

HERNAN CORTES

Letters from Mexico

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With an Introductory Essay by
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Item: Another piece woven with patterns and in the center a black wheel of feathers.

Item: Two white cotton cloths woven with some pieces of featherwork.

Another cotton cloth with some white cords(?) attached. A peasant smock.

A white piece with a large wheel of white feathers in the middle.

Two pieces of gray cord with some wheels of feathers, and another two of tawny cord.

Six painted pieces; another red piece with some wheels and another two pieces painted blue; and two women's shirts.

[Twelve veils.]⁴⁷

Item: Six bucklers, each one with a gold plate covering the whole buckler.

Another item: A half miter of gold.

The which things, and each one of them, as is laid down and established by these declarations, we, Alonso Fernández Puerto Carrero and Francisco de Montejo, the abovementioned representatives, do acknowledge that it is true that we have received them and that they were entrusted to us to take to Their Highnesses, from you, Fernando Cortés, chief justice for Their Highnesses in these parts, and from you, Alonso de Ávila and Alonso de Grado, treasurer and *veedor* for Their Highnesses. And because it is true we sign it with our names. Dated the sixth day of July in the year 1519.

—PUERTO CARRERO, FRANCISCO DE MONTEJO.

The things above-mentioned in the said memorial, with the aforementioned letter and account sent by the municipal council of Vera Cruz, were received by the King Don Carlos, Our Sovereign, as already stated, in Valladolid, in Holy Week, in the beginning of the month of April of the year of Our Lord, 1520.⁴⁸

The Second Letter

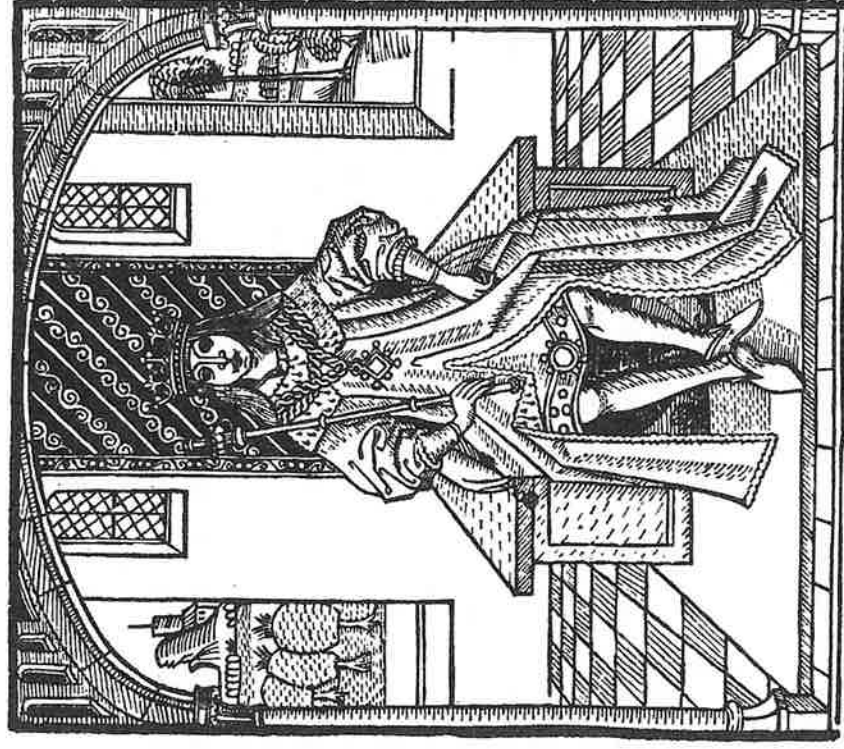


Sent to His Sacred Majesty the Emperor, Our Sovereign, by Don Fernando Cortés, Captain General of New Spain.

In which he gives an account of the lands and provinces without number that he has newly discovered in Yucatán in the year 1519 and subjected to His Majesty's Royal Crown. And in particular he gives an account of a very large and very rich province called Culua,¹ in which there are large cities and marvelous buildings, much commerce and great wealth. Among these cities there is one more marvelous and more wealthy than all the others, called Temixtitán,² which has, with extraordinary skill, been built upon a great lake, of which city and province a powerful lord called Mutezuma³ is king: here things terrible to relate befell the captain and the Spaniards. He tells at length of the great dominion of the said Mutezuma and of its rites and ceremonies and how they are performed.

MOST HIGH AND POWERFUL AND CATHOLIC PRINCE, MOST INVINCIBLE EMPEROR AND OUR SOVEREIGN:

In a ship which I dispatched to Your Sacred Majesty from New Spain on the sixteenth day of June, 1519, I sent a very long and detailed account of all that had occurred in these lands from the day I arrived until that date. This relation was carried by Alonso Hernández Puerto Carrero and Francisco de Montejo, representatives of the town of Vera Cruz, which I founded in Your Highness's name. Since then, because I have had neither the opportunity nor the ships, and because I was occupied in the conquest and pacification of these lands, and, moreover, because I knew nothing of the aforementioned representatives and their ship, I have not acquainted Your Majesty with all that has happened since. God alone knows how much this has troubled me; for I wished Your Highness to know all the things of this land, which, as I have already written in another report, are so many and of such a kind that one might call oneself the emperor of this kingdom with no less glory than of Germany, which, by the Grace of God, Your Sacred Majesty already possesses. And because to attempt to inform Your Highness of every detail of these lands and new realms would be to continue almost forever, I beg Your Highness's pardon if I do not render as long an account as I should. Neither my natural aptitudes nor the conditions in which I find myself favor me in the task. Despite this, however, I shall make every effort to acquaint Your Highness, as best I can, with the truth and with all that at the present time Your Majesty should know. Likewise I beg Your Highness to forgive me if I do not record all that is necessary and am uncertain of time and details, or if I do not give the correct names either of some of the



Larta de relació ebiada a su. S. majestad del épa-
do nro señoz por el capitán general dela nueva España: llamado fernando cor-
tes. En la q̄l base relación dlas tierras y prouincias sin cuento q̄ há descubier-
to nueuamente en el yucará del año de. m. xix. a esta pte: y ha somerido ala corona
real de su. S. M. En especial base relación de vna grãdissima prouincia muy
rica llamada Culua: la q̄ ay muy grãdes ciudades y de marauillosos coi-
fidos: y de grãdes rraos y riq̄zas. Entre las q̄les ay vna mas marauillosa
y rica q̄ todas llamada Amirita: q̄ esta por marauillosa arte edificara lo
bre vna grãde laguna. dela q̄l curao y prouincia es rey vn grãdissimo señoz
llamado Quetzuma: do se le acaciere al capitán y a los españoles espã-
sã cosas de oyr. Cuenta largamente del grãdissimo señoz del dicho Qu-
tezuma y de sus ritos y ceremonias: y de como se sirue.

9. Title page of the first printed edition of Letter II, Seville, 1522.
Courtesy of the British Museum.

towns and cities, or of their rulers, who have offered themselves in the service of Your Highness as your subjects and vassals. For in a certain misfortune which has recently befallen me, of which I shall render complete account later in this report, I lost all the proceedings and agreements I had made with the natives of these lands, and many other things besides.

Most Excellent Prince, in the other report I told Your Majesty of the cities and towns which at that time had offered themselves to the service of Your Highness and which I held subject. I also spoke of a great lord called Mutezuma, whom the natives of these lands had spoken to me about, and who, according to the number of days they said we would have to march, lived about ninety or a hundred leagues from the harbor where I disembarked. And, trusting in God's greatness and in the might of Your Highness's Royal name, I decided to go and see him wherever he might be. Indeed I remember that, with respect to the quest of this lord, I undertook more than I was able, for I assured Your Highness that I would take him alive in chains or make him subject to Your Majesty's Royal Crown.

With that purpose I set out from the town of Cempoal, which I renamed Sevilla, on the sixteenth of August with fifteen horsemen and three hundred foot soldiers, as well equipped for war as the conditions permitted me to make them. I left in the town of Vera Cruz two horsemen and 150 men, to construct a fortress which is now almost completed; and I left all that province of Cempoal and all the mountains surrounding the town, which contain as many as fifty thousand warriors and fifty towns and fortresses, very secure and peaceful; and all of these natives have been and still are faithful vassals of Your Majesty, for they were subjects of Mutezuma and, according to what I was told, had been subdued by force not long previously. When they heard through me of Your Highness and of Your very great Royal power, they said they wished to become vassals of Your Majesty and my allies, and asked me to protect them from that great lord who held them

by tyranny and by force, and took their children to sacrifice to his idols; and they made many other complaints about him. Because of this, they have been very loyal and true in the service of Your Highness, and I believe that they will always be so, as they are now free of his tyranny, and because they have always been honored and well treated by me. But to ensure further the safety of all who remained in Vera Cruz, I brought with me some of their chieftains with their servants, who were of no small use to me on my journey.

Because, as I believe I wrote to Your Majesty in the first report, some of those who joined my company were servants and friends of Diego Velázquez, it troubled them to see what I was doing in the service of Your Highness, and some of them even wanted to overthrow me and to leave this land, especially four Spaniards, Juan Escudero and Diego Cermeño, a pilot, and Gonzalo de Ugría, also a pilot, and Alonso Peñate, all of whom voluntarily confessed that they had determined to seize a brigantine which was in the port with bread and salt pork aboard. They intended to kill the master of it, return to the island of Fernandina and inform Diego Velázquez of how I had sent a ship to Your Highness, and also of what she was carrying and what course she was to take, so that the said Diego Velázquez might send ships to lie in wait and take her. As soon as he knew this, he did so, for, as I have been informed, he sent a caravel after that same ship which, if she had not already passed, would have been taken. Likewise they confessed that there were others who also intended to warn Diego Velázquez. On hearing the confessions of these miscreants, I punished them according to the law and as, in the circumstances, I judged would do Your Majesty greatest service.

As well as the friends and servants of Diego Velázquez who wished to leave the land, there were others who, when they saw how big it was, and how few Spaniards we were against so many, were of the same mind. Believing, therefore, that if the ships remained there would be a rebellion, and once all those who had resolved to go had gone I would be left almost alone, whereby all that

in the name of God and of Your Highness has been accomplished in this land would have been prevented, I devised a plan, according to which I declared the ships unfit to sail and grounded them;⁴ thus they lost all hope of escape and I proceeded in greater safety and with no fear that once my back was turned the people I had left in the town would betray me.

Eight or ten days after I ran the ships aground, and having already left the town of Vera Cruz for that of Cempoal, which is four leagues distant and whence I was to continue my journey, I heard from Vera Cruz that four ships were sailing off the coast and that the captain⁵ whom I had left in charge had gone out to them in a boat, and they had told him that they were from Francisco de Garay, lieutenant and governor of the island of Jamaica, and that they had come to explore. The captain had told them how I, in the name of Your Highness, had settled in this land and had founded a town there, one league from where the ships were; that they might go there and I would be informed of their arrival. If they were short of anything they could obtain it there; he would lead them into the port which he pointed out to them. They replied that they had already seen the port as they had sailed past it, and that they would do as he said. He returned to the port, but the ships did not follow him and were still sailing along the coast, with what purpose he did not know.

On hearing this, I left at once for Vera Cruz, where I learnt that the ships were anchored three leagues down the coast and that no one had landed from them. From there I set off with a few followers to gather information, but when I had come within almost one league of them I met three men from the ships, one of whom said he was a notary. The other two were to be witnesses, or so I was told, of the serving of a notice. They said that their captain had told them to give me a document they had brought with them which informed me that he had discovered that land and wished to colonize it. He therefore desired to discuss frontiers with me, for he wished to set up a base five leagues down the coast beyond Naute-

cal, which is a city twelve leagues from Vera Cruz and which is now called Almería.⁶ I told them to rejoin their captain and to sail to Vera Cruz, where we would talk and discover what they had come for. And if his ships were in need of anything I would help him as best I could. Since he said that he came in the service of Your Sacred Majesty, I too said I desired nothing except insofar as I might serve Your Highness thereby, which in helping him I believed I was doing.

They replied that on no account would Captain Garay or anyone else land, not even to meet me; and seeing how reluctant they were to appear before me, I thought that they must have done some damage in the land.

When night fell I crept very silently up to the shore just opposite where the ships were anchored, and there I lay hidden until almost noon the following day, thinking that the captain or pilot would come ashore and that I might discover from them what they had done or where they had been; and if they had done any damage in the land, I would send them to Your Holy Majesty. But neither they nor anyone else came ashore, so I made those who had brought the summons remove their clothes, which I put on three men of my own company whom I ordered to go down to the beach and signal to the ships. As soon as they saw them, they sent out a boat with as many as ten or twelve men aboard armed with crossbows andarquebuses. The men who had been signaling from the shore then left the beach as though seeking the shade of some bushes which were nearby. Four men landed, two crossbowmen and twoarquebusiers, who, as they were surrounded by the Spaniards I had placed on the beach, were taken. One of these was master of one of the ships, and he tried to fire hisarquebus, which would have killed the captain I had put in charge of Vera Cruz had not Our Lord prevented the fuse from igniting. Those who remained in the boat put out to sea, but, before they had reached them, the ships had hoisted their sails without waiting or wishing to discover anything from them. Those who remained behind told me

that they had reached a river⁷ thirty leagues down the coast from Almería, and that they had been well received by the natives and had bartered with them for food. They had seen some gold which the Indians brought but not much. And they had bartered for as much as three thousand gold *castellanos*. They had only gone ashore when they saw some villages by the riverbanks which were so close they could see them clearly from the ships. There were no stone buildings, all of the houses being built of straw, although some of the floors were raised and made by hand. All of which I later heard more fully from Mutezuma and from certain interpreters of that land which he had with him.

I sent these men I had captured, together with an Indian whom they had brought from that river, and some other messengers of Mutezuma, to the lord of that river, who is called Pánuco, to persuade him to the service of Your Holy Majesty. He sent back with them an important person and, they told me, the chief of a village, who gave me some clothes, stones and featherwork from him, saying that he and all his subjects were very well pleased to be Your Highness's vassals and my friends. I then gave them things from Spain with which he was very pleased, so much so that when other ships arrived from Francisco de Garay (of which I will tell Your Majesty later) this Pánuco sent me word that these ships were in another river, five or six days' journey from there. He wished to know if those who traveled in them were of my party, for if so, he would give them whatever they needed; and that he had sent them some women, and chickens and other things to eat.

Most Powerful Lord, I traveled for three days through the country and the kingdom of Cempoal, where I was very well received and accommodated by all the natives. On the fourth day I entered a province which is called Sienchimale⁸, in which there is a town which is very strong and built in a defensible position on the side of a very steep mountain. There is only one entrance, up steep steps which can only be climbed on foot and that with considerable difficulty. In the plain there are many villages and hamlets of five or

three or two hundred inhabitants, so that there are in all as many as five or six thousand warriors; and this land is in the kingdom of Mutezuma. Here they received me very well and generously provided the provisions I needed for the journey. They told me that they knew I was going to visit their lord Mutezuma, and that I should be confident he was my friend and had sent word that they were to give me every facility, for they served him by so doing. I responded to their great kindness by saying that Your Majesty had received news of him and had sent me to see him, and that I was going for no other purpose. Then I went over a pass which is at the frontier of this province, and we called it Nombre de Dios, because it was the first we had crossed in these lands: it is so rough and steep that there is none in Spain so difficult. But I did cross it, safely and without adverse incident. On the slopes below the pass there are other villages and a fortress called Ceyxnacan,⁹ which also belongs to Mutezuma; here we were no less well received than at Sienchimale⁸; also, they told us, because Mutezuma wished it. And I replied as before.

From there I continued for three days through desert country which is uninhabitable because of its infertility and lack of water and because of the extreme cold. God knows how much my people suffered from thirst and hunger, and especially from a hail- and rainstorm that hit us there, which I thought would cause the deaths of many people from cold; and indeed several Indians from the island of Fernandina who had not enough to wear did die from it. After three days we crossed another pass not so steep as the first. At the top of it there was a small tower, almost like a wayside shrine, in which they kept a number of idols, and around the tower were more than a thousand cartloads of firewood, all very well stacked; for this reason we called it the Firewood Pass.¹⁰ On the descent from this pass, between some very steep mountains, there is a valley thickly inhabited with people who seemed to be very poor. After going two leagues through this region without learning anything about it, I reached a flatter place where the chief of that

valley appeared to live; for he had the largest and the best-constructed buildings we had seen in that land so far. They were all of dressed stone and very well built and very new, and they had very large and beautiful halls in them and many rooms, also well built: this valley and town are called Caltanmí.¹¹ By the chief and the people I was very well received and lodged.

After I had spoken to him on behalf of Your Majesty and of the reason for my coming to these parts, I asked him if he was a vassal of Mutezuma or owed some other allegiance. And he showed surprise at my question, and asked who was not a vassal of Mutezuma, meaning that here he is king of the whole world. I replied by telling him of the great power of Your Majesty and of the many other princes, greater than Mutezuma, who were Your Highness's vassals and considered it no small favor to be so; Mutezuma also would become one; as would all the natives of these lands. I therefore asked him to become one, for if he did it would be greatly to his honor and advantage, but if, on the other hand, he refused to obey he would be punished. And to acknowledge that he had been received into Your Royal service, I begged him to give me some gold to send to Your Majesty. He replied that he had gold but would give me none unless Mutezuma commanded it, but that once this had been done he would surrender to me the gold and his own person and all that he had. So as not to offend him and for fear that some calamity might befall my endeavor and my journey, I dissembled as best I could and told him that very soon I would have Mutezuma order him to give the gold and all that he owned.

Here two other chieftains who held lands in that valley came to see me: one lived four leagues down the valley and the other two leagues up the valley, and they gave me several gold necklaces of little weight and value and seven or eight female slaves. After staying there four or five days, I left them all very pleased and went up the valley to the town of the other chief I spoke of, which is called Ysracmasitlán.¹² His territory consists of some three or four leagues' extent of built-up land, lying in the valley floor

beside a small river which runs through it. On a very high hill is this chief's house, with a better fortress than any to be found in the middle of Spain, and fortified with better walls and barbicans and earthworks. On top of this hill live some five or six thousand inhabitants with very good houses and somewhat richer than those living in the valley. Here likewise I was very well received, and this chief said that he was also a vassal of Mutezuma. I remained in this town three days, to allow my people to recover from the hardships they had suffered in the desert as well as to await the return of four native messengers from Cempoal who had come with me and whom I had sent from Catalmy to a very large province called Tascalteca,¹³ which they told me was very close by, and so it seemed to be. They had also told me that the natives of this province were their friends and very hated enemies of Mutezuma, and they wished to be my allies for they were many and very strong. They shared a large frontier with Mutezuma and fought continual wars with him and would help me if Mutezuma wished to oppose me. But the whole time I was in that valley, which was eight days in all, the messengers did not return; so I asked those chieftains of Cempoal who traveled in my company why the messengers had not returned. They replied that the land must be far away and they could not return so quickly. When I saw how long they were in coming, and that the chieftains of Cempoal so assured me of the friendship and good faith of those of that province, I set out thither.

On leaving this valley I found a great barrier built of dry stone and as much as nine feet high, which ran right across the valley from one mountain range to the other.¹⁴ It was some twenty paces wide and all along the top was a battlement a foot and a half thick to provide an advantageous position for battle; it had only one entrance, some ten paces wide. At this entrance one wall doubled over the other, in the manner of a ravelin, within a space of forty paces, so that the entrance was not direct but had turns in it. When I asked the reason for this wall they replied that that was the frontier of the province of Tascalteca, whose inhabitants were Mu-

tezuma's enemies and were always at war with him. The natives of the valley, because I was going to see Mutezuma their lord, begged me not to go through the territory of his enemies, for they might be hostile to me and do me some harm; they themselves would lead me to Mutezuma without leaving his territory, in which I would always be well received.

But those of Cempoal told me not to do this, but to go through Tascalteca, for what the others had said was only to prevent me from forming an alliance with that province. They said that all Mutezuma's people were wicked traitors and would lead me to a place whence I could not escape. As I held those of Cempoal in greater esteem than the others, I took their advice, leading my men with as much caution as possible. And I, with some six horsemen, rode half a league ahead, not in anticipation of what later befell me, but to explore the land, so that if anything should happen I might have time to gather and instruct my men.

