

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.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 237-239.—Ixtilxochitl, 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

(95)

was held by a body of Indians, who saluted the fleet, as it passed, with showers of stones and arrows. Cortés, resolving to punish their audacity, and to clear the lake of his troublesome enemy, instantly landed with a hundred and fifty of his followers. He placed himself at their head, scaled the steep ascent, in the face of a driving storm of missiles, and, reaching the summit, put the garrison to the sword. There was a number of women and children, also, gathered in the place, whom he spared.<sup>1</sup>

On the top of the eminence was a blazing beacon, serving to notify to the inhabitants of the capital when the Spanish fleet weighed anchor. Before Cortés had regained his brigantine, the canoes and *piraguas* of the enemy had left the harbors of Mexico, and were seen darkening the lake for many a rood. There were several hundred of them, all crowded with warriors, and advancing rapidly by means of their oars over the calm bosom of the waters.<sup>2</sup>

Cortés, who regarded his fleet, to use his own language, as "the key of the war," felt the importance of striking a decisive blow in the first encounter with the enemy.<sup>3</sup> It was with chagrin, therefore, that he

<sup>1</sup> "It was a beautiful victory," exclaims the Conqueror. "É entrámoslos de tal manera, que ninguno de ellos se escapó, excepto las Mugerres, y Niños; y en este combate me hiriéron veinte y cinco Españoles, pero fué muy hermosa Victoria." Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> About five hundred boats, according to the general's own estimate (Ibid., loc. cit.); but more than four thousand, according to Bernal Díaz (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 150); who, however, was not present.

<sup>3</sup> "Y como yo deseaba mucho, que el primer reencuentro, que con

found his sails rendered useless by the want of wind. He calmly awaited the approach of the Indian squadron, which, however, lay on their oars at something more than musket-shot distance, as if hesitating to encounter these leviathans of their waters. At this moment, a light air from land rippled the surface of the lake; it gradually freshened into a breeze, and Cortés, taking advantage of the friendly succor, which he may be excused, under all the circumstances, for regarding as especially sent him by Heaven, extended his line of battle, and bore down, under full press of canvas, on the enemy.<sup>4</sup>

The latter no sooner encountered the bows of their formidable opponents than they were overturned and sent to the bottom by the shock, or so much damaged that they speedily filled and sank. The water was covered with the wreck of broken canoes, and with the bodies of men struggling for life in the waves and vainly imploring their companions to take them on board their over-crowded vessels. The Spanish fleet, as it dashed through the mob of boats, sent off its volleys to the right and left with a terrible effect, completing the discomfiture of the Aztecs. The latter made no attempt at resistance, scarcely venturing a single flight of arrows, but strove with all their strength to regain the port from which they had so lately issued.

ellos obiessemos, fuesse de mucha victoria; y se hiciesse de manera, que ellos cobrasen mucho temor de los bergantines, porque la llave de toda la Guerra estaba en ellos." Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, pp. 241, 242.

<sup>4</sup> "Plugo á nuestro Señor, que estándonos mirando los unos á los otros, vino un viento de la Tierra muy favorable para embestir con ellos." Ibid., p. 242.

They were no match in the chase, any more than in the fight, for their terrible antagonist, who, borne on the wings of the wind, careered to and fro at his pleasure, dealing death widely around him, and making the shores ring with the thunders of his ordnance. A few only of the Indian flotilla succeeded in recovering the port, and, gliding up the canals, found a shelter in the bosom of the city, where the heavier burden of the brigantines made it impossible for them to follow. This victory, more complete than even the sanguine temper of Cortés had prognosticated, proved the superiority of the Spaniards, and left them, henceforth, undisputed masters of the Aztec sea.<sup>5</sup>

It was nearly dusk when the squadron, coasting along the great southern causeway, anchored off the point of junction, called Xoloc, where the branch from Cojohuacan meets the principal dike. The avenue widened at this point, so as to afford room for two towers, or turreted temples, built of stone, and surrounded by walls of the same material, which presented altogether a position of some strength, and, at the

<sup>5</sup> Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, loc. cit.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 48.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 32.—I may be excused for again quoting a few verses from a beautiful description in "Madoc," and one as pertinent as it is beautiful:

"Their thousand boats, and the ten thousand oars,  
From whose broad bowls the waters fall and flash,  
And twice ten thousand feathered helms, and shields,  
Glittering with gold and scarlet plumery.  
Onward they come with song and swelling horn;  
. . . . . On the other side  
Advance the *British* barks; the freshening breeze  
Fills the broad sail; around the rushing keel  
The waters sing, while proudly they sail on,  
Lords of the water."

