

soldiers, and all the soldiers who were wounded did the same ; for if the wounds were not very dangerous, we had to fight and keep guard, wounded as we were, for few of us remained unwounded.

Then we returned to our camp, well contented, and giving thanks to God. We buried the dead in one of those houses which the Indians had built underground, so that the enemy should not see that we were mortals, but should believe that, as they said, we were Teules. We threw much earth over the top of the house, so that they should not smell the bodies, then we doctored all the wounded with the fat of the Indian, as I have related before. It was cold comfort to be even without salt or oil with which to cure the wounded. There was another want from which we suffered, and it was a severe one—and that was clothes with which to cover ourselves, for such a cold wind came from the snow mountains, that it made us shiver, for our lances and muskets and crossbows made a poor covering. That night we slept with more tranquillity than on the night before, when we had so much duty to do, with scouting, spies, watchmen and patrols.

I will leave off here and relate what we did on the next day. In this battle we captured three Indian chieftains.

CHAPTER LXVI.

How next day we sent messengers to the Caciques of Tlaxcala, begging them to make peace, and what they did about it.

AFTER the battle which I have described was over, in which we had captured three Indian chieftains, our Captain Cortés sent them at once in company with the two others who were in our camp and who had already been sent as messengers, and ordered them to go to the Caciques of Tlaxcala and tell them that we begged them to make peace

and to grant us a passage through their country on our way to Mexico, as we had already sent to request them, and to say that if they did not now come to terms, we would slay all their people, but that as we were well disposed towards them and wished to treat them as brothers, we had no desire to annoy them, unless they gave us reason to do so; and he said many flattering things to them so as to make friends of them, and the messengers then set out eagerly for the capital of Tlaxcala and gave their message to all the Caciques already mentioned by me, whom they found gathered in council with many other elders and priests. They were very sorrowful both over the want of success in the war and at the death of those captains, their sons and relations, who had fallen in battle. As they were not very willing to listen to the message, they decided to summon all the soothsayers, priests, and those others called *Tacal naguas* (who are like wizards and foretell fortunes), and they told them to find out from their witchcraft, charms, and lots what people we were, and if by giving us battle day and night without ceasing we could be conquered, and to say if we were Teules, (which, as I have already said many times, are evil beings, like devils,) as the people of Cempoala asserted, and to tell them what things we ate, and ordered them to look into all these matters with the greatest care.

When the soothsayers and wizards and many priests had got together and made their prophecies and forecasts, and performed all the other rites according to their use, it seems that they said that by their divinations they had found out we were men of flesh and blood and ate poultry and dogs and bread and fruit when we had them, and that we did not eat the flesh nor the hearts of the Indians whom we killed. It seems that our Indian friends whom we had brought from Cempoala had made them believe that we were Teules, and that we ate the

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hearts of Indians, and that the cannon shot forth lightning, such as falls from heaven, and that the Lurcher, which was a sort of lion or tiger, and the horses, were used to catch Indians when we wanted to kill them, and much more nonsense of the same sort.

The worst of all that the priests and wizards told the Caciques was, that it was not during the day, but only at night that we could be defeated, for as night fell, all our strength left us. Furthermore, their wizards told them that by day we were very valiant, and all this strength lasted throughout the day up to sunset, but that as soon as night came on we had no strength whatever. When the Caciques heard this, and they were quite convinced of it, they sent to tell their captain general Xicotenga that as soon as it was possible he should come and attack us in great force by night. On receiving this order Xicotenga assembled ten thousand of the bravest of his Indians and came to our camp, and from three sides they began alternately to shoot arrows and throw single pointed javelins from their spear throwers, and from the fourth side the swordsmen and those armed with macanas and broadswords approached so suddenly, that they felt sure that they would carry some of us off to be sacrificed. Our Lord God provided otherwise, for secretly as they approached, they found us well on the alert, and as soon as our outposts and spies perceived the great noise of their movement, they ran at breakneck speed to give the alarm, and as we were all accustomed to sleep ready shod, with our arms on us and our horses bitted and saddled, and with all our arms ready for use, we defended ourselves with guns, crossbows and sword play so that they soon turned their backs. As the ground was level and there was a moon the horsemen followed them a little way, and in the morning we found lying on the plain about twenty of them dead and wounded. So they went back with great loss and sorely repenting

this night expedition, and I have heard it said, that as what the priests and wizards had advised did not turn out well they sacrificed two of them.