After proceeding four leagues, we reached the brow of a hill, and the two horsemen who went in front of me saw some Indians dressed in the feathers they wear in battle, and bearing swords and bucklers, who when they saw the horses began to run away. I arrived soon after and I called out to them to return and not to be afraid; as we approached them (there must have been about fifteen Indians) they banded together and began to throw spears and to call to others of their people who were in a valley. They fought so fiercely with us that they killed two horses and wounded three others and two horsemen. At this point the others appeared who must have been four or five thousand. Some eight horsemen were now with me, not counting the dead, and we fought them making several charges while we waited for the other soldiers whom I had sent a horseman to fetch; and in the fighting we did them some damage, in that we killed fifty or sixty of them and ourselves suffered no harm, although they fought with great courage and ferocity. But as we were all mounted we attacked in safety and retreated likewise.

When they saw our men approaching, they withdrew, for they were few, and left us the field. After they had gone, several messengers arrived, who said they came from the chieftains of that province and with them two of the messengers I had sent, who said that the lords of the province knew nothing of what those others had done; for they were of an independent community and had done it without his permission. They regretted what had happened and would pay me for the horses which had been killed; they wanted to be my friends, wished me good fortune and said I would be welcomed by them. I replied that I was grateful to them and that I held them as friends and would go where they said. That night I was forced to sleep in a river bed one league beyond where this happened, for it was late and the men were tired.

There I took all the precautions I could, with watchmen and scouts both on foot and on horseback. When it was light I departed, keeping my vanguard and baggage in close formation and my scouts in front. When, at sunrise, I arrived at a very small village I found the other two messengers weeping, saying that they had been tied up to be killed, but had escaped that night. Only a stone's throw from them there appeared a large number of Indians, heavily armed, who with a great shout began to attack us with many javelins and arrows. I began to deliver the formal requerimiento through the interpreters who were with me and before a notary, but the longer I spent in admonishing them and requesting peace, the more they pressed us and did us as much harm as they could. Seeing therefore that nothing was to be gained by the requerimiento or protestations we began to defend ourselves as best we could, and so drew us fighting into the midst of more than 100,000 warriors who surrounded us on all sides. We fought all day long until an hour before sunset, when they withdrew; with half a dozen guns and five or sixarquebuses and forty crossbowmen and with the thirteen horsemen who remained, I had done them much harm without receiving any except from exhaustion and hunger. And it truly seemed that God was fighting for us, because from such a

multitude, such fierce and able warriors and with so many kinds of weapons to harm us,¹⁵ we escaped so lightly.

That night I fortified a small tower on top of a hill, where they kept their idols. When it was day I left two hundred men and all the artillery behind and rode out to attack them with the horsemen, one hundred foot soldiers and four hundred Indians of those I brought from Cempoal, and three hundred from Yztaemestitan [*sic*]. Before they had time to rally, I burnt five or six small places of about a hundred inhabitants, and took prisoner about four hundred persons, both men and women; and returned to the camp having suffered no loss whatever. The following day at dawn, more than 149,000 men, who covered the entire ground, attacked the camp with such force that some of them broke in and fought the Spaniards hand to hand. We then went out and charged them, and so much did Our Lord help us that in four hours' fighting we had advanced so far that they could no longer harm us in the camp, although they still made some attacks. And so we fought until late, when they retired.

The following day I left before dawn by a different route, without being observed, with the horsemen, a hundred foot soldiers and my Indian allies. I burnt more than ten villages, in one of which there were more than three thousand houses, where the inhabitants fought with us, although there was no one there to help them. As we were carrying the banner of the Cross and were fighting for our Faith and in the service of Your Sacred Majesty in this Your Royal enterprise, God gave us such a victory that we killed many of them without ourselves receiving any hurt. Having gained our victory, we returned to camp a little after midday, for the enemy was gathering from all directions.

The following day messengers arrived from the chieftains saying that they wished to be vassals of Your Highness and my friends; and they begged me to forgive them for what they had done. I replied that they had done wrong, but that I was content to be their friend and to forgive what they had done. The next day

some fifty Indians who, it seemed, were people of importance among them, came to the camp saying they were bringing food, and began to inspect the entrances and exits and some huts where we were living. The men from Cempoal came to me and said I should take notice of the fact that the newcomers were bad men and had come to spy and see how we could be harmed, and I could be certain that that was their only purpose in coming. I ordered one of them to be captured discreetly so that the others did not see, and I took him aside and through the interpreters threatened him so that he should tell me the truth. He confessed that Sintengal,¹⁶ who is captain general of this province, was waiting with many men behind some hills opposite the camp to fall on us that night, because, they said, they had fought with us by day and gained nothing and now wished to try by night, so that their people should fear neither the horses nor the guns nor the swords. They had been sent to spy out our camp and to see where it could be entered, and how they might burn the straw huts. Then I had another Indian seized and questioned him likewise, and he repeated what the other had said and in the same words. Then I took five or six and they all confirmed what I had heard, so I took all fifty and cut off their hands and sent them to tell their chief that by day or by night, or whenever they chose to come, they would see who we were. I had the camp fortified as best I could, and deployed my men where I thought most advantageous, and so remained on the alert until the sun set.

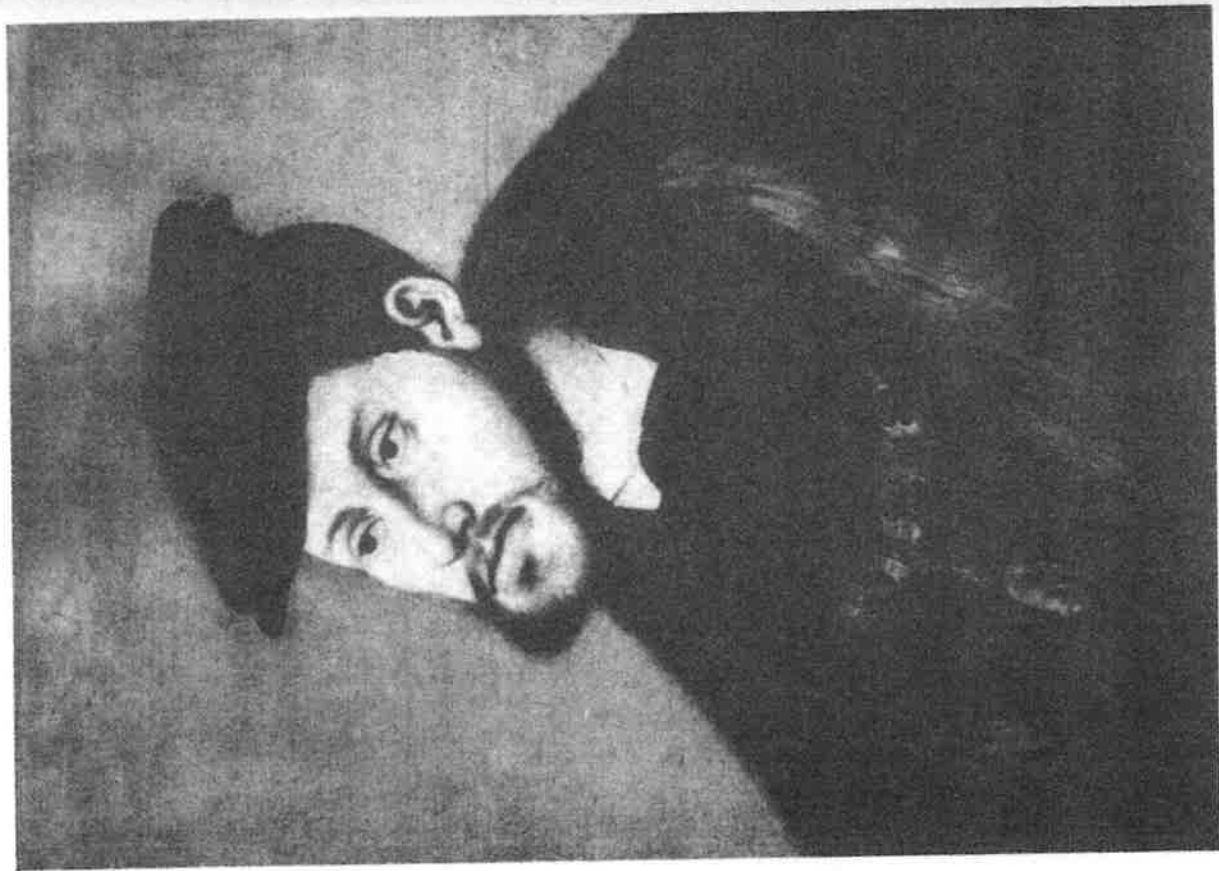
When night fell the enemy began to come down through two valleys, thinking that they were unobserved and could draw close to us the better to accomplish their purpose. But as I was well prepared I saw them, and it seemed to me that it would be disadvantageous to allow them to reach the camp; for at night they would be unable to see the damage my people inflicted on them, and would be all the more intrepid. I was also afraid that as the Spaniards would not be able to see them, some of them might show less boldness in their fighting. Moreover, I was afraid they might set fire

to the camp, which would have been so disastrous that none of us would have escaped. I therefore determined to ride out to meet them with all the horsemen to frighten and scatter them so they would be unable to reach the camp. And so it was that when they saw that we intended to attack them on horseback they, without stopping or shouting, made off into the maize fields of which this land is full. They unloaded some of the provisions they were carrying for the celebrations they intended to hold once they had utterly defeated us; and so they left us in peace for the rest of the night. After this occurrence I did not leave the camp for several days except to defend the entrance from some Indians who came to shout and skirmish.

When we had rested somewhat, I went out one night, after inspecting the first watch, with a hundred foot soldiers, our Indian allies and the horsemen; and one league from the camp five of the horses fell and would go no further, so I sent them back. And although all those who were with me in my company urged me to return, for it was an evil omen, I continued on my way secure in the belief that God is more powerful than Nature. Before it was dawn I attacked two towns, where I killed many people, but I did not burn the houses lest the fires should alert the other towns nearby. At dawn I came upon another large town containing, according to an inspection I had made, more than twenty thousand houses. As I took them by surprise, they rushed out unarmed, and the women and children ran naked through the streets, and I began to do them some harm. When they saw that they could not resist, several men of rank of the town came to me and begged me to do them no more harm, for they wished to be Your Highness's vassals and my allies. They now saw that they were wrong in not having been willing to assist me; from thenceforth I would see how they would do all that I, in Your Majesty's name, commanded them to do, and they would be Your faithful vassals. Then, later, more than four thousand came to me in peace and led me outside to a spring and fed me very well.

And so I left them pacified and returned to our camp where I found that those who had remained behind were very afraid that some danger had befallen me because of the omen they had seen in the return of the horses the night before. But after they heard of the victory which God had been pleased to give us, and how we had pacified those villages, there was great rejoicing, for I assure Your Majesty that there was amongst us not one who was not very much afraid, seeing how deep into this country we were and among so many hostile people and so entirely without hope of help from anywhere. Indeed, I heard it whispered, and almost spoken out loud, that I was a Pedro Carbonero¹⁷ to have led them into this place from which they could never escape. And, moreover, standing where I could not be seen, I heard certain companions in a hut say that if I was crazy enough to go where I could not return, they were not, and that they were going to return to the sea, and if I wished to come with them, all well and good, but if not, they would abandon me. Many times I was asked to turn back, and I encouraged them by reminding them that they were Your Highness's vassals and that never at any time had Spaniards been found wanting, and that we were in a position to win for Your Majesty the greatest dominions and kingdoms in the world. Moreover, as Christians we were obliged to wage war against the enemies of our Faith; and thereby we would win glory in the next world, and, in this, greater honor and renown than any generation before our time. They should observe that God was on our side, and to Him nothing is impossible, for, as they saw, we had won so many victories in which so many of the enemy had died, and none of us. I told them other things which occurred to me of this nature, with which, and Your Highness's Royal favor, they were much encouraged and determined to follow my intentions and to do what I wished, which was to complete the enterprise I had begun.

On the following day at ten o'clock, Sintengal, the captain general of this province, came to see me, together with some fifty men of rank, and he begged me on his own behalf, and on behalf of



10. The Emperor Charles V, by Cranach the Elder. Galleria Thyssen.
Photo Brunel, Lugano.



11. Queen Juana of Castille, by John of Flanders. Galleria Thyssen.
Photo Brunel, Lugano.

Magiscasin,¹⁸ who is the most important person in the entire province, and on behalf of many other lords, to admit them to Your Highness's Royal service and to my friendship, and to forgive them their past errors, for they did not know who we were. They had tried with all their forces both by day and by night to avoid being subject to anyone, for this province never had been, nor had they ever had an over-all ruler. For they had lived in freedom and independence from time immemorial and had always defended themselves against the great power of Murezuma and against his ancestors, who had subjugated all those lands but had never been able to reduce them to servitude, although they were surrounded on all sides and had no place by which to leave their land. They ate no salt because there was none in their land,¹⁹ neither could they go and buy it elsewhere, nor did they wear cotton because it did not grow there on account of the cold; and they were lacking in many other things through being so enclosed.

All of which they suffered willingly in return for being free and subject to no one, and with me they had wished to do the same; to which end, as they said, they had used all their strength but saw clearly that neither it nor their cunning had been of any use. They would rather be Your Highness's vassals than see their houses destroyed and their women and children killed. I replied that they should recognize they were to blame for the harm they had received, for I had come to their land thinking that I came to a land of friends because the men of Cempoal had assured me that it was so. I had sent my messengers on ahead to tell them that I was coming and that I wished to be their friend. But without reply they had attacked me on the road while I was unprepared and had killed two horses and wounded others. And after they had fought me, they sent messengers to tell me that it had been done without their consent by certain communities who were responsible; but they were not involved and had now rebuked those others for it and desired my friendship. I had believed them and had told them that I was pleased and would come on the following day and go among

them as I would among friends. And again they had attacked me on the road and had fought all day until nightfall. And I reminded them of everything else that they had done against me and many other things which in order not to tire Your Highness I will omit. Finally, they offered themselves as vassals in the Royal service of Your Majesty and offered their persons and fortunes and so they have remained until today and will, I think, always remain so for what reason Your Majesty will see hereafter.

I did not then leave the camp for six or seven days, for I dared not trust them, although they begged me to come to a great city of theirs where all the chiefs of the province are accustomed to live. These chiefs even came themselves and pleaded with me to go to the city, for there I should be better entertained and supplied with all the things I needed which were not available in the countryside. They were ashamed to see me so poorly accommodated, for they held me as their friend, and both they and I were Your Highness's vassals; and because of their pleas I went to the city, which is six leagues from our camp.

The city is so big and so remarkable that, although there is much I could say of it which I shall omit, the little I will say is, I think, almost unbelievable, for the city is much larger than Granada and very much stronger, with as good buildings and many more people than Granada had when it was taken, and very much better supplied with the produce of the land, namely, bread, fowl and game and fresh-water fish and vegetables and other things they eat which are very good.²⁰ There is in this city a market where each and every day upward of thirty thousand people come to buy and sell, without counting the other trade which goes on elsewhere in the city. In this market there is everything they might need or wish to trade; provisions as well as clothing and footwear. There is jewelry of gold and silver and precious stones and other ornaments of featherwork and all as well laid out as in any square or marketplace in the world. There is much pottery of many sorts and as good as the best in Spain. They sell²¹ a great deal of firewood and charcoal

and medicinal and cooking herbs. There are establishments like barbers' where they have their hair washed and are shaved, and there are baths. Lastly there is amongst them every consequence of good order and courtesy, and they are such an orderly and intelligent people that the best in Africa cannot equal them.

In this province, which is in size ninety leagues or more about, there are many beautiful valleys and plains, all cultivated and harvested, leaving no place untilled; and the orderly manner in which, until now, these people have been governed is almost like that of the states of Venice or Genoa or Pisa, for they have no overlord. There are many chiefs, all of whom reside in this city, and the country towns contain peasants who are vassals of these lords and each of whom holds his land independently; some have more than others, and for their wars they join together and together they plan and direct them.

It is thought that there must be some form of law for punishing wrongdoers, because one of the natives of this province stole some gold from a Spaniard and I told Magiscasin, who is the greatest of all the chiefs, and they searched for him and pursued him to a city that is close by, called Churultecal,²² and from there they brought him prisoner and delivered him to me together with the gold and told me to punish him. I thanked them for the diligence they had shown in this matter, and told them that since I was in their land they should punish him as they were accustomed, and that I did not wish to interfere by punishing their own people, for which they thanked me and took him and with a crier who announced his crime publicly had him marched through that great marketplace. They made him stand below a kind of stage which is in the middle of this marketplace, and the crier climbed to the top of the stage and in a loud voice again announced his crime; when they saw him they all beat him over the head with cudgels until he died. Many others we have seen in captivity, where they say they are held for thefts and other crimes.²³ There are in this province, according to the investigation I had made, 150,000 inhabitants to-

gether with another small province which is adjacent, called Guasincango,²⁴ and there they live as these do with no natural lord; and these are no less Your Highness's vassals than those of Tascalteca.

Most Catholic Lord, while I was in the camp which I had in the country during the war with this province, six chieftains of rank, vassals of Mutezuma, came to see me with as many as two hundred men in attendance. They told me that they had come on behalf of Mutezuma to inform me how he wished to be Your Highness's vassal and my ally, and that I should say what I wished him to pay as an annual tribute to Your Highness in gold and silver and jewels as well as slaves, cotton, clothing and other things which he possessed; all of which he would give, provided that I did not go to his land, the reason being that it was very barren and lacking in all provisions and it would grieve him if I and those who came with me should be in want. With them he sent me almost a thousand pesos *de oro* and as many cotton garments, such as they wear.

They stayed with me during much of the war and remained until the end, when they saw clearly what Spaniards are capable of and the peace we made with those of this province and how the lords and all the inhabitants offered themselves to the service of Your Sacred Majesty. It appeared that they were rather displeased at this, since they made many and varied attempts to cause trouble between me and those people, saying that they were not speaking the truth nor was the friendship they offered me sincere, but that all this was done so that they might dispel my suspicions and thus betray me with impunity. The people of Tascalteca, on the other hand, warned me many times not to trust Mutezuma's vassals, for they were traitors and everything they did was done with treachery and cunning; and that in this manner they had subjugated the whole land. They warned me of all this as true friends, and inasmuch as they were people who were well acquainted with their behavior. When I saw the discord and animosity between these two peoples I was not a little pleased, for it seemed to further my purpose considerably; consequently I might have the opportunity of

subduing them more quickly, for, as the saying goes, "divided they fall." . . . And I remember that one of the Gospels says, "*Omne regnum in seipsum divisum desolabitur*." ²⁵ So I maneuvered one against the other and thanked each side for their warnings and told each that I held his friendship to be of more worth than the other's.

After having spent twenty days in this city, those lords, Mutezuma's messengers, who were always with me, asked me to go to a city called Churultecal, which is six leagues from Tascalteca, for the people there were Mutezuma's allies, and there we should know Mutezuma's wishes, whether I was to go to his land or not, and some of their number would go and tell him what I had said, and would return with his reply, although they knew that certain of his messengers were waiting there to speak with me. I told them that I would go and advised them on what day I would leave. And when those of Tascalteca heard what the others had planned with me, and that I had agreed to go to that city with them, the chiefs came to me much distressed and warned me on no account to go, for a trap had been prepared to kill me in that city and all my companions, and that for this purpose Mutezuma had sent from his land (for some part of it bordered with this state) fifty thousand men who were garrisoned two leagues from the city. They had closed the highroad by which they usually traveled, and had made a new one full of holes and with sharpened stakes driven into the ground and covered up so that the horses would fall and cripple themselves; they had walled up many of the streets and piled stones on the roofs of the houses so that after we had entered the city they might capture us without difficulty and do with us as they wished. And if I wished to confirm all they said, I should take notice of the fact that the chiefs of that city had never come to see me, although it was so near, while the people of Guasincango, which is farther away, had come; and I should send for them and I would see that they would refuse to come. I thanked them for their warning and asked them to give me messengers that I might send for them. This they did, and I sent them to ask those chiefs to come to me, for I wished to speak

to them about certain matters on behalf of Your Highness and to explain to them the reason of my coming to this land.

These messengers went and delivered my message to the chiefs of that city, and they sent back two or three persons of no great importance who told me that they had come on behalf of those chiefs who could not come themselves because they were sick; and that I should tell them what I wanted. The people of Tascalteca said that this was a trick; for those messengers were men of little consequence and that I should on no account depart from there until the chiefs of that city had come. I spoke to those messengers and told them that an embassy from so high a prince as Your Sacred Majesty should not be received by persons such as they, and that even their masters were hardly worthy to receive it; therefore the chiefs should appear before me within three days to owe obedience to Your Highness and offer themselves as your vassals. I warned them that if they did not appear within the period I specified, I would march against them and destroy them as rebels who refused to subject themselves to the dominion of Your Highness. For this purpose I sent them a command signed in my name and witnessed by a notary, together with a long account concerning the Royal person of Your Sacred Majesty and of my coming, telling them how these parts and other much greater lands and dominions all belonged to Your Highness, and that those who wished to be Your vassals would be honored and aided, but that on the other hand, those who rebelled would be punished in accordance with the law.

