

as the men were averse to the employment. Cortés selected those who came from Palos, Moguer, and other maritime towns, and, notwithstanding their frequent claims of exemption, as hidalgos, from this menial occupation, he pressed them into the service.¹³ Each vessel mounted a piece of heavy ordnance, and was placed under an officer of respectability, to whom Cortés gave a general code of instructions for the government of the little navy, of which he proposed to take the command in person.

He had already sent to his Indian confederates, announcing his purpose of immediately laying siege to Mexico, and called on them to furnish their promised levies within the space of ten days at furthest. The Tlascalans he ordered to join him in Tezcuco; the others were to assemble at Chalco, a more convenient place of rendezvous for the operations in the southern quarter of the Valley. The Tlascalans arrived within the time prescribed, led by the younger Xicotencatl, supported by Chichemecatl, the same doughty warrior who had convoyed the brigantines to Tezcuco. They came fifty thousand strong, according to Cortés,¹⁴

¹³ Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.—*Hidalgo*, besides its legal privileges, brought with it some fanciful ones to its possessor; if, indeed, it be considered a privilege to have excluded him from many a humble, but honest, calling, by which the poor man might have gained his bread. (For an amusing account of these, see Doblado's Letters from Spain, let. 2.) In no country has the *poor gentleman* afforded so rich a theme for the satirist, as the writings of Le Sage, Cervantes, and Lope de Vega abundantly show.

¹⁴ "Y los Capitanes de Tascaltcal con toda su gente, muy lúcida, y bien armada, . . . y segun la cuenta, que los Capitanes nos diéron, pasaban de cinquenta mil Hombres de Guerra." (Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 236.) "I toda la Gente," adds Herrera,

making a brilliant show with their military finery, and marching proudly forward under the great national banner, emblazoned with a spread eagle, the arms of the republic.¹⁵ With as blithe and manly a step as if they were going to the battle-ground, they defiled through the gates of the capital, making its walls ring with the friendly shouts of "Castile and Tlascala."

The observations which Cortés had made in his late tour of reconnoissance had determined him to begin the siege by distributing his forces into three separate camps, which he proposed to establish at the extremities of the principal causeways. By this arrangement the troops would be enabled to move in concert on the capital, and be in the best position to intercept its supplies from the surrounding country. The first of these points was Tacuba, commanding the fatal causeway of the *noche triste*. This was assigned to Pedro de Alvarado, with a force consisting, according to Cortés' own statement, of thirty horse, one hundred and sixty-eight Spanish infantry, and five-and-twenty thousand Tlascalans. Cristóval de Olid had command of the second army, of much the same magnitude, which was to take up its position at Cojohuacan, the city, it will be remembered, overlooking the short

"tardó tres Días en entrar, segun en sus Memoriales dice Alonso de Ojeda, ni con ser Tezcuco tan gran Ciudad, cabian en ella." Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 13.

¹⁵ "Y sus vāderas tēdidas, y el aue blāca q̄ tienen por armas, q̄ parece águila, con sus alas tendidas." (Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 149.) A spread eagle of gold, Clavigero considers as the arms of the republic. (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 145.) But, as Bernal Diaz speaks of it as "white," it may have been the white heron, which belonged to the house of Xicotencatl.

causeway connected with that of Iztapalapan. Gonzalo de Sandoval had charge of the third division, of equal strength with each of the two preceding, but which was to draw its Indian levies from the forces assembled at Chalco. This officer was to march on Iztapalapan and complete the destruction of that city, begun by Cortés soon after his entrance into the Valley. It was too formidable a post to remain in the rear of the army. The general intended to support the attack with his brigantines, after which the subsequent movements of Sandoval would be determined by circumstances.¹⁶

Having announced his intended dispositions to his officers, the Spanish commander called his troops together, and made one of those brief and stirring harangues with which he was wont on great occasions to kindle the hearts of his soldiery. "I have taken the last step," he said; "I have brought you to the goal for which you have so long panted. A few days will place you before the gates of Mexico,—the capital from which you were driven with so much ignominy. But we now go forward under the smiles of Providence. Does any one doubt it? Let him but compare our present condition with that in which we found ourselves not twelve months since, when, broken and dispirited, we sought shelter within the walls of Tlascalala; nay, with that in which we were but a few months