That night, one of our Indian friends from Cempoala was killed and two of our soldiers were wounded and one horse, and we captured four of the enemy. When we found that we had escaped from that impetuous attack we gave thanks to God, and we buried our Cempoala friend and tended the wounded and the horse, and slept the rest of the night after taking every precaution to protect the camp as was our custom.

When we awoke and saw how all of us were wounded, even with two or three wounds, and how weary we were and how others were sick and clothed in rags, and knew that Xicotenga was always after us, and already over forty-five of our soldiers had been killed in battle, or succumbed to disease and chills, and another dozen of them were ill, and our Captain Cortés himself was suffering from fever as well as the Padre de la Merced, and what with our labours and the weight of our arms which we always carried on our backs, and other hardships from chills and the want of salt, for we could never find any to eat, we began to wonder what would be the outcome of all this fighting, and what we should do and where we should go when it was finished. To march into Mexico we thought too arduous an undertaking because of its great armies, and we said to one another that if those Tlaxcalans, which our Cempoalan friends had led us to believe were peacefully disposed, could reduce us to these straits, what would happen when we found ourselves at war with the great forces of Montezuma? In addition to this we had heard nothing from the Spaniards whom we had left settled in Villa Rica, nor they of us. As there were among us very excellent gentlemen and soldiers, steady and valiant men of good counsel, Cortés never said or did anything [important] without first asking

well considered advice, and acting in concert with us. Although the historian Gomara says Cortés did this and that, and came here and went there, and says many other things without reason, even if Cortés were made of iron, as Gomara in his history says he was, he could not be everywhere at once. Suffice it to say that he bore himself like a good commander. This I say, for after all the great mercies which our Lord granted us in all our doings, and in the late victories, and in everything else, it seems that God gave us soldiers grace and good counsel to advise Cortés how to do all things in the right way.

Let us cease praising and cease speaking of past praises, for they do not add much to our history, and let me relate how one and all we put heart into Cortés, and told him that he must get well again and reckon upon us, and that as with the help of God we had escaped from such perilous battles, our Lord Jesus Christ must have preserved us for some good end ; that he [Cortés] should at once set our prisoners free and send them to the head Caciques already named by me, so as to bring them to peace, when all that had taken place would be pardoned, including the death of the mare.

Let us leave this and say how Doña Marina who, although a native woman, possessed such manly valour that, although she had heard every day how the Indians were going to kill us and eat our flesh with chili, and had seen us surrounded in the late battles, and knew that all of us were wounded and sick, yet never allowed us to see any sign of fear in her, only a courage passing that of woman. So Doña Marina and Jerónimo de Aguilar spoke to the messengers whom we were now sending and told them that they must come and make peace at once, and that if it was not concluded within two days we should go and kill them all and destroy their country and would come to seek them in their city, and with these brave words they were dispatched

to the capital where Xicotenga the elder and Mase Escasi were [residing].

Let us leave this, and I will mention another thing that I have noticed, that the historian Gomara does not mention or make any record in his history of the fact that any of us were killed or wounded, or underwent any hardships, or suffered, but writes about it all as though we were going to a wedding, and it is thus that we find it recorded. Oh!—how badly those men advised him when they told him to put such things in his history! It has made all of us conquerors reflect upon what he wrote down, which not being true, he ought to have remembered, that as soon as we saw his history we must out with the truth!

Let us forget Gomara and say that our messengers went to the capital of Tlaxcala with our message, and I think that they carried a letter, for although we knew they could not understand it, yet they would look on it as an order, and with it was sent an arrow, and they found the two chief Caciques who were in conference with the other chieftains, and what they answered I will go on to relate.

CHAPTER LXVII.

How we again sent messengers to the Caciques of Tlaxcala to bring them to peace, and what they did about it and decided.

WHEN the messengers whom we had sent to treat for peace arrived at Tlaxcala, they found the two principal Caciques in consultation, namely: Mase Escasi and Xicotenga, the elder (the father of the Captain General Xicotenga, so often mentioned by me, who bore the same name). When they had heard the embassy, they were undecided and kept silence for a few moments, and it pleased God to guide their thoughts towards making peace