

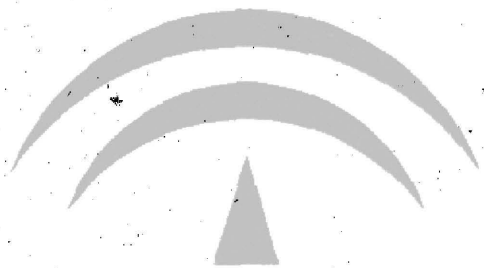
concerns of life. His motives were pure and elevated. But his manner of enforcing them was not always so commendable. This may be gathered not only from the testimony of the colonists generally, who, as parties interested, may be supposed to have been prejudiced ; but from that of the members of his own profession, persons high in office, and of integrity beyond suspicion, not to add that of missionaries engaged in the same good work with himself. These, in their letters and reported conversations, charged the Bishop of Chiapa with an arrogant, uncharitable temper, which deluded his judgment, and vented itself in unwarrantable crimination against such as resisted his projects, or differed from him in opinion. Las Casas, in short, was a man. But, if he had the errors of humanity, he had virtues that rarely belong to it. The best commentary on his character is the estimation which he obtained in the court of his sovereign. A liberal pension was settled on him after his last return from America, which he chiefly expended on charitable objects. No measure of importance, relating to the Indians, was taken without his advice. He lived to see the fruits of his efforts in the positive amelioration of their condition, and in the popular admission of those great truths which it had been the object of his life to unfold. And who shall say how much of the successful efforts and arguments since made in behalf of persecuted humanity may be traced to the example and the writings of this illustrious philanthropist?

His compositions were numerous, most of them of no great length. Some were printed in his time ; others have since appeared, especially in the French translation of Llorente. His great work, which occupied him at intervals for more than thirty years, the *Historia General de las Indias*, still remains in manuscript. It is in three volumes, divided into as many parts, and embraces the colonial history from the discovery of the country by Columbus to the year 1520. The style of the work, like that of all his writings, is awkward, disjointed, and excessively diffuse ; abounding in repetitions, irrelevant digressions, and pedantic citations. But it is sprinkled over with passages of a different kind ; and, when he is roused by the desire to exhibit some gross wrong to the natives, his simple language kindles into eloquence, and he expounds those great and immutable principles of natural justice, which, in his own day, were so little understood. His defect as a historian is, that he wrote history, like every thing else, under the influence of one dominant idea. He is always pleading the cause of the persecuted native. This gives a coloring to events which passed under his own eyes, and filled him with a too easy confidence in those which he gathered from the reports of others. Much of the preceding portion of our narrative which relates to affairs in Cuba must

have come under his personal observation. But he seems incapable of shaking off his early deference to Velasquez, who, as we have noticed, treated him, while a poor curate in the island, with peculiar confidence, For Cortés, on the other hand, he appears to have felt a profound contempt. He witnessed the commencement of his career, when he was standing, cap in hand, as it were, at the proud governor's door, thankful even for a smile of recognition. Las Casas remembered all this, and, when he saw the Conqueror of Mexico rise into a glory and renown, that threw his former patron into the shade, — and most unfairly, as Las Casas deemed, at the expense of that patron, — the good bishop could not withhold his indignation; nor speak of him otherwise than with a sneer, as a mere upstart adventurer.

It was the existence of defects like these, and the fear of the misconception likely to be produced by them, that have so long prevented the publication of his history. At his death, he left it to the convent of San Gregorio, at Valladolid, with directions that it should not be printed for forty years, nor be seen during that time by any layman or member of the fraternity. Herrera, however, was permitted to consult it, and he liberally transferred its contents to his own volumes, which appeared in 1601. The Royal Academy of History revised the first volume of Las Casas some years since, with a view to the publication of the whole work. But the indiscreet and imaginative style of the composition, according to Navarrete, and the consideration that its most important facts were already known through other channels, induced that body to abandon the design. With deference to their judgment, it seems to me a mistake. Las Casas, with every deduction, is one of the great writers of the nation; great from the important truths which he discerned when none else could see them, and from the courage with which he proclaimed them to the world. They are scattered over his History as well as his other writings. They are not, however, the passages transcribed by Herrera. In the statement of fact, too, however partial and prejudiced, no one will impeach his integrity; and, as an enlightened contemporary, his evidence is of undeniable value. It is due to the memory of Las Casas, that, if his work be given to the public at all, it should not be through the garbled extracts of one who was no fair interpreter of his opinions. Las Casas does not speak for himself in the courtly pages of Herrera. Yet the History should not be published without a suitable commentary to enlighten the student, and guard him against any undue prejudices in the writer. We may hope that the entire manuscript will one day be given to the world under the auspices of that distinguished body, which has already done so much in this way for the illustration of the national annals.

