

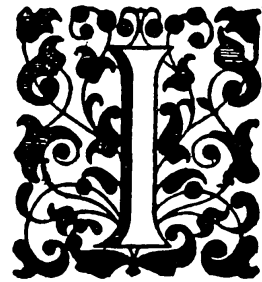


BOOK I.—THE DISCOVERY.

THE EXPEDITION UNDER FRANCISCO HERNÁNDEZ DE CÓRDOVA,

CHAPTER I.

The beginning of the story.



BERNAL DÍAZ DEL CASTILLO, citizen and Regidor of the most loyal city of Santiago de Guatemala, one of the first discoverers and conquerors of New Spain and its provinces, and the Cape of Honduras and all that lies within that land, a Native of the very noble and distinguished town of Medina del Campo, and the son of its former *Regidor*, Francisco Díaz del Castillo, who was also called "The graceful," (may his soul rest in glory), speak about that which concerns myself and all the true conquerors my companions who served His Majesty by discovering, conquering, pacifying and settling most of the provinces of New Spain, and that it is one of the best countries yet discovered in the New World, we found out by our own efforts without His Majesty knowing anything about it.

I also speak here in reply to all that has been said and written by persons who themselves knowing nothing, have received no true account from others of what really took place, but who nevertheless now put forward any statements that happen to suit their fancy. As there is no account of our many and remarkable services such as their merits deserve * * * * * these indifferent story-tellers are now unwilling that we should receive the recompense and * * * * * which His Majesty has ordered his Governors and Viceroys to afford us.

Apart from these reasons such deeds as those I am going on to describe, cannot be forgotten, and the truth about them will be proved afresh, but, as in the books which have been written on the subject the truth has so often been perverted, [I write this history] so that when tales are told of daring deeds our fame shall not suffer, and that on account of such brilliant adventures our names may be placed among the most famous, for we have run the risk of death and wounds, and have suffered a thousand other miseries, venturing our lives in discovering lands about which nothing whatever was known, battling by day and by night with a host of doughty warriors, at so great a distance from Castille that no aid or assistance could reach us, save the only true help, namely the loving kindness of our Lord God whom it has pleased that we should conquer New Spain and the far-famed city of Tenochtitlan,¹ Mexico, for so it is called, and many other cities and provinces which are too numerous for me to name. As soon as we had the country pacified and settled by Spaniards, we thought it to be our duty as good and loyal subjects of His Majesty, with much respect for our King and natural Lord, to hand the country over to him. With that

¹ Tenuztitlan in the original.

intent we sent our Ambassadors to Castille and thence to Flanders where his Majesty at that time held his Court. I shall also tell about all the good results that came of it, and about the large number of souls which have been saved, and are daily being saved, by conversion to the faith, all of which souls were formerly lost in Hell. In addition to this holy work, attention will be called to the great treasure which we sent as a present to his Majesty, and that which has been sent and is being sent daily and is in the form of the Royal Fifths,¹ as well as in the large amounts carried off by many persons of all classes. I shall tell in this story who was the first discoverer of the province of Yucatan, and how we went to the discovery of New Spain and who were the Captains and soldiers who conquered and settled it and many other things which happened during the conquest, which are worth knowing and should not be forgotten; all this I shall relate as briefly as possible, and above all with the assured truth of an eye witness.

²If I were to remember and recount one by one the heroic [deeds] which we, one and all of us valiant captains and brave [soldiers] accomplished, from the beginning to the end of the conquest, reciting each deed as it deserved, it would, indeed, be a great [undertaking,] and would need a very famous historian [to carry it out] with greater eloquence and style than my poor words [can compass.] As later on when I was present and saw and understood, and I will call to mind that repeats imposed as a duty—and delicate style and I I will write it with God's

¹ The tax on all bullion and other treasure paid to the Crown.

² In the following passages many of the words of the Manuscript are rubbed and worn out. When the meaning is obvious the missing words are supplied in brackets in the translation. When the meaning is not clear the spaces are marked with asterisks.

help with honest truth of the wise
 elders who say that a good style is
 to tell the truth and [not] to exaggerate
 and flatter others, especially in a nar-
 rative like this would die of it, and
 because I am no latin scholar and do not understand
 the art I will not treat of it, for I say I
 understand [only] the battles and pacifications where I
 was myself present, for I was one of the first [to set out]
 from Cuba in the company of a Captain named Francisco
 [Hernández de Córdova] and we were accompanied on
 that voyage by one hundred and ten soldiers, we explored
 they stopped (?) at the first place at
 which one landed which is called Cape [Catoche and at] a
 town further on called Chanpoton more than half of us
 [were killed and] the Captain received ten arrow wounds
 and all the rest of us soldiers got two [arrow wounds and
 the Indians] a[ttack]ing us with such skill we were obliged,
 with the greatest difficulty to return to the Island [of
 Cuba whence] we had set out with the fleet, and the
 captain died almost as soon as we landed, and of the
 one hundred and ten soldiers who set out with us, fifty-
 seven were left behind, dead.

After this first warlike expedition, I set out a second
 time from this same Island of Cuba under another captain,
 named Juan de Grijalva, and we again had great warlike
 encounters with these same Indians of the *Pueblo* of
 Chanpoton, and in this second battle many of our soldiers
 were killed. From that Pueblo we went on along the
 coast, exploring, until we arrived at New Spain and then
 kept on our way until we reached the province of Panuco.
 Then a second time we had to turn back to the Island
 of Cuba, baffled and exhausted both from hunger and
 thirst, and from other reasons which I will set forth in the
 chapter which treats of this expedition.

