

them in his interest. The best ship in the fleet was got ready, and two pilots were appointed, one of them being Anton de Alaminos, who knew the passage through the Bahama Channel, for he was the first man to sail through it, and fifteen sailors were told off, and a full supply of ship's stores given to them. When everything was ready, we agreed to write to tell His Majesty all that had happened. Cortés wrote on his own account, so he told us, an accurate narrative of the events, but we did not see his letter.

The Cabildo<sup>1</sup> wrote a letter jointly with ten of the soldiers from among those who wished to settle in the land and had appointed Cortés as their general, and the letter was drawn up with great accuracy so that nothing was omitted, and I put my signature to it ; and besides these letters and narratives, all the captains and soldiers together wrote another letter and narrative, and what was contained in the letter which we wrote is as follows :

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#### CHAPTER LIV.

The narrative and letter which we sent to His Majesty by our proctors, Alonzo Hernández Puertocarrero and Francisco de Montejo, which letter was signed by a number of the Captains and soldiers.

AFTER beginning with the expressions of well deserved respect which were due from us to the great Majesty of the Emperor our Lord, for such his Catholic Christian Royal Majesty was, and after adding other matters which it was appropriate to state in a narrative and account of our doings and voyage, each chapter by itself, there followed this, which I will here briefly recapitulate. How we sailed from

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<sup>1</sup> Cabildo—Municipality, the alguaciles, etc., already mentioned.

the Island of Cuba with Hernando Cortés ; and the proclamations which were made ; how we intended coming to settle, but that Diego Velásquez was secretly minded to trade and not to settle. How Cortés wished to return with certain gold gained by barter in accordance with the instructions that he brought from Diego Velásquez which we have submitted to His Majesty. How we insisted on Cortés forming a settlement, and chose him as Captain General and Chief Justice, until His Majesty might please to order otherwise. How we promised him [Cortés] the fifth of what should be obtained, after the Royal fifth had been deducted. How we arrived at Cozumel and by what chance Jerónimo de Aguilar happened to be at Cape Catoche, and about the way he said that he got there, he and a certain Gonzalo Guerrero, who remained with the Indians because he was married and had children and had already become like an Indian. How we arrived at Tabasco, and of the war they waged against us, and the battle we fought with them, and how we brought them to peace. How that wherever we went excellent discourses were addressed to them [the Indians] to induce them to abandon their Idols, and matters concerning our Holy faith were explained to them. How they gave their fealty to His Royal Majesty, and became the first vassals that he has in these parts. How they [the Indians] brought a present of women, and among them a Cacica, for an Indian a woman of great importance, who knew the Mexican language, which is the language used throughout the country and that with her and Aguilar we possessed reliable interpreters. How we landed at San Juan de Ulúa, and about the speeches of the Ambassadors of the Great Montezuma, and who the Great Montezuma was and what was said about his greatness, and about the present that they brought. How we went to Cempoala, which is a large town, and thence to another town named Quiahuitztlan, which is fortified, and how in

that town an alliance and confederation was made with us and more than thirty towns withdrew their obedience from Montezuma, and all gave their fealty to His Majesty and are now part of his Royal possessions. The expedition to Cingapacinga, how we made a fortress, and that we are now on the road to the interior of the country to see Montezuma himself. How this country is very large with many cities and thickly peopled and the natives are great warriors. How there is a great diversity of languages among them and they make war one against the other. How they are idolators and kill and sacrifice many men, women and children, and eat human flesh and practice other iniquities. How the first discoverer was Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, and Juan de Grijalva came soon after and that now at the present time we offer him [His Majesty] the gold that we have gained, that is, the golden sun and silver moon and a helmet full of gold in grains as they take it from the mines, many different kinds of golden articles shaped in various ways, and cotton cloths much embroidered with feathers, of great excellence, and many other golden objects such as fly whisks and shields, and other things which, as so many years have already gone by, I cannot now call to mind. We also present four Indians whom we liberated in Cempoala whom they had kept in wooden cages to fatten, so that when they were fat they might be sacrificed and eaten. After giving the report of this and other things, we gave an account and narration of how we, four hundred and fifty soldiers in these his Majesty's dominions, were placed in very great danger among such a great number of towns, and such quarrelsome people and such great warriors, in order to serve God and His Royal Crown, and we begged him to show us favour in all that we might need, and that he would not grant the government of these countries or crown offices to any person whatever, for they are of such quality