On the following day, some or nearly all the chiefs of the above-mentioned city came and said that if they had not come before it was because the people of that province were their enemies and they dared not enter their land because they did not feel safe there. They believed I had been told things unfavorable to them, but I should not believe what I heard because it was the word of enemies and not the truth, and I should go to their city, for there I would recognize that all I had been told was false and that what

they said was indeed true. From thenceforth they offered themselves as vassals of Your Sacred Majesty and swore to remain so always and to serve and assist in all things that Your Highness commanded them. A notary set all this down through the interpreters which I had. Still I determined to go with them; on the one hand, so as not to show weakness and, on the other, because I hoped to conduct my business with Mutezuma from that city because it bordered on his territory, as I have said, and on the road between the two there is free travel and no frontier restrictions.

When the people of Tascalteca saw my determination it distressed them considerably, and they told me many times that I was mistaken, but since they were vassals of Your Sacred Majesty and my friends they would go with me to assist me in whatever might happen. Although I opposed this and asked them not to come, as it was unnecessary, they followed me with some 100,000 men, all well armed for war, and came within two leagues of the city. After much persuasion on my part they returned, though there remained in my company some five or six thousand of them. That night I slept in a ditch, hoping to divest myself of these people in case they caused trouble in the city, and because it was already late enough and I did not want to enter too late. The following morning, they came out of the city to greet me with many trumpets and drums, including many persons whom they regard as priests in their temples, dressed in traditional vestments and singing after their fashion, as they do in the temples. With such ceremony they led us into the city and gave us very good quarters, where all those in my company were most comfortable. There they brought us food, though not sufficient. On the road we had come across many of the signs which the natives of that province had warned us about, for we found the highroad closed and another made and some holes, though not many; and some of the streets of the city were barricaded, and there were piles of stones on all the roofs. All this made us more alert and more cautious.

There I found several of Mutezuma's messengers who came

and spoke with those who were with me, but to me they said merely that they had come to discover from those others what they had agreed with me, so as to go and inform their master. So after they had spoken with them, they left; and with them went one of the most important of those who had been with me before. During the three days I remained in that city they fed us worse each day, and the lords and principal persons of the city came only rarely to see and speak with me. And being somewhat disturbed by this, my interpreter, who is an Indian woman²⁶ from Putunchan, which is the great river of which I spoke to Your Majesty in the first letter, was told by another Indian woman and a native of this city that very close by many of Mutezuma's men were gathered, and that the people of the city had sent away their women and children and all their belongings, and were about to fall on us and kill us all; and that if she wished to escape she should go with her and she would shelter here. All this she told to Gerónimo de Aguilar, an interpreter whom I acquired in Yucatán, of whom I have also written to Your Highness; and he informed me. I then seized one of the natives of this city who was passing by and took him aside secretly and questioned him; and he confirmed what the woman and the natives of Tascalteca had told me. Because of this and because of the signs I had observed, I decided to forestall an attack, and I sent for some of the chiefs of the city, saying that I wished to speak with them. I put them in a room and meanwhile warned our men to be prepared, when a harquebus was fired, to fall on the many Indians who were outside our quarters and on those who were inside. And so it was done, that after I had put the chiefs in the room, I left them bound up and rode away and had the harquebus fired, and we fought so hard that in two hours more than three thousand men were killed. So that Your Majesty should realize how well prepared they were, even before I left my quarters they had occupied all the streets and had placed all their people at the ready, although, as we took them by surprise, they were easy to disperse, especially because I had imprisoned their leaders. I ordered some towers and fortified houses

from which they were attacking us to be set on fire. And so I proceeded through the city fighting for five hours or more, leaving our quarters, which were in a strong position, secure. Finally all the people were driven out of the city in many directions, for some five thousand Indians from Tascalteca and another four hundred from Cempoal were assisting me.²⁷

When I returned I spoke to those chiefs I had imprisoned, and asked them for what reason they had wished to kill me treacherously. They replied that they were not to blame, for those of Culua, who were Mutezuma's vassals, had forced them to it, and that Mutezuma had garrisoned in a place, which later was found to be a league and a half from there, fifty thousand men for that purpose. But now they knew that they had been tricked, and they asked that one or two of them should be freed so as to fetch into the city the women and children and the belongings which they had outside. They begged me to forgive them their mistake and assured me that they would not be deceived in future, and they would be Your Highness's very true and faithful vassals and my allies. After having spoken to them at length concerning their error, I freed two of them, and on the following day the whole city was reoccupied and full of women and children, all unafraid, as though nothing had happened. Then I set free all the other chiefs on the condition that they promised to serve Your Majesty most loyally.

After fifteen or twenty days which I remained there the city and the land were so pacified and full of people that it seemed as if no one were missing from it, and their markets and trade were carried on as before. I then restored the friendly relations between this city of Churultecal [*sic*] and Tascalteca, which had existed in the recent past, before Mutezuma had attracted them to his friendship with gifts and made them enemies of the others.²⁸

This city of Churultecal is situated in a plain and has as many as twenty thousand houses within the main part of the city and as many again in the outskirts. It is an independent state having fixed frontiers; the people owe obedience to no overlord but are

governed like those of Tascalteca. The people of this city wear somewhat more clothes than those of Tascalteca, for the respected citizens among them wear burnouses over their other garments, but they are different from those worn in Africa because they have armholes, although in the shape and the cloth and in the hems they are very similar. Since those troubles, they have all been and continue to be very faithful vassals of Your Majesty and very obedient in whatever I, in Your Royal name, have requested of them, and I believe that they will remain so.

This state is very rich in crops, for it possesses much land, most of it irrigated. The city itself is more beautiful to look at than any in Spain, for it is very well proportioned and has many towers. And I assure Your Highness that from a temple I counted more than 430 towers, and they were all of temples. From here to the coast I have seen no city so fit for Spaniards to live in, for it has water and some common lands suitable for raising cattle, which none of those we saw previously had, for there are so many people living in these parts that not one foot of land is uncultivated, and yet in many places they suffer hardships for lack of bread. And there are many poor people who beg from the rich in the streets as the poor do in Spain and in other civilized places.

I spoke to those of Mutezuma's messengers who were with me of the treachery attempted upon me in that city, and how the chiefs had said that it had been done on Mutezuma's orders, and that I could scarcely believe that such a great lord should send his messengers and such esteemed persons as he had sent me to say that he was my friend, and meanwhile should be seeking a way to attack me by another's hand so that he might avoid responsibility if all did not turn out as he hoped. But since it was true that he did not keep his word or speak the truth, I had changed my plans: whereas, before, I had been going to his land with the intention of seeing him and speaking with him in order to have him as a friend and to converse with him in harmony, now I intended to enter his land at war doing all the harm I could as an enemy, though I regretted it very

much, for I had always wished rather to be his friend and ask his advice on all the things that must be done in this land.

They then replied that they had been with me many days and had known nothing of such an agreement save what they had heard in the city after the fighting was over, and they could not believe that it had been done by order of Mutezuma. They therefore begged me that before I resolved to cast aside his friendship and make war on him as I had said, I should be certain of the truth; I should allow one of them to go and speak with him, and he would return very soon. There are but twenty leagues between the city and the place where Mutezuma lives. I told them I agreed and allowed one of them to go, who, after six days, returned with another who had gone before. And they brought me ten gold plates and fifteen hundred articles of clothing and many provisions of chickens and *panicap*,²⁹ which is a certain beverage they drink; and they told me that Mutezuma was much distressed at the hostilities that had been attempted in Churultecal because he knew I could not but believe that it had been done by his orders. But he assured me that it was not so, and although it was true that the men who were garrisoned there were his, they had taken part without his orders, induced by those of Churultecal, for they came from two of his provinces, one of which was called Acancingo and the other Yzcucan,³⁰ which bordered on the territory of that city. Between these there were certain neighborly agreements of mutual assistance, and for this reason they had gone there, and not because he ordered it. But in future I would see by his deeds whether what he said was true or not; even so, he urged me not to trouble to come to his land, for it was very barren and we would go hungry, and that, wherever I might be, I should send to him for what I required and he would provide it for me. I replied that the journey to his land could not be avoided, for I had to send an account of it and of him to Your Majesty; I believed what he said, but as I had perforce to go and see him he should accept the fact and not make any other plans, because it would cause him great harm, and I would be distressed if

any harm befell him. Once he understood my determination to go and see him and his land, he sent to tell me that I was welcome, and that he would accommodate me in that great city where he lived; and he sent to me many of his men to accompany me, for I was now entering his land. These men wished to lead me by a certain road where they must have planned to prepare an ambush, or so it seemed afterwards, for many Spaniards whom I later sent through the land saw the road. There were on it so many bridges and difficult stretches that had I gone that way they could have accomplished their purpose with no trouble. But as God has always shown diligence in guiding the Royal affairs of Your Sacred Majesty ever since Your childhood, and as I and those of my company traveled in Your Royal service, so He showed us another road which, although somewhat rough, was not so dangerous as the one by which they wished to lead us and it happened in the following manner:

Eight leagues from this city of Churultecal are two very high and very remarkable mountains;³¹ for at the end of August there is so much snow on top of them that nothing else can be seen, and from one of them, which is the higher, there appears often both by day and by night a great cloud of smoke as big as a house which goes straight as an arrow up into the clouds, and seems to come out with such force that even though there are very strong winds on top of the mountain they cannot turn it. Because I have always wished to render Your Highness very particular account of all the things of this land, I wished to know the explanation of this which seemed to me something of a miracle; so I sent ten of my companions, such as were qualified for such an undertaking, with some natives to guide them; and I urged them to attempt to climb the mountain and discover the secret of the smoke, whence it came, and how. These men went and made every effort to climb the mountain but were not able to on account of the great quantity of snow that is there and the whirlwinds of ash which come out of the mountain, and also because they could not endure the great cold which they encountered there. But they came very close to the summit; so

much so that while they were there the smoke started to come out, with such force and noise, they said, it seemed the whole mountain was falling down, so they descended and brought much snow and icicles for us to see, for this seemed to be something very rare in these parts, so the pilots have believed until now, because of the warm climate; especially as this land is at twenty degrees, which is on the same parallel as the island of Hispaniola, where it is always very hot.

When they were going toward this mountain, they came across a road and asked the natives who were with them where it led, and they replied, to Culua, and that it was a good one and that the other, by which the people of Culua had wished to lead us, was not good. And the Spaniards traveled along it until they had crossed the mountains, between which the road ran, and there they looked down on the plains of Culua and the great city of Temixtitan and the lakes which are in that province, with all of which I will acquaint Your Highness later. So they returned very pleased at having discovered such a good road; and God knows how glad I was about it. After these Spaniards who had gone to see the mountain had returned, and I had questioned both them and the natives about the road they had found, I spoke to those messengers of Mutezuma who came with me to lead me through their land, and told them that I wished to go by that road because it was shorter, and not by the one they had mentioned. They replied that it was true it was shorter and easier, but that they had not taken us by it because we would have had to spend a day in Guasucingo, which was the land of their enemies, and there we would have had none of the things we required as we would in the land of Mutezuma, but that if I wished to go that way they would have provisions brought from the other road. So we left, in some fear lest they should persist in trying to set a trap for us; but as we had announced that that was the road we were to travel by, it did not seem wise to me to leave it or to turn back, for I did not wish them to believe we lacked courage.

On the day I left the city of Churultecal, I traveled four leagues to some villages of the state of Guasucingo, where I was very well received by the natives, who gave me some female slaves and clothing and some small pieces of gold, which in all was very little, because they own very little on account of their being allies of the Tascaltecan and surrounded on all sides by Mutezuma's land, so they have no trade save with the people of their own province; because of this they live very poorly. On the following day I climbed the pass which goes between the two mountains I have mentioned, and on the descent we entered Mutezuma's land through a province of it called Chalco. Two leagues before we reached the villages,³² I found a dwelling, newly built and so large that I and all those of my company were quartered there very comfortably, although I brought with me more than four thousand Indians, natives of the provinces of Tascalteca, Guasucingo, Churultecal and Cempoal. There was plenty to eat for all, and in all the rooms very great fires and plenty of firewood, for it was very cold on account of our being very close to those two mountains which have so much snow on them.

Certain persons, who seemed to be chieftains, came here to speak with me, one of whom was said to be Mutezuma's brother. He brought me some three thousand *pesos de oro* from Mutezuma, and begged me on his behalf to turn back and not persist in going to his city, for the land was scarce of food and the roads were bad; furthermore, the city was built entirely on the water and I might only enter it by canoe. He also told me of many other inconveniences I would find on the journey. He then said that I had only to say what I wanted and Mutezuma, their lord, would command it to be given me and would likewise agree to give me each year a *cerium quid*, which he would send to the coast or wherever else I wished. I received them very well and gave them some of the things from Spain which they hold in great esteem, especially to him who was said to be Mutezuma's brother. To his embassy I replied that were it in my power to return I would do so to please Mutezuma,

but that I had come to this land by Your Majesty's commands, and the principal thing of which I had been ordered to give an account was of Mutezuma and his great city, of which and of whom Your Highness had known for many years. And I told him to beg Mutezuma on my behalf to acquiesce in my journey, because no harm would come of it to his person or his land, rather, it would be to his advantage; and that once I had seen him, should he still not wish me to remain in his company, I would then return; and that we could better decide between ourselves in person how Your Majesty was to be served than through ambassadors, even if they were men in whom we placed the utmost confidence. With this reply they departed. To judge by all we had seen and the preparations which had been made in this dwelling of which I have spoken, it seemed to the Indians that they planned to attack us that night. When I heard this I set up such a guard that once they saw it they changed their minds, and very secretly sent away that night many of their people who had gathered in the woods which were close to the camp, as was seen by our sentries and scouts.

At daybreak I departed for a town which is two leagues from there and is called Amaqueruca.³³ It is in the province of Chalco, which contains, in the principal town and in the villages which are two leagues away, more than twenty thousand inhabitants. In the aforementioned town we were quartered in some very good houses belonging to the lord of the place. And many persons who seemed to be of high rank came to speak with me, saying that Mutezuma, their lord, had sent them to wait for me there and to provide me with all that I might need. The chief of this province and town gave me as many as forty slave girls and three thousand *castellanos*, and, in the two days that we were there, he provided us very adequately with all the food we needed. On the following day, traveling with those messengers of Mutezuma who said that they had come to wait for me, I left and put up for the night four leagues from there in a small town which is by a great lake. Almost half of it is built on the water, and on the land side there is a very

rugged mountain strewn with many stones and boulders; and there we were very well quartered.³⁴ Here likewise they wished to pit their strength against us, only it seemed that they wished to do it without risk by falling on us at night unawares. But as I was on the alert I anticipated their plans, and that night kept such watch that when dawn broke my men had taken or killed some fifteen or twenty of their spies, some of whom had come in canoes and others of whom had descended from the mountain to see if there was an opportunity of achieving their intention. Consequently, few of them returned to report what they had discovered; and, seeing that we were always so well prepared, they decided to abandon their original intent and treat us well.

On the following morning, as I was preparing to leave the town, ten or twelve lords, of great importance, as I later discovered, came to see me, and among them there was one great chief, a young man of about twenty-five³⁵ to whom they all showed great reverence, so much so that after he stepped down from the litter in which he came all the others began to clear the stones and straw from the ground in front of him. When they came to where I was they told me they had come on behalf of Mutezuma, their lord, and that he had sent them to accompany me, and he begged me to forgive him for not coming himself to receive me, for he was indisposed; but his city was close by, and since I was determined to go there we should meet and I would learn from him his willingness to serve Your Highness. But still he begged me, if it were possible, not to go there, for I would suffer many hardships and he was very ashamed not to be able to provide for me as he wished. To this end those chiefs urged and earnestly persisted, so much so that finally there was nothing left for them to say, save that they would bar the road if I still insisted on going.

I answered, and appeased them as eloquently as I could, making them understand that no harm could ensue from my coming, but rather much profit. I then gave them some of the things that I had with me and they departed. I followed immediately after

them accompanied by many people who seemed of some account, as afterwards they were shown to be. I continued on the road by the side of that great lake, and one league from the quarters we had just left I saw in the middle of it, well beyond bowshot, a small city, with perhaps some thousand or two thousand inhabitants, constructed entirely on the water and with many towers and no place to enter, or so it seemed from a distance.³⁶ Another league beyond we entered upon a causeway as wide as a horseman's lance and two-thirds of a league into the middle of the lake, and there we came upon a city, which, although small, was the most beautiful we had seen, both in regard to the well-built houses and towers and in the skill of the foundations, for it is raised on the water.³⁷ In this city, which has some two thousand inhabitants, they received and fed us very well. The chief and important persons of the place came to me and begged me to rest there for the night. But Mutezuma's messengers told me not to stay, but to go to another city three leagues from there, called Yztapalapa, belonging to a brother of Mutezuma, and I did so.³⁸ And to leave this city, where we ate, whose name I cannot now recall, we passed along another causeway for a league or more before reaching dry land. When I arrived at the city of Yztapalapa, the lord and that of another city called Caluaacan,³⁹ which is three leagues distant, came out to meet me together with other chiefs who were waiting there, and they gave me some three or four thousand *castellanos* and some clothing and slave girls, and made me very welcome.

In this city of Yztapalapa live twelve or fifteen thousand inhabitants. It is built by the side of a great salt lake, half of it on the water and the other half on dry land. The chief of this city has some new houses which, although as yet unfinished, are as good as the best in Spain; that is, in respect of size and workmanship both in their masonry and woodwork and their floors, and furnishings for every sort of household task; but they have no reliefs or other rich things which are used in Spain but not found here. They have many upper and lower rooms and cool gardens with many trees and

sweet-smelling flowers; likewise there are pools of fresh water, very well made and with steps leading down to the bottom. There is a very large kitchen garden next to the house and overlooking it a gallery with very beautiful corridors and rooms, and in the garden a large reservoir of fresh water, well built with fine stonework, around which runs a well-tiled pavement so wide that four people can walk there abreast. It is four hundred paces square, which is sixteen hundred paces around the edge. Beyond the pavement, toward the wall of the garden, there is a latticework of canes, behind which are all manner of shrubs and scented herbs. Within the pool there are many fish and birds, wild ducks and widgeons, as well as other types of waterfowl; so many that the water is often almost covered with them.

On the following day I left this city and after traveling for half a league came to a causeway which runs through the middle of the lake for two leagues until it reaches the great city of Temixtitan, which is built in the middle of the lake. This causeway is as wide as two lances, and well built, so that eight horsemen can ride abreast. In the two leagues from one end to the other there are three towns, and one of them, which is called Miscalcango, is in the main built on the water, and the other two, which are called Nica and Huchilohuchico,⁴⁰ are built on the shore, but many of their houses are on the water. The first of these cities has three thousand inhabitants, the second more than six thousand, and the third another four or five thousand, and in all of them there are very good houses and towers, especially the houses of the chiefs and persons of high rank, and the temples or oratories where they keep their idols.

In these cities there is much trading in salt, which they export from the water of the lake and from the shallow area which is covered by the waters of the lake. They bake it in some way to make cakes, which are sold to the inhabitants and also beyond.

Thus I continued along this causeway, and half a league before the main body of the city of Temixtitan, at the entrance to another causeway which meets this one from the shore, there is a

very strong fortification with two towers ringed by a wall four yards wide with merloned battlements all around commanding both causeways. There are only two gates, one for entering and one for leaving. Here as many as a thousand men came out to see and speak with me, important persons from that city, all dressed very richly after their own fashion. When they reached me, each one performed a ceremony which they practice among themselves; each placed his hand on the ground and kissed it. And so I stood there waiting for nearly an hour until everyone had performed his ceremony. Close to the city there is a wooden bridge ten paces wide across a breach in the causeway to allow the water to flow, as it rises and falls. The bridge is also for the defense of the city, because whenever they so wish they can remove some very long broad beams of which this bridge is made. There are many such bridges throughout the city as later Your Majesty will see in the account I give of it.