To go back to my story ; I set out for the third time with the daring and valiant captain Don Hernando Cortés, who later on was made Marqués del Valle and received other titles of honour. I repeat that no other captain or soldier went to New Spain three times in succession on one expedition after another as I did, so that I am the earliest discoverer and conqueror who has ever lived or is now living in New Spain. Although many soldiers went twice on voyages of discovery, the first time with Juan de Grijalva whom I have already mentioned, and the second time with the gallant captain Cortés, yet they never went three times in succession. If they went the first time with Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, they did not go the second time with Grijalva, nor the third time with the valiant Cortés. God has been pleased to preserve me through many risks of death, both during this laborious discovery, and in the very bloody Mexican wars (and I give God many thanks for it), in order that I may tell and declare the events that happened in those wars, so that studious readers may give them attention and thought.

I was twenty-four years old when Diego Velásquez, the Governor of the Island of Cuba, who was my kinsman, promised to give me some Indians as soon as there were any available, but I did not care to be kept waiting until this should happen. I always had a zeal for soldiering, as it is becoming that a man should have, both in order to serve God and the king and to endeavour to gain renown, and as being such a life that honourable men should seek, and I gradually put from my mind the death of my companions who were killed in those times and the wounds that I myself received, and the fatigue and hardship I endured and which all must endure who set out to discover new lands, and, being as we were, but a small company, dare to enter into great towns swarming with hostile warriors. I myself was always at the front and never

descended to the many vices prevalent in the island of Cuba, as will be clearly seen in the course of this story.

In the year fifteen hundred and fourteen, I came from Castille and began my career as a soldier on Tierra-firme,¹ then went on to the discovery of Yucatan and New Spain, and as my forefathers, my father and my brother had always been servants of the crown and of the Catholic kings of glorious memory Don Fernando and Doña Ysabel, I wished to be something like them.

In the year 1514, as I have already said, there came out as Governor of Tierra-firme, a gentleman named Pedrías Dávila.² I agreed to go with him to his Government and the country conquered by him. So as to shorten the story, I will not relate what happened on the voyage, more than to say sometimes with good weather and other times with bad weather, we arrived at Nombre de Dios, for so it was named.

Some three or four months after the settlement was formed, there came a pestilence from which many soldiers died, and in addition to this, all the rest of us fell ill and suffered from bad ulcers on the legs. Then disputes arose between the Governor and a nobleman named Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, the captain, who had conquered that province, to whom Pedrías Dávila had given his daughter (Doña somebody Arias de Peñalosa) in marriage. But it seems that after marriage, he grew suspicious of his son-in-law, believing that he would rise in rebellion and lead a body of soldiers towards the South Sea, so he gave orders that Balboa should have his throat cut and certain of the soldiers should be punished.

As we were witnesses of what I have related, and of other revolts among the captains, and as the news reached

¹ Tierra-firme = the Spanish Main.

² Pedro Arias de Ávila.

us that the Island of Cuba had lately been conquered and settled, and that a gentleman named Diego Velásquez, a native of Cuellar, who has already been mentioned by me, had been made Governor of the Island, some of us gentlemen and persons of quality, who had come out with Pedrarias Dávila, made up our minds to ask him to give us permission to go to Cuba, and he willingly did so, as he had no need of all the soldiers he had brought with him from Castille, as there was no one left to conquer. Indeed the country under his rule is small and thinly peopled, and his son-in-law Vasco Nuñez de Balboa had already conquered it and ensured peace.

As soon as leave was granted we embarked in a good ship and with fair weather reached the Island of Cuba. On landing we went at once to pay our respects to the Governor, who was pleased at our coming, and promised to give us Indians as soon as there were any to spare.

When three years had gone by, counting both the time we were in Tierra-firme and that which we had passed in the Island of Cuba, and it became evident that we were merely wasting our time, one hundred and ten of us got together, most of us comrades who had come from Tierra-firme, and the other Spaniards of Cuba who had had no Indians assigned to them, and we made an agreement with a gentleman named Francisco Hernández de Córdova,¹ whose name I have already mentioned, a rich man who owned an Indian Pueblo in the Island, that he should be our leader, for he was well fitted for the post, and that we should try our fortune in seeking and exploring new lands where we might find employment.

With this object in view, we purchased three ships, two

¹ The three partners in this expedition were Francisco Hernández de Córdova, Lope Ochoa de Caicedo and Cristóval Morante. (See letter from the Municipality of Vera Cruz, dated 10th July, 1519. Usually known as Cortés' first letter.)

of them of good capacity, and the third, a bark, bought on credit from the Governor, Diego Velásquez, on the condition that all of us soldiers should go in the three vessels to some islands lying between Cuba and Honduras, which are now called the Islands of the Guanajes,¹ and make war on the natives and load the vessels with Indians, as slaves, with which to pay him for his bark. However, as we soldiers knew that what Diego Velásquez asked of us was not just, we answered that it was neither in accordance with the law of God nor of the king, that we should make free men slaves. When he saw that we had made up our minds, he said that our plan to go and discover new countries was better than his, and he helped us in providing food for our voyage. Certain inquisitive gentlemen have asked me why I have written down these words which Diego Velásquez uttered about selling us the ship, and they say they have an ugly look and should not have been inserted in this history. I reply that I write them here because it is desirable on account of the law suits which Diego Velásquez and the Bishop of Burgos and Archbishop of Rosano, whose name is Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, brought against us.

To return to my story, we now found ourselves with three ships stored with Cassava² bread, which is made from a root, and we bought some pigs which cost three dollars apiece, for in those days there were neither sheep nor cattle in the Island of Cuba, for it was only beginning to be settled, and we added a supply of oil, and bought beads and other things of small value to be used for barter. We then sought out three pilots, of whom the chief, who took charge of the fleet, was called Anton de Alaminos a native of Palos, the second came from Triana

¹ Roatan, Bonacca, etc. Islands near the coast of Honduras.