and so rich with such great towns and cities, that they are suitable for an *Infante* or Great Lord, and we are thinking that as Don Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos and Archbishop of Rosano, is President of the Council and rules all the Indies, that he will give it [the government] to some relation of his own or to some friend, especially to one Diego Velásquez who is governor of the Island of Cuba, and the reason why he will give him the government or any other office, is that he [Diego Velásquez] is always giving him presents of gold and has set apart for him in this same island, townships of Indians to get out the gold from the mines, and from among these he ought first of all to have given the best to the Royal Crown, but he did not set aside one of them, and on this account he is not worthy to receive favours. As in all things, we are his [Majesty's] most loyal servants, and are ready to lay down our lives in his service, we inform him of this so that he may know all about it and we are determined that until he has deigned to permit our proctors, whom we are sending, to kiss his feet, and has seen our letter, and until we see his Royal signature (when prostrate we may obey his Royal commands), that should the Bishop of Burgos on his own authority send us any one soever to govern us or be our captain, then, before obeying him, we would bring it to His Majesty's personal knowledge wherever he may be, and that whatever he should order, that would we obey as we are bound to do, as the command of our King and Lord.

Besides these narratives, we begged him, until he be pleased to order otherwise, to grant the government to Hernando Cortés, and we praised him so highly as his most obedient servant, as to raise him to the clouds, and after having written all these narratives with the greatest respect and humility as well as we were able and as was proper, explaining every event, how and when and

in what manner they happened, in the form of a letter intended for our King and not in the style that is here set down in my story, we captains and soldiers who were on the side of Cortés, all of us signed it. Two copies were made of the letter, and Cortés begged us to show them to him, and when he saw such a true narrative, and the great praise which we gave to him, he was very pleased and said that he would remember it to our credit and made us great promises, but he did not wish us to mention or allude to the fifth of the gold that we had promised him, nor to say who were the first discoverers, because, as we understood, he gave no account in his letter of Francisco Hernández de Córdoba nor of Grijalva, but attributed the discovery, and the honour and glory of it all, to himself alone, and he said that now at this time it would be better to write thus, and not to report it to His Majesty. There were not wanting those who said to him that to our King and Lord nothing that had happened should be left untold. When these letters had been written and given to our proctors, we impressed on them strongly, that on no account should they enter Havana or go to a farm which one of them, Francisco de Montejo, owned there, which was called *El Marien* and was a harbour for ships, lest Diego Velásquez should get to know what was happening. They did not do as they were told as I shall show later on. When everything was ready for them to embark, the Padre de la Merced said Mass, commending them to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

On the 26th July 1519 they left San Juan de Ulúa and with good weather, arrived at Havana, and Francisco de Montejo with the greatest importunity allured and induced the pilot Alaminos to steer to his farm, saying that he was going to obtain supplies of pigs and cassava, until he got him to do what he wanted which was to drop anchor at his farm, for Puertocarrero was very ill and he (Montejo) paid

no attention to him, and on the very night they arrived they despatched a sailor from the ship by land with letters and information for Diego Velásquez, and we know that Montejo sent the man who went with the letters, and this sailor went post haste through the Island of Cuba, from town to town making known all that I have here told, until Diego Velásquez himself knew it, and what he did about it I will tell later on.

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## CHAPTER LV.

How Diego Velásquez, the Governor of Cuba, learned for certain from letters, that we were sending proctors with an embassy and presents to our King and Lord, and what he did about it.

As Diego Velásquez the Governor of Cuba learnt the news both from the letters which were secretly sent him, (rumour said by Montejo) as well as from the sailor, who had been present during all that I have related in the last chapter, and who swam ashore to carry the letters to him, and when he understood about the great present of gold that we were sending to His Majesty, and knew who were the Ambassadors and proctors, he was taken with cold sweats as of death and uttered most lamentable words and curses against Cortés, and against his own secretary Duero, and the accountant Amador de Lares who had advised him to make Cortés a general, and he promptly ordered two ships of small burden which were fast sailors, to be armed with all the artillery and soldiers that could be provided and two captains, one named Gabriel de Rojas, and the other so and so de Guzman, to go in them and he ordered them to go as far as the Havana, and thence to the Bahama Channel and in any case to capture and bring the ship in which our proctors were sailing and all the gold that they were carrying. With all haste, in compliance with his commands, they arrived after some days of sailing at the