After we had crossed this bridge, Mutezuma came to greet us and with him some two hundred lords, all barefoot and dressed in a different costume, but also very rich in their way and more so than the others. They came in two columns, pressed very close to the walls of the street, which is very wide and beautiful and so straight that you can see from one end to the other. It is two-thirds of a league long and has on both sides very good and big houses, both dwellings and temples.

Mutezuma came down the middle of this street with two chiefs, one on his right hand and the other on his left. One of these was that great chief who had come on a litter to speak with me, and the other was Mutezuma's brother, chief of the city of Yztapalapa, which I had left that day. And they were all dressed alike except that Mutezuma wore sandals whereas the others went barefoot; and they held his arm on either side. When we met I dismounted and stepped forward to embrace him, but the two lords who were with him stopped me with their hands so that I should not touch him; and they likewise all performed the ceremony of kissing the earth.

When this was over Mutezuma requested his brother to remain with me and to take me by the arm while he went a little way ahead with the other; and after he had spoken to me all the others in the two columns came and spoke with me, one after another, and then each returned to his column.

When at last I came to speak to Mutezuma himself I took off a necklace of pearls and cut glass that I was wearing and placed it round his neck; after we had walked a little way up the street a servant of his came with two necklaces, wrapped in a cloth, made from red snails' shells, which they hold in great esteem; and from each necklace hung eight shrimps of refined gold almost a span in length. When they had been brought he turned to me and placed them about my neck, and then continued up the street in the manner already described until we reached a very large and beautiful house which had been very well prepared to accommodate us. There he took me by the hand and led me to a great room facing the courtyard through which we entered. And he bade me sit on a very rich throne, which he had had built for him and then left saying that I should wait for him. [After a short while, when all those of my company had been quartered, he returned with many and various treasures of gold and silver and featherwork, and as many as five or six thousand cotton garments, all very rich and woven and embroidered in various ways.] And after he had given me these things he sat on another throne which they placed there next to the one on which I was sitting, and addressed me in the following way:

“For a long time we have known from the writings of our ancestors that neither I, nor any of those who dwell in this land, are natives of it, but foreigners who came from very distant parts; and likewise we know that a chieftain, of whom they were all vassals, brought our people to this region. And he returned to his native land and after many years came again, by which time all those who had remained were married to native women and had built villages and raised children. And when he wished to lead them away again they would not go nor even admit him as their chief; and so he

departed. And we have always held that those who descended from him would come and conquer this land and take us as their vassals. So because of the place from which you claim to come, namely, from where the sun rises, and the things you tell us of the great lord or king who sent you here, we believe and are certain that he is our natural lord, especially as you say that he has known of us for some time. So be assured that we shall obey you and hold you as our lord in place of that great sovereign of whom you speak; and in this there shall be no offense or betrayal whatsoever. And in all the land that lies in my domain, you may command as you will, for you shall be obeyed; and all that we own is for you to dispose of as you choose. Thus, as you are in your own country and your own house, rest now from the hardships of your journey and the battles which you have fought, for I know full well of all that has happened to you from Puntunchan⁴¹ to here, and I also know how those of Cempoal and Tascalteca have told you much evil of me; believe only what you see with your eyes, for those are my enemies, and some were my vassals, and have rebelled against me at your coming and said those things to gain favor with you. I also know that they have told you the walls of my houses are made of gold, and that the floor mats in my rooms and other things in my household are likewise of gold, and that I was, and claimed to be, a god; and many other things besides. The houses as you see are of stone and lime and clay."

Then he raised his clothes and showed me his body, saying, as he grasped his arms and trunk with his hands, "See that I am of flesh and blood like you and all other men, and I am mortal and substantial. See how they have lied to you? It is true that I have some pieces of gold left to me by my ancestors; anything I might have shall be given to you whenever you ask. Now I shall go to other houses where I live, but here you shall be provided with all that you and your people require, and you shall receive no hurt, for you are in your own land and your own house."⁴²

I replied to all he said as I thought most fitting, especially in

making him believe that Your Majesty was he whom they were expecting; and with this he took his leave. When he had gone we were very well provided with chickens, bread, fruit and other requisites, especially for the servicing of our quarters. In this manner I spent six days, very well provisioned with all that was needed and visited by many of those chiefs.

Most Catholic Lord, as I said at the beginning of this account, when I departed from Vera Cruz in search of this Mutezuma I left behind 150 men to complete a fortress which I had begun; I also related how I had left many towns and fortresses in the countryside around that town under Your Highness's Royal command and the natives pacified.

When I was in the city of Churultecal I received letters from the captain whom I had left in the aforementioned town in which he informed of how Qualpopoca, chief of the city which is called Almería, had sent messengers to him to say that he wished to be Your Highness's vassal, and if he had not come before or now to swear allegiance and offer himself and all his lands as he was obliged, it was because he would have to pass through the lands of his enemies and feared that he would be attacked. He therefore asked the captain to send four Spaniards to accompany him, for those through whose land he must pass, knowing his purpose, would not trouble him. The captain, believing what Qualpopoca said to be true, for many others had done the same sort of thing, sent the four Spaniards, but once Qualpopoca had them in his house, he ordered them to be killed in such way as to appear he had not done it. Two of them were killed, but the others escaped, wounded, through the woods.

And so the captain had marched on the city of Almería with fifty Spaniards and the two horsemen, as well as two guns and with some eight or ten thousand of our Indian allies. They had attacked the inhabitants of that city, and with the loss of six or seven Spaniards had captured it and killed many of the inhabitants, driving out the rest. They had set fire to the city and destroyed it, for the

Indians who came with them were the enemies of that city and had taken great care over it. But Qualpopoca, chief of that city, together with other chiefs, allies of his, who had come to assist him, had escaped. From some prisoners he took in that city the captain had discovered who had been defending it and for what reason they had killed the Spaniards whom he had sent. They said that it was done because Mutezuma had commanded Qualpopoca and the others who had come there, as his vassals, that once I had left the town of Vera Cruz to fall upon those who had rebelled and offered themselves to the service of Your Highness, and to seek every possible means of killing the Spaniards whom I had left behind, so that they should not help or favor them.

Most Invincible Lord, six days having passed since we first entered this great city of Temixtitlan, during which time I had seen something of it, though little compared with how much there is to see and record, I decided from what I had seen that it would benefit Your Royal service and our safety if Mutezuma were in my power and not in complete liberty, in order that he should not retreat from the willingness he showed to serve Your Majesty; but chiefly because we Spaniards are rather obstinate and persistent, and should we annoy him he might, as he is so powerful, obliterate all memory of us. Furthermore, by having him with me, all those other lands which were subject to him would come more swiftly to the recognition and service of Your Majesty, as later happened. I resolved, therefore, to take him and keep him in the quarters where I was, which were very strong.

Thinking of all the ways and means to capture him without causing a disturbance, I remembered what the captain I had left in Vera Cruz had written to me about the events in the city of Almería, and how all that had happened there had been by order of Mutezuma.⁴³ I left a careful watch on the crossroads and went to Mutezuma's houses, as I had done at other times, and after having joked and exchanged pleasantries with him and after he had given me some gold jewelry and one of his daughters and other chiefs'

daughters to some of my company, I told him that I knew of what had happened in the city of Nautecal (or Almería, as we called it), and the Spaniards who had been killed there; and that Qualpopoca excused himself by saying that all had been done by Mutezuma's command, and that as his vassal he could not have done otherwise. I told him, however, that I did not believe it was as Qualpopoca had said, but that as he was trying to exculpate himself, I thought that he ought to send for Qualpopoca and for all the other lords concerned in the death of those Spaniards, so that the truth might be known, and they might be punished so that Your Majesty should see clearly his good intentions. For, if he provoked Your Highness's anger, instead of receiving favors as he should, he would suffer much harm on account of what those men had said, but I was well satisfied that the truth was the reverse of what they claimed, and I had confidence in him. He immediately sent for certain of his men to whom he gave a small stone figure in the manner of a seal, which he carried fastened to his arm, and he commanded them to go to the city of Almería, which is sixty or seventy leagues from Temixtitlan, and to bring Qualpopoca, and to discover who were the others who had been concerned with the death of the Spaniards and to bring them likewise. If they did not come voluntarily, they were to be brought as prisoners, and if they resisted capture, Mutezuma's messengers were to request of certain communities close to the city, which he indicated to them, to send forces to seize them, but on no account to return without them.

These left at once, and after they had gone I thanked Mutezuma for the great care which he had taken in this matter, for it was my responsibility to account to Your Highness for those Spaniards, but asked that he should stay in my quarters until the truth were known and he was shown to be blameless. I begged him not to take this ill, for he was not to be imprisoned but given all his freedom, and I would not impede the service and command of his domains, and he should choose a room in those quarters where I was, which ever he wished. There he would be very much at his ease and

would certainly be given no cause for annoyance or discomfort, because as well as those of his service my own men would serve him in all he commanded. In this we spent much time reasoning and discussing, all of which is too lengthy to write down and too tedious and too little pertinent to the issue to give Your Highness an account; so I will say only that at last he said he would agree to go with me. Then he ordered the room where he wished to stay to be prepared, and it was very well prepared. When this was done many chiefs came, and removing their garments they placed them under their arms, and walking barefoot they brought a simple litter, and weeping carried him in it in great silence. Thus we proceeded to my quarters with no disturbance in the city, although there was some agitation which, as soon as Mutezuma knew of it, he ordered to cease; and all was quiet and remained so all the time I held Mutezuma prisoner, for he was very much at his ease and kept all his household—which is very great and wonderful, as I will later relate—with him as before. And I and those of my company satisfied his needs as far as was possible.

Fifteen or twenty days after his imprisonment, those he had sent to find Qualpopoca and the others who had killed the Spaniards returned, bringing with them the aforementioned Qualpopoca and one of his sons and fifteen other persons whom they said were of high rank and had been concerned in the killing. And Qualpopoca was borne in a litter like a lord, which indeed he was. When they arrived they were handed over to me and I had them well guarded in chains. After they had confessed to the killing of the Spaniards I had them questioned to see if they were Mutezuma's vassals. Qualpopoca replied asking if there were any other lord of whom he could be a vassal, as much as to say that there was no other, and that he was. Likewise I asked them if what they had done was by Mutezuma's command, and they replied that it was not, although when the sentence that they should be burnt was carried out, they said unanimously that it was true that Mutezuma had

ordered it to be done, and by his command they had done it. Thus they were burnt publicly in a square, with no disturbance whatsoever. But on the day of their execution, because they had confessed that Mutezuma had ordered them to kill those Spaniards, I ordered him to be put in irons, from which he received no small fright, although later that same day, after having spoken with him, I had them removed, and he was very pleased.

From then on I did all I could to please him, especially by announcing publicly to all the natives, the chiefs as well as those who came to see me, that it was Your Majesty's wish that Mutezuma should remain in power, acknowledging the sovereignty which Your Highness held over him, and that they could best serve Your Highness by obeying him and holding him for their lord, as they had before I came to this land. So well did I treat him and so much satisfaction did he receive from me that many times I offered him his liberty, begging him to return to his house, and each time he told me that he was pleased to be where he was and he did not wish to go, for he lacked nothing, just as if he were in his own home. Also, his going might permit certain chiefs, his vassals, to induce or oblige him to do something against his will and prejudicial to the service of Your Highness; for he had resolved to serve Your Majesty in all that he could. As long as these chiefs were informed of all he wanted he was content to remain there, as he might excuse himself, should they wish to demand anything of him, by replying that he was not at liberty. Many times he asked my permission to go and spend some time at certain residences which he owned both inside and outside the city, and not once did I refuse him. Many times he went with five or six Spaniards to entertain himself one or two leagues beyond the city, and he always returned very happy and content to the quarters where I held him. Whenever he went out he gave many gifts of jewels and clothing, both to the Spaniards who escorted him and to the natives by whom he was always so well attended that when the least number went with him there were

more than three thousand men, most of whom were chiefs and persons of high rank; he also gave many banquets and entertainments, of which those who went with him had much to relate.

After he had demonstrated very fully to me how great was his desire to serve Your Highness, I begged him to show me the mines from which they obtained the gold, so that I could give Your Majesty a more complete account of the things of this land, and he replied that he would be very pleased to do so. Then he called certain of his servants and sent them in pairs to four provinces where he said it was obtained; and he asked me to send Spaniards with them to see it being mined, so I gave him two Spaniards to accompany each two of his men.

Some went to a province which is called Cuçula,⁴⁴ and is eighty leagues from the great city of Temixtitan. The natives of that province are Mutezuma's vassals, and there the Spaniards were shown three rivers, and from these and others they brought me samples of gold, of good quality, although extracted with little skill, for they had no tools save that which the Indians traditionally use. On their journey these Spaniards passed through three provinces with very beautiful lands and many towns and cities and other communities in great numbers, and with so many and such good buildings that they said in Spain there could be none better. In particular they said that they had seen fortified lodgings larger and stronger and better built than the Burgos Castle. The people of one of these provinces, which is called Tamazulapa,⁴⁵ wore more clothes than any others we have seen, and as it seemed to them, well designed.

Some of the others went to a province called Malinaltebeque,⁴⁶ which is likewise seventy leagues or so from the capital, and more toward the coast. And likewise they brought me samples of gold from a great river which passes through there. Others went to another land which is upstream of this river and is of a people who speak a different language from that of Culua; the land is called Tenis,⁴⁷ and the lord of the land is called Coaticamat. Because he

has his lands among some very high and steep mountains and also because the people of that province are very warlike and fight with lances some twenty-five or thirty spans long, he is not subject to Mutezuma.

Thus, because these people were not Mutezuma's vassals, the messengers who went with the Spaniards dared not enter the land without first making their presence known to the lord thereof and asking his permission, saying that they came with Spaniards to see the gold mines he had in his land, and they begged him on my behalf and on behalf of Mutezuma their lord to let them pass. Coaticamat replied that he was very pleased for the Spaniards to enter his land and see the mines and all else they wished to see, but that the people of Culua, who are Mutezuma's subjects, might not enter because they were his enemies. The Spaniards were somewhat undecided whether to enter alone or not, because their companions had warned them not to go, saying that they would be killed, with which intention the Culuaans had been denied entry. At last they resolved to go alone and were very well received by the lord and all those of his land; and they were shown seven or eight rivers from which they were told that the gold was taken, and in their presence the Indians extracted some; and they brought me back samples from all the rivers. With these Spaniards the aforementioned Coaticamat sent several of his messengers to offer me his person and his land in the service of Your Sacred Majesty; and he also sent me certain gifts of gold and of native clothing. The others went to another province called Tuchiaquebeque,⁴⁸ which lies in the same direction toward the coast, twelve leagues from the province of Malinaltebeque, where, as I have said, there is gold, and there they were shown other rivers from which they also brought samples of gold.

According to the Spaniards who went there, that province of Malinaltebeque was very well provided for setting up farms. I therefore asked Mutezuma to have a farm built there for Your Majesty; and he was so diligent in all this that in two months about

ninety-five bushels of maize were sown, and fifteen of beans and two thousand cacao plants. Cacao is a fruit like the almond, which they grind and hold to be of such value that they use it as money throughout the land and with it buy all they need in the markets and other places. They built four very good houses, in one of which, apart from the rooms, they made a water tank, and in it put five hundred ducks, which here they value highly, and pluck them every year, because they use their feathers to make clothes. And they put there as many as fifteen hundred chickens and other things for dairy farming, which the Spaniards who saw them many times valued at twenty thousand *pesos de oro*.

Likewise I asked Mutezuma to tell me if there was on the coast any river or cove where the ships that came might enter and be safe. He replied that he did not know, but would have them make a map of all the coast for me with all its rivers and coves; and that I should send some Spaniards to see it, and he would give me guides to accompany them; and so it was done. On the following day they brought me a cloth with all the coast painted on it, and there appeared a river which ran to the sea, and according to the representation was wider than all the others. This river seemed to pass through the mountains which we called Sanmin,⁴⁹ and are so high they form a bay which the pilots believed divided a province called Mazamalco. He told me to decide whom to send, and he would provide the means and the guide to show it to them. Then I chose ten men, and among them some pilots and other persons who knew about the sea. With the provisions which he had given them, they departed and traveled up all the coast from the port of Chilmecca,⁵⁰ which is called San Juan, where I landed; and they went more than seventy leagues along the coast and nowhere did they find a river or bay where any ships might enter, although on that coast there were many and very large ones and they sounded them all from canoes. Finally they reached the province of Quacalcalco,⁵¹ where the aforementioned river is to be found.

The ruler of that province, who is called Tuchtintecla, re-

ceived them very well and gave them canoes to explore the river, and in the shallowest part of its mouth they found two and a half fathoms and more. They then went upriver for twelve leagues, and the shallowest they found there was five or six fathoms; and from what they saw of it they concluded that it continued for more than thirty leagues at that depth. On the banks of this river are many great towns, and all the province is very flat and fertile, and abounds in all manner of crops, and the population is almost without number.

The people of this province are not vassals or subjects of Mutezuma; rather his enemies. Thus when the Spaniards arrived the lord of the land sent to say that the Culuan might not enter his domain because they were his enemies. When the Spaniards returned to me with this report, he sent with them several messengers who brought gold jewelry, and tigerskins and featherwork and precious stones and clothing; they told me, on his behalf, that Tuchtintecla,⁵² their lord, had known of me for some time, because the people of Puchunchan [*sic*]—which is the river of Grijalba—who are his allies, had told him how I had passed by there and had fought with them because they would not allow me to enter their town; and how afterwards they became our friends and Your Majesty's vassals. He likewise offered himself to Your Royal service, together with all his lands, and begged me to take him as a friend, on condition that the Culuan should not enter his land, although I might see all that he had which might be of service to Your Highness, and that each year he would give all that I indicated.

When the Spaniards who had been to that province told me that it was suitable for settling and that they had found a port there, I was greatly pleased, for ever since I arrived in this land I have been searching for a port, so that I might settle here, but I had never found one, nor is there one on all the coast from the river of San[t] Antón, which is next to the Grijalba, to the Pánuco, which is down coast, where certain Spaniards went to settle by order of Francisco de Garay, of which I will inform Your Highness later.

In order to acquaint myself better with the state of that province and port and with the intentions of the inhabitants and other things pertinent to settling, I sent back certain members of my company, who had some experience in these matters, to discover all this. They went with the messengers which that lord Tunchintecla had sent me and with several things which I gave them for him. When they arrived they were very well received by him and they again sounded the port and the river and looked to see what sites there were on which to build a town. They brought me a very long and accurate report of all this and said that there was everything we required for settling, and the lord of the province was very pleased and very willing to serve Your Highness. When they arrived with this report I sent a captain with 150 men to lay out the town and to build a fort, for the lord of that province had offered to do it and anything else I might need or demand of him; and he even built six dwellings there himself, saying that he was very pleased that we had gone there to settle in his land.

Most Powerful Lord, in the preceding chapters, I told how at the time I was going to the great city of Temixtitan, a great chief had come out to meet me on behalf of Mutezuma, and, as I learnt afterwards, he was a very close kinsman of Mutezuma and ruled a province called Aculuacan, next to the territory of Mutezuma. The capital of it is a very great city which stands beside the salt lake; and by canoe it is six leagues from there to the city of Temixtitan, and by land ten. This city is called Tesuico, and there are as many as thirty thousand inhabitants in it.⁵³ It has very remarkable houses and temples and shrines, all very large and well built; and there are very large markets.

In addition to this city he has two others, one of which is three leagues from Tesuico and is called Acuruman, and another six leagues away which is called Otumpa.⁵⁴ Each of these has three or four thousand inhabitants. The aforementioned province and dominion of Aculuacan has many other villages and hamlets and very good lands and farms. This province borders on one side with

the province of Tascalteca, of which I have already spoken to Your Majesty. After Mutezuma had been imprisoned, the lord of this province, who is called Cacamazin,⁵⁵ rebelled both against the service of Your Highness, to which he had pledged himself, and against Mutezuma. Although he was many times required to obey Your Majesty's Royal commands, he would not, even though, as well as the demands I sent, Mutezuma sent orders also. On the contrary, he replied that if we required anything from him we should go and get it, and that there we should see what sort of man he was and what service he was obliged to render! According to the information I received, he had collected together a large force of warriors who were all very well prepared for war.