² Cassava bread. Made from the root of *Manihoc utilissima*.

and was named Camacho, and the third was Juan Alvarez "el Manquillo"¹ from Huelva. We also engaged the necessary number of sailors and procured the best supply that we could afford of ropes, cordage, cables, and anchors, and casks for water and other things needed for the voyage, and this all to our own cost and regret.

When all the soldiers were mustered, we set out for a port which in the Indian language is called Axaruco,² on the North coast, eight leagues from a town named San Cristóbal, which was then inhabited and which two years later was moved to the present site of Havana. In order that our voyage should proceed on right principles we wished to take with us a priest named Alonso González who was then living in the said town of San Cristóbal, and he agreed to come with us. We also chose for the office of *Veedor*,³ (in his Majesty's name), a soldier named Bernaldino Yñiguez, a native of Santo Domingo de la Calzada, so that if God willed that we should come on rich lands, or people who possessed gold or silver or pearls or any other kind of treasure, there should be a responsible person to guard the Royal Fifth.

After all was arranged and we had heard Mass, we commended ourselves to God our Lord, and to Our Lady, the sainted Virgin Mary, His blessed Mother, and set out on our voyage in the way I will now relate.

¹ El Manquillo = the little maimed or one-handed man.

² Jaruco is shown on modern maps about twelve miles to the east of the present city of Havana.

The name of Havana at this time appears to have applied to the district.

San Cristóbal was on the south coast of the Island, which is here about eight leagues across from sea to sea.

³ *Veedor* (obsolete) = overseer, caterer, official in charge of the stores.

CHAPTER II.

How we discovered the Province of Yucatan.

ON the eighth day of the month of February in the year fifteen hundred and seventeen, we left the Havana from the port of Axaruco, which is on the North coast, and in twelve days we doubled Cape San Antonio, which is also called in the Island of Cuba the land of the Guanahataveyes, who are Indians like savages. When we had passed this Cape we were in the open sea and trusting to luck we steered towards the setting sun, knowing nothing of the depth of water, nor of the currents, nor of the winds which usually prevail in that latitude, so we ran great risk of our lives, then a storm struck us which lasted two days and two nights, and raged with such strength that we were nearly lost. When the weather moderated, we kept on our course, and twenty-one days after leaving port, we sighted land, at which we rejoiced greatly and gave thanks to God. This land had never been discovered before and no report of it had reached us. From the ships we could see a large town standing back about two leagues from the coast, and as we had never seen such a large town in the Island of Cuba nor in Hispaniola, we named it the Great Cairo.

We arranged that the two vessels which drew the least water should go in as near as possible to the Coast, to examine the land and see if there was an anchorage near the shore. On the morning of the 4th March, we saw ten large canoes, called *piraguas*, full of Indians from the town, approaching us with oars and sails. The canoes were large ones made like hollow troughs cleverly cut out from huge single logs, and many of them would hold forty Indians.

To go back to my story ; the Indians in the ten canoes

came close to our ships, and we made signs of peace to them, beckoning with our hands and waving our cloaks to induce them to come and speak to us, although at that time we had no interpreters who could speak the languages of Yucatan and Mexico. They approached quite fearlessly and more than thirty of them came on board the flagship, and we gave them each a present of a string of green beads, and they passed some time examining the ships. The chief man among them, who was a *Cacique*, made signs to us that they wished to embark in their canoes and return to their town, and that they would come back again another day with more canoes in which we could go ashore.

These Indians were clothed in cotton shirts made like jackets, and covered their persons with a narrow cloth which they call *masteles*, and they seemed to us a people superior to the Cubans, for the Cuban Indians go about naked, only the women wearing a cloth reaching to the thighs, which cloths they call *naguas*.¹

To return to my story; the next morning the same *Cacique* returned to the ships and brought twelve large canoes, which I have already said are called *piraguas*, with Indian rowers, and with a cheerful face and every appearance of friendliness, made signs that we should go to his town, where they would feed us and supply all our needs, and that in those canoes of his we could land.

He kept on saying in his language, "*cones catoche*", "*cones catoche*", which means "come to my houses", and for that reason we called the land Cape Catoche, and it is still so named on the charts.

When our captain and the soldiers saw the friendly

¹ Why the author should have written "que llaman naguas" is not clear. Enaguas or naguas is the Spanish, not the Cuban, word for the skirt, petticoat or upper skirt of a woman's dress.

overtures the chief was making to us, we agreed to lower the boats from our ships, and in the vessel of least draught, and in the twelve canoes, to go ashore all together, and because we saw that the shore was crowded with Indians from the town, we arranged to land all of us at the same moment. When the Cacique saw us all on shore, but showing no intention of going to his town, he again made signs to our captain that we should go with him to his houses, and he showed such evidence of peace and good-will, that our captain asked our advice whether we should go on or no, and most of the soldiers were of opinion that with the precaution of taking all our arms with us we should go on, and we took with us fifteen crossbows and ten muskets, so with the Cacique as our guide, we began our march along the road, accompanied by many Indians.

We moved on in this way until we approached some brush-covered hillocks, when the Cacique began to shout and call out to some squadrons of warriors who were lying in ambush ready to fall upon us and kill us. On hearing the Cacique's shouts, the warriors attacked us in great haste and fury, and began to shoot with such skill that the first flight of arrows wounded fifteen soldiers.

These warriors wore armour made of cotton reaching to the knees and carried lances and shields, bows and arrows, slings and many stones.

After the flight of arrows, the warriors, with their feathered crests waving, attacked us hand to hand, and hurling their lances with all their might they did us much damage. However, thank God, we soon put them to flight when they felt the sharp edge of our swords, and the effect of our guns and crossbows, and fifteen of them fell dead.