The life of Las Casas has been several times written. The two memoirs most worthy of notice are that by Llorente, late Secretary of the Inquisition, prefixed to his French translation of the Bishop's controversial writings, and that by Quintana, in the third volume of his "Españoles Célebres," where it presents a truly noble specimen of biographical composition, enriched by a literary criticism as acute as it is candid.—I have gone to the greater length in this notice, from the interesting character of the man, and the little that is known of him to the English reader. I have also transferred a passage from his work in the original to the Appendix, that the Spanish scholar may form an idea of his style of composition. He ceases to be an authority for us hereafter, as his account of the expedition of Cortés terminates with the destruction of the navy.



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

BOOK THIRD.

MARCH TO MEXICO.

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA



BOOK III.

MARCH TO MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

PROCEEDINGS AT CEMPOALLA.—THE SPANIARDS CLIMB THE TABLELAND.—PICTURESQUE SCENERY.—TRANSACTIONS WITH THE NATIVES.—EMBASSY TO TLASCALA.

1519.

WHILE at Cempoalla, Cortés received a message from Escalante, his commander at Villa Rica, informing him there were four strange ships hovering off the coast, and that they took no notice of his repeated signals. This intelligence greatly alarmed the general, who feared they might be a squadron sent by the governor of Cuba, to interfere with his movements. In much haste, he set out at the head of a few horsemen, and, ordering a party of light infantry to follow, posted back to Villa Rica. The rest of the army he left in charge of Alvarado and of Gonzalo de Sandoval, a young officer, who had begun to give evidence of the uncommon qualities which have secured to him so distinguished a rank among the conquerors of Mexico.

Escalante would have persuaded the general, on his reaching the town, to take some rest, and allow him to go in search of the strangers. But Cortés replied with the homely proverb, "A wounded hare takes no nap,"¹ and, without stopping to refresh himself or his men, pushed on three or four leagues to the north, where he understood the ships were at anchor. On the way, he fell in with three Spaniards, just landed from them. To his eager inquiries whence they came, they replied, that they belonged to a squadron fitted out by Francisco de Garay, governor of Jamaica. This person, the year previous, had visited the Florida coast, and obtained from Spain — where he had some interest at court — authority over the countries he might discover in that vicinity. The three men, consisting of a notary and two witnesses, had been sent on shore to warn their countrymen under Cortés to desist from what was considered an encroachment on the territories of Garay. Probably neither the governor of Jamaica, nor his officers, had any very precise notion of the geography and limits of these territories.

Cortés saw at once there was nothing to apprehend from this quarter. He would have been glad, however, if he could, by any means, have induced the crews of the ships to join his expedition. He found no difficulty in persuading the notary and his companions. But when he came in sight of the vessels, the people on board, distrusting the good terms on

¹ "Cabra coxa no tenga siesta."

which their comrades appeared to be with the Spaniards, refused to send their boat ashore. In this dilemma, Cortés had recourse to a stratagem.

He ordered three of his own men to exchange dresses with the new comers. He then drew off his little band in sight of the vessels, affecting to return to the city. In the night, however, he came back to the same place, and lay in ambush, directing the disguised Spaniards, when the morning broke, and they could be discerned, to make signals to those on board. The artifice succeeded. A boat put off, filled with armed men, and three or four leaped on shore. But they soon detected the deceit, and Cortés, springing from his ambush, made them prisoners. Their comrades in the boat, alarmed, pushed off, at once, for the vessels, which soon got under way, leaving those on shore to their fate. Thus ended the affair. Cortés returned to Cempoalla, with the addition of half a dozen able-bodied recruits, and, what was of more importance, relieved in his own mind from the apprehension of interference with his operations.²

He now made arrangements for his speedy departure from the Totonac capital. The forces reserved for the expedition amounted to about four hundred foot and fifteen horse, with seven pieces of artillery. He obtained, also, thirteen hundred Indian warriors, and a thousand *tamanes*, or porters, from the cacique

² Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., — Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 59, 60.
Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 42-45.

of Cempoalla, to drag the guns, and transport the baggage. He took forty more of their principal men as hostages, as well as to guide him on the way, and serve him by their counsels among the strange tribes he was to visit. They were, in fact, of essential service to him throughout the march.³

The remainder of his Spanish force he left in garrison at Villa Rica de Vera Cruz, the command of which he had intrusted to the alguacil, Juan de Escalanté, an officer devoted to his interests. The selection was judicious. It was important to place there a man who would resist any hostile interference from his European rivals, on the one hand, and maintain the present friendly relations with the natives, on the other. Cortés recommended the Totonac chiefs to apply to this officer, in case of any difficulty, assuring them, that, so long as they remained faithful to their new sovereign and religion, they should find a sure protection in the Spaniards.

Before marching, the general spoke a few words of encouragement to his own men. He told them, they were now to embark, in earnest, on an enterprise which had been the great object of their desires; and that the blessed Saviour would carry them victorious through every battle with their ene-

³ Gomara, Crónica, cap. 44. — Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83. — Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 61.