As neither warnings nor commands could persuade him, I spoke to Mutezuma and asked him what he thought we should do so that his rebellion should not go unpunished. To which Mutezuma replied that to try and take him by force would be very dangerous, for he was a very great lord and had many troops and that he could not be defeated without the risk of a large number being killed. But he, Mutezuma, had in Cacamazin's land many important persons who received salaries from him, and he would speak to them so as to win some of Cacamazin's people over to our side; and once this had been done we might take him in safety. So it was that Mutezuma made his arrangements in such a way that those persons induced Cacamazin to meet them in the city of Tesuico to settle matters concerning their status as persons of rank, and because it grieved them to see that he was acting in a way which might lead to his downfall.

They met in a beautiful house belonging to Cacamazin himself, which was by the lakeside and so built that canoes might pass underneath it. There they had canoes secretly prepared and many men ready lest Cacamazin attempt to resist capture. Once he was in their presence, all those lords took him before his own people realized it, and put him into those canoes, and went out onto the lake, from whence they went to the great city which is six leagues from

there, as I have said. When they arrived they placed him in a litter, as his position demanded, and as they were accustomed to do, and brought him to me; and I had irons put on him and ordered him to be closely guarded. And on Mutezuma's advice I, in Your Highness's name, appointed a son of his, called Cocuzcacin,⁵⁶ as ruler of that province. And I made all the communities and chiefs of that province and dominion obey him as their lord until such time as Your Highness might make other arrangements. Thus it was done, and from then on they all took him as their lord and obeyed him as they had Cacamazin; and he was obedient in all that I, on Your Majesty's behalf, commanded him.

A few days after the imprisonment of this Cacamazin, Mutezuma summoned to an assembly all the chiefs of the cities and lands thereabouts. When they were gathered he sent for me to join him, and as soon as I arrived addressed them in the following manner:

"My brothers and friends, you know that for a long time you and your forefathers have been subjects and vassals of my ancestors and of me, and that you have been always well treated and honored by us, and likewise you have done all that loyal and true vassals are obliged to do for their rightful lords. I also believe that you have heard from your ancestors how we are not natives of this land, but came from another far away, and how they were brought by a lord who left them there, whose vassals they all were. After many years this lord returned but found that our ancestors had already settled in this land and married the native women and had had many children; consequently, they did not wish to return with him and refused to welcome him as their sovereign. He departed, saying that he would return or would send such forces as would compel them to serve him. You well know that we have always expected him, and according to the things this captain has said of the Lord and King who sent him here, and according to the direction whence he says he comes, I am certain, and so must you be also, that this is the same lord for whom we have been waiting, especially as he says that there they know of us. And because our predecessors

did not receive their lord as they were bound, let us now receive him and give thanks also to our gods that what we have so long awaited has come to pass in our time. And I beg you—since all this is well known to you—that just as until now you have obeyed me and held me as your rightful lord, from now on you should obey this great King, for he is your rightful lord, and as his representative acknowledge this his captain. And all the tributes and services which, until now, you have rendered to me, render now to him, for I also must contribute and serve in all that he may command; and in addition to doing your duty and all that you are obliged to do, you will give me great satisfaction thereby."

All this he said weeping with all the tears and sighs that a man is able; and likewise all the other lords who were listening wept so much that for a long time they were unable to reply. And I can assure Your Holy Majesty that among the Spaniards who heard this discourse there was not one who did not have great pity for him.

After they had restrained their tears somewhat, those chiefs replied that they held him as their lord and had sworn to do all he commanded, and that for this reason and on account of what he had said they were very pleased to obey, and from then on they submitted themselves as Your Highness's vassals. Then all together and each one by himself they promised to obey and comply with all that was demanded of them in the name of Your Majesty, as true and loyal vassals must do, and to provide all the tributes and services which formerly they paid to Mutezuma and whatever else might be required of them in Your Highness's name. All of this was said before a notary public, who set it down in a formal document, which I asked for, attested by the presence of many Spaniards who served as witnesses.

When the submission of these chiefs to Your Majesty's service was complete, I spoke one day with Mutezuma and told him that Your Highness had need of gold for certain works You had ordered to be done. I asked him therefore to send some of his people together with some Spaniards to the countries and dwellings

of those chiefs who had submitted themselves, to ask them to render to Your Majesty some part of what they owned, for, as well as the need which Your Highness had, they were now beginning to serve Your Highness, who would have thereby higher regard for their good intentions. I also asked him to give me something of what he possessed, for I wished to send it to Your Majesty, as I had sent the gold and other things with the messengers. Later he asked for the Spaniards he wished to send, and by twos and fives dispatched them to many provinces and cities, whose names I do not remember, because I have lost my writings, and they were so many and so varied, and, moreover, because some of them were eighty and a hundred leagues from the great city of Temixtitlan. With them he sent some of his own people, and ordered them to go to the chiefs of those provinces and cities and tell them I demanded that each of them should give me a certain quantity of gold. And so it was done, and all the chiefs to whom he sent gave very fully of all that was asked of them, both in jewelry and in ingots and gold and silver sheets, and other things which they had.

When all was melted down that could be, Your Majesty's fifth came to more than 32,400 *pesos de oro*, exclusive of the gold and silver jewelry, and the featherwork and precious stones and many other valuable things which I designated for Your Holy Majesty and set aside; all of which might be worth a hundred thousand ducats or more.⁵⁷ All these, in addition to their intrinsic worth, are so marvelous that considering their novelty and strangeness they are priceless; nor can it be believed that any of the princes of this world, of whom we know, possess any things of such high quality.

And lest Your Highness should think all this is an invention, let me say that all the things of which Mutezuma has ever heard, both on land and in the sea, they have modeled, very realistically, either in gold and silver or in jewels or feathers, and with such perfection that they seem almost real. He gave many of these for Your Highness, without counting other things which I drew for him and which he had made in gold, such as holy images, crucifixes, medal-

lions, ornaments, necklaces and many other of our things. Of the silver Your Highness received a hundred or so marks, which I had the natives make into plates, both large and small, and bowls and cups and spoons which they fashioned as skillfully as we could make them understand. In addition to this, Mutezuma gave me many garments of his own, which even considering that they were all of cotton and not silk were such that in all the world there could be none like them, nor any of such varied and natural colors or such workmanship. Amongst them were very marvelous clothes for men and women, and there were bedspreads which could not have been compared even with silk ones. There were also other materials, like tapestries which would serve for hallways and churches, and counterpanes for beds, of feathers and cotton, in various colors, and also very wonderful, and many other things which as there are so many and so varied I do not know how to describe them to Your Majesty.

He also gave me a dozen blowpipes,⁵⁸ such as he uses, whose perfection I am likewise unable to describe to Your Highness, for they were all painted in the finest paints and perfect colors, in which were depicted all manner of small birds and animals and trees and flowers and several other things. Round their mouthpieces and muzzles was a band of gold a span in depth, and round the middle another, finely decorated. He also gave me pouches of gold mesh for the pellers and told me that he would give me pellets of gold as well. He also gave me some gold bullet-molds⁵⁹ and many other things which are too numerous to describe.

Most Powerful Lord, in order to give an account to Your Royal Excellency of the magnificence, the strange and marvelous things of this great city of Temixtitlan and of the dominion and wealth of this Mutezuma, its ruler, and of the rites and customs of the people, and of the order there is in the government of the capital as well as in the other cities of Mutezuma's dominions, I would need much time and many expert narrators. I cannot describe one hundredth part of all the things which could be mentioned, but, as

best I can, I will describe some of those I have seen which, although badly described, will, I well know, be so remarkable as not to be believed, for we who saw them with our own eyes could not grasp them with our understanding. But Your Majesty may be certain that if my account has any fault it will be, in this as in all else of which I give account to Your Highness, too short rather than too long, because it seems to me right that to my Prince and Lord I should state the truth very clearly without adding anything which might be held to embroil it or diminish it.

Before I begin to describe this great city and the others which I mentioned earlier, it seems to me, so that they may be better understood, that I should say something of Mesyco, which is Mutezuma's principal domain and the place where this city and the others which I have mentioned are to be found.⁶⁰ This province is circular and encompassed by very high and very steep mountains, and the plain is some seventy leagues in circumference: in this plain there are two lakes which cover almost all of it, for a canoe may travel fifty leagues around the edges. One of these lakes is of fresh water and the other, which is the larger, is of salt water.⁶¹ A small chain of very high hills which cuts across the middle of the plain separates these two lakes. At the end of this chain a narrow channel which is no wider than a bowshot between these hills and the mountains joins the lakes. They travel between one lake and the other and between the different settlements which are on the lakes in their canoes without needing to go by land. As the salt lake rises and falls with its tides as does the sea, whenever it rises, the salt water flows into the fresh as swiftly as a powerful river, and on the ebb the fresh water passes to the salt.

This great city of Temixtitan is built on the salt lake, and no matter by what road you travel there are two leagues from the main body of the city to the mainland. There are four artificial causeways leading to it, and each is as wide as two cavalry lances. The city itself is as big as Seville or Córdoba. The main streets are very wide and very straight; some of these are on the land, but the

rest and all the smaller ones are half on land, half canals where they paddle their canoes. All the streets have openings in places so that the water may pass from one canal to another. Over all these openings, and some of them are very wide, there are bridges made of long and wide beams joined together very firmly and so well made that on some of them ten horsemen may ride abreast.

Seeing that if the inhabitants of this city wished to betray us they were very well equipped for it by the design of the city, for once the bridges had been removed they could starve us to death without our being able to reach the mainland, as soon as I entered the city I made great haste to build four brigantines, and completed them in a very short time. They were such as could carry three hundred men to the land and transport the horses whenever we might need them.

This city has many squares where trading is done and markets are held continuously. There is also one square twice as big as that of Salamanca,⁶² with arcades all around, where more than sixty thousand people come each day to buy and sell, and where every kind of merchandise produced in these lands is found; provisions as well as ornaments of gold and silver, lead, brass, copper, tin, stones, shells, bones, and feathers. They also sell lime, hewn and unhewn stone, adobe bricks, tiles, and cut and uncut woods of various kinds. There is a street where they sell game and birds of every species found in this land: chickens, partridges and quails, wild ducks, flycatchers, widgeons, turtledoves, pigeons, cane birds, parrots, eagles and eagle owls, falcons, sparrow hawks and kestrels, and they sell the skins of some of these birds of prey with their feathers, heads and claws. They sell rabbits and hares, and stags and small gelded dogs which they breed for eating.⁶³

There are streets of herbalists where all the medicinal herbs and roots found in the land are sold. There are shops like apothecaries', where they sell ready-made medicines as well as liquid ointments and plasters. There are shops like barbers' where they have their hair washed and shaved, and shops where they sell food and

drink. There are also men like porters to carry loads.⁶⁴ There is much firewood and charcoal, earthenware braziers and mats of various kinds like mattresses for beds, and other, finer ones, for seats and for covering rooms and hallways. There is every sort of vegetable, especially onions, leeks, garlic, common cress and watercress, borage, sorrel, teasels and artichokes; and there are many sorts of fruit, among which are cherries and plums like those in Spain.

They sell honey, wax, and a syrup made from maize canes, which is as sweet and syrupy as that made from the sugar cane. They also make syrup from a plant which in the islands is called *maguey*,⁶⁵ which is much better than most syrups, and from this plant they also make sugar and wine, which they likewise sell. There are many sorts of spun cotton, in hanks of every color, and it seems like the silk market at Granada, except here there is a much greater quantity. They sell as many colors for painters as may be found in Spain and all of excellent hues. They sell deerskins, with and without the hair, and some are dyed white or in various colors. They sell much earthenware, which for the most part is very good; there are both large and small pitchers, jugs, pots, tiles, and many other sorts of vessel, all of good clay and most of them glazed and painted. They sell maize both as grain and as bread and it is better both in appearance and in taste than any found in the islands or on the mainland. They sell chicken and fish pies, and much fresh and salted fish, as well as raw and cooked fish. They sell hen and goose eggs, and eggs of all the other birds I have mentioned, in great number, and they sell *tortillas* made from eggs.

Finally, besides those things which I have already mentioned, they sell in the market everything else to be found in this land, but they are so many and so varied that because of their great number and because I cannot remember many of them nor do I know what they are called I shall not mention them. Each kind of merchandise is sold in its own street without any mixture whatever; they are very particular in this. Everything is sold by number and

size, and until now I have seen nothing sold by weight. There is in this great square a very large building like a courthouse, where ten or twelve persons sit as judges. They preside over all that happens in the markets, and sentence criminals. There are in this square other persons who walk among the people to see what they are selling and the measures they are using; and they have been seen to break some that were false.

There are, in all districts of this great city, many temples or houses for their idols. They are all very beautiful buildings, and in the important ones there are priests of their sect who live there permanently; and, in addition to the houses for the idols, they also have very good lodgings. All these priests dress in black and never comb their hair from the time they enter the priesthood until they leave; and all the sons of the persons of high rank, both the lords and honored citizens also, enter the priesthood and wear the habit from the age of seven or eight years until they are taken away to be married; this occurs more among the first-born sons, who are to inherit, than among the others. They abstain from eating things, and more at some times of the year than at others; and no woman is granted entry nor permitted inside these places of worship.

Amongst these temples there is one, the principal one, whose great size and magnificence no human tongue could describe, for it is so large that within the precincts, which are surrounded by a very high wall, a town of some five hundred inhabitants could easily be built. All round inside this wall there are very elegant quarters with very large rooms and corridors where their priests live. There are as many as forty towers, all of which are so high that in the case of the largest there are fifty steps leading up to the main part of it; and the most important of these towers is higher than that of the cathedral of Seville. They are so well constructed in both their stone and woodwork that there can be none better in any place, for all the stonework inside the chapels where they keep their idols is in high relief, with figures and little houses, and the woodwork is likewise

of relief and painted with monsters and other figures and designs. All these towers are burial places of chiefs, and the chapels therein are each dedicated to the idol which he venerated.

There are three rooms within this great temple for the principal idols, which are of remarkable size and stature and decorated with many designs and sculptures, both in stone and in wood. Within these rooms are other chapels, and the doors to them are very small. Inside there is no light whatsoever; there only some of the priests may enter, for inside are the sculptured figures of the idols, although, as I have said, there are also many outside.

The most important of these idols, and the ones in whom they have most faith, I had taken from their places and thrown down the steps; and I had those chapels where they were cleaned, for they were full of the blood of sacrifices; and I had images of Our Lady and of other saints put there, which caused Mutezuma and the other natives some sorrow. First they asked me not to do it, for when the communities learnt of it they would rise against me, for they believed that those idols gave them all their worldly goods, and that if they were allowed to be ill treated, they would become angry and give them nothing and take the fruit from the earth leaving the people to die of hunger. I made them understand through the interpreters how deceived they were in placing their trust in those idols which they had made with their hands from unclean things. They must know that there was only one God, Lord of all things, who had created heaven and earth and all else and who made all of us; and He was without beginning or end, and they must adore and worship only Him, not any other creature or thing. And I told them all I knew about this to dissuade them from their idolatry and bring them to the knowledge of God our Saviour. All of them, especially Mutezuma, replied that they had already told me how they were not natives of this land, and that as it was many years since their forefathers had come here, they well knew that they might have erred somewhat in what they believed, for they had left their native land so long ago; and as I had only

recently arrived from there, I would better know the things they should believe, and should explain to them and make them understand, for they would do as I said was best. Mutezuma and many of the chieftains of the city were with me until the idols were removed, the chapel cleaned and the images set up, and I urged them not to sacrifice living creatures to the idols, as they were accustomed, for, as well as being most abhorrent to God, Your Sacred Majesty's laws forbade it and ordered that he who kills shall be killed. And from then on they ceased to do it, and in all the time I stayed in that city I did not see a living creature killed or sacrificed.

The figures of the idols in which these people believe are very much larger than the body of a big man. They are made of dough from all the seeds and vegetables which they eat, ground and mixed together, and bound with the blood of human hearts which those priests tear out while still beating. And also after they are made they offer them more hearts and anoint their faces with the blood. Everything has an idol dedicated to it, in the same manner as the pagans who in antiquity honored their gods. So they have an idol whose favor they ask in war and another for agriculture; and likewise for each thing they wish to be done well they have an idol which they honor and serve.⁶⁶

There are in the city many large and beautiful houses, and the reason for this is that all the chiefs of the land, who are Mutezuma's vassals, have houses in the city and live there for part of the year;⁶⁷ and in addition there are many rich citizens who likewise have very good houses. All these houses have very large and very good rooms and also very pleasant gardens of various sorts of flowers both on the upper and lower floors.

Along one of the causeways to this great city run two aqueducts made of mortar. Each one is two paces wide and some six feet deep, and along one of them a stream of very good fresh water, as wide as a man's body, flows into the heart of the city and from this they all drink. The other, which is empty, is used when they wish to clean the first channel. Where the aqueducts cross the bridges,

the water passes along some channels which are as wide as an ox; and so they serve the whole city.

Canoes paddle through all the streets selling the water; they take it from the aqueduct by placing the canoes beneath the bridges where those channels are, and on top there are men who fill the canoes and are paid for their work. At all the gateways to the city and at the places where these canoes are unloaded, which is where the greater part of the provisions enter the city, there are guards in huts who receive a *certum quid* of all that enters. I have not yet discovered whether this goes to the chief or to the city, but I think to the chief, because in other markets in other parts I have seen this tax paid to the ruler of the place. Every day, in all the markets and public places there are many workmen and craftsmen of every sort, waiting to be employed by the day. The people of this city are dressed with more elegance and are more courtly in their bearing than those of the other cities and provinces, and because Mutezuma and all those chieftains, his vassals, are always coming to the city, the people have more manners and politeness in all matters. Yet so as not to tire Your Highness with the description of the things of this city (although I would not complete it so briefly), I will say only that these people live almost like those in Spain, and in as much harmony and order as there, and considering that they are barbarous and so far from the knowledge of God and cut off from all civilized nations, it is truly remarkable to see what they have achieved in all things.

Touching Mutezuma's service and all that was remarkable in his magnificence and power, there is so much to describe that I do not know how to begin even to recount some part of it; for, as I have already said, can there be anything more magnificent than that this barbarian lord should have all the things to be found under the heavens in his domain, fashioned in gold and silver and jewels and feathers; and so realistic in gold and silver that no smith in the world could have done better, and in jewels so fine that it is impossible to imagine with what instruments they were cut so perfectly;

and those in feathers more wonderful than anything in wax or embroidery.

I have not yet been able to discover the extent of the domain of Mutezuma, but in the two hundred leagues which his messengers traveled to the north and to the south of this city his orders were obeyed, although there were some provinces in the middle of these lands which were at war with him. But from what I have discovered, and what he has told me, I imagine that his kingdom is almost as big as Spain, for he sent messengers from the region of Putunchan, which is the Grijalba River, seventy leagues to a city which is called Cumantan commanding the inhabitants thereof to offer themselves as vassals to Your Majesty, and that city is 230 leagues from the capital; the remaining 150 leagues have been explored by Spaniards on my orders. The greater part of the chiefs of these lands and provinces, especially those from close by, resided, as I have said, for most of the year in this capital city, and all or most of their eldest sons were in the service of Mutezuma. In all these domains he had fortresses garrisoned with his own people, and governors and officials to collect the tributes which each province must pay; and they kept an account of whatever each one was obliged to give in characters and drawings on the paper which they make, which is their writing.⁶⁸ Each of these provinces paid appropriate tributes in accordance with the nature of the land; thus Mutezuma received every sort of produce from those provinces, and he was so feared by all, both present and absent, that there could be no ruler in the world more so.

He had, both inside the city and outside, many private residences, each one for a particular pastime, and as well made as I can describe—as is befitting so great a ruler. The palace inside the city in which he lived was so marvelous that it seems to me impossible to describe its excellence and grandeur. Therefore, I shall not attempt to describe it at all, save to say that in Spain there is nothing to compare with it.

He also had another house, only a little less magnificent than

this, where there was a very beautiful garden with balconies over it; and the facings and flagstones were all of jasper and very well made. In this house there were rooms enough for two great princes with all their household. There were also ten pools in which were kept all the many and varied kinds of water bird found in these parts, all of them domesticated. For the sea birds there were pools of salt water, and for river fowl of fresh water, which was emptied from time to time for cleaning and filled again from the aqueducts. Each species of bird was fed with the food which it eats when wild, so that those which eat fish were given fish, and those which eat worms, worms, and those which eat maize or smaller grain were likewise given those things. And I assure Your Highness that the birds which eat only fish were given 250 pounds each day, which were taken from the salt lake. There were three hundred men in charge of these birds who knew no other trade, as there were others who were skilled only in healing sick birds. Above these pools were corridors and balconies, all very finely made, where Mutezuma came to amuse himself by watching them. There was also in this house a room in which were kept men, women and children who had, from birth, white faces and bodies and white hair, eyebrows and eyelashes.