A short distance ahead of the place where they attacked us, was a small *plaza* with three houses built of masonry,

which served as *Cues*¹ and oratories.² These houses contained many pottery Idols, some with the faces of demons and others with women's faces, and there were others of evil figures of Indians who appeared to be committing sodomy one with another.

Within the houses were some small wooden chests, and in them were some other Idols, and some little discs made partly of gold but more than half of copper, and some necklaces and three diadems, and other small objects in the form of fish and others like the ducks of the country, all made of inferior gold.

When we had seen the gold and the houses of masonry, we felt well content at having discovered such a country, for at that time Peru was unknown, indeed, it was not discovered until twenty years later.

While we were fighting with the Indians, the priest González had accompanied us, and he took charge of the chests and the gold, and the Idols, and carried them to the ship. In these skirmishes we took two Indians prisoners, and later on, when they were baptized, one was named Julian and the other Melchior, both of them were cross-eyed. When the fight was over we returned to our ships, and went on exploring along the coast towards the setting sun, we set sail as soon as the wounded were cared for, and what else happened I will tell later on.

¹ *Cue* is the name commonly applied to the Indian shrines or temples, usually small buildings raised on pyramidal foundations. It is not a Maya or Mexican word, but one picked up by the Spaniards in the Antilles.

² It should be noted that, although the Spaniards had now been in America for twenty-four years and had explored the Islands and the coast of the mainland from the mouth of the Orinoco to the Bay of Honduras, and part of the coast of Florida, this was the first time they had seen houses and temples built of stone; and with the exception of the crew of a canoe which Columbus met during his fourth voyage near the Islands of the Guanajes off the coast of Honduras, this was the first meeting of the Spaniards with any of the more civilised races of America.

CHAPTER III.

How we coasted along towards the west, discovering capes and deep water, roadsteads and reefs.

BELIEVING this land to be an Island, as the Pilot, Anton de Alaminos, had assured us that it was, we travelled with the greatest caution, sailing only by day and anchoring by night. After voyaging in this manner for fifteen days, we descried from the ship, what appeared to be a large town near to a great bay or creek, and we thought that there might be a river or stream there, where we could provide ourselves with water of which we had great need, because the casks and other vessels which we had brought with us, were not watertight. It was because our fleet was manned by poor men who had not money enough to purchase good casks and cables, that the water ran short. We had to land near the town, and as it was Sunday, the day of San Lázaro, we gave the town that name, and so it is marked on the charts, but its proper Indian name is Campeche.

In order that we could all of us land at the same time, we agreed to approach the shore in the smallest of the vessels, and in the three boats, with all our arms ready, so as not to be caught as we had been at Cape Catoche.

In these roadsteads and bays, the water shallows very considerably at low tide, so that we had to leave our ships anchored more than a league from the shore.

We went ashore near the town where there was a pool of good water, used by the people of the place for drinking water, for as far as we had seen there were no rivers in this country. We landed the casks, intending to fill them with water, and return to our ships. When the casks were full, and we were ready to embark, a company of about fifty Indians, clad in good cotton mantles, came out in a peace-

ful manner from the town. From their appearance we believed them to be Caciques, and they asked us by signs what it was we were looking for, and we gave them to understand that we had come for water, and wished to return at once to our ships. They then made signs with their hands to find out whether we came from the direction of the sunrise, repeating the word "Castilan" "Castilan" and we did not understand what they meant by Castilan. They then asked us by signs to go with them to their town, and we took council together as to what we should do, and decided to go with them, keeping well on the alert and in good formation.

They led us to some large houses very well built of masonry, which were the Temples of their Idols, and on the walls were figured the bodies of many great serpents and snakes and other pictures of evil-looking Idols. These walls surrounded a sort of Altar covered with clotted blood. On the other side of the Idols were symbols like crosses, and all were coloured. At all this we stood wondering, as they were things never seen or heard of before.

It seemed as though certain Indians had just offered sacrifices to their Idols so as to ensure victory over us. However, many Indian women moved about us, laughing, and with every appearance of good will, but the Indians gathered in such numbers that we began to fear that there might be some trap set for us as at Catoche. While this was happening, many other Indians approached us, wearing very ragged mantles and carrying dry reeds, which they deposited upon the plain, and behind them came two squadrons of Indian archers in cotton armour, carrying lances and shields, slings and stones, and each captain drew up his squadron at a short distance from where we stood. At that moment, there sallied from another house, which was an oratory of their Idols, ten

Indians clad in long white cotton cloaks, reaching to their feet, and with their long hair reeking with blood, and so matted together, that it could never be parted or even combed out again, unless it were cut. These were the priests of the Idols, who in New Spain are commonly called *papas* and such I shall call them hereafter. These priests brought us incense of a sort of resin which they call *copal*, and with pottery braziers full of live coals, they began to fumigate us, and by signs they made us understand that we should quit their land before the firewood which they had piled up there should burn out, otherwise they would attack us and kill us. After ordering fire to be put to the reeds, the priests withdrew without further speech. Then the warriors who were drawn up in battle array began to whistle and sound their trumpets and drums. When we perceived their menacing appearance and saw great squadrons of Indians bearing down on us we remembered that we had not yet recovered from the wounds received at Cape Catoche, and had been obliged to throw overboard the bodies of two soldiers who had died, and fear fell on us, so we determined to retreat to the coast in good order, and began to march along the shore towards a large rock which rose out of the sea, while the boats and the small bark laden with the water casks coasted along close in shore. We had not dared to embark near the town where we had landed, on account of the great press of Indians, for we felt sure they would attack us as we tried to get in the boats. As soon as we had embarked and got the casks on board the ships, we sailed on for six days and nights in good weather, then we were struck by a *norther* which is a foul wind on that coast and it lasted four days and nights, and so strong was the storm that it nearly drove us ashore, so that we had to drop anchor, but we broke two cables, and one ship began to drag her anchor. Ah! the danger was terrible, for if

our last cable had given way we should have been driven ashore to destruction, but thank God we were able to ease the strain on the cable by lashing it with pieces of rope and hawsers, and at last the weather moderated. Then we kept on our course along the coast, going ashore whenever we were able to do so to get water, for, as I have already said, the casks we carried were not only leaky, but were gaping open, and we could not depend upon them, and we hoped that by keeping near the coast we should be able to find water, whenever we landed, either in pools or by digging for it.