¹⁶ The precise amount of each division, as given by Cortés, was,—in that of Alvarado, 30 horse, 168 Castilian infantry, and 25,000 Tlascalans; in that of Olid, 33 horse, 178 infantry, 20,000 Tlascalans; and in Sandoval's, 24 horse, 167 infantry, 30,000 Indians. (Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 236.) Diaz reduces the number of native troops to one-third. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 150.

since, when we took up our quarters in Tezcuco.¹⁷ Since that time our strength has been nearly doubled. We are fighting the battles of the Faith, fighting for our honor, for riches, for revenge. I have brought you face to face with your foe. It is for you to do the rest."¹⁸

The address of the bold chief was answered by the thundering acclamations of his followers, who declared that every man would do his duty under such a leader; and they only asked to be led against the enemy.¹⁹ Cortés then caused the regulations for the army, published at Tlascalala, to be read again to the troops, with the assurance that they should be enforced to the letter.

It was arranged that the Indian forces should precede the Spanish by a day's march, and should halt for their confederates on the borders of the Tezcucan territory. A circumstance occurred soon after their departure which gave bad augury for the future. A

¹⁷ "Que se alegrassen, y esforzassen mucho, pues que veian, que nuestro Señor nos encaminaba para haber victoria de nuestros Enemigos: porque bien sabian, que quando habiamos entrado en Tesaico, no habiamos trahido mas de quarenta de Caballo, y que Dios nos habia socorrido mejor, que lo habiamos pensado." Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 235.

¹⁸ Oviedo expands what he nevertheless calls the "breve é substancial oracion" of Cortés into treble the length of it as found in the general's own pages; in which he is imitated by most of the other chroniclers. Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 22.

¹⁹ "Y con estas últimas palabras cesó; y todos respondieron sin discrepancia, é á una voce dicentes; Sirvanse Dios y el Emperador nuestro Señor de tan buen capitan, y de nosotros, que así lo harémos todos como quien somos, y como se debe esperar de buenos Españoles, y con tanta voluntad, y deseo, dicho que parecia que cada hora les era perder vn año de tiempo por estar ya á las manos con los Enemigos." Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., ubi supra.

quarrel had arisen in the camp at Tezcuco between a Spanish soldier and a Tlascalan chief, in which the latter was badly hurt. He was sent back to Tlascalala, and the matter was hushed up, that it might not reach the ears of the general, who, it was known, would not pass it over lightly. Xicotencatl was a near relative of the injured party, and on the first day's halt he took the opportunity to leave the army, with a number of his followers, and set off for Tlascalala. Other causes are assigned for his desertion.²⁰ It is certain that from the first he had looked on the expedition with an evil eye, and had predicted that no good would come of it. He came into it with reluctance, as, indeed, he detested the Spaniards in his heart.

His partner in the command instantly sent information of the affair to the Spanish general, still encamped at Tezcuco. Cortés, who saw at once the mischievous consequences of this defection at such a time, detached a party of Tlascalan and Tezcucan Indians after the fugitive, with instructions to prevail on him, if possible, to return to his duty. They overtook him on the road, and remonstrated with him on his conduct, contrasting it with that of his countrymen generally, and of his own father in particular, the steady friend of the white men. "So much the worse," replied the chieftain: "if they had taken my counsel, they would never have become the dupes of the perfidious strangers."²¹

²⁰ According to Diaz, the desire to possess himself of the lands of his comrade Chichimecatl, who remained with the army (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 150); according to Herrera, it was an amour that carried him home. (Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 17.) Both and all agree on the chief's aversion to the Spaniards and to the war.

²¹ "Y la respuesta que le embió á dezir fué, que si el viejo de su

Finding their remonstrances received only with anger or contemptuous taunts, the emissaries returned without accomplishing their object.

Cortés did not hesitate on the course he was to pursue. "Xicotencatl," he said, "had always been the enemy of the Spaniards, first in the field, and since in the council-chamber; openly, or in secret, still the same,—their implacable enemy. There was no use in parleying with the false-hearted Indian." He instantly despatched a small body of horse with an alguacil to arrest the chief wherever he might be found, even though it were in the streets of Tlascalala, and to bring him back to Tezcuco. At the same time, he sent information of Xicotencatl's proceedings to the Tlascalan senate, adding that desertion among the Spaniards was punished with death.