The number of the Indian auxiliaries stated in the text is much larger than that allowed by either

Cortés or Diaz. But both these actors in the drama show too obvious a desire to magnify their own prowess, by exaggerating the numbers of their foes, and diminishing their own, to be entitled to much confidence in their estimates.

mies. "Indeed," he added, "this assurance must be our stay, for every other refuge is now cut off, but that afforded by the Providence of God, and your own stout hearts."⁴ He ended by comparing their achievements to those of the ancient Romans, "in phrases of honeyed eloquence far beyond any thing I can repeat," says the brave and simple-hearted chronicler who heard them. Cortés was, indeed, master of that eloquence which went to the soldiers' hearts. For their sympathies were his, and he shared in that romantic spirit of adventure which belonged to them. "We are ready to obey you," they cried as with one voice. "Our fortunes, for better or worse, are cast with yours."⁵ Taking leave, therefore, of their hospitable Indian friends, the little army, buoyant with high hopes and lofty plans of conquest, set forward on the march to Mexico.

It was the sixteenth of August, 1519. During the first day, their road lay through the *tierra caliente*, the beautiful land where they had been so long lingering; the land of the vanilla, cochineal, cacao, (not till later days of the orange and the sugarcane,) products which, indigenous to Mexico, have now become the luxuries of Europe; the land where the fruits and the flowers chase one another in un-

⁴ "No teníamos otro socorro, ni ayuda sino el de Dios; porque ya no teníamos nauíos para ir á Cuba, salvo nuestro buen pelear, y coraçones fuertes." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 59.

⁵ "Y todos á vna le respondimos, que haríamos lo que ordenasse, que echada estaua la suerte de la buena, ó mala ventura." Loc. cit.

broken circle through the year; where the gales are loaded with perfumes till the sense aches at their sweetness; and the groves are filled with many-colored birds, and insects whose enamelled wings glisten like diamonds in the bright sun of the tropics. Such are the magical splendors of this paradise of the senses. Yet Nature, who generally works in a spirit of compensation, has provided one here; since the same burning sun, which quickens into life these glories of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, calls forth the pestilent *malaria*, with its train of bilious disorders, unknown to the cold skies of the North. The season in which the Spaniards were there, the rainy months of summer, was precisely that in which the *vómito* rages with greatest fury; when the European stranger hardly ventures to set his foot on shore, still less to linger there a day. We find no mention made of it in the records of the Conquerors, nor any notice, indeed, of an uncommon mortality. The fact doubtless corroborates the theory of those who postpone the appearance of the yellow fever till long after the occupation of the country by the whites. It proves, at least, that, if existing before, it must have been in a very much mitigated form.

After some leagues of travel over roads made nearly impassable by the summer rains, the troops began the gradual ascent—more gradual on the eastern than the western declivities of the Cordilleras—which leads up to the table-land of Mexico. At the close of the second day, they reached Xala-

pa, a place still retaining the same Aztec name, that it has communicated to the drug raised in its environs, the medicinal virtues of which are now known throughout the world.⁶ This town stands midway up the long ascent, at an elevation where the vapors from the ocean, touching in their westerly progress, maintain a rich verdure throughout the year. Though somewhat infected with these marine fogs, the air is usually bland and salubrious. The wealthy resident of the lower regions retires here for safety in the heats of summer, and the traveller hails its groves of oak with delight, as announcing that he is above the deadly influence of the *vómito*.⁷ From this delicious spot, the Spaniards enjoyed one of the grandest prospects in nature. Before them was the steep ascent, — much steeper after this point, — which they were to climb. On the right rose the *Sierra Madre*, girt with its dark belt of pines, and its long lines of shadowy hills stretching away in the distance. To the south, in brilliant contrast, stood the mighty Orizaba, with his white robe of snow descending far down his sides, towering in solitary grandeur, the giant spectre of the Andes. Behind them, they beheld, unrolled at their feet, the magnifi-

⁶ Jalap, *Convolvulus jalapæ*. The *x* and *j* are convertible consonants in the Castilian.

⁷ The heights of Xalapa are crowned with a convent dedicated to St. Francis, erected in later days by Cortés, showing, in its so-

lidity, like others of the period built under the same auspices, says an agreeable traveller, a military as well as religious design. Tudor's Travels in North America, (London, 1834,) vol. II. p. 186.

cent *tierra caliente*, with its gay confusion of meadows, streams, and flowering forests, sprinkled over with shining Indian villages ; while a faint line of light on the edge of the horizon told them that there was the ocean, beyond which were the kindred and country — they were many of them never more to see.

Still winding their way upward, amidst scenery as different as was the temperature from that of the regions below, the army passed through settlements containing some hundreds of inhabitants each, and on the fourth day reached a "strong town," as Cortés terms it, standing on a rocky eminence, supposed to be that now known by the Mexican name of Naulinco. Here they were hospitably entertained by the inhabitants, who were friends of the Totonacs. Cortés endeavoured, through father Olmedo, to impart to them some knowledge of Christian truths, which were kindly received, and the Spaniards were allowed to erect a cross in the place, for the future adoration of the natives. Indeed, the route of the army might be tracked by these emblems of man's salvation, raised wherever a willing population of Indians invited it, suggesting a very different idea from what the same memorials intimate to the traveller in these mountain solitudes in our day.⁸

⁸ Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1. — Rel. Seg. de 83.

Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 40. — Gomara, Crónica, cap. 44. — Ixtlixochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83. "Every hundred yards of our route," says the traveller last quot-

The troops now entered a rugged defile, the Bishop's Pass,⁹ as it is called, capable of easy defence against an army. Very soon they experienced a most unwelcome change of climate. Cold winds from the mountains, mingled with rain, and, as they rose still higher, with driving sleet and hail, drenched their garments, and seemed to penetrate to their very bones. The Spaniards, indeed, partially covered by their armor and thick jackets of quilted cotton, were better able to resist the weather, though their long residence in the sultry regions of the valley made them still keenly sensible to the annoyance. But the poor Indians, natives of the *tierra caliente*, with little protection in the way of covering, sunk under the rude assault of the elements, and several of them perished on the road.

The aspect of the country was as wild and dreary as the climate. Their route wound along the spur of the huge Cofre de Perote, which borrows its name, both in Mexican and Castilian, from the coffer-like rock on its summit.¹⁰ It is one of the great volcanoes of New Spain. It exhibits now, indeed,

ed, speaking of this very region, "was marked by the melancholy erection of a wooden cross, denoting, according to the custom of the country, the commission of some horrible murder on the spot where it was planted." Travels in North America, vol. II. p. 188.

⁹ *El Paso del Obispo*. Cortés named it *Puerto del Nombre de Dios*. Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. ii.

¹⁰ The Aztec name is Nauhcampatepetl, from *nauhcampa*, "any thing square," and *tepetl*, "a mountain." — Humboldt, who waded through forests and snows to its summit, ascertained its height to be 4,089 metres = 13,414 feet, above the sea. See his *Vues des Cordillères*, p. 234, and *Essai Politique*, vol. I. p. 266.

no vestige of a crater on its top, but abundant traces of volcanic action at its base, where acres of lava, blackened scoriæ, and cinders, proclaim the convulsions of nature, while numerous shrubs and mouldering trunks of enormous trees, among the crevices, attest the antiquity of these events. Working their toilsome way across this scene of desolation, the path often led them along the borders of precipices, down whose sheer depths of two or three thousand feet the shrinking eye might behold another climate, and see all the glowing vegetation of the tropics choking up the bottom of the ravines.

After three days of this fatiguing travel, the way-worn army emerged through another defile, the *Sierra del Agua*.¹¹ They soon came upon an open reach of country, with a genial climate, such as belongs to the temperate latitudes of southern Europe. They had reached the level of more than seven thousand feet above the ocean, where the great sheet of tableland spreads out for hundreds of miles along the crests of the Cordilleras. The country showed signs of careful cultivation, but the products were, for the most part, not familiar to the eyes of the Spaniards. Fields and hedges of the various tribes of the cactus, the towering organum, and plantations of aloes with rich yellow clusters of flowers on their tall stems, affording drink and clothing to the Aztec, were everywhere seen. The plants of the torrid

¹¹ The same mentioned in Cortés' Letter as the *Puerto de la Leña* Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. iii.

and temperate zones had disappeared, one after another, with the ascent into these elevated regions. The glossy and dark-leaved banana, the chief, as it is the cheapest, aliment of the countries below, had long since faded from the landscape. The hardy maize, however, still shone with its golden harvests in all the pride of cultivation, the great staple of the higher, equally with the lower terraces of the plateau.

Suddenly the troops came upon what seemed the environs of a populous city, which, as they entered it, appeared to surpass even that of Cempoalla in the size and solidity of its structures.¹² These were of stone and lime, many of them spacious and tolerably high. There were thirteen *teocallis* in the place; and in the suburbs they had seen a receptacle, in which, according to Bernal Diaz, were stored a hundred thousand skulls of human victims, all piled and ranged in order! He reports the number as one he had ascertained by counting them himself.¹³ Whatever faith we may attach to the precise accuracy of his figures, the result is almost equally startling. The Spaniards were destined to become fa-

¹² Now known by the euphonious Indian name of Tlatlauquitepec. (Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. iv.) It is the *Cocotlan* of Bernal Diaz. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 61.) The old Conquerors made sorry work with the Aztec names, both of places and persons, for which they must be allowed to have had ample apology.

¹³ Puestos tantos rimeros de calaueras de muertos, que se podian bien contar, segun el concierto con que estauan puestas, que me parece que eran mas de cien mil, y digo otra vez sobre cien mil." Ibid., ubi supra.

miliar with this appalling spectacle, as they approached nearer to the Aztec capital.

The lord of the town ruled over twenty thousand vassals. He was tributary to Montezuma, and a strong Mexican garrison was quartered in the place. He had probably been advised of the approach of the Spaniards, and doubted how far it would be welcome to his sovereign. At all events, he gave them a cold reception, the more unpalatable after the extraordinary sufferings of the last few days. To the inquiry of Cortés, whether he were subject to Montezuma, he answered, with real or affected surprise, "Who is there that is not a vassal to Montezuma?"¹⁴ The general told him, with some emphasis, that he was not. He then explained whence and why he came, assuring him that he served a monarch who had princes for his vassals as powerful as the Aztec monarch himself.