As we were sailing along on our course, we came in sight of a town, and about a league on the near side of it, there was a bay which looked as though it had a river or stream running into it; so we determined to anchor. On this coast the tide runs out so far that there is danger of the ships being stranded, so for fear of this we dropped anchor at the distance of a league from the shore, and we landed in that bay from the vessel of least draught and from the boats, carrying all our casks along with us to fill them with water. We landed soon after mid-day, well armed with crossbows and guns. This landing place was about a league from the town, near to some pools of water, and maize plantations, and a few small houses built of masonry. The town is called Potonchan.¹

¹ This town is called both Potonchan and Chanpoton by Bernal Díaz, and Chanpoton in the "Itinirario" and in the Letter from the Municipality of Vera Cruz to Chas. V. In modern maps it is called Champoton. There is a further difficulty about the name of this town, because the town at the mouth of the Rio de Grijalva (Sta. Maria de la Victoria) was also called Potonchon or Potonchan. In the "Relacion de la Villa de Santa Maria de la Victoria" (1579), printed in the *Documentos Ineditos, Relaciones de Yucatan* (Madrid, 1898) we find: "This province is called the province of Tabasco, because the Lord of this town was called Tabasco, and the name of the town is Potonchan, which in Spanish means the Chontal tongue, almost as though we should say the barbarous tongue, for Chontal in the Mexican language is the same as barbarous, and so this town is called Potonchan, as that is the language generally used in this province; and as

We filled our casks with water, but we could not carry them away on account of the great number of warriors who fell on us. I will stop now and tell later on about the attack they made on us.

CHAPTER IV

Concerning the attack made on us as we stood among the farms and maize fields already mentioned.

AS we were filling our casks with water there came along the coast towards us from the town of Potonchan¹ (as it is called) many squadrons of Indians clad in cotton armour reaching to the knees, and armed with bows and arrows, lances and shields, and swords like two handed broad swords, and slings and stones and carrying the feathered crests which they are accustomed to wear. Their faces were painted black and white, and ruddled and they came in silence straight towards us, as though they came in peace, and by signs they asked whether we came from where the sun rose, and we replied that we did come from the direction of the sunrise. We were at our wits end considering the matter and wondering what the words were which the Indians called out to us for they were the same as those used by the people of Lázaro, but we never made out what it was that they said.

the Lord of this town was called Tabasco the province is called Tabasco."

Santa Maria de la Victoria appears to have lost both its original native and its Spanish name, and soon became known as the town of Tabasco, and is so marked on the map of Melchor de Santa Cruz (1579); not long afterwards the town itself disappeared.

Chanpoton has retained its name, and when Bernal Díaz mentions Chanpoton or Potonchan he invariably intends to indicate the site of the modern Champoton, between Campeche and the Laguna de Términos, the "Costa de Mala Pelea" of the expedition under Francisco Hernández de Córdova.

¹ Here written Pontuchan in the original text = Chanpoton.



Part of a Mural Painting of a
BATTLE FROM THE BALL COURT TEMPLE CHICHÉN ITZA, YUCATAN.

After a drawing by Miss Adela Breton.

Reproduced and printed for the Hakluyt Society by Donald Macbeth, 1908.

Plate 2.

To face page 22.

All this happened about the time of the Ave Maria, and the Indians then went off to some villages in the neighbourhood, and we posted watchmen and sentinels for security, for we did not like such a large gathering of Indians.

While we were keeping watch during the night we heard a great squadron of Indian warriors approaching from the town and from the farms, and we knew well that their assembly boded us no good, and we took council together as to what should be done. Some of the soldiers were of opinion that we should embark without delay; however as always happens in such cases, some said one thing and some said another, but the Indians being in such numbers it seemed to most of my companions that if we made any attempt to embark they would be sure to attack us, and we should run great risk of losing our lives. Some others were of opinion that we should fall upon the Indians that very night, for, as the proverb says "who attacks conquers". On the other hand we could see that there were about two hundred Indians to every one of us. While we were still taking council the dawn broke, and we said one to the other "let us strengthen our hearts for the fight, and after commending ourselves to God let us do our best to save our lives."

As soon as it was daylight we could see, coming along the coast, many more Indian warriors with their banners raised, and with feathered crests and drums, and they joined those warriors who had assembled the night before. When their squadrons were formed up they surrounded us on all sides and poured in such showers of arrows and darts, and stones thrown from their slings that over eighty of us soldiers were wounded, and they attacked us hand to hand, some with lances and the others shooting arrows, and others with two-handed

knife edged swords,¹ and they brought us to a bad pass. We gave them a good return of thrusts and cuts and the guns and crossbows never ceased their work, some being loaded while the others were fired. At last feeling the effects of our sword play they drew back a little, but it was not far, and only enabled them to shoot their stones and darts at us with greater safety to themselves.

