

that they would stand by us in everything we ordered them to do and would join their forces [with ours] against Montezuma and all his allies. Then, in the presence of Diego de Godoy, the scribe, they pledged obedience to his Majesty and messengers were sent to relate all that had happened to the other towns in that province. And as they no longer paid any tribute and no more tax gatherers appeared there was no end to the rejoicing at being rid of that tyranny.

Now, I will leave this incident and tell how we agreed to descend to the plain to some fields where we began to build a fort. This is what really took place and not the story that was told to the historian Gomara.¹

CHAPTER XLVIII.

How we determined to found "La Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz" and to build a fort in some meadows near the salt marshes, and close to the harbour with the ugly name [Bernal] where our ships were at anchor, and what we did there.

As soon as we had made this federation and friendship with more than twenty of the hill towns, known as [the towns of] the Totonacs, which at this time rebelled against the great Montezuma, and gave their allegiance to His Majesty, and offered to serve us—we determined with their ready help at once to found the Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz on a plain half a league from this fortress-like town, called Quiahuitzlan, and we laid out plans of a church, market-place and arsenals, and all those things that are needed for a town, and we built a fort, and from the laying of the foundations until the walls were high enough to receive

¹ Blotted out in the original MS. "No matter how eloquently he may relate it."—G. G.

the woodwork, loopholes, watch-towers, and barbicans, we worked with the greatest haste.

Cortés himself was the first to set to work to carry out the earth and stone on his back, and to dig foundations, and all his captains and soldiers followed his example; and we kept on labouring [without pause] so as to finish the work quickly, some of us digging foundations and others building walls,¹ carrying water, working in the lime kilns, making bricks and tiles, or seeking for food. Others worked at the timber, and the blacksmiths, for we had two blacksmiths with us, made nails. In this way we all laboured without ceasing, from the highest to the lowest; the Indians helping us, so that the church and some of the houses were soon built and the fort almost finished.

While we were thus at work, it seems that the great Montezuma heard the news in Mexico about the capture of his tax gatherers and the rebellion against his rule, and how the Totonac towns had withdrawn their allegiance and risen in revolt. He showed much anger against Cortés and all of us, and had already ordered a great army of warriors to make war on the people who had rebelled against him, and not to leave a single one of them alive. He was also getting ready to come against us with a great army with many companies.

Just at this moment there arrived two Indian prisoners whom Cortés had ordered to be set free, as I have related in the last chapter, and when Montezuma knew that it was Cortés who had taken them out of prison and had sent them to Mexico,—and when he heard the words and promises which he had sent them to report, it pleased our Lord God that his anger was appeased, and he resolved to send and gather news of us. For this purpose he despatched his two young nephews under the charge of four old men

1 § ¹ Tapias = walls made of earth stamped into a mould.

who were Caciques of high rank, and sent with them a present of gold and cloth, and told his messengers to give thanks to Cortés for freeing his servants.

On the other hand, he sent many complaints, saying that it was owing to our protection that those towns had dared to commit such a great treason as to refuse to pay him tribute and to renounce their allegiance to him, and that now, having respect for what he knew to be true—that we were those whom his ancestors had foretold were to come to their country, and must therefore be of his own lineage, how was it that we were living in the houses of these traitors? He did not at once send to destroy them, but the time would come when they would not brag of such acts of treason.

Cortés accepted the gold and the cloth, which was worth more than two thousand dollars, and he embraced the envoys and gave as an excuse that he and all of us were very good friends of the Lord Montezuma, and that it was as his servant that he still kept guard over the three tax gatherers, and he sent at once to have them brought from the ships—where they had been well treated and well clothed, and he delivered them up to the messengers.

Then Cortés, on his part, complained greatly of Montezuma, and told the envoys how the Governor, Pitalpitoque, had left the camp one night without giving him notice, which was not well done and that he believed and felt certain that the Lord Montezuma had not authorized any such meanness, and that it was on account of this that we had come to these towns where we were now residing and where we had been well treated by the inhabitants. And he prayed him to pardon the disrespect of which the people had been guilty. As to what he said about the people no longer paying tribute, they could not serve two masters and during the time we had been there they had rendered service to us in the name of our Lord and King; but

as he, Cortés, and all his brethren were on their way to visit him, and place themselves at his service, that when we were once there, then his commands would be attended to.

When this conversation and more of the same nature was over, Cortés ordered blue and green glass beads to be given to the two youths, who were Caciques of high rank, and to the four old men who had come in charge of them, who were also chieftains of importance, and paid them every sign of honour. And as there were some good meadows in the neighbourhood, Cortés ordered Pedro de Alvarado who had a good and very handy sorrel mare, and some of the other horsemen, to gallop and skirmish before the Caciques, who were delighted at the sight of their galloping, and they then took leave of Cortés and of all of us well contented, and returned to Mexico.

About this time Cortés' horse died, and he bought or was given another called "El Arriero," a dark chestnut which belonged to Ortiz, the musician, and Bartolomé Garcia, the miner ; it was one of the best of the horses that came in the fleet.

I must stop talking about this, and relate that as these towns of the sierra, our allies, and the town of Cempoala had hitherto been very much afraid of the Mexicans, believing that the great Montezuma would send his great army of warriors to destroy them, when they saw the kinsmen of the great Montezuma arriving with the presents I have mentioned, and paying such marked respect to Cortés and to all of us, they were fairly astounded and the Caciques said to one another that we must be Teules for Montezuma had fear of us, and had sent us presents of gold. If we already had reputation for valour, from this time forth it was greatly increased. But I must leave off here and go on to say what the fat Cacique and his friends were about.

CHAPTER XLIX.

How the fat Cacique and other chieftains came to complain to Cortés, that in a fortified town named Cingapacinga,¹ there was a garrison of Mexicans which did them much damage, and what was done about it.

As soon as the Mexican messengers had departed, the fat Cacique with many other friendly chieftains, came to beg Cortés to go at once to a town named Cingapacinga, two days' journey from Cempoala (that is about eight or nine leagues)—as there were many warriors of the Culuas, or Mexicans, assembled there, who were destroying their crops and plantations, and were waylaying and ill-treating their vassals, and doing other injuries. Cortés believed the story as they told it so earnestly. He had promised that he would help them, and would destroy the Culuas and other Indians who might annoy them, and noting with what importunity they pressed their complaints, he did not know what to answer them, unless it were to say that he would willingly go, or send some soldiers under one of us, to turn these Mexicans out. As he stood there thinking the matter over, he said laughingly to some of us companions who were with him: "Do you know, gentlemen, that it seems to me that we have already gained a great reputation for valour throughout this country and that from what they saw us do in the matter of Montezuma's tax-gatherers, the people here take us for gods or beings like their idols. I am thinking that so as to make them believe that one of us is enough to defeat those Indian warriors, their enemies, who they say are occupying the town with the fortress, that we will send Heredia against

¹ Not marked on the modern maps. Orozco y Berra (vol. iv, p. 163) says that it no longer exists, but that he found it marked in a MS. map of Patiño under the name of Tizapanecingo, eight or nine leagues N.W. of Cempoala.