MADOC, Part 2, canto 25.

present moment, was garrisoned by a body of Aztecs. They were not numerous, and Cortés, landing with his soldiers, succeeded without much difficulty in dislodging the enemy and in getting possession of the works.

It seems to have been originally the general's design to take up his own quarters with Olid at Cojohuacan. But, if so, he now changed his purpose, and wisely fixed on this spot as the best position for his encampment. It was but half a league distant from the capital, and, while it commanded its great southern avenue, had a direct communication with the garrison at Cojohuacan, through which he might receive supplies from the surrounding country. Here, then, he determined to establish his headquarters. He at once caused his heavy iron cannon to be transferred from the brigantines to the causeway, and sent orders to Olid to join him with half his force, while Sandoval was instructed to abandon his present quarters and advance to Cojohuacan, whence he was to detach fifty picked men of his infantry to the camp of Cortés. Having made these arrangements, the general busily occupied himself with strengthening the works at Xoloc and putting them in the best posture of defence.

During the first five or six days after their encampment the Spaniards experienced much annoyance from the enemy, who too late endeavored to prevent their taking up a position so near the capital, and which, had they known much of the science of war, they would have taken better care themselves to secure. Contrary to their usual practice, the Indians made their attacks by night as well as by day. The water swarmed with

canoes, which hovered at a distance in terror of the brigantines, but still approached near enough, especially under cover of the darkness, to send showers of arrows into the Christian camp, that fell so thick as to hide the surface of the ground and impede the movements of the soldiers. Others ran along the western side of the causeway, unprotected as it was by the Spanish fleet, and plied their archery with such galling effect that the Spaniards were forced to make a temporary breach in the dike, wide enough to admit two of their own smaller vessels, which, passing through, soon obtained as entire command of the interior basin as they before had of the outer. Still, the bold barbarians, advancing along the causeway, marched up within bow-shot of the Christian ramparts, sending forth such yells and discordant battle-cries that it seemed, in the words of Cortés, "as if heaven and earth were coming together." But they were severely punished for their temerity, as the batteries, which commanded the approaches to the camp, opened a desolating fire, that scattered the assailants and drove them back in confusion to their own quarters.<sup>6</sup>

The two principal avenues to Mexico, those on the south and the west, were now occupied by the Christians. There still remained a third, the great dike of Tepejacac, on the north, which, indeed, taking up the principal street, that passed in a direct line through the

<sup>6</sup> "Y era tanta la multitud," says Cortés, "que por el Agua, y por la Tierra no viamos sino Gente, y daban tantas gritas, y alaridos, que parecía que se hundia el Mundo." *Rel. Terc.*, p. 245.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 23.—Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 95.—Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 32.

heart of the city, might be regarded as a continuation of the dike of Iztapalapan. By this northern route a means of escape was still left open to the besieged, and they availed themselves of it, at present, to maintain their communications with the country and to supply themselves with provisions. Alvarado, who observed this from his station at Tacuba, advised his commander of it, and the latter instructed Sandoval to take up his position on the causeway. That officer, though suffering at the time from a severe wound received from a lance in one of the late skirmishes, hastened to obey, and thus, by shutting up its only communication with the surrounding country, completed the blockade of the capital.<sup>7</sup>

But Cortés was not content to wait patiently the effects of a dilatory blockade, which might exhaust the patience of his allies and his own resources. He determined to support it by such active assaults on the city as should still further distress the besieged and hasten the hour of surrender. For this purpose he ordered a simultaneous attack, by the two commanders at the other stations, on the quarters nearest their encampments.