While the battle was raging the Indians called to one another in their language "*al Calachuni, Calachuni*" which means "let us attack the Captain and kill him," and ten times they wounded him with their arrows ; and me they struck thrice, one arrow wounding me dangerously in the left side, piercing through the ribs. All the other soldiers were wounded by spear thrusts and two of them were carried off alive, one named Alonzo Boto, and the other an old Portuguese man.

Our captain then saw that our good fighting availed us nothing ; other squadrons of warriors were approaching us fresh from the town, bringing food and drink with them and a large supply of arrows. All our soldiers were wounded with two or three arrow wounds, three of them had their throats pierced by lance thrusts, our captain was bleeding from many wounds and already fifty of the soldiers were lying dead.

Feeling that our strength was exhausted we determined with stout hearts to break through the battalions surrounding us and seek shelter in the boats which awaited us near the shore, and proved to be a great assistance to us ; so we formed in close array and broke through the enemy.

Ah ! then to hear the yells, hisses and cries, as the

¹ *Macana* or *Macuahuitl*, a wooden sword edged with sharp flint or obsidian.

enemy showered arrows on us and hurled lances with all their might, wounding us sorely.

Then another danger befell us ; as we all sought shelter in the boats at the same time and there were so many of us they began to sink, so in the best way we could manage hanging on to the waterlogged boats and half swimming, we reached the vessel of lightest draught which came in all haste to our assistance.

Many of us were wounded while we embarked, especially those who were sitting in the stern of the boats, for the Indians shot at them as targets, and even waded into the sea with their lances and attacked us with all their strength. Thank God ! by a great effort we escaped with our lives from the clutches of those people.

When we got on board the ships we found that over fifty of our soldiers were missing, among them two who had been carried off alive. Within a few days we had to cast into the sea five others who died of their wounds and of the great thirst which we suffered. The whole of the fighting occupied only one hour.

The place is called Potonchan,¹ but the pilots and sailors have marked it on the chart as the "Costa de Mala Pelea" (the coast of the disastrous battle). When we were safely out of that affray we gave hearty thanks to God.

As the wounds of the soldiers were being dressed, some of them complained of the pain they felt, for they began to be chilled and the salt water caused considerable swelling, and some of them began to curse the pilot Anton de Alaminos and his voyage and discovery of the Island, for he always maintained that it was an Island and not the main land.

Here I must leave off and I will tell what happened to us later on.

CHAPTER V.

How we agreed to return to the Island of Cuba and of the great hardships we endured before arriving at the Port of Havana.

AS soon as we got on board ship again, in the way I have related, we gave thanks to God, and after we had attended to the wounded (and there was not a man among us who had not two, three or four wounds, and the Captain was wounded in ten places and only one soldier escaped without hurt) we decided to return to Cuba.

As almost all the sailors also were wounded we were shorthanded for tending the sails, so we abandoned the smallest vessel and set fire to her after removing the sails, cables and anchors, and we divided the sailors who were unwounded between the two larger vessels. However, our greatest trouble arose from the want of fresh water, for owing to the attack made on us at Chanpoton, and the haste with which we had to take to the boats, we could not carry away with us the casks and barrels which we had filled with water, and they were all left behind.

So great was our thirst that our mouths and tongues were cracked with the dryness, and there was nothing to give us relief. Oh! what hardships one endures, when discovering new lands, in the way we set out to do it; no one can appreciate the excessive hardships who has not passed through them as we did.

We kept our course close to the land in hope of finding some stream or bay where we could get fresh water, and at the end of three days we found a bay where there appeared to be a river or creek which we thought might hold fresh water. Fifteen of the sailors who had remained on board and were unwounded and three soldiers who were out of danger from their wounds went ashore, and

they took hoes with them, and some barrels to fill with water; but the water of the creek was salt, so they dug holes on the beach, but there also the water was as salt and bitter as that in the creek. However, bad as the water was, they filled the casks with it and brought it on board, but no one could drink such water and it did harm to the mouths and bodies of the few soldiers who attempted to drink it.

There were so many large alligators in that creek that it has always been known as the *estero de los Lagartos* and so it is marked on the charts.

While the boats went ashore for water there arose such a violent gale from the North East that the ships began to drag their anchors and drift towards the shore, for on that coast contrary winds prevail from the North or North East. When the sailors who had gone on shore saw what the weather was like they returned with the boats in hot haste and arrived in time to put out other anchors and cables, so that the ships rode in safety for two days and nights. Then we got up anchor and set sail continuing our voyage back to the island of Cuba.

The pilot Alaminos then took council with the other two pilots, and it was settled that from the place we then were we should cross over to Florida, for he judged from his charts and observations that it was about seventy leagues distant, and that having arrived in Florida they said that it would be an easier voyage and shorter course to reach Havana than the course by which we had come.

We did as the pilot advised, for it seems that he had accompanied Juan Ponce de Leon on his voyage of discovery to Florida fourteen or fifteen years earlier,¹ when in that same land Juan Ponce was defeated and

¹ Juan Ponce de Leon discovered Florida on Easter Sunday (Pascua Florida), 27th March, 1513.

killed. After four days' sail we came in sight of the land of Florida, and what happened to us there I will tell next.

CHAPTER VI.

How twenty of us soldiers went ashore in the Bay of Florida, in company with the Pilot Alaminos, to look for water, and the attack that the natives of the land made on us, and what else happened before we returned to Havana.

WHEN we reached Florida it was arranged that twenty of the soldiers, those whose wounds were best healed, should go ashore. I went with them, and also the Pilot, Anton de Alaminos, and we carried with us such vessels as we still possessed, and hoes, and our crossbows and guns. As the Captain was very badly wounded, and much weakened by the great thirst he had endured, he prayed us on no account to fail in bringing back fresh water as he was parching and dying of thirst, for, as I have already said, the water we had on board was salt and not fit to drink.