The emissaries of Cortés punctually fulfilled his orders. They arrested the fugitive chief,—whether in Tlascalala or in its neighborhood is uncertain,—and brought him a prisoner to Tezcuco, where a high gallows, erected in the great square, was prepared for his reception. He was instantly led to the place of execution; his sentence and the cause for which he suffered were publicly proclaimed, and the unfortunate cacique expiated his offence by the vile death of a malefactor. His ample property, consisting of lands, slaves, and some gold, was all confiscated to the Castilian crown.²²

padre, y Masse Escaci le huvieran creído, que no se huvieran señoreado tanto dellos, que les haze hazer todo lo que quiere: y por no gastar mas palabras, dixo, que no queria venir." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 150.

²² So says Herrera, who had in his possession the memorial of

Thus perished Xicotencatl, in the flower of his age,—as dauntless a warrior as ever led an Indian army to battle. He was the first chief who successfully resisted the arms of the invaders; and, had the natives of Anahuac, generally, been animated with a spirit like his, Cortés would probably never have set foot in the capital of Montezuma. He was gifted with a clearer insight into the future than his countrymen; for he saw that the European was an enemy far more to be dreaded than the Aztec. Yet, when he consented to fight under the banner of the white men, he had no right to desert it, and he incurred the penalty prescribed by the code of savage as well as of civilized nations. It is said, indeed, that the Tlasealan senate aided in apprehending him, having previously answered Cortés that his crime was punishable with death by their own laws.²³ It was a bold act, however, thus to execute him in the midst of his people. For he

Ojeda, one of the Spaniards employed to apprehend the chieftain. (Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 17, and Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 90.) Bernal Diaz, on the other hand, says that the Tlascalan chief was taken and executed on the road. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 150.) But the latter chronicler was probably absent at the time with Alvarado's division, in which he served. Solís, however, prefers his testimony, on the ground that Cortés would not have hazarded the execution of Xicotencatl before the eyes of his own troops. (Conquista, lib. 5, cap. 19.) But the Tlascalans were already well on their way towards Tacuba. A very few only could have remained in Tezcuco, which was occupied by the citizens and the Castilian army,—neither of them very likely to interfere in the prisoner's behalf. His execution there would be an easier matter than in the territory of Tlascala, which he had probably reached before his apprehension.

²³ Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 17.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 90.

was a powerful chief, heir to one of the four seigniories of the republic. His chivalrous qualities made him popular, especially with the younger part of his countrymen; and his garments were torn into shreds at his death and distributed as sacred relics among them. Still, no resistance was offered to the execution of the sentence, and no commotion followed it. He was the only Tlascalan who ever swerved from his loyalty to the Spaniards.

According to the plan of operations settled by Cortés, Sandoval, with his division, was to take a southern direction, while Alvarado and Olid would make the northern circuit of the lakes. These two cavaliers, after getting possession of Tacuba, were to advance to Chapoltepec and demolish the great aqueduct there, which supplied Mexico with water. On the tenth of May they commenced their march; but at Acolman, where they halted for the night, a dispute arose between the soldiers of the two divisions, respecting their quarters. From words they came to blows, and a defiance was even exchanged between the leaders, who entered into the angry feelings of their followers.²⁴ Intelligence of this was soon communicated to Cortés, who sent at once to the fiery chiefs, imploring them, by their regard for him and the common cause, to lay aside their differences, which must end in their own ruin and that of the expedition. His remonstrance prevailed, at least, so far as to establish a show of reconciliation between the parties. But Olid was not

²⁴ "Y sobre ello ya auíamos echado mano á las armas los de nuestra Capitanía contra los de Christóval de Oli, y aun los Capitanes desafiados." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 150.

a man to forget, or easily to forgive; and Alvarado, though frank and liberal, had an impatient temper much more easily excited than appeased. They were never afterwards friends.²⁵

The Spaniards met with no opposition on their march. The principal towns were all abandoned by the inhabitants, who had gone to strengthen the garrison of Mexico, or taken refuge with their families among the mountains. Tacuba was in like manner deserted, and the troops once more established themselves in their old quarters in the lordly city of the Tepanecs.²⁶

Their first undertaking was to cut off the pipes that conducted the water from the royal streams of Chapultepec to feed the numerous tanks and fountains which sparkled in the court-yards of the capital. The aqueduct, partly constructed of brick-work and partly of stone and mortar, was raised on a strong though narrow dike, which transported it across an arm of the lake; and the whole work was one of the most pleasing monuments of Mexican civilization. The Indians,

²⁵ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 150.—*Rel. Terc. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 237.—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 130.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 22.

