

can do our duty in the cause of God and the King!"²³ There was no longer hesitation. All thoughts were now bent on the instant passage of the Cordilleras.

²³ "Todos digeron que fuese por el Camino que quisiese i viesse que mas convenia, que todos le seguirian con buena voluntad é obra al tiempo del efecto, y veria lo que cada uno de ellos haria en servicio de Dios é de su Magestad." *Ibid.*, MS., loc. cit.

CHAPTER IV.

SEVERE PASSAGE OF THE ANDES.—EMBASSIES FROM ATAHUALLPA.—THE SPANIARDS REACH CAXAMALCA.—EMBASSY TO THE INCA.—INTERVIEW WITH THE INCA.—DEPENDENCY OF THE SPANIARDS.

1532.

THAT night Pizarro held a council of his principal officers, and it was determined that he should lead the advance, consisting of forty horse and sixty foot, and reconnoitre the ground; while the rest of the company, under his brother Hernando, should occupy their present position till they received further orders.

At early dawn the Spanish general and his detachment were under arms, and prepared to breast the difficulties of the sierra. These proved even greater than had been foreseen. The path had been conducted in the most judicious manner round the rugged and precipitous sides of the mountains, so as best to avoid the natural impediments presented by the ground. But it was necessarily so steep, in many places, that the cavalry were obliged to dismount, and, scrambling up as they could, to lead their horses by the bridle. In many places, too, where some huge crag or eminence overhung the road, this was driven to the very verge of the precipice; and the traveller was compelled to wind along the narrow ledge of rock, scarcely wide enough for his single steed, where a misstep would precipitate him hundreds, nay, thousands, of feet into the dreadful abyss! The wild passes of the sierra, practicable for the half-naked Indian, and even for the sure and circumspect mule,—an animal that seems to have been created for the roads of

the Cordilleras,—were formidable to the man-at-arms encumbered with his panoply of mail. The tremendous fissures or *quebradas*, so frightful in this mountain chain, yawned open, as if the Andes had been split asunder by some terrible convulsion, showing a broad expanse of the primitive rock on their sides, partially mantled over with the spontaneous vegetation of ages; while their obscure depths furnished a channel for the torrents, that, rising in the heart of the sierra, worked their way gradually into light, and spread over the savannas and green valleys of the *tierra caliente* on their way to the great ocean.

Many of these passes afforded obvious points of defence; and the Spaniards, as they entered the rocky defiles, looked with apprehension lest they might rouse some foe from his ambush. This apprehension was heightened, as, at the summit of a steep and narrow gorge, in which they were engaged, they beheld a strong work, rising like a fortress, and frowning, as it were, in gloomy defiance on the invaders. As they drew near this building, which was of solid stone, commanding an angle of the road, they almost expected to see the dusky forms of the warriors rise over the battlements, and to receive their tempest of missiles on their bucklers; for it was in so strong a position, that a few resolute men might easily have held there an army at bay. But they had the satisfaction to find the place untenanted, and their spirits were greatly raised by the conviction that the Indian monarch did not intend to dispute their passage, when it would have been easy to do so with success.

Pizarro now sent orders to his brother to follow without delay; and, after refreshing his men, continued his toilsome ascent, and before nightfall reached an eminence crowned by another fortress, of even greater strength than the preceding. It was built of solid masonry, the lower part excavated from the living rock, and the whole work executed with skill not inferior to that of the European architect.¹