The cacique in turn fell nothing short of the Spaniard, in the pompous display of the grandeur and resources of the Indian emperor. He told his guest that Montezuma could muster thirty great vassals, each master of a hundred thousand men!¹⁵

¹⁴ "El qual casi admirado de lo que le preguntaba, me respondió, diciendo; ¿que quien no era vasallo de Muctezuma? queriendo decir, que allí era Señor del Mundo." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 47.

¹⁵ "Tiene mas de 30 Príncipes á sí subjectos, que cada uno dellos tiene cient mill hombres é mas de pelea." (Oviedo, Hist. de las

Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.) This marvellous tale is gravely repeated by more than one Spanish writer, in their accounts of the Aztec monarchy, not as the assertion of this chief, but as a veritable piece of statistics. See, among others, Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 12, — Solís, Conquista, lib. 3, cap. 16.

His revenues were immense, as every subject, now-ever poor, paid something. They were all expended on his magnificent state, and in support of his armies. These were continually in the field, while garrisons were maintained in most of the large cities of the empire. More than twenty thousand victims, the fruit of his wars, were annually sacrificed on the altars of his gods! His capital, the cacique said, stood in a lake, in the centre of a spacious valley. The lake was commanded by the emperor's vessels, and the approach to the city was by means of causeways, several miles long, connected in parts by wooden bridges, which, when raised, cut off all communication with the country. Some other things he added, in answer to queries of his guest, in which, as the reader may imagine, the crafty, or credulous cacique varnished over the truth with a lively coloring of romance. Whether romance, or reality, the Spaniards could not determine. The particulars they gleaned were not of a kind to tranquillize their minds, and might well have made bolder hearts than theirs pause, ere they advanced. But far from it. "The words which we heard," says the stout old cavalier, so often quoted, "however they may have filled us with wonder, made us — such is the temper of the Spaniard — only the more earnest to prove the adventure, desperate as it might appear."¹⁶

¹⁶ Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 61.

There is a slight ground-swell of glorification in the Captain's

narrative, which may provoke a smile, — not a sneer, for it is mingled with too much real courage, and plicity of character

In a further conversation Cortés inquired of the chief, whether his country abounded in gold, and intimated a desire to take home some, as specimens to his sovereign. But the Indian lord declined to give him any, saying it might displease Montezuma. "Should he command it," he added, "my gold, my person, and all I possess, shall be at your disposal." The general did not press the matter further.

The curiosity of the natives was naturally excited by the strange dresses, weapons, horses, and dogs of the Spaniards. Marina, in satisfying their inquiries, took occasion to magnify the prowess of her adopted countrymen, expatiating on their exploits and victories, and stating the extraordinary marks of respect they had received from Montezuma. This intelligence seems to have had its effect; for soon after, the cacique gave the general some curious trinkets of gold, of no great value, indeed, but as a testimony of his good-will. He sent him, also, some female slaves to prepare bread for the troops, and supplied the means of refreshment and repose, more important to them, in the present juncture, than all the gold of Mexico.¹⁷

The Spanish general, as usual, did not neglect the occasion to inculcate the great truths of revelation on his host, and to display the atrocity of the Indian superstitions. The cacique listened with

¹⁷ For the preceding pages, besides authorities cited in course, see Peter Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. 5, cap. 1, — Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 83, — Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 44, — Torquemada, *Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 26.

civil, but cold indifference: Cortés, finding him unmoved, turned briskly round to his soldiers, exclaiming that now was the time to plant the Cross! They eagerly seconded his pious purpose, and the same scenes might have been enacted as at Cempoalla, with, perhaps, very different results, had not father Olmedo, with better judgment, interposed. He represented that to introduce the Cross among the natives, in their present state of ignorance and incredulity, would be to expose the sacred symbol to desecration, so soon as the backs of the Spaniards were turned. The only way was to wait patiently the season when more leisure should be afforded to instil into their minds a knowledge of the truth. The sober reasoning of the good father prevailed over the passions of the martial enthusiasts.

It was fortunate for Cortés that Olmedo was not one of those frantic friars, who would have fanned his fiery temper on such occasions into a blaze. It might have had a most disastrous influence on his fortunes; for he held all temporal consequences light in comparison with the great work of conversion, to effect which the unscrupulous mind of the soldier, trained to the stern discipline of the camp, would have employed force, whenever fair means were ineffectual.¹⁸ But Olmedo belonged to that class of benevolent missionaries—of whom the Roman Catholic church, to its credit, has furnished many exam-

¹⁸ The general clearly belonged to the church militant, mentioned by Butler;

"Such as do build their faith upon
The holy text of pike and gun;
And prove their doctrines orthodox
By apostolic blows and knocks."

ples — who rely on spiritual weapons for the great work, inculcating those doctrines of love and mercy which can best touch the sensibilities and win the affections of their rude audience. These, indeed, are the true weapons of the Church, the weapons employed in the primitive ages, by which it has spread its peaceful banners over the farthest regions of the globe. Such were not the means used by the conquerors of America, who, rather adopting the policy of the victorious Moslems in their early career, carried with them the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other. They imposed obedience in matters of faith, no less than of government, on the vanquished, little heeding whether the conversion were genuine, so that it conformed to the outward observances of the Church. Yet the seeds thus recklessly scattered must have perished but for the missionaries of their own nation, who, in later times, worked over the same ground, living among the Indians as brethren, and, by long and patient culture, enabling the germs of truth to take root and fructify in their hearts.