²⁶ The Tepanec capital, shorn of its ancient splendors, is now only interesting from its historic associations. "These plains of Tacuba," says the spirited author of "Life in Mexico," "once the theatre of fierce and bloody conflicts, and where, during the siege of Mexico, Alvarado 'of the leap' fixed his camp, now present a very tranquil scene. Tacuba itself is now a small village of mud huts, with some fine old trees, a few very old ruined houses, a ruined church, and some traces of a building, which ——— assured us had been the palace of their last monarch; whilst others declare it to have been the site of the Spanish encampment." Vol. i. let. 13.

well aware of its importance, had stationed a large body of troops for its protection. A battle followed, in which both sides suffered considerably, but the Spaniards were victorious. A part of the aqueduct was demolished, and during the siege no water found its way again to the capital through this channel.

On the following day the combined forces descended on the fatal causeway, to make themselves masters, if possible, of the nearest bridge. They found the dike covered with a swarm of warriors, as numerous as on the night of their disaster, while the surface of the lake was dark with the multitude of canoes. The intrepid Christians strove to advance under a perfect hurricane of missiles from the water and the land, but they made slow progress. Barricades thrown across the causeway embarrassed the cavalry and rendered it nearly useless. The sides of the Indian boats were fortified with bulwarks, which shielded the crews from the arquebuses and cross-bows; and, when the warriors on the dike were hard pushed by the pikemen, they threw themselves fearlessly into the water, as if it were their native element, and, reappearing along the sides of the dike, shot off their arrows and javelins with fatal execution. After a long and obstinate struggle, the Christians were compelled to fall back on their own quarters with disgrace, and—including the allies—with nearly as much damage as they had inflicted on the enemy. Olid, disgusted with the result of the engagement, inveighed against his companion as having involved them in it by his wanton temerity, and drew off his forces the next morning to his own station at Cojohuacan.

The camps, separated by only two leagues, main-

tained an easy communication with each other. They found abundant employment in foraging the neighboring country for provisions, and in repelling the active sallies of the enemy; on whom they took their revenge by cutting off his supplies. But their own position was precarious, and they looked with impatience for the arrival of the brigantines under Cortés. It was in the latter part of May that Olid took up his quarters at Cojohuacan; and from that time may be dated the commencement of the siege of Mexico.²⁷

²⁷ Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 237-239.—Ixtililochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 94.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 22.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 50.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 130.—Clavigero settles this date at the day of Corpus Christi, May 30th. (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 196.) But the Spaniards left Tezcuco May 10th, according to Cortés; and three weeks could not have intervened between their departure and their occupation of Cojohuacan. Clavigero disposes of this difficulty, it is true, by dating the beginning of their march on the 20th instead of the 10th of May; following the chronology of Herrera, instead of that of Cortés. Surely the general is the better authority of the two.

CHAPTER V.

INDIAN FLOTILLA DEFEATED.—OCCUPATION OF THE CAUSEWAYS.—DESPERATE ASSAULTS.—FIRING OF THE PALACES.—SPIRIT OF THE BESIEGED.—BARRACKS FOR THE TROOPS.

1521.

No sooner had Cortés received intelligence that his two officers had established themselves in their respective posts, than he ordered Sandoval to march on Iztapalapan. The cavalier's route led him through a country for the most part friendly; and at Chalco his little body of Spaniards was swelled by the formidable muster of Indian levies who awaited there his approach. After this junction, he continued his march without opposition till he arrived before the hostile city, under whose walls he found a large force drawn up to receive him. A battle followed, and the natives, after maintaining their ground sturdily for some time, were compelled to give way, and to seek refuge either on the water, or in that part of the town which hung over it. The remainder was speedily occupied by the Spaniards.

Meanwhile, Cortés had set sail with his flotilla, intending to support his lieutenant's attack by water. On drawing near the southern shore of the lake, he passed under the shadow of an insulated peak, since named from him the "Rock of the Marquis." It

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