On the day appointed, his forces were under arms with the dawn. Mass, as usual, was performed; and the Indian confederates, as they listened with grave attention to the stately and imposing service, regarded with undisguised admiration the devotional reverence shown by the Christians, whom, in their simplicity,

<sup>7</sup> *Rel. Terc. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 246, 247.—Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 150.—Herrera, *Hist. de las Ind.*, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 17.—Defensa, MS., cap. 28.

they looked upon as little less than divinities themselves.<sup>8</sup> The Spanish infantry marched in the van, led on by Cortés, attended by a number of cavaliers, dismounted like himself. They had not moved far upon the causeway, when they were brought to a stand by one of the open breaches, that had formerly been traversed by a bridge. On the farther side a solid rampart of stone and lime had been erected, and behind this a strong body of Aztecs were posted, who discharged on the Spaniards, as they advanced, a thick volley of arrows. The latter vainly endeavored to dislodge them with their fire-arms and cross-bows; they were too well secured behind their defences.

Cortés then ordered two of the brigantines, which had kept along, one on each side of the causeway, in order to co-operate with the army, to station themselves so as to enfilade the position occupied by the enemy. Thus placed between two well-directed fires, the Indians were compelled to recede. The soldiers on board the vessels, springing to land, bounded like deer up the sides of the dike. They were soon followed by their countrymen under Cortés, who, throwing themselves into the water, swam the undefended chasm and joined in pursuit of the enemy. The Mexicans fell back, however, in something like order, till they reached another opening in the dike, like the former, dismantled of its bridge, and fortified in the

<sup>8</sup> "Así como fué de día se dixo vna misa de Espíritu Santo, que todos los Christianos oyéron con mucha devocion; é aun los Indios, como simples, é no entendientes de tan alto misterio, con admiracion estaban atentos notando el silencio de los cathólicos y el acatamiento que al altar, y al sacerdote los Christianos toviéron hasta recibir la benedicion." Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 24.

same manner by a bulwark of stone, behind which the retreating Aztecs, swimming across the chasm, and reinforced by fresh bodies of their countrymen, again took shelter.

They made good their post, till, again assailed by the cannonade from the brigantines, they were compelled to give way. In this manner breach after breach was carried; and at every fresh instance of success a shout went up from the crews of the vessels, which, answered by the long files of the Spaniards and their confederates on the causeway, made the Valley echo to its borders.

Cortés had now reached the end of the great avenue, where it entered the suburbs. There he halted to give time for the rear-guard to come up with him. It was detained by the labor of filling up the breaches in such a manner as to make a practicable passage for the artillery and horse and to secure one for the rest of the army on its retreat. This important duty was intrusted to the allies, who executed it by tearing down the ramparts on the margins and throwing them into the chasms, and, when this was not sufficient,—for the water was deep around the southern causeway,—by dislodging the great stones and rubbish from the dike itself, which was broad enough to admit of it, and adding them to the pile, until it was raised above the level of the water.

The street on which the Spaniards now entered was the great avenue that intersected the town from north to south, and the same by which they had first visited the capital.<sup>9</sup> It was broad and perfectly straight, and,

<sup>9</sup> [This street, which is now called the Calle del Rastro, and traverses

in the distance, dark masses of warriors might be seen gathering to the support of their countrymen, who were prepared to dispute the further progress of the Spaniards. The sides were lined with buildings, the terraced roofs of which were also crowded with combatants, who, as the army advanced, poured down a pitiless storm of missiles on their heads, which glanced harmless, indeed, from the coat of mail, but too often found their way through the more common *escaupil* of the soldier, already gaping with many a ghastly rent. Cortés, to rid himself of this annoyance for the future, ordered his Indian pioneers to level the principal buildings as they advanced; in which work of demolition, no less than in the repair of the breaches, they proved of inestimable service.<sup>10</sup>

The Spaniards, meanwhile, were steadily, but slowly, advancing, as the enemy recoiled before the rolling fire of musketry, though turning, at intervals, to discharge their javelins and arrows against their pursuers. In this way they kept along the great street until their course was interrupted by a wide ditch or canal, once traversed by a bridge, of which only a few planks now remained. These were broken by the Indians the

the whole city from north to south, leading from the Calle del Relox to the causeway of Guadalupe or Tepeyacac, was known at the period immediately following the Conquest as the Calle de Iztapalapa, which name was given to it through its whole extent. In the time of the ancient Mexicans its course was intercepted by the great temple, the principal door of which fronted upon it. After this edifice had been demolished, the street was opened from one end to the other. *Conquista de Méjico* (trad. de Vega), tom. ii. p. 157.]