He had another very beautiful house, with a large patio, laid with pretty tiles in the manner of a chessboard. There were rooms nine feet high and as large as six paces square. The roofs of each of these houses are half covered with tiles while the other half is covered by well-made latticework. In each of these rooms there was kept a bird of prey of every sort that is found in Spain, from the kestrel to the eagle, and many others which have never been seen there. There were large numbers of each of these birds, and in the covered part of each of the rooms was a stick like a perch, and another outside beneath the latticework, and they were on one during the night or when it rained and on the other during the day when the sun was out. All these birds were given chickens to eat each day and no other food. In this house there were several large

low rooms filled with big cages, made from heavy timbers and very well joined. In all, or in most of them, were large numbers of lions, tigers, wolves, foxes and cats of various kinds which were given as many chickens to eat as they needed. Another three hundred men looked after these birds and animals. There was yet another house where lived many deformed men and women, among which were dwarfs and hunchbacks and others with other deformities; and each manner of monstrosity had a room to itself; and likewise there were people to look after them. I shall not mention the other entertainments which he has in this city, for they are very many and of many different kinds.

He was served in this manner: Each day at dawn there arrived at his house six hundred chiefs and principal persons, some of whom sat down while others wandered about the rooms and corridors of the house; there they passed the time talking but without ever entering his presence. The servants of these persons and those who accompanied them filled two or three large courtyards and the street, which was very big. And they remained all day until night-fall. When they brought food to Mutezuma they also provided for all those chiefs to each according to his rank; and their servants and followers were also given to eat. The pantry and the wine stores were left open each day for those who wished to eat and drink. Three or four hundred boys came bringing the dishes, which were without number, for each time he lunched or dined, he was brought every kind of food: meat, fish, fruit and vegetables. And because the climate is cold, beneath each plate and bowl they brought a brazier with hot coals so that the food should not go cold. They placed all these dishes together in a great room where he ate, which was almost always full. The floors were well covered and clean and he sat on a finely made, small leather cushion. While he ate, there were five or six old men, who sat apart from him; and to them he gave a portion of all he was eating. One of the servants set down and removed the plates of food and called to others who were farther away for all that was required. Before and after the meal they gave

him water for his hands and a towel which once used was never used again, and likewise with the plates and bowls, for when they brought more food they always used new ones, and the same with the braziers.

He dressed each day in four different garments and never dressed again in the same ones. All the chiefs who entered his house went barefoot, and those he called before him came with their heads bowed and their bodies in a humble posture, and when they spoke to him they did not look him in the face; this was because they held him in great respect and reverence. I know that they did it for this reason because certain of those chiefs reproved the Spaniards, saying that when they spoke to me they did so openly without hiding their faces, which seemed to them disrespectful and lacking in modesty. When Mutezuma left the palace, which was not often, all those who went with him and those whom he met in the streets turned away their faces so that in no manner should they look on him; and all the others prostrated themselves until he had passed. One of those chiefs always walked before him carrying three long thin rods, which I think was done so that all should know he was coming. When he descended from the litter he took one of these in his hand and carried it to wherever he was going. The forms and ceremonies with which this lord was attended are so many and so varied that I would need more space than that which I have at present to recount them, and a better memory with which to recall them, for I do not think that the sultans nor any of the infidel lords of whom we have heard until now are attended with such ceremony.

While in this great city I was seeing to the things which I thought were required in the service of Your Sacred Majesty and subduing and persuading to Your service many provinces and lands containing very many and very great cities, towns and fortresses. I was discovering mines and finding out many of the secrets of Mutezuma's lands and of those which bordered on them and those of which he had knowledge; and they are so many and so wonderful

that they seem almost unbelievable. All of which was done with such good will and delight on the part of Mutezuma and all the natives of the aforementioned lands that it seemed as if *ab initio* they had known Your Sacred Majesty to be their king and rightful lord; and with no less good will they have done all that I, in Your Royal name, have commanded them.

In these matters and in others no less useful to the Royal service of Your Highness I spent from the eighth of November, 1519, until the beginning of May of this year. While all was quiet in this city, having sent many of the Spaniards to many and diverse places and having pacified and settled this land, I was anxiously waiting for ships to arrive with a reply to the report I had sent to Your Majesty concerning this land and by them to send this one, and all the gold and jewels which I had collected for Your Highness, when there came to me certain natives of this land, vassals of Mutezuma, who live by the sea. They told me how close by the mountains of Sanmyn, which are on the coast, before reaching the harbor or bay of Sant Juan, eighteen ships had arrived, but they did not know to whom these ships belonged, because as soon as they had seen them they had come to inform me.⁶⁹ Following these came an Indian from the island of Fernandina, who brought me a letter from a Spaniard whom I had posted on the coast, so that if he saw ships he should tell them about me and the town which was close by that harbor, so they should not get lost. This letter contained the following: That on such and such a day a single ship had anchored in front of the harbor of Sant Juan, and he had looked all along the coast as far as he was able but had seen no other; and therefore he believed that it was the ship which I had sent to Your Sacred Majesty, because it was time for it to return. To make certain, however, he was waiting for this ship to enter the port so that he might learn what it was. Then he would immediately inform me.

When I saw this letter I sent two Spaniards, one by one road and one by another so that they should not miss any messenger

coming from the ship. I told them to go to the port and discover how many ships had arrived, whence they came, and what they were carrying, and to return to me as swiftly as possible to inform me. Likewise I sent another to the town of Vera Cruz to tell them all that I had discovered about those ships so that they might make enquiries there and send me their information. I sent yet another to the captain whom, together with 150 men, I had ordered to build a town in the province and port of Quacucalco,⁷⁰ and I wrote to him that, no matter where the messenger might reach him, he should not move from there until I wrote again, for I had received news that certain ships had arrived at the port, which, so it appeared later, he already knew by the time my letter arrived.

After I had sent these messengers, fifteen days passed without my knowing anything or receiving a reply from any of them, and this perturbed me not a little. After fifteen days, however, there came other Indians, also Mutezuma's vassals, and from these I learnt that the ships were anchored in the port of Sant Juan, and that the people had landed. They had counted eighty horses, and eight hundred men and ten or twelve guns, all of which they had represented on a piece of their paper,⁷¹ to show it to Mutezuma. The Indians told me how the Spaniard I had posted on the coast and all the other messengers whom I had sent were with those people, and had explained to the Indians that the captain would not let them leave and asked them to inform me of the fact. When I heard all this I resolved to send a friar⁷² whom I had brought in my company with a letter from me and another from the alcaldes and regidores of the town of Vera Cruz who were with me in the city. These I addressed to the captain and his people who had landed at that port, informing them very fully of all that had happened in this land and how I had taken many cities, towns and fortresses and had subjected them to Your Majesty's Royal service, and how I had captured the lord of these parts. I spoke of the nature of the capital city and of the gold and jewels which I had for Your Highness; and also of how I had sent a report concerning this land to Your Majesty. I

begged them to inform me as to who they were, and if they were true vassals of the realms and dominions of Your Highness, and to write to me whether they came by Your Royal command to settle and remain in the land, or were going on, or had to return. If they lacked for anything, I would equip them with all that was in my power. If they came from outside Your Highness's domains they should also let me know whether they had need of anything, for I would likewise help them as best I could; but if they refused to inform me, I required them on behalf of Your Majesty to depart from Your lands at once and not to disembark. Furthermore, I warned them that if they did not do so I would march against them with all I had, Spaniards as well as natives of the land, and I would capture or kill them as foreigners invading the realms and dominions of my lord and king.

Five days after the aforementioned friar had left with this dispatch, there arrived in the city of Temixtitan twenty Spaniards from Vera Cruz, and they brought with them a friar and two laymen whom they had taken in the aforementioned town.⁷³ From them I learnt that the fleet in the port was from Diego Velázquez and had come by his command, under the captaincy of one Pánfilo de Narváez, an inhabitant of the island of Fernandina. He brought eighty horsemen and many guns and eight hundred foot soldiers, among whom they said there were eighty harquebusiers and 120 crossbowmen; and he called himself captain general and lieutenant governor in all these parts for Diego Velázquez, and for this had brought decrees from Your Majesty. The messengers I had sent and the man I had posted on the coast were all with this Pánfilo de Narváez and he would not allow them to return. From them he had learnt how I had founded a town, twelve leagues from the port, and of the people who were in it and likewise he heard of those people I had sent to Quacucalco and those who were in a province called Tuchtebeque, which is thirty leagues from the aforementioned port; and of all the things which I, in the service of Your Highness, had done in the land: of the towns and cities which I had conquered

and pacified; of that great city of Temixtitlan; of the gold and jewels which had been acquired in the land; and of all the other things which had happened to me.

Narváez had sent these men to Vera Cruz to speak to the people there on his behalf and see if they could win them over to his purpose and make them rise against me. With them they brought more than a hundred letters which this Narváez and his companions had sent to Vera Cruz telling the people of the town to believe what the cleric and the others who were with him said on his behalf, and promising them that if they did as he asked, he, in the name of Diego Velázquez, would reward them well; but if they refused, they would be very harshly treated. This and many other things contained in these letters were told to me by those envoys.

Almost at the same time one of the Spaniards from Quaculcalco arrived with letters from the captain, one Juan Velázquez de León.⁷⁴ He informed me that the people who had come to that port were those of Pánfilo de Narváez. This captain also forwarded me a letter which Narváez had sent to him with an Indian, for he was a relation of Diego Velázquez and Narváez's brother-in-law, in which Narváez said that he had learnt from my messengers how Juan Velázquez was there with those men, and asked that he should bring them to him for it was his duty to a kinsman, and that he, Narváez, believed that I held him by force; and other things which Narváez had written. This captain, Juan Velázquez, as he was more bound to serve Your Majesty, not only refused to do as Narváez bade him, but, after he had sent me this letter, came to join forces with me.

I learnt from that cleric and from the other two who accompanied him many things about the intentions of Diego Velázquez and Pánfilo de Narváez and how they had sent that fleet and their men against me because I had sent the report concerning this land to Your Majesty and not to the aforementioned Diego Velázquez; and how they came with pernicious intent to kill me and many of my company whom they had already singled out in Cuba. I like-

wise learned that the *licenciado* Figueroa, a judge residing on the island of Hispaniola, and all Your Highness's judges and officials, when they heard that Diego Velázquez was preparing a fleet, and his purpose in doing so, had seen the harm and disservice to Your Majesty that this might cause and had therefore sent the *licenciado* Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón,⁷⁵ one of the aforementioned judges, with their authority to command Diego Velázquez not to send the fleet. When he arrived he found Diego Velázquez on the headland of the island of Fernandina with all his men armed and prepared to leave. He commanded Diego Velázquez and all those in the fleet not to go, for Your Highness would be ill served by their doing so, and he threatened them with severe penalties, but they, in defiance of all this *licenciado* had commanded them, departed with the fleet nonetheless.

I also learnt that this same Ayllón was in the port, for he had sailed with the fleet hoping thereby to prevent the harm which would ensue from its arrival, because the evil intents with which it came were well known to him and to everyone else. I sent the aforementioned cleric with a letter of mine for Narváez,⁷⁶ in which I told him how I had learnt from the same cleric and his companions that Narváez was the captain of the fleet, and I was pleased that it was so, for, as my messengers had not returned, I had thought otherwise; but that as he knew I was in this land in Your Highness's service, I was surprised that he had neither written nor sent any messenger advising me of his arrival, for he knew how pleased I would be, both because he had been my friend for a long time and because I knew that he came to serve Your Highness, which was what I most desired. Furthermore, it surprised me to hear that he had sent suborners and letters of inducement to the people, whom I, in the service of Your Majesty, had in my company, to rise against me and join him as though one of us were a Christian and the other an infidel or as if one were Your Highness's vassal and the other his enemy. I, therefore, begged him to cease behaving in this fashion, and to let me know the reason for his coming. I also informed him

that I had been told he had taken the title of captain general and lieutenant governor for Diego Velázquez, and had had himself proclaimed throughout the land as such; and that he had appointed alcaldes and regidores and executed justice, all of which was a great disservice to Your Highness and contrary to all Your laws; because as this land pertained to Your Majesty and had been colonized by Your vassals, and as there was both justice and a municipal council, he could not assume the aforementioned titles or exercise them without first being instated, for in order to do so he needed Your Majesty's decree. If he brought such a decree, I asked and required him to present it before me and before the municipal council of Vera Cruz, and they would be observed as letters and decrees from our king and rightful lord insofar as was appropriate to Your Majesty's Royal service.

I was myself in that city where I held the lord captive, and I had a great quantity of gold and jewels, belonging to Your Highness, to the people in my company, and to myself, and for this reason I dared not leave the city for fear that once I had done so the inhabitants would rebel and I would lose all the gold, the jewels, and even the city itself; for once that was lost the whole country would be lost also. Likewise I gave this cleric a letter for Ayllón, who, as I later discovered, by the time the cleric arrived, had been seized by Narváez and sent back with two ships.⁷⁷

On the day this cleric left, a messenger arrived from the people in Vera Cruz, who informed me that all the natives had rebelled and joined Narváez, especially those of the city of Cempoal and their followers, and that none of them would come and serve in the town or the fortress or provide any of the other assistance as they used to; for they said Narváez had told them that I was wicked and he had come to seize me and all my company and take us away. The men that he brought were many, while those who were on my side were few, and he brought many horses and guns and they wished to be on the winning side. This messenger also informed me that they had learnt from the Indians how Nar-

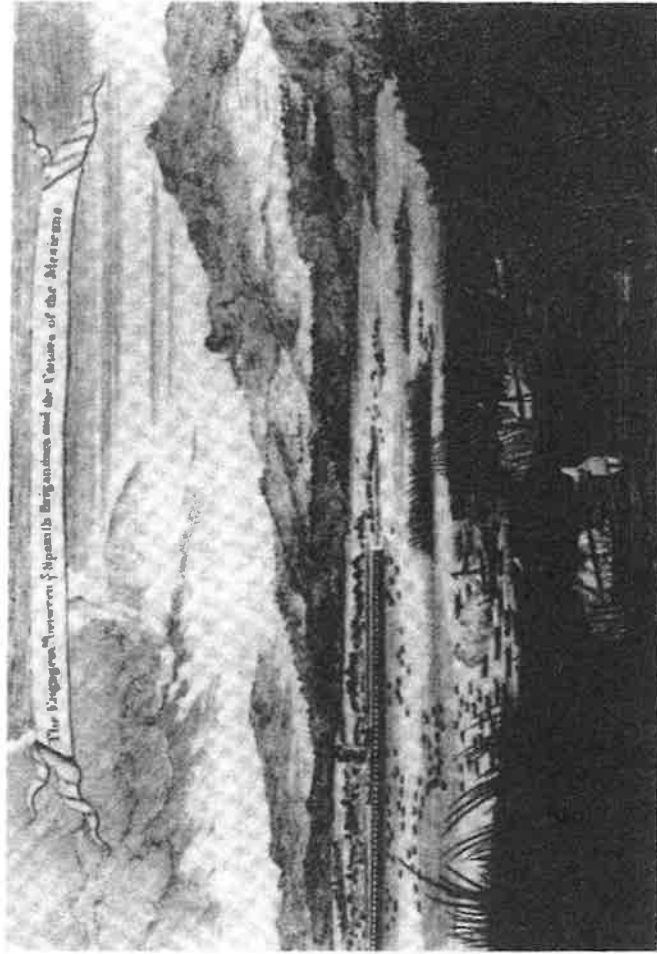
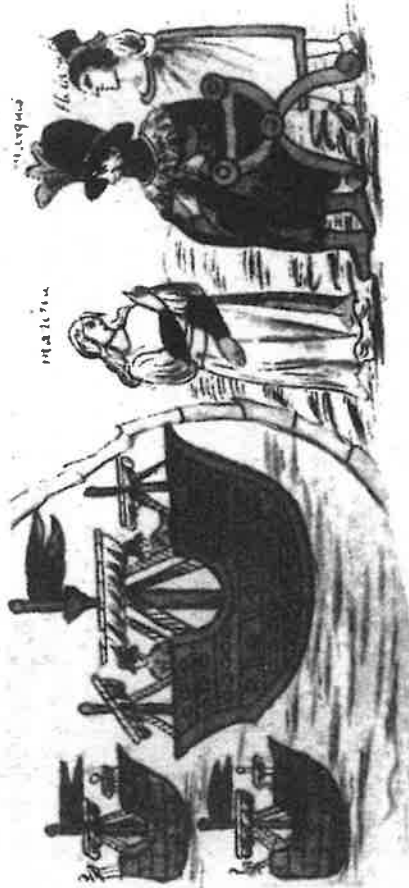
várez had moved his quarters to the city of Cempoal, and, knowing how near it was to Vera Cruz, they believed from all they had heard of Narváez's evil intentions that he would move against them with the help of those Indians. They, therefore, informed me that they were leaving the town so as not to fight them; and to avoid a disturbance they were going into the mountains to the house of a chieftain who was Your Highness's vassal and our friend, and there they would remain until I sent to tell them what they should do.

When I saw the great harm which was being stirred up, and how the country was in revolt because of Narváez, it seemed to me that if I went to where he was the country would, in great part, become calm, for the Indians would not dare to rebel once they had seen me. I also intended to make an agreement with Narváez so that the great harm which was begun should cease. So I departed that same day, leaving the fortress well provided with maize and water, and garrisoned by five hundred men with some guns.⁷⁸ And together with the remaining seventy or so men, I set out accompanied by some of Mutezuma's chieftains. Before I left I spoke to Mutezuma at length, telling him to bear in mind that he was Your Highness's vassal and would now receive favors from Your Majesty for the services he had rendered, and that I left in his care those Spaniards, with all the gold and jewels which he had given me and had ordered to be given to Your Highness, for now I was going to meet those people who had newly arrived in the land, to discover who they were, for as yet I did not know, but I believed that they must be hostile, and not Your Highness's vassals. He promised me to provide those I left behind with everything they might need and to guard closely all that I left there belonging to Your Majesty; and those of his people who went with me would lead me by a road which never left his lands, and on it he would have them provide me with everything I required. He begged me to inform him if those people were hostile, for he would straightaway send many warriors to fight them and drive them from the land. For all of which I thanked him and assured him that he would be well re-

CAP. 69.



CAP. 71.



13. From the English translation by Thomas Townsend of Antonio de Solis's *Historia de la Conquista de México* (1724). Although a hypothetical reconstruction, this drawing gives a very good idea of what Cortés's brigantines must have looked like. *Courtesy of the British Museum.*

12. The arrival of the Spaniards at San Juan de Ulúa. From Vol. II of Fray Diego de Durán's *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de Tierra Firme*, Mexico, 1880. *Courtesy of the British Museum.*

warded by Your Highness, and I gave many jewels and articles of clothing to him and to a son of his and to many of the lords who were with him at that time.

In a city called Churultecal I met Juan Velázquez, the captain whom, as I have said, I had sent to Quacucalco, together with all his men; and after having sent some who were sick on to the capital, I continued my journey with him and the rest. Fifteen leagues beyond Churultecal I met the friar whom I had sent to the port to discover whose fleet it was that had arrived there. He brought me a letter from Narváez which informed me that he, Narváez, brought certain decrees to hold this land for Diego Velázquez, and that I should go to where he was to comply with them; and that he had founded a town and appointed *alcaldes* and *regidores*. From this same friar I also learnt how Narváez had seized the *licenciado* Ayllón, his notary and *alguacil*, and had sent them away in two ships; how certain of Narváez's men had attempted to bribe him into persuading some of my company to go over to Narváez; and how the same Narváez had paraded all his men, both horsemen and foot soldiers, before him and certain Indians who were with him, had fired all the ordinance both in the ships and on land in order to frighten them, and then had said, "See how you cannot defend yourselves if you do not do as we ask." He also told me how he had seen Narváez with a native chief, a vassal of Mutezuma and his governor in all the lands from the mountains to the coast. He knew that this chief had spoken to Narváez on Mutezuma's behalf and had given him certain gold ornaments; in return Narváez had given him some few things, and had sent messengers to Mutezuma to tell him he would be freed and that he, Narváez, had come to seize me and all my company and would afterwards leave the land. He said he did not want gold but that once he had captured me and all those with me he would leave the people of this land in complete freedom. Finally this friar said I should know that Narváez's intention was to take possession of this land on his own authority, without being subject to anyone, and if I

and my company would not acknowledge him as captain general and chief justice, in the name of Diego Velázquez, he intended to proceed against us and take us by force. To this end he was in league with the natives, especially with Mutezuma by way of his messengers.