The Spanish commander remained in the city four or five days to recruit his fatigued and famished forces; and the modern Indians still point out, or did, at the close of the last century, a venerable cypress, under the branches of which was tied the horse of the *Conquistador*, — the Conqueror, as Cortés was styled, *par excellence*.¹⁹ Their route

¹⁹ “Árbol grande, dicho *ahuehuete*.” (Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. iii.) The *cupressus disticha* of Linnæus. See Humboldt, *Essai Politique*, tom. II. p. 54, note.

now opened on a broad and verdant valley, watered by a noble stream, — a circumstance of not too frequent occurrence on the parched table-land of New Spain. The soil was well protected by woods, a thing still rarer at the present day; since the invaders, soon after the Conquest, swept away the magnificent growth of timber, rivalling that of our Southern and Western States in variety and beauty, which covered the plateau under the Aztecs.²⁰

All along the river, on both sides of it, an unbroken line of Indian dwellings, “so near as almost to touch one another,” extended for three or four leagues; arguing a population much denser than at present.²¹ On a rough and rising ground stood a town, that might contain five or six thousand inhabitants, commanded by a fortress, which, with its walls and trenches, seemed to the Spaniards quite “on a level with similar works in Europe.” Here the troops again halted, and met with friendly treatment.²²

²⁰ It is the same taste which has made the Castiles, the table-land of the Peninsula, so naked of wood. Prudential reasons, as well as taste, however, seem to have operated in New Spain. A friend of mine on a visit to a noble *hacienda*, but uncommonly barren of trees, was informed by the proprietor that they were cut down to prevent the lazy Indians on the plantation from wasting their time by loitering in their shade!

²¹ It confirms the observations of M. de Humboldt. “Sans doute

lors de la première arrivée des Espagnols, toute cette côte, depuis la rivière de Papaloapan (Alvarado) jusqu’à Huastecapan, était plus habitée et mieux cultivée qu’elle ne l’est aujourd’hui. Cependant à mesure que les conquérans montèrent au plateau, ils trouvèrent les villages plus rapprochés les uns des autres, les champs divisés en portions plus petites, le peuple plus policé.” Humboldt, *Essai Politique*, tom. II. p. 202.

²² The correct Indian name of the town, *Yxtacamaxtillán*, *Yxtac-*

Cortés now determined his future line of march. At the last place he had been counselled by the natives to take the route of the ancient city of Cholula, the inhabitants of which, subjects of Montezuma, were a mild race, devoted to mechanical and other peaceful arts, and would be likely to entertain him kindly. Their Cempoallan allies, however, advised the Spaniards not to trust the Cholulans, "a false and perfidious people," but to take the road to Tlascala, that valiant little republic, which had so long maintained its independence against the arms of Mexico. The people were frank as they were fearless, and fair in their dealings. They had always been on terms of amity with the Totonacs, which afforded a strong guaranty for their amicable disposition on the present occasion.

The arguments of his Indian allies prevailed with the Spanish commander, who resolved to propitiate the good-will of the Tlascalans by an embassy. He selected four of the principal Cempoallans for this, and sent by them a martial gift, — a cap of crimson cloth, together with a sword and a crossbow, weapons which, it was observed, excited general admiration among the natives. He added a letter, in which he asked permission to pass through their country. He expressed his admiration of the valor

mastitan of Cortés, will hardly be recognised in the *Xalacingo* of Diaz. The town was removed, in 1601, from the top of the hill to the plain. On the original site

are still visible remains of carved stones of large dimensions, attesting the elegance of the ancient fortress or palace of the cacique. Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. v.

of the Tlascalans, and of their long resistance to the Aztecs, whose proud empire he designed to humble.²³ It was not to be expected that this epistle, indited in good Castilian, would be very intelligible to the Tlascalans. But Cortés communicated its import to the ambassadors. Its mysterious characters might impress the natives with an idea of superior intelligence, and the letter serve instead of those hieroglyphical missives which formed the usual credentials of an Indian ambassador.²⁴

The Spaniards remained three days in this hospitable place, after the departure of the envoys, when they resumed their progress. Although in a friendly country, they marched always as if in a land of enemies, the horse and light troops in the van, with the heavy-armed and baggage in the rear, all in battle array. They were never without their armor, waking or sleeping, lying down with their weapons by their sides. This unintermitting and restless vigilance was, perhaps, more oppressive to the spirits than even bodily fatigue. But they were confident in their superiority in a fair field, and felt that the most serious danger they had to fear from Indian warfare was surprise. "We are few against many, brave companions," Cortés would say to them; "be prepared, then, not as if you were going to battle, but as if actually in the midst of it!"²⁵

²³ "Estas cosas y otras de gran persuasión contenía la carta, pero como no sabían leer no pudieron entender lo que contenía." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

²⁴ For an account of the diplomatic usages of the people of Anahuac, see Ante, p. 44.