<sup>10</sup> Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 32.—Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 95.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 23.—Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 247, 248.

moment they had crossed, and a formidable array of spears was instantly seen bristling over the summit of a solid rampart of stone, which protected the opposite side of the canal. Cortés was no longer supported by his brigantines, which the shallowness of the canals prevented from penetrating into the suburbs. He brought forward his arquebusiers, who, protected by the targets of their comrades, opened a fire on the enemy. But the balls fell harmless from the bulwarks of stone; while the assailants presented but too easy a mark to their opponents.

The general then caused the heavy guns to be brought up, and opened a lively cannonade, which soon cleared a breach in the works, through which the musketeers and crossbowmen poured in their volleys thick as hail. The Indians now gave way in disorder, after having held their antagonists at bay for two hours.<sup>11</sup> The latter, jumping into the shallow water, scaled the oppo-

<sup>11</sup> Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ubi supra.—Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 95.—Here terminates the work last cited of the Tezcucan chronicler; who has accompanied us from the earliest period of our narrative down to this point in the final siege of the capital. Whether the concluding pages of the manuscript have been lost, or whether he was interrupted by death, it is impossible to say. But the deficiency is supplied by a brief sketch of the principal events of the siege, which he has left in another of his writings. He had, undoubtedly, uncommon sources of information in his knowledge of the Indian languages and picture-writing, and in the oral testimony which he was at pains to collect from the actors in the scenes he describes. All these advantages are too often counterbalanced by a singular incapacity for discriminating—I will not say, between historic truth and falsehood (for what is truth?)—but between the probable, or rather the possible, and the impossible. One of the generation of primitive converts to the Romish faith, he lived in a state of twilight civilization, when, if miracles were not easily wrought, it was at least easy to believe them.

site bank without further resistance, and drove the enemy along the street towards the square, where the sacred pyramid reared its colossal bulk high over the other edifices of the city.

It was a spot too familiar to the Spaniards. On one side stood the palace of Axayacatl, their old quarters, the scene to many of them of so much suffering.<sup>12</sup> Opposite was the pile of low, irregular buildings once the residence of the unfortunate Montezuma;<sup>13</sup> while a third side of the square was flanked by the *Coatepantli*, or Wall of Serpents, which encompassed the great *teocalli* with its little city of holy edifices.<sup>14</sup> The Spaniards halted at the entrance of the square, as if oppressed, and for the moment overpowered, by the bitter recollections that crowded on their minds. But their intrepid leader, impatient at their hesitation, loudly called on them to advance before the Aztecs had time to rally; and, grasping his target in one hand, and waving his sword high above his head with the other, he cried his war-cry of "St. Jago," and led them at once against the enemy.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> [In the street of Santa Teresa. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. ii. p. 158.]

<sup>13</sup> [Which forms now what is called "El Empedradillo." Ibid.]

<sup>14</sup> [This wall, adorned with serpents, and crowned with the heads, strung together on stakes, of the human victims sacrificed in the temple, formed the front of the Plaza on the south side, extending from the corner of the Calle de Plateros east, towards the chains that enclose the cemetery of the cathedral. Ibid.]

<sup>15</sup> "I con todo eso no se determinaban los Christianos de entrar en la Plaça; por lo qual diciendo Hernando Cortés, que no era tiempo de mostrar cansancio, ni cobardía, con vna Rodela en la mano, apellidando Santiago, arremetió el primero." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 18.