¹ "Tan ancha la Cerca como qualquier Fortaleza de España, con

Here Pizarro took up his quarters for the night. Without waiting for the arrival of the rear, on the following morning he resumed his march, leading still deeper into the intricate gorges of the sierra. The climate had gradually changed, and the men and horses, especially the latter, suffered severely from the cold, so long accustomed as they had been to the sultry climate of the tropics.² The vegetation also had changed its character; and the magnificent timber which covered the lower level of the country had gradually given way to the funereal forest of pine, and, as they rose still higher, to the stunted growth of numberless Alpine plants, whose hardy natures found a congenial temperature in the icy atmosphere of the more elevated regions. These dreary solitudes seemed to be nearly abandoned by the brute creation as well as by man. The light-footed vicuña, roaming in its native state, might be sometimes seen looking down from some airy cliff, where the foot of the hunter dared not venture. But instead of the feathered tribes whose gay plumage sparkled in the deep glooms of the tropical forests, the adventurers now beheld only the great bird of the Andes, the loathsome condor, who, sailing high above the clouds, followed with doleful cries in the track of the army, as if guided by instinct in the path of blood and carnage.

At length they reached the crest of the Cordillera, where it spreads out into a bold and bleak expanse, with scarce the vestige of vegetation, except what is afforded by the *pajonal*, a dried yellow grass, which, as it is seen from below, encircling the base of the snow-covered peaks, looks, with its brilliant straw-color lighted up in the rays of an

sus Puertas: que si en esta Tierra oviese los Maestros, i Herramientas de España, no pudiera ser mejor labrada la Cerca." Xerez, Conq. del Peru, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 192.

² "Es tanto el frio que hace en esta Sierra, que como los Caballos venian hechos al calor, que en los Valles hacia. algunos de ellos se resfriaron." Ibid., p. 191.

ardent sun, like a setting of gold round pinnacles of burnished silver. The land was sterile, as usual in mining districts, and they were drawing near the once famous gold quarries on the way to Caxamalca;

"Rocks rich in gems, and mountains big with mines,
That on the high equator ridgy rise."

Here Pizarro halted for the coming up of the rear. The air was sharp and frosty; and the soldiers, spreading their tents, lighted fires, and, huddling round them, endeavored to find some repose after their laborious march.³

They had not been long in these quarters when a messenger arrived, one of those who had accompanied the Indian envoy sent by Pizarro to Atahualpa. He informed the general that the road was free from enemies, and that an embassy from the Inca was on its way to the Castilian camp. Pizarro now sent back to quicken the march of the rear, as he was unwilling that the Peruvian envoy should find him with his present diminished numbers. The rest of the army were not far distant, and not long after reached the encampment.

In a short time the Indian embassy also arrived, which consisted of one of the Inca nobles and several attendants, bringing a welcome present of llamas to the Spanish commander. The Peruvian bore, also, the greetings of his master, who wished to know when the Spaniards would arrive at Caxamalca, that he might provide suitable refreshments for them. Pizarro learned that the Inca had left Guamachucho, and was now lying with a small force in

³ "É aposentaronse los Españoles en sus toldos ó pabellones de algodón de la tierra que llevaban, é haciendo fuegos para defenderse del mucho frio que en aquella Sierra hacen, porque sin ellos no se pudieron valer sin padecer mucho trabajo; y segun à los cristianos les pareció, y aun como era lo cierto, no podia haber mas frio en parte de España en invierno." Oviedo, *Hist. de las Indias*, MS., Parte 3, lib. 8, cap. 4.

the neighborhood of Caxamalca, at a place celebrated for its natural springs of warm water. The Peruvian was an intelligent person, and the Spanish commander gathered from him many particulars respecting the late contests which had distracted the empire.

As the envoy vaunted in lofty terms the military prowess and resources of his sovereign, Pizarro thought it politic to show that it had no power to overawe him. He expressed his satisfaction at the triumphs of Atahualpa, who, he acknowledged, had raised himself high in the rank of Indian warriors. But he was as inferior, he added, with more policy than politeness, to the monarch who ruled over the white men, as the petty curacas of the country were inferior to him. This was evident from the ease with which a few Spaniards had overrun this great continent, subduing one nation after another, that had offered resistance to their arms. He had been led by the fame of Atahualpa to visit his dominions, and to offer him his services in his wars; and, if he were received by the Inca in the same friendly spirit with which he came, he was willing, for the aid he could render him, to postpone awhile his passage across the country to the opposite seas. The Indian, according to the Castilian accounts, listened with awe to this strain of glorification from the Spanish commander. Yet it is possible that the envoy was a better diplomatist than they imagined; and that he understood it was only the game of brag at which he was playing with his more civilized antagonist.⁴