²⁵ "Mira, señores compañeros, ya veis que somos pocos, hemos

The road taken by the Spaniards was the same which at present leads to Tlascala; not that, however, usually followed in passing from Vera Cruz to the capital, which makes a circuit considerably to the south, towards Puebla, in the neighbourhood of the ancient Cholula. They more than once forded the stream that rolls through this beautiful plain, lingering several days on the way, in hopes of receiving an answer from the Indian republic. The unexpected delay of the messengers could not be explained, and occasioned some uneasiness.

As they advanced into a country of rougher and bolder features, their progress was suddenly arrested by a remarkable fortification. It was a stone wall nine feet in height, and twenty in thickness, with a parapet, a foot and a half broad, raised on the summit for the protection of those who defended it. It had only one opening, in the centre, made by two semicircular lines of wall overlapping each other for the space of forty paces, and affording a passage-way between, ten paces wide, so contrived, therefore, as to be perfectly commanded by the inner wall. This fortification, which extended more than two leagues, rested at either end on the bold natural buttresses formed by the sierra. The work was built of immense blocks of stones nicely laid together without cement;²⁶ and the remains still existing, among

de estar siempre tan apercebidos, y aparejados, como si aora viessemos venir los contrarios á pelear, y no solamente vellos venir, sino

hazer cuenta que estamos ya en la batalla con ellos." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 62.

²⁶ According to the writer last

which are rocks of the whole breadth of the rampart, fully attest its solidity and size.²⁷

This singular structure marked the limits of Tlascala, and was intended, as the natives told the Spaniards, as a barrier against the Mexican invasions. The army paused, filled with amazement at the contemplation of this Cyclopean monument, which naturally suggested reflections on the strength and resources of the people who had raised it. It caused them, too, some painful solicitude as to the probable result of their mission to Tlascala, and their own consequent reception there. But they were too sanguine to allow such uncomfortable surmises long to dwell in their minds. Cortés put himself at the head of his cavalry, and calling out, "Forward, soldiers, the Holy Cross is our banner, and under that we shall conquer," led his little army through the undefended passage, and in a few moments they trod the soil of the free republic of Tlascala.²⁸

cited, the stones were held by a cement so hard that the men could scarcely break it with their pikes.

* (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 62.)

But the contrary statement, in the general's letter, is confirmed by the present appearance of the wall. Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. vii.

²⁷ Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. vii.

The attempts of the Archbishop to identify the route of Cortés

have been very successful. It is a pity, that his map illustrating the itinerary should be so worthless.

²⁸ Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS. — Gomara, Crónica, cap. 44, 45. — Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83. — Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 3. — Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 2. — Peter Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 1.

CHAPTER II.

REPUBLIC OF TLASCALA.—ITS INSTITUTIONS.—EARLY HISTORY.—
DISCUSSIONS IN THE SENATE.—DESPERATE BATTLES.

1519.

BEFORE advancing further with the Spaniards into the territory of Tlascala, it will be well to notice some traits in the character and institutions of the nation, in many respects, the most remarkable in Anahuac. The Tlascalans belonged to the same great family with the Aztecs.¹ They came on the grand plateau about the same time with the kindred races, at the close of the twelfth century, and planted themselves on the western borders of the lake of Tezcuco. Here they remained many years engaged in the usual pursuits of a bold and partially civilized people. From some cause or other, perhaps their turbulent temper, they incurred the enmity of surrounding tribes. A coalition was formed against •

¹ The Indian chronicler, Camargo, considers his nation a branch of the Chichemec. (Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) So, also, Torquemada. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 9.) Clavigero, who has carefully investigated the antiquities of Anahuac, calls it one of the seven

Nahuatlac tribes. (Stor. del Mexico, tom. I. p. 153, nota.) The fact is not of great moment, since they were all cognate races, speaking the same tongue, and, probably, migrated from their country in the far North at nearly the same time.

them; and a bloody battle was fought on the plains of Poyauhtlan, in which the Tlascalans were completely victorious.

Disgusted, however, with their residence among nations with whom they found so little favor, the conquering people resolved to migrate. They separated into three divisions, the largest of which, taking a southern course by the great *volcan* of Mexico, wound round the ancient city of Cholula, and finally settled in the district of country overshadowed by the sierra of Tlascala. The warm and fruitful valleys, locked up in the embraces of this rugged brotherhood of mountains, afforded means of subsistence for an agricultural people, while the bold eminences of the sierra presented secure positions for their towns.

