunger. Cortés was pleased at this although he pretended not to see what was going on, and many of the servants and friends of Diego Velásquez asked him why he did not prevent us from bartering. What happened about this I will tell later.

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## CHAPTER XLI.

What was done about the bartering for gold, and other things that took place in camp.

WHEN the friends of Diego Velásquez saw that some of us soldiers were bartering for gold, they asked Cortés why he permitted it, and said that Diego Velásquez did not send out the expedition in order that the soldiers should carry off most of the gold, and that it would be as well to issue an order that for the future no gold should be