As I foresaw so clearly the harm and disservice to Your Majesty which would ensue from the above-mentioned, especially as they told me he had powerful forces with him, and brought a decree from Diego Velázquez that as soon as I and certain of my companions, whom he had singled out, were taken we should be hanged, I still determined to go to him, thinking it wise to make him recognize the great disservice which he was doing to Your Highness and to dissuade him from his evil intent. So I continued on my way, and fifteen leagues before the city of Cempoal, where Narváez was quartered, the cleric whom the people of Vera Cruz had sent, and with whom I had dispatched a letter to Narváez and Ayllón, came to me together with another cleric⁷⁹ and one Andrés de Duero, an inhabitant of the island of Fernandina and also one of Narváez's company. They, in reply to my letter, told me, on Narváez's behalf, that I should still go and obey him and acknowledge him as captain general and hand over the country to him, and that if I did not do so I would suffer greatly, for he, Narváez, had many forces and I, few, because in addition to the Spaniards whom he brought, most of the natives were on his side. If I delivered the country to him, he said he would give me all that I needed of the ships and provisions which he had and would allow me, and all those who wished to go with me, to leave with all we wished to take without impeding us in any way. One of those clerics also told me that Diego Velázquez had empowered Narváez and the two clerics jointly to make this offer and any concessions I might wish. I replied that I saw no decree from Your Highness instructing me to deliver the land to them, and that, if indeed they brought one, they should present it before me and the municipal council of Vera Cruz in accordance with the practice in Spain; and that I was very dili-

gent in my obedience and, therefore, until this was done, I would not be persuaded by bribes to do as they asked, for I, and those who were with me, would rather die in defense of the land which we had won and now held in subjection for Your Majesty than be disloyal or traitors to our king.

They made many other suggestions to win me to their purpose, but none of them would I accept before I had seen a decree from Your Highness ordering me to do so, which they were never willing to show me. Finally these clerics, Andrés de Duero and I agreed that Narváez, with ten of his men, and I, with as many of mine, should meet with a surety on both sides, and there he would make known to me the decree, if indeed he brought one, and I would reply to him. I, for my part, signed and dispatched a safe-conduct, and he likewise sent me another signed in his name which, it seemed to me, he had no intention of keeping, for he had planned to find a way to kill me at our meeting without more ado. To that end he instructed two of the ten who were to come with him to fall on me while the others fought with my men. For they said that once I was dead their task was accomplished, which, indeed, it would have been if God, who so often intervenes at such times, had not intervened then with a warning, which one of those who was party to the treachery sent me together with the safe-conduct.

Once I had learnt all this I wrote a letter to Narváez and another to the mediators telling them that I had discovered his evil designs and that I had no wish to meet them in the manner they planned. I then sent them several requests and commands in which I demanded that if Narváez brought any decree from Your Highness, he should make it known to me, and until he did so he should not call himself captain general or chief justice or exercise any of the functions of those offices under pain of certain punishments which I imposed. Likewise I commanded all those who were with Narváez not to obey him as captain general or chief justice, and summoned them to appear before me within a certain time, which I also set down, when I would tell them what they should do in the

service of Your Highness. But I warned that if they did not do so, I would proceed against them as against traitors and perfidious vassals who had rebelled against their sovereign and sought to usurp his realms and dominions and deliver them to a man who had no claim to them nor competent authority over them. In the execution whereof, if they did not appear before me or perform what was required of them in my commandment, I would march against them and seize them and hold them prisoner as justice demanded.

Narváez's reply was to seize the notary and his companion, who was carrying the order, and also some Indians in their company, all of whom were detained until I sent another messenger to inquire about them.⁸⁰ All Narváez's men were paraded before them, and they and I were threatened if we refused to surrender the land. Once I had seen that there was no way by which I could avoid the great harm that would ensue, and, furthermore, that the natives of the land were becoming more rebellious each day, I entrusted myself to God, and, setting aside all fear of what might ensue, and considering that to die in the service of my king and in defense of his lands against usurpation would win for us all great glory, I ordered Gonzalo de Sandoval, *alguacil mayor*, to seize Narváez and all those who called themselves *alcaldes*⁸¹ and *regidores*; and to do this I gave him eighty men. I, with another 170 men (for we were 250 all together) but with no horses or guns, followed the aforementioned *alguacil mayor* on foot to assist him should Narváez and the others resist arrest.

On the same day the *alguacil mayor*, and I and all the men arrived at the city of Cempoal, where Narváez and his people were camped. He learnt of our arrival and rode out of his camp with eighty horsemen and five hundred foot soldiers, still leaving a strong force behind in the great temple of the city where he had his quarters. Thus he came to within a league of where I was, but, as all he knew of my arrival he had heard from the Indians, when he failed to find me he thought they were deceiving him and he returned to the city, alerting all his men and placing two spies almost

one league outside the city. As I wished to avoid any disturbance, I thought it best to go by night without being observed if possible, and proceed directly to Narváez's quarters, which I and all my company knew very well, and seize him, for I believed that once he was taken there would be no disturbance, because the others would be willing to follow justice, particularly since most of them had been forced to come by Diego Velázquez and for fear that if they refused he might confiscate the Indians they had in the island of Fernandina.⁸²

So a little after midnight on the Feast of Pentecost,⁸³ I entered Narváez's camp. First, however, I met the aforementioned spies Narváez had stationed and my vanguard captured one of them, from whom I learnt how they were disposed. The other escaped and so that he should not arrive before me and warn them of my coming I advanced as rapidly as possible, although not fast enough to prevent the spy from arriving almost half an hour before me.

When I reached Narváez's camp all his men were armed and mounted and well prepared, two hundred men in each section, but we came with such stealth that when they observed us and sounded the alarm I was already inside the courtyard of the camp where all the men were gathered together; and they had occupied the three or four towers there and all the other strong positions. On the steps of the tower where Narváez himself was quartered were some nineteen guns. But we climbed those steps so quickly that they had time to fire only one gun, which, thank God, did not go off or cause any harm whatsoever. We reached the place where Narváez slept, and he and some fifty men fought with the alguacil mayor and the men who were with him, and although they commanded Narváez many times in Your Highness's name to give himself up, he would not until they had set fire to the place, at which he surrendered. While the alguacil mayor was seizing Narváez, I, with the rest of the men, defended the tower against those who came to his assistance, and I seized the artillery and with it strengthened my defense.

With the loss of only two men who were killed by one shot, in one hour all those whom we wished to capture were taken, together with the arms of all of them. They all promised to abide by Your Majesty's justice, for they claimed to have been deceived into believing that Narváez had decrees from Your Majesty and that I had usurped the land and was a traitor to Your Highness, and many other things besides. When they all knew the truth and how Diego Velázquez and Narváez had acted with evil intent and their campaign had been misconceived, they were very glad that God had so provided. For I assure Your Majesty that if God had not mysteriously assisted us and the victory had gone to Narváez, it would have been the greatest harm that Spaniards had done to each other for a long time past. For he would have carried out his intentions and what Diego Velázquez had ordered him to do, namely, to hang me and many of my company so that no one might recount what had happened. Furthermore, I was informed by some Indians that they had agreed that if Narváez had captured me as he intended he could not have done it without many of his own people being killed as well as mine. Meanwhile the Indians would have killed all those I had left in the city, as indeed they attempted to. Afterwards they would have united and fallen on all those who remained here so that they and their land might be free, and all memory of the Spaniards obliterated. Your Highness may be certain that had they accomplished all they intended, this land which has now been conquered and subdued could not be regained in twenty years.

Two days after Narváez's capture, as I could not now maintain so many people together in that city, especially as it was almost in ruins, for those who were with Narváez had looted it and all the inhabitants had fled, leaving their houses empty, I sent two captains with two hundred men each, one to build a town at the port of Quicalco, which, as I told Your Highness, I had previously ordered to be built, and the other to that river which the ships of Francisco de Garay said they had seen, for I was now sure of its existence there.⁸⁴ Likewise I sent another two hundred men to the

town of Vera Cruz, where I ordered Narváez's ships to be brought. I myself remained in the city with the rest of the men to provide for all that might be necessary in Your Majesty's service. I also sent a messenger to the city of Temixtitan to inform the Spaniards who remained there of all that had happened to me. This messenger returned within twelve days bringing me letters from the alcalde who had remained there in which he informed me of how the Indians had attacked the fortress and set fire to it in many places and tried to mine it, and that the Spaniards had been greatly pressed and in great danger, and might yet be killed if Mutezuma did not order a cease fire, for although they were not at present being attacked, they were still surrounded and not permitted to venture outside the fortress at all. In the battle they had lost much of the provisions which I had left them and the four brigantines I had built there were burnt. ⁸⁵ They were in dire need and I must, for the love of God, come to their aid as swiftly as possible.

I saw how hard pressed these Spaniards were, and knew that if I did not go to their aid not only would they be killed by the Indians and all the gold and silver we had acquired that belonged to Your Highness as well as to the Spaniards and myself be taken, but the greatest and most noble city of all the newly discovered part of the world would be lost, and with it all we had gained, for it was the capital city of the land which all others obeyed. I immediately sent messengers to the captains whom I had dispatched informing them of all I had heard from the capital and ordering them to return, no matter where they might be, and travel by the shortest main road to the province of Tascalteca, where I would join them with all the artillery I could command and seventy horsemen. There we met, and when we had paraded our men we found that we had seventy horsemen and five hundred foot soldiers.

I left in all possible haste for the capital, and not once on my journey did any of Mutezuma's people come to welcome me as they had before. And all the land was in revolt and almost uninhabited, which aroused in me a terrible suspicion that the Spaniards in

the city were dead and that all the natives had gathered waiting to surprise me in some pass or other place where they might have the advantage of me. Fearing this, I proceeded with the greatest possible caution until I arrived at the city of Tesuico,⁸⁶ which, as I have already informed Your Majesty, is on the shores of that great lake. There I asked the inhabitants about the Spaniards who had remained in the capital and was told that they were still alive. I then instructed them to bring me a canoe, for I wished to send a Spaniard to find out; and I said also that when he left, one of them, who seemed to be of importance, was to remain with me, for nowhere could I see any of the chiefs and nobles who were known to me. He then ordered a canoe to be brought and sent several Indians with the Spaniard, while he himself remained with me.

As this Spaniard was embarking for the city of Temixtitan, he saw another canoe approaching across the lake and waited for it to reach the port. In it came one of the Spaniards from the city from whom I learnt that they were all alive, except five or six whom the Indians had killed; but the rest were still surrounded and not allowed to leave the fortress nor were they provided with any of the things they needed except at a great price. Since hearing of my arrival, however, the Indians had treated them better, and Mutezuma had said that he was only waiting for me to arrive before allowing them to move freely about the city as they were accustomed. With this Spaniard, Mutezuma sent me one of his own messengers, who told me that as I must by now be informed of all that had happened in the city he believed I would be angry and intent on doing him harm. But he begged me not to be angry, for what had happened grieved him as deeply as it did me and that nothing had been done by his will and consent. He sent me word of many other things to placate the anger he thought I bore against him, and begged me to go and live in the city as I had done before, for nothing would be done there save what I commanded, as had been the case before. I answered saying that I was not angry with him, for I well knew his good intention and wanted to do as he requested.

On the following day, which was the eve of St. John the Baptist's day, I departed and slept on the road three leagues from the city; and on the day of St. John, after having heard Mass, I entered the city, almost at midday. I saw very few people about the city and some of the gates at the crossroads and entrances to streets had been removed, which did not seem well to me, although I thought that they did it for fear of what they had done, and that my arrival would reassure them. With this I went to the fortress where, together with the great temple which was beside it, all my people were quartered. The garrison in the fortress received us with such joy it seemed we had given back to them their lives which they had deemed lost; and that day and night we passed in rejoicing, believing that all was quiet again.

The next day, after Mass, I sent a messenger to Vera Cruz to give them the good news of how all the Christians were alive and how I had entered the city which was now secure. But after half an hour this messenger returned, beaten and wounded and crying out that all the Indians in the city were preparing for war and had raised all the bridges. And almost behind him there came upon us from all sides such a multitude that neither the streets nor the roofs of the houses could be seen for them.⁸⁷ They came with the most fearful cries imaginable, and so many were the stones that were hurled at us from their slings into the fortress that it seemed they were raining from the sky, and the arrows and spears were so many that all the walls and courtyards were so full we could hardly move for them. I went out to attack the Indians in two or three places, and they fought very fiercely with us. In one place a captain went out with two hundred men, and before he could withdraw they had killed four and wounded him and many others; and in the place where I was engaged they wounded me and many of the other Spaniards. We killed few of them, for they were sheltered from us on the other side of the bridges and threw stones on us from the roofs and terraces, some of which were captured and burnt.

But they were so many and so strong and so well provided

with stones and other arms that we were unable to take them all, for we were few, nor even to prevent them from being able to attack us at their ease. The fighting in the fortress was so fierce that they set fire to it in many places, and in one burnt down a great part of it, about which we could do nothing until we knocked down a part of the wall, which extinguished the fire. And if I had not placed there a strong force of harquebusiers and crossbowmen with some guns, they could easily have broken in without our being able to resist. In this fashion we fought all that day until well after dark; and even after nightfall they continued to scream at us and make a commotion until dawn. That night I had the breaches in the wall caused by fire repaired, and wherever else I thought the fortress was weak. I organized the watches and the men who were to keep them and chose those of us who would go outside to fight the next day. I also had the wounded, of which there were more than eighty, attended to.

Later, when it was light, the enemy attacked us very much more fiercely than on the previous day, and there was so great a number of them that the artillery had no need to aim but only to point their guns at the Indian forces. And although the artillery did much damage, for there were thirteen harquebuses besides the guns and some crossbows, it seemed to make no impression, for where ten or twelve were killed by the firing others came immediately to take their place, so that it was as if none had fallen. Leaving behind in the fortress all the men I could spare, I took the others and went out and captured some of the bridges and burnt some of the houses and killed many of those who were defending them, but they were so many that although we did all the harm we could we made very little impression on them. We had to fight all day, whereas they fought in shifts and still they seemed to have plenty of men to spare. That day they wounded sixty or seventy more Spaniards but killed none, although we fought until nightfall, by which time we were so tired we withdrew to the fortress.

Seeing the great harm that the enemy had done us and how

they wounded and killed us as they chose, and how, although we did great harm to them there were so many that it did not seem so, we spent all that night and all the following day in constructing three wooden engines. Each one of these carried twenty men inside, and the stones the Indians threw from the roof tops could not harm them for they were covered by boards. The people who went inside were some of them harquebusiers and crossbowmen; the rest carried pikes and pickaxes, and iron bars to break into the houses and throw down the barricades the Indians had built in the streets. While we were constructing these machines the enemy continued to attack; whenever we left the fortress they tried to break in, and we repulsed them only with great difficulty. Mutezuma, who together with one of his sons and many other chiefs who had been captured previously was still a prisoner,⁸⁸ asked to be taken out onto the roof of the fortress where he might speak to the captains of his people and tell them to end the fighting. I had him taken out, and when he reached a breastwork which ran out beyond the fortress, and was about to speak to them, he received a blow on his head from a stone; and the injury was so serious that he died three days later.⁸⁹ I told two of the Indians who were captive to carry him out on their shoulders to the people. What they did with him I do not know; only the war did not stop because of it, but grew more fierce and pitiless each day.

That same day they called to me from the place where they had wounded Mutezuma, asking me to go there, for certain captains wished to speak with me. This I did, and we had many discussions and I begged them not to fight me, for they had no cause to, and to consider the good deeds I had done for them and how they had always been well treated by me. They replied saying that once I had left their land they would stop the war; otherwise they had all determined to die or put an end to us. This they said, or so it seemed, to persuade me to leave the fortress, for then they could have taken us easily at the bridges. I replied that they should not think I asked for peace because I feared them, but because it

distressed me to see the harm we had done them, and would still have to do them, for I did not want to destroy so fine a city as theirs; yet still they answered that they would not end the war until I left the city.

On the following day, when we had finished the engines, I went out to capture some of the roof tops and bridges. The engines went in front, and behind them came four guns, many crossbowmen and shield-bearers and more than three thousand Indians from Tascalteca who had come with me and served the Spaniards. When we reached one of the bridges we placed the engines against the wall of a house and set up ladders with which to climb onto the roof, but there were so many people defending that bridge and the roof top, and so many and so large were the stones which they threw down at us, that they put our engines out of action and killed one Spaniard and wounded many more. We were unable to advance one step, although we fought hard from morning until midday, at which hour we returned to the fortress sorely disappointed. This gave the enemy such heart that they almost reached our gates. They captured the great temple, and some five hundred Indians, who seemed to me to be persons of rank, climbed up the main tower carrying provisions of bread and water and other things to eat, and many stones. All the rest had very long lances with flint heads wider than ours and no less sharp. From there they did much damage to the people in the fortress which stood close by. Once or twice the Spaniards attacked this tower and attempted to climb it, but because it was very high and the ascent very difficult, for there were a hundred or more steps, and because those at the top were well provided with stones and other weapons, and at an advantage because we had failed to take the other roof tops, every time the Spaniards began to climb they were driven back down again; and many were wounded thereby. When those of the enemy who were engaged elsewhere saw this, they became so elated that they came fearlessly right up to the fortress. When I saw that by continuing to hold that tower they not only inflicted great damage from it,

but also gained fresh courage to attack us, I left the fortress, although I had lost the use of my left hand from a wound I received on the first day, and strapping my buckler to my arm went to the tower with a few Spaniards.⁹⁰ I made them surround it from below, which was easily done, although not without danger, for they fought on all sides with the enemy who brought in many reinforcements. I then began to climb the tower with several Spaniards behind me, and, although they defended it so very fiercely that three or four Spaniards were thrown down, with the help of God and his Blessed Mother, for whose house that tower had been set aside and where we had placed her image, we reached the top and fought so hard with the people there that they were forced to jump down onto some terraces round the tower which were about a pace wide. The tower had three or four of these, and all were about five yards high, one above the other. Some of the Indians fell all the way down and they were killed by the Spaniards below. Those who remained on the top, however, fought so fiercely that it was more than three hours before we had killed them all (for none escaped); and I assure Your Sacred Majesty that the capture of this tower was so difficult that if God had not clipped their wings, twenty of them would have sufficed to hold off a thousand; even so, they fought very bravely until death. I ordered my men to set fire to this tower and the others in the temple from which they had already removed the holy images that we had placed there.

The loss of this tower so much damaged their confidence that they began to weaken greatly on all sides. Afterwards, I returned to that roof top and addressed the captains who had spoken to me before and who were now somewhat dismayed by what they had seen. These then came and I told them to observe how they could not triumph, and how each day we did them great harm and killed many of them and we were burning and destroying their city; and that we would not cease until there was nothing left either of it or of them. They replied that they had indeed seen how much they had suffered and how many of them had died, but that

they were all determined to perish or have done with us, and that I should look and see how full of people were all those streets and squares and roof tops. Furthermore, they had calculated that if 25,000 of them died for every one of us, they would finish with us first, for they were many and we were but few. They told me that all the causeways into the city were dismantled—which in fact was true, for all had been dismantled save one—and that we had no way of escape except over the water. They well knew that we had few provisions and little fresh water and, therefore, could not last long because we would die of hunger if they did not kill us first. And truly they were right, for even if we had had nothing to fight but hunger and thirst, we would have died in a very short while. We discussed many other things, each one expressing his own opinions.

After nightfall I went out with several Spaniards, and as we fell on them unawares we took a street where we burnt more than three hundred houses. Then I returned by another street, for the enemy was massing in the first, and there likewise I burnt many houses, especially some which were close to the fortress and from whose roof tops they did us much harm. They were very frightened by what had happened, and that same night I ordered the engines which had been damaged the previous day to be repaired and made ready.

To follow up this victory which God had given us, I went out at dawn to that street where they had defeated us the day before but found it as well defended as before. As we were fighting for our lives and our honor, for that street lead to the only unbroken causeway crossing to the mainland—although on the way were eight deep and wide bridges, and the street itself was lined by many high houses and towers—we were so brave and determined that with the help of Our Lord we won four of them that day and burnt every single house and tower. The previous night, however, they had erected at all the bridges many very strong walls of adobe and clay, in such a manner that the guns and the crossbows could not harm them. We filled in the channels beneath the four bridges

with the adobe and earth of the walls and with stones and wood from the burnt houses, although this was not accomplished without danger and they wounded many Spaniards. That night I placed a careful watch on those bridges so that they should not retake them.