We landed near a creek which opened towards the sea, and the Pilot Alaminos carefully examined the coast and said that he had been at this very spot when he came on a voyage of discovery with Juan Ponce de Leon and that the Indians of the country had attacked them and had killed many soldiers, and that it behoved us to keep a very sharp look out. We at once posted two soldiers as sentinels while we dug deep holes on a broad beach where we thought we should find fresh water, for at that hour the tide had ebbed. It pleased God that we should come on very good water, and so overjoyed were we that what with satiating our thirst, and washing out cloths with which to bind up wounds, we must have stayed there an hour. When, at last, very well satisfied, we wished to go

on board with the water, we saw one of the soldiers whom we had placed on guard coming towards us crying out, "to arms, to arms! many Indian warriors are coming on foot and others down the creek in canoes." The soldier who came shouting, and the Indians reached us nearly at the same time.

These Indians carried very long bows and good arrows and lances, and some weapons like swords, and they were clad in deerskins and were very big men. They came straight on and let fly their arrows and at once wounded six of us, and to me they dealt a slight arrow wound. However, we fell on them with such rapidity of cut and thrust of sword and so plied the crossbows and guns that they left us to ourselves and set off to the sea and the creek to help their companions who had come in the canoes and were fighting hand to hand with the sailors, whose boat was already captured and was being towed by the canoes up the creek, four of the sailors being wounded, and the Pilot Alaminos badly hurt in the throat. Then we fell upon them, with the water above our waists, and at the point of the sword, we made them abandon the boat. Twenty of the Indians lay dead on the shore or in the water, and three who were slightly wounded we took prisoners, but they died on board ship.

As soon as the skirmish was over we asked the soldier who had been placed on guard what had become of his companion Berrio (for so he was named). He replied that he had seen him go off with an axe in his hand to cut down a small palm tree, and that he went towards the creek, whence the Indian warriors had approached us, that he then heard cries in Spanish, and on that account he had hurried towards us to give us warning, and it was then that his companion must have been killed.

The soldier who had disappeared was the only man who had escaped unwounded from the fight at Potonchan¹ and it was his fate to come on here to die. We at once set to work to search for our soldier along the trail made by the Indians who had attacked us. We found a palm tree partly cut through, and near by the ground was much trampled by footsteps more than in other parts, and as there was no trace of blood we took it for certain that they had carried him off alive. We searched and shouted all round about for more than an hour, but finding no trace of him we got into the boats and carried the fresh water to the ship, at which the soldiers were as overjoyed as though we had given them their lives. One soldier jumped from the ship into the boat, so great was his thirst, and clasping a jar of water to his chest drank so much water that he swelled up and died within two days.

As soon as we had got the water on board and had hauled up the boats, we set sail for Havana, and during the next day and night the weather was fair and we were near some Islands called *Los Martires* among the shoals called the shoals of the Martyrs. Our deepest soundings gave four fathoms, and the flagship struck the ground when going between the Islands and made water fast, and with all of us soldiers working at the pumps we were not able to check it, and we were in fear of foundering.

We had some Levantine sailors on board with us, and we called to them, "Comrades, come and help to work the pump, for you can see that we are all badly wounded and weary from working day and night." And the Levantines answered, "Do it yourselves, for we do not get any pay as you do, but only hunger and thirst, toil and wounds." So then we made them help us with the work.

¹ Chanpoton.

Ill and wounded as we were we managed to trim the sails and work the pump until our Lord carried us into the Port of Carenas,¹ where now stands the city of Havana, but it used to be called *Puerto de Carenas*, and when we got to land we gave thanks to God.

I must remember to say that when we got to Havana, a Portuguese diver who happened to be in that port soon got the water out of the flagship.

We wrote in great haste to the Governor of the Island, Diego Velásquez, telling him that we had discovered thickly-peopled countries, with masonry houses, and people who covered their persons and went about clothed in cotton garments, and who possessed gold and who cultivated maize fields, and other matters which I have forgotten.

From Havana our Captain Francisco Hernández went by land to the town of Santispíritus, for so it is called, of which he was a citizen, and where he had his Indians ; but he was so badly wounded that he died within ten days.

Three soldiers died of their wounds in Havana, and all the rest of us dispersed and went some to one and some to other parts of the Island. The ships went on to Santiago where the Governor was living, and the two Indians whom we captured at Cape Catoche, whom we named Melchorejo and Julianillo were sent on shore, as were also the little chest with the diadems and the ducks and little fish and other articles of gold and the many idols. These showed such skilful workmanship that the fame of them travelled throughout the Islands including Santo Domingo and Jamaica and even reached Spain. It was said that better lands had never been discovered in the world ; and when the pottery idols with so many different

¹ The Havana of to-day.

shapes were seen, it was said that they belonged to the Gentiles, and others said that they were the work of the Jews whom Titus and Vespasian had turned out of Jerusalem and sent to sea in certain ships which had carried them to this land which as Peru was as yet undiscovered (indeed it was not discovered for another twenty years) was held in high estimation.

There was another matter about which Diego Velásquez questioned these Indians, whether there were gold mines in their country, and to all his questions they answered by signs "Yes." They were shown gold dust, and they said that there was much of it in their land, and they did not speak the truth, for it is clear that neither at Cape Catoche nor in all Yucatan are there any mines either of gold or of silver. These Indians were also shown the mounds of earth in which the plants are set, from the roots of which Cassava bread is made. This plant is called *Yuca* in the Island of Cuba and the Indians said that it grew in their country, and they said *Tlati* for so they call the ground in which the roots are planted; and, because *Yuca* and *Tlati* would make *Yucatan* the Spaniards who had joined in the conversation between Diego Velásquez and the Indians, said, "Señor, these Indians say that their country is called *Yucutlan*"; so it kept that name, but in their own language they do not call it by that name.