The Mexicans, intimidated by the presence of their detested foe, who, in spite of all their efforts, had again forced his way into the heart of their city, made no further resistance, but retreated, or rather fled, for refuge into the sacred enclosure of the *teocalli*, where the numerous buildings scattered over its ample area afforded many good points of defence. A few priests, clad in their usual wild and blood-stained vestments, were to be seen lingering on the terraces which wound round the stately sides of the pyramid, chanting hymns in honor of their god, and encouraging the warriors below to battle bravely for his altars.<sup>16</sup>

The Spaniards poured through the open gates into the area, and a small party rushed up the winding corridors to its summit. No vestige now remained there of the Cross, or of any other symbol of the pure faith to which it had been dedicated. A new effigy of the Aztec war-god had taken the place of the one demolished by the Christians, and raised its fantastic and hideous form in the same niche which had been occupied by its predecessor. The Spaniards soon tore away its golden mask and the rich jewels with which it was bedizened, and, hurling the struggling priests down the sides of the pyramid, made the best of their way to their comrades in the area. It was full time.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Ixtlilxochitl, in his Thirteenth Relacion, embracing among other things a brief notice of the capture of Mexico, of which an edition has been given to the world by the industrious Bustamante, bestows the credit of this exploit on Cortés himself. "En la capilla mayor donde estaba Huitzilopochtli, que llegaron Cortés é Ixtlilxuchitl á un tiempo, y ambos embistiéron con el ídolo. Cortés cogió la máscara de oro que tenia puesta este ídolo con ciertas piedras preciosas que estaban engastadas en ella." Venida de los Españoles, p. 29.

The Aztecs, indignant at the sacrilegious outrage perpetrated before their eyes, and gathering courage from the inspiration of the place, under the very presence of their deities, raised a yell of horror and vindictive fury, as, throwing themselves into something like order, they sprang, by a common impulse, on the Spaniards. The latter, who had halted near the entrance, though taken by surprise, made an effort to maintain their position at the gateway. But in vain; for the headlong rush of the assailants drove them at once into the square, where they were attacked by other bodies of Indians, pouring in from the neighboring streets. Broken, and losing their presence of mind, the troops made no attempt to rally, but, crossing the square, and abandoning the cannon, planted there, to the enemy, they hurried down the great street of Iztapalapan. Here they were soon mingled with the allies, who choked up the way, and who, catching the panic of the Spaniards, increased the confusion, while the eyes of the fugitives, blinded by the missiles that rained on them from the *azoteas*, were scarcely capable of distinguishing friend from foe. In vain Cortés endeavored to stay the torrent, and to restore order. His voice was drowned in the wild uproar, as he was swept away, like drift-wood, by the fury of the current.

All seemed to be lost;—when suddenly sounds were heard in an adjoining street, like the distant tramp of horses galloping rapidly over the pavement. They drew nearer and nearer, and a body of cavalry soon emerged on the great square. Though but a handful in number, they plunged boldly into the thick of the

enemy. We have often had occasion to notice the superstitious dread entertained by the Indians of the horse and his rider. And, although the long residence of the cavalry in the capital had familiarized the natives in some measure with their presence, so long a time had now elapsed since they had beheld them that all their former mysterious terrors revived in full force; and, when thus suddenly assailed in flank by the formidable apparition, they were seized with a panic and fell into confusion. It soon spread to the leading files, and Cortés, perceiving his advantage, turned with the rapidity of lightning, and, at this time supported by his followers, succeeded in driving the enemy with some loss back into the enclosure.

It was now the hour of vespers, and, as night must soon overtake them, he made no further attempt to pursue his advantage. Ordering the trumpets, therefore, to sound a retreat, he drew off his forces in good order, taking with him the artillery which had been abandoned in the square. The allies first went off the ground, followed by the Spanish infantry, while the rear was protected by the horse, thus reversing the order of march on their entrance. The Aztecs hung on the closing files, and, though driven back by frequent charges of the cavalry, still followed in the distance, shooting off their ineffectual missiles, and filling the air with wild cries and howlings, like a herd of ravenous wolves disappointed of their prey. It was late before the army reached its quarters at Xoloc.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> "Los de Caballo revolvían sobre ellos, que siempre alanceaban, ó mataban algunos; é como la Calle era muy larga, hubo lugar de hacerse esto quatro, ó cinco veces. É aunque los Enemigos vian