After the lapse of years, the institutions of the nation underwent an important change. The monarchy was divided first into two, afterwards into four separate states, bound together by a sort of federal compact, probably not very nicely defined. Each state, however, had its lord or supreme chief, independent in his own territories, and possessed of coördinate authority with the others in all matters concerning the whole republic. The affairs of government, especially all those relating to peace and war, were settled in a senate or council, consisting of the four lords with their inferior nobles.

The lower dignitaries held of the superior, each in his own district, by a kind of feudal tenure, being bound to supply his table, and enable him to main-

tain his state in peace, as well as to serve him in war.² In return, he experienced the aid and protection of his suzerain. The same mutual obligations existed between him and the followers among whom his own territories were distributed.³ Thus a chain of feudal dependencies was established, which, if not contrived with all the art and legal refinements of analogous institutions in the Old World, displayed their most prominent characteristics in its personal relations, the obligations of military service on the one hand, and protection on the other. This form of government, so different from that of the surrounding nations, subsisted till the arrival of the Spaniards. And it is certainly evidence of considerable civilization, that so complex a polity should

² The descendants of these petty nobles attached as great value to their pedigrees, as any Biscayan or Asturian in Old Spain. Long after the Conquest, they refused, however needy, to dishonor their birth by resorting to mechanical or other plebeian occupations, *oficios viles y bajos*. "Los descendientes de estos son estimados por hombres calificados, que aunque sean probrísimos no usan oficios mecánicos ni tratos bajos ni viles, ni jamas se permiten cargar ni cabar con coas y azadones, diciendo que son hijos Idalgos en que no han de aplicarse á estas cosas soeces y bajas, sino servir en guerras y fronteras, como Idalgos, y morir como hombres peleando." Camargo, *Hist. de Tlascala*, MS.

³ "Cualquier Tecuhtli que formaba un Tecalli, que es casa de Mayorazgo, todas aquellas tierras que le caian en suerte de repartimiento, con montes, fuentes, rios, ó lagunas tomase para la casa principal la mayor y mejor suerte ó pagos de tierra, y luego las demas que quedaban se partian por sus soldados amigos y parientes, igualmente, y todos estos están obligados á reconocer la casa mayor y acudir á ella, á alzarla y repararla, y á ser continuos en reconocer á ella de aves, caza, flores, y ramos para el sustento de la casa del Mayorazgo, y el que lo es está obligado á sustentarlos y á regalarlos como amigos de aquella casa y parientes de ella." *Ibid.*, MS.

have so long continued, undisturbed by violence or faction in the confederate states, and should have been found competent to protect the people in their rights, and the country from foreign invasion.

The lowest order of the people, however, do not seem to have enjoyed higher immunities than under the monarchical governments; and their rank was carefully defined by an appropriate dress, and by their exclusion from the insignia of the aristocratic orders.⁴

The nation, agricultural in its habits, reserved its highest honors, like most other rude — unhappily also, civilized — nations, for military prowess. Public games were instituted, and prizes decreed to those who excelled in such manly and athletic exercises, as might train them for the fatigues of war. Triumphs were granted to the victorious general, who entered the city, leading his spoils and captives in long procession, while his achievements were commemorated in national songs, and his effigy, whether in wood or stone, was erected in the temples. It was truly in the martial spirit of republican Rome.⁵

An institution not unlike knighthood was introduced, very similar to one existing also among the Aztecs. The aspirant to the honors of this barbaric

⁴ Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

⁵ “Los grandes recibimientos que hacian á los capitanes que venian y alcanzaban victoria en las guerras, las fiestas y solenidades con que se solenizaban á manera

de triunfo, que los metian en andas en su puebla, trayendo consigo á los vencidos; y por eternizar sus hazañas se las cantaban publicamente, y así quedaban memoradas y con estatuas que les ponian en los templos.” Ibid., MS.

chivalry watched his arms and fasted fifty or sixty days in the temple, then listened to a grave discourse on the duties of his new profession. Various whimsical ceremonies followed, when his arms were restored to him; he was led in solemn procession through the public streets, and the inauguration was concluded by banquets and public rejoicings. — The new knight was distinguished henceforth by certain peculiar privileges, as well as by a badge intimating his rank. It is worthy of remark, that this honor was not reserved exclusively for military merit; but was the recompense, also, of public services of other kinds, as wisdom in council, or sagacity and success in trade. For trade was held in as high estimation by the Tlascalans, as by the other people of Anahuac.⁶

The temperate climate of the table-land furnished the ready means for distant traffic. The fruitfulness of the soil was indicated by the name of the country, — *Tlascala* signifying the “land of bread.” Its wide plains, to the slopes of its rocky hills, waved with yellow harvests of maize, and with the bountiful maguey, a plant, which, as we have seen, supplied the materials for some important fabrics. With these, as well as the products of agricultural industry, the merchant found his way down the sides of the Cordilleras, wandered over the sunny regions at

⁶ For the whole ceremony of merchant-knights, — see *Appendix*, Part 2, No. 9, where the inauguration, — though as it seems, having especial reference to the original is given from Camargo.