I must leave this subject and say that all of us soldiers who went on that voyage of discovery spent the little we possessed on it and we returned to Cuba wounded and in debt. So each soldier went his own way, and soon afterwards our captain died, and we were a long time recovering from our wounds, and according to our count, fifty-seven soldiers died, and this was all the profit we gained by that expedition and discovery. But Diego Velásquez wrote to the Lords Councillors who were at that time managing the Royal Council of the Indies, to say that he had made

the discovery, and had expended on the expedition a great number of gold dollars, and so it was stated and published by Don Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos and Archbishop of Rosano (for thus he was called) who was President of the Council of the Indies, and he wrote to that effect to His Majesty in Flanders, giving much credit in his letters to Diego Velásquez, and he made no mention of us who made the discovery. Now I must stop, and I will tell later about the hardships which befel me and three other soldiers.

CHAPTER VII.

About the hardships I endured on the way to a town called
Trinidad.

I HAVE already said that some of us soldiers who had not yet recovered from our wounds remained in Havana, and when we had got better three of us soldiers wished to go to the town of Trinidad, and we arranged to go with a certain Pedro de Ávila, a resident in Havana who was going to make the voyage in a canoe along the southern coast.¹ The canoe was laden with cotton shirts which Pedro de Ávila intended to sell at the town of Trinidad.

I have already said that the canoes are made like hollow troughs, and in these countries they are used for paddling along the coasts.

The arrangement we made with Avila was that we should give him ten gold dollars to take us in his canoe. So we set out along the coast, sometimes rowing and sometimes sailing, and after eleven days travelling, when near a village of friendly Indians, called Canarreo, which

¹ Bernal Díaz crossed overland to San Cristóval de Havana—the Havana of that time—situated on the south coast (on the river Onicaxinal, see *Orozco y Berra*, vol. iv., p. 71), and thence took canoe to Trinidad.

was the boundary of the township of Trinidad, there arose such a heavy gále in the night that the canoe could not make headway against the sea although we were all of us rowing, as well as Pedro de Ávila and some Indians from Havana, very good rowers whom we had hired to come with us ; we were cast upon some rocks (*Seborucos*), which thereabouts are very large, and in so doing the canoe went to pieces and Ávila lost his property. We all got ashore disabled and naked to the skin, for so as to swim more freely in our efforts to keep the canoe from breaking up we had thought it best to take off all our clothes.

Having escaped from that mishap we found that there was no trail along the coast to the town of Trinidad, nothing but rough ground and *Seborucos* as they call them, stones that pierce the soles of one's feet ; moreover the waves continually broke over us, and we had nothing whatever to eat. To shorten the list of hardships I will leave out all one might say about the bleeding from our feet and other parts of our bodies.

It pleased God that after great toil we came out on a sandy beach, and after travelling along it for two days, we arrived at an Indian village named Yaguarama, which at that time belonged to Padre Fray Bartolomé de las Casas who was the parish priest, whom I afterwards knew as a doctor and a Dominican friar, and who afterwards became Bishop of Chiapas,—and at that village they gave us food.

Next day we went on to a village called Chipiana which belonged to Alonzo de Ávila, and a certain Sandoval, (not the Captain Sandoval of New Spain, but another, a native of Tudela de Duero) and from there we went to Trinidad.

A friend and countryman of mine named Antonio de Medina supplied me with some clothes, such as are worn in the Island. From Trinidad with my poverty and hardships I went to Santiago de Cuba where lived

the Governor, who received me with a good grace ; he was already making haste to send off another fleet.

When I went to pay my respects to him, for we were kinsmen, he joked with me, and going from one subject to another, asked me if I was well enough to return to Yucatan, and I, laughing, asked him who had given the name Yucatan for in that country it was not so called, and he replied, "the Indians you brought back with you call it so," so I told him "you had better call it the land where half the soldiers who went there were killed and all those who escaped death were wounded." He answered, "I know that you suffered many hardships, that always happens to those who set out to discover new lands and gain honour, and His Majesty will reward you, and I will write to him about it, and now my son, go again in the fleet I am getting ready and I will tell the Captain Juan de Grijalva to treat you with honour." I will stop here and relate what happened later.

Here ends the discovery made by Francisco Hernández whom Bernal Díaz del Castillo accompanied ;—Let us relate what Diego Velásquez was proposing to do.

THE EXPEDITION UNDER JUAN DE GRIJALVA.

CHAPTER VIII.

How Diego Velásquez, Governor of the Island of Cuba, ordered another fleet to be sent to the lands which we had discovered and a kinsman of his, a nobleman named Juan de Grijalva, went as Captain General, besides three other Captains, whose names I will give later on.

IN the year 1518 the Governor of Cuba hearing the good account of the land which we had discovered, which is called Yucatan, decided to send out another fleet, and made search for four vessels to compose it. Two of these vessels were two of the three which had accompanied Francisco Hernández, the other two were vessels which Diego Velásquez bought with his own money.

At the time the fleet was being fitted out, there were present in Santiago de Cuba, where Velásquez resided Juan de Grijalva, Alonzo de Ávila, Francisco de Montejo, and Pedro de Alvarado, who had come to see the Governor on business, for all of them held *encomiendas* of Indians in the Island. As they were men of distinction, it was agreed that Juan de Grijalva who was a kinsman of Diego Velásquez, should go as Captain General, that Alonzo de Ávila, Pedro de Alvarado, and Francisco de Montejo should each have command of a ship. Each of these Captains contributed the provisions and stores of Cassava bread and salt pork, and Diego Velásquez provided the four ships, crossbows and guns, some beads and other articles of small value for barter,