On the succeeding morning, at an early hour, the troops were again on their march, and for two days were occupied in threading the airy defiles of the Cordilleras. Soon after beginning their descent on the eastern side another emissary arrived from the Inca, bearing a message of similar import to the preceding, and a present, in like manner, of Peruvian

⁴ Xerez, *Conq. del Peru*, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 193.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Indias*, MS., Parte 3, lib. 8, cap. 5.

sheep. This was the same noble that had visited Pizarro in the valley. He now came in more state, quaffing *chicha*—the fermented juice of the maize—from golden goblets borne by his attendants, which sparkled in the eyes of the rapacious adventurers.⁵

While he was in the camp the Indian messenger originally sent by Pizarro to the Inca returned, and no sooner did he behold the Peruvian, and the honorable reception which he met with from the Spaniards, than he was filled with wrath, which would have vented itself in personal violence, but for the interposition of the by-standers. It was hard, he said, that this Peruvian dog should be thus courteously treated, when he himself had nearly lost his life on a similar mission among his countrymen. On reaching the Inca's camp he had been refused admission to his presence, on the ground that he was keeping a fast and could not be seen. They had paid no respect to his assertion that he came as an envoy from the white men, and would, probably, not have suffered him to escape with life, if he had not assured them that any violence offered to him would be retaliated in full measure on the persons of the Peruvian envoys, now in the Spanish quarters. There was no doubt, he continued, of the hostile intentions of Atahualpa; for he was surrounded with a powerful army, strongly encamped about a league from Caxamalca, while that city was entirely evacuated by its inhabitants.

To all this the Inca's envoy coolly replied that Pizarro's messenger might have reckoned on such a reception as he

⁵ "Este Embajador traia servicio de Señor, i cinco, ò seis Vasos de Oro fino, con que bebia, i con ellos daba à beber à los Españoles de la Chicha que traia." Xerez, Conq. del Peru, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 193.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.

The latter author, in this part of his work, has done little more than make a transcript of that of Xerez. His indorsement of Pizarro's secretary, however, is of value, from the fact that, with less temptation to misstate or overstate, he enjoyed excellent opportunities for information.

had found, since he seemed to have taken with him no credentials of his mission. As to the Inca's fast, that was true; and, although he would doubtless have seen the messenger had he known there was one from the strangers, yet it was not safe to disturb him at these solemn seasons, when engaged in his religious duties. The troops by whom he was surrounded were not numerous, considering that the Inca was at that time carrying on an important war; and as to Caxamalca, it was abandoned by the inhabitants in order to make room for the white men, who were so soon to occupy it.⁶

This explanation, however plausible, did not altogether satisfy the general; for he had too deep a conviction of the cunning of Atahualpa, whose intentions towards the Spaniards he had long greatly distrusted. As he proposed, however, to keep on friendly relations with the monarch for the present, it was obviously not his cue to manifest suspicion. Affecting, therefore, to give full credit to the explanation of the envoy, he dismissed him with reiterated assurances of speedily presenting himself before the Inca.

The descent of the sierra, though the Andes are less precipitous on their eastern side than towards the west, was attended with difficulties almost equal to those of the upward march; and the Spaniards felt no little satisfaction, when, on the seventh day, they arrived in view of the valley of Caxamalca, which, enamelled with all the beauties of cultivation, lay unrolled like a rich and variegated carpet of verdure, in strong contrast with the dark forms of the Andes, that rose up everywhere around it. The valley is of an oval shape, extending about five leagues in length by three in breadth. It was inhabited by a population of a superior character to any which the Spaniards had met on the other side of the mountains, as was argued

⁶ Xerez, Conq. del Peru, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 194.—Oviedo, Hist. del las Indias, MS., ubi supra.

by the superior style of their attire, and the greater cleanliness and comfort visible both in their persons and dwellings.⁷ As far as the eye could reach, the level tract exhibited the show of a diligent and thrifty husbandry. A broad river rolled through the meadows, supplying facilities for copious irrigation by means of the usual canals and subterraneous aqueducts. The land, intersected by verdant hedge-rows, was checkered with patches of various cultivation; for the soil was rich, and the climate, if less stimulating than that of the sultry regions of the coast, was more favorable to the hardy products of the temperate latitudes. Below the adventurers, with its white houses glittering in the sun, lay the little city of Caxamalca, like a sparkling gem on the dark skirts of the sierra. At the distance of about a league farther, across the valley, might be seen columns of vapor rising up towards the heavens, indicating the place of the famous hot baths, much frequented by the Peruvian princes. And here, too, was a spectacle less grateful to the eyes of the Spaniards; for along the slope of the hills a white cloud of pavilions was seen covering the ground, as thick as snow-flakes, for the space, apparently, of several miles. "It filled us all with amazement," exclaims one of the Conquerors, "to behold the Indians occupying so proud a position! So many tents, so well appointed, as were never seen in the Indies till now! The spectacle caused something like confusion and even fear in the stoutest bosom. But it was too late to turn back, or to betray the least sign of weakness, since the natives in our own company would, in such case, have been the first to rise upon us. So, with as bold a countenance as we could, after coolly surveying the ground, we prepared for our entrance into Caxamalca."⁸

⁷ Xerez, Conq. del Peru, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 195.

⁸ "Y eran tantas las tiendas que parecian, que cierto nos puso harto espanto, porque no pensabamos que Indios pudiesen tener tan soberbia estancia, ni tantas tiendas, ni tan á punto, lo cual hasta alli en

What were the feelings of the Peruvian monarch we are not informed, when he gazed on the martial cavalcade of the Christians, as, with banners streaming, and bright panoplies glistening in the rays of the evening sun, it emerged from the dark depths of the sierra, and advanced in hostile array over the fair domain, which, to this period, had never been trodden by other foot than that of the red man. It might be, as several of the reports had stated, that the Inca had purposely decoyed the adventurers into the heart of his populous empire, that he might envelope them with his legions, and the more easily become master of their property and persons.⁹ Or was it from a natural feeling of curiosity, and relying on their professions of friendship, that he had thus allowed them, without any attempt at resistance, to come into his presence? At all events, he could hardly have felt such confidence in himself, as not to look with apprehension, mingled with awe, on the mysterious strangers, who, coming from an unknown world, and possessed of such wonderful gifts, had made their way across

las Indias nunca se vió, que nos causó á todos los Españoles harta confusion y temor; aunque no convenia mostrarse, ni menos volver atras, porque si alguna flaqueza en nosotros sintieran, los mismos Indios que llevabamos nos mataran, y así con animoso semblante, despues de haber muy bien atalayado el pueblo y tiendas que he dicho, abajamos por el valle abajo, y entramos en el pueblo de Caxamalca." *Relacion del Primer. Descub. MS.*

⁹ This was evidently the opinion of the old Conqueror, whose imperfect manuscript forms one of the best authorities for this portion of our narrative. "Teniendonos en muy poco, y no haciendo cuenta que 190 hombres le habian de ofender, dió lugar y consintió que pasasemos por aquel paso y por otros muchos tan malos como él, porque realmente, á lo que despues se supo y averiguó, su intencion era vernos y preguntarnos, de donde veniamos? y quien nos habia hechado alli? y que queriamos? Porque era muy sabio y discreto, y aunque sin luz ni escriptura, amigo de saber y de sutil entendimiento; y despues de holgarse con nosotros, tomarnos los caballos y las cosas que á el mas le aplacian, y sacrificar á los demas." *Relacion del Primer. Descub. MS.*