The following morning I went out again and God gave us such a lucky victory that, although there were innumerable people defending the bridges and the very great walls and openings which they had made that night, we won them all and closed them up. At the same time some horsemen pursued the defeated enemy to the mainland. While I was repairing and closing up those bridges, they called to me to come in great haste, for the Indians were asking for peace and certain of their captains were waiting for me at the fortress. I left behind the men and guns and went alone with two horsemen to see what they wanted. They told me that if I assured them that they would not be punished for what they had done, they would raise the siege, replace the bridges, repair the roads and serve Your Majesty as they had done before. They asked me to bring one of their priests whom I held prisoner, and who was a kind of superior in their religion.⁹¹ He came and spoke to them and made agreements between us; and then it seemed that they sent messengers, as they had promised, to the captains in the field to end the attack on the fortress and all further hostilities; and with this we parted.

I returned to the fortress to eat, and as I was about to begin they came in a great hurry to tell me that the Indians had retaken the bridges which we had won that day and had killed several Spaniards. God knows how much this perturbed me, for I believed our task had been completed when we had opened a way out. I rode as fast as I was able down the whole length of the street with some horsemen following me, and without stopping I broke through those Indians, recovered the bridges and pursued the fugitives to the mainland. But because the foot soldiers were tired and wounded and frightened and saw the great danger they were in, none of them followed me, so that when, having crossed the bridges, I now

wished to return, I found they had been taken and many which we had closed up had now been dug much deeper than before. Both sides of the causeway were full of people, on the land and also in canoes, who speared and stoned us in such a fashion that if God had not mysteriously deigned to save us, we should never have escaped, and even so it had been put about among those in the city that I was dead. When I reached the last bridge outside the city I found that all those horsemen who were with me had fallen into the water and that one horse was loose. I could not cross and was forced to stand alone against the enemy, and in fighting I made enough room for the horses to pass. When the bridge was freed I passed over, although with great difficulty, for the horse had to jump almost five feet from one side to the other; but neither he nor I, as we were both well armored, were wounded but only bruised and beaten.

[That night they held those four bridges; but I had the other four well guarded and went to the fortress and had a wooden bridge made to be carried by forty men. Because I had seen the great danger we were in and the great harm which the Indians did us every day, and because I feared they would demolish that causeway as they had demolished the others, after which we could have done nothing save resign ourselves to death, and because all of my company, the greater part of whom were so badly wounded they could no longer fight, had often entreated me to depart, I determined to leave that same night. I took all Your Majesty's gold and jewels which we could carry and placed them in a room where, in several bundles, I entrusted them to Your Highness's officials that I in Your Royal name had chosen, and I begged and commanded the alcaides and regidores and all those who were present to help me to carry it out and save it; and for this purpose I gave them one of my mares onto which they loaded as much as possible. I chose certain Spaniards, servants of mine as well as of others, to go with the mare and the gold, and the rest of the alcaides and regidores and myself distributed the remainder among the Spaniards. Having abandoned

the fortress with great riches belonging to Your Highness, the Spaniards and myself, I went out as secretly as possible taking with me a son and two daughters of Mutezuma, and Cacamazin, lord of Aculmacan, and also his brother whom I had appointed in his stead, and other chiefs of cities and provinces, whom I held prisoner.

When we reached the first of the bridges which the Indians had removed we threw across the space, with little difficulty, the bridge which we had made, for there was no one to impede us except a few guards. These, however, raised such a shout that before we had reached the second bridge an infinite number of the enemy were upon us, attacking us from all sides both from the land and from the water. I crossed quickly with five horsemen and a hundred foot soldiers, and we swam across each of the channels until we reached the mainland. Leaving these people on the far side, I returned to the rest and found that, although they were fighting fiercely, the harm which both the Spaniards and the Indians of Tascalteca who were with us had received was beyond compare, for nearly all had been killed. The Spaniards had also killed many of the enemy, but many had perished together with their horses, and all the gold had been lost together with jewels, clothing, all the artillery and many other things besides. I collected all those who were still alive and sent them on ahead while I, with three or four horsemen and some twenty foot soldiers who were bold enough to remain with me, took the rear guard and fought with those Indians until we reached a city called Tacuba at the end of the causeway. God alone knows how dangerous and how difficult it was, for each time I turned on the enemy I came back full of arrows and bruised by stones. For as there was water on both sides they attacked in safety with no fear of those who were fleeing to the land. When we attacked them they jumped into the water, so that they received very little hurt except that there were so many that some of them fell on each other and were killed. With great danger and difficulty I led all my men to the city of Tacuba, without a single Indian or

Spaniard being killed or wounded save for one horseman who came with me in the rear guard. The people in the front and on the sides fought no less fiercely, although the worst attack came from behind where the enemy pursued us out of the great city.⁹²

When I arrived in Tacuba I found all my people crowded together in a square not knowing where to go. I therefore made haste to move them out into the countryside before more of the enemy arrived in the city and occupied the roof tops, from which they could do us great harm. The vanguard said they did not know which road to take, so I sent them to the rear and took the lead myself until we had left the city, and then waited in the fields. When the rear guard arrived I saw that they had received some damage and that some of the Spaniards and Indians had been killed; and also that much of the gold had been lost by the road and captured by the enemy. I remained behind until all the men had passed, holding the Indians in check so that the foot soldiers might take a hill on which stood a tower and a fortified house.⁹³ They succeeded without being injured, but God alone knows how exhausted I was in keeping back the Indians until the tower was taken, for of the twenty-four horses that remained not one could gallop, nor was there a horseman who could raise his arm nor barely a foot soldier well enough for action. When we arrived at the aforementioned house we barricaded ourselves in, and there the enemy surrounded us until nightfall without letting us rest for a single hour. We discovered that 150 Spaniards had died in the rout and forty-five horses and more than two thousand Indians, who had helped the Spaniards, among whom were the son and daughters of Mutezuma and all the other lords we had held prisoner.⁹⁴

That night, at midnight, thinking that we were unobserved, we quit that house very silently, leaving behind many fires; and we knew no road nor where we were going, save that an Indian from Tascalteca led us, saying that he would take us to his land if the road was free. But there were some guards close by who saw us and raised all the people from the villages thereabouts, who pursued us

until daybreak. At dawn, five horsemen who were riding ahead as scouts came across a squadron of the enemy on the road and killed several of them, whereupon the rest fled, believing that more horsemen and foot soldiers were coming up behind.

When I saw that the enemy was massing on all sides, I concentrated my people there, and from those who were still capable of action made squadrons, placing them in front and behind and on the sides with the wounded in the middle; and I distributed the horsemen likewise. In this manner we marched all that day, fighting on all sides and so fiercely that we covered no more than three leagues during a whole day and night. Just at nightfall our Lord showed us a tower and fortified house on a hill where we barricaded ourselves as before.⁹⁵ That night they left us in peace, although shortly before dawn the alarm was raised, though for no reason save the fear which we all had of the great multitude of people who continued to follow us.

On the following day I left an hour after daybreak in the formation already mentioned, keeping my rear guard and vanguard well protected; and still they pursued us on both sides, shouting and calling to arms all that land which is thickly populated. Those of us who were on horseback, although we were few, attacked them but did them little harm, for as the land there was somewhat uneven they retreated into the hills. In this manner we traveled that day close by some lakes until we reached a good town⁹⁶ where we expected to have some encounter with the inhabitants. But as we arrived they abandoned it and fled to other villages which were thereabouts. I remained there that day and the following because all the men, both the wounded and the fit, were exhausted and weary with hunger and thirsty, as indeed were the horses. We also found some maize there which we ate boiled and roasted for the journey.

We left the next day, still pursued by the enemy, who, with terrible cries, attacked us from time to time in front and behind. We followed the directions of the Indian from Tascalteca, suffer-

ing many hardships, for we were often obliged to leave the road. When it was already late we reached a plain with some small houses⁹⁷ where we camped that night, in great need of food. On the morning of the following day we began to depart, but even before we had reached the road the enemy was pursuing us, and skirmishing with them we reached a large village,⁹⁸ which was two leagues from there, and to the right of it were some Indians on a small hill.⁹⁹ Intending to take them, for they were very close to the road, and also to discover if there were more people behind the hill, I went with five horsemen and ten or twelve foot soldiers and circled the hill. Behind it lay a great city of many inhabitants,¹⁰⁰ with whom we fought fiercely, but as the ground was strewn with boulders, and the Indians were many and we were few, I considered it wise to withdraw to the village where our people were.

In the fighting I had been very badly wounded in the head from two stones. After having bound up my wounds, I made the Spaniards leave that village, for it did not seem a safe place for us to camp. Thus we left, the Indians still following in great numbers, and fighting so fiercely with us that they wounded four or five Spaniards and as many horses. One horse was killed and, although God knows how much we needed it, and how sorry we were to have lost it, for after God we had no help save from the horses, its flesh was some consolation, for we ate it, leaving neither the skin nor any other part of it. For we were very hungry as we had eaten nothing since we left the great city save boiled and roasted maize—and there was not always even enough of that—and herbs which we picked in the fields.

When I saw how each day the enemy grew in number and became more daring while we were weakening, I ordered crutches and other aids to be made for the wounded and the sick, whom we had hitherto carried on the haunches and backs of the horses, so that they could stand and walk, and leave the horses and the Spaniards who were well free to fight. And it seemed, from what happened the following day, that the Holy Spirit had inspired me in

this, for, after we had struck camp in the morning and traveled on a league and a half, there came to meet us such a multitude of Indians that the fields all around were so full of them that nothing else could be seen. We could hardly distinguish between ourselves and them, so fiercely and so closely did they fight with us.¹⁰¹ Certainly we believed that it was our last day, for the Indians were very strong and we could resist but feebly, as we were exhausted and nearly all of us wounded and weak from hunger. But Our Lord was pleased to show His power and mercy, for with all our weakness we broke their great arrogance and pride, and many of them died, including many important persons, for they were so many that they got in each other's way, and could neither fight nor run. We spent most of that day in the fight until God ordained that one of their chieftains should die, and he, it seemed, was of such importance that the battle ended. So we proceeded more easily but still somewhat harassed, until we reached a small house¹⁰² in the plain, and there, and in the fields round about, we camped that night. From there we caught sight of some mountains of the province of Tascalteca, which brought no small joy to our hearts, for we knew the land and where we had now to go, although we were not very certain that we would find the natives of that province still our friends. For we believed that on seeing us so dispirited they would seek to put an end to our lives and regain their former liberty. This thought distressed us as much as the fighting with the Culuanes.

On the following day, when it was light, we began to travel along a very flat road which led directly to the aforementioned province of Tascalteca. Here very few of the enemy followed us, although there were several large towns nearby; and those who did remained far in the rear and shouted after us from some hills. And so that day, which was Sunday, the eighth of July, we left Culua and reached a town of the province of Tascalteca, called Gualipán,¹⁰³ which had some three or four thousand inhabitants by whom we were well received; and there we were, in some measure able to satisfy our great hunger and need for rest, although they

gave us many of our provisions only in exchange for money and would accept nothing but gold, which, on account of our great need, we were obliged to give them. In this town I remained three days, and here Magiscacin and Sicutengal came to see me together with all the chiefs of the province and some of those from Guazucingo. They all seemed much distressed by what had happened to us, and tried hard to console me, saying that many times they had told me that the people of Culua were traitors, and I should beware of them, but I had not wished to believe it. But I had escaped alive, for which I should be thankful, and they would die to help me avenge the harm which I had been done, for apart from the duty they owed Your Highness as his vassals, they grieved for their sons and brothers who had been killed in my company.

In times past they had received many other injuries from the Culuanes, and I might be certain that they would remain faithful to me until death. As I was wounded and all those in my company exhausted, they said we should go to the city which is four leagues from this town, and there we could rest, and they would attend to our wounds and restore us after our exhaustion. I thanked them and accepted their offer and gave them some few jewels that had escaped, which greatly pleased them. Thus I accompanied them to the aforementioned city, where we were likewise very well received. And Magiscacin brought me a finely made wooden bed with some of the bedclothes they use, in which I slept, for we had brought none with us; and he gave to every one of us all that he had and could.

When I set out for Temixtitan I had left behind in this city some who were wounded and some of my servants with silver and clothing of mine and other personal effects which I was carrying, so that I might be less burdened should anything befall us. All the written agreements I had made with the natives of these parts were lost. Likewise all the Spaniards' clothing had been left behind, and they brought nothing save what they were wearing and their cloaks.

I now learnt how another of my servants had come from the

town of Vera Cruz,¹⁰⁴ accompanied by five horsemen and forty-five foot soldiers, with provisions and other things for me; and how he had taken back with him all the people whom I had left behind with the silver and clothes and other things belonging to me and my companions, together with seven thousand *pesos de oro* which I had left in two chests, not to mention other valuables, and also fourteen thousand *pesos de oro* which, in the province of Tuchtebeque, had been given to that captain whom I had sent to build the town of Quacualco. And there were many other things besides, worth in all more than thirty thousand *pesos de oro*. But the Indians of Culua had killed them on the road and taken all they were carrying. Likewise I learnt that many other Spaniards had been killed on the road to Temixtitan, believing that the city was at peace and the roads safe as they had been before. I assure Your Majesty that this caused us the greatest sadness, for in addition to the loss of these Spaniards and the others, this reminded us of how many had died and how much had been lost in the city and on the bridges and on the road; it also made me suspect that they might have attacked the people in Vera Cruz, and that those whom we held as allies, when they learnt of our defeat, might have rebelled against us. Then I sent certain messengers to learn the truth, with some Indians to guide them, and I ordered them to return as swiftly as possible but not to travel by the usual roads. It pleased Our Lord, however, that they should find all the Spaniards quite safe and the natives loyal. And this made up greatly for our losses, although the Spaniards were very distressed to hear of our rout.

In this province of Tascalteca I remained twenty days to heal my wounds, which on account of the journey and the ill treatment I had received had greatly worsened, especially those in the head,¹⁰⁵ and likewise to recover from the toil of the days past and to heal the wounds of my companions. Some of them died and others were crippled, for they were very badly wounded and we had few means by which to cure them. I myself lost two fingers of my left hand.

When those of my company saw that many had died and that those who remained were weak and wounded and discouraged by the dangers they had endured, and being afraid of those who might very soon come, they many times begged me to return to Vera Cruz, where we could make ourselves secure before the natives of the land, whom we held as our allies, on seeing our defeat and feeble strength, could join with our enemies, seize the mountain passes by which we were to travel, and fall on us and on those in Vera Cruz. Once we were all together and had ships, we would be stronger and better able to defend ourselves, should they attack us, until such time as we sent for help from the islands. But I saw that to show the natives, especially those who were our allies, that we lacked courage would suffice to turn them against us the sooner, and I remembered that Fortune always favors the bold, and furthermore that we were Christians who trusted in the great goodness of God, who would not let us perish utterly nor allow us to lose so great and noble a land which had been, or was to be, subject to Your Majesty; nor could I abandon so great a service as continuing the war whereby we would once more subdue the land as it had been before. I determined, therefore, that on no account would I go across the mountains to the coast. On the contrary, disregarding all the dangers and toil that might befall us, I told them that I would not abandon this land, for, apart from being shameful to myself and dangerous for all, it would be great treason to Your Majesty; rather I resolved to fall on our enemies wherever I could and oppose them in every possible way.

After I had been in this province twenty days, although my wounds were not fully healed and those in my company were still rather weak, I departed for another province which is called Tepeaca, which belongs to the league and confederation of Culua, our enemies, and where, I was informed, ten or twelve Spaniards had been killed on the road, which passes through there, from Vera Cruz to the great city. This province of Tepeaca is very large and in part borders on Tascalteca and Churultecal. When we crossed

the border many of the natives came out to fight with us and defend the road against us as best they could, attacking us from strong and dangerous positions. But so as not to give an account of all the details of what befell us in this battle, which would be too lengthy, I will say only that after we had made our demands for peace on Your Majesty's behalf and they had not complied, we made war on them and they fought many times with us. With God's help and the Royal fortune of Your Majesty we always routed them and killed many, without their killing or wounding a single Spaniard. And, although, as I have said, this province is very large, within twenty days we had subdued and pacified many towns and villages, and the lords and chieftains have come and offered themselves as Your Majesty's vassals. Furthermore, I have driven from these provinces many of the people of Culua who had come to help the natives of Tepeaca make war on us and to assure that they did not become our allies, willingly or unwillingly. Thus I have been engaged in this war, which is still not finished, for there are still some towns and villages to be pacified, which with the aid of Our Lord will soon, like these others, be subject to Your Majesty's Royal command.

In a certain part of this province,¹⁰⁶ where they killed the ten or twelve Spaniards, the natives have always been very warlike and rebellious. I made certain of them slaves of which I gave a fifth part to Your Majesty's officers, for, in addition to their having killed the aforementioned Spaniards and rebelled against Your Highness's service, they are all cannibals, of which I send Your Majesty no evidence because it is so infamous.¹⁰⁷ I was also moved to take those slaves so as to strike some fear into the people of Culua and also because there are so many people that if I did not impose a great and cruel punishment they would never be reformed. In this war the natives of Tascalteca, Churultecal and Guasucingo have fought with us, and by so doing have so assured us of their friendship that we are certain they will always serve Your Highness as loyal vassals.

While I was in this province of Tepeaca I received letters from Vera Cruz, informing me of how there had arrived in the port in disarray two ships belonging to Francisco de Garay, who, it seems, had sent them back with more men to that great river, of which I have already rendered Your Highness account, and that the natives had fought with them and killed seventeen or eighteen Christians and wounded many others. Likewise seven horses had been killed, but the Spaniards who remained swam out to the ships and only escaped because they had strong legs. The captain and the others were in a sorry state and wounded, but the lieutenant whom I had left in the town had welcomed them and ordered their wounds to be attended to. So that they might recover in greater comfort, he had sent some of them to the land of a friendly chieftain that lay close by, and there they were very well cared for. All of which distressed us as much as our past hardships; but perhaps such misfortune would never have befallen them if they had joined me on that first occasion, about which I have already written to Your Highness, for, as I was very well acquainted with these parts, I could have advised them and this disaster would have been avoided, especially as the chieftain of that river, which is called Pánuco, had offered himself as Your Majesty's vassal, in recognition of which he had sent certain gifts with his messengers to me in the city of Temixtitan, as I have already said. I have written to Vera Cruz saying that if Garay's captain and his people wish to leave they should give them every assistance in dispatching both themselves and their ships.¹⁰⁸

After having pacified all that which in this province of Tepeaca has now been pacified and subjected to the service of Your Royal Highness, Your Majesty's officers and I many times discussed the manner by which the security of this province was to be maintained. Seeing that the natives, having offered themselves as Your Highness's vassals, had rebelled and killed many Spaniards, and seeing that the road inland from the seacoast passes through here, we considered that if this province were left unattended as before, the

natives of Culua, their neighbors, might once again incite these others to rebel, from which great harm would follow and hindrance to the subjection of these parts and to the service of Your Highness, for the road would be closed, especially as there are only two mountain passes leading to the sea, both of which are very steep and rocky and could be easily defended by the natives. So for these and for many other reasons touching this matter, we decided that to avoid these evils we would have a town built in the best part of this province of Tepeaca, where conditions were best suited to the needs of the settlers. When this had been decided, I, in Your Majesty's name, called this town *Segura de la Frontera*, and appointed alcaldes, regidores and other officials as is customary. For the greater security of the inhabitants of this town, I have ordered a fortress to be built in a place which I indicated, and building materials to be brought, as these are very good hereabouts; and all possible haste will be made to complete it.

While engaged in writing this report there came to me several messengers from the chief of a city five leagues from this province, called Buacachula,¹⁰⁹ and situated at the entrance to one of the passes into the province of Mexico. These messengers told me, on behalf of their lord, that some while previously they had come and offered themselves as Your Majesty's vassals. And so that I should not accuse them of complicity, they were informing me that several captains from Culua were quartered in their city, and that in it and one league away thirty thousand men were garrisoned to prevent us from crossing by that pass, and also to prevent the inhabitants of the city or of any of the surrounding provinces from becoming Your Highness's vassals or our allies. They said that some of those would have come to offer themselves in Your Royal service had they not been prevented. They told me this so that I should remedy it, for in addition to preventing all those of goodwill from coming, the Culuans had done great harm to the inhabitants of that city and to the people thereabouts. For, as there were many warriors, their people had been greatly injured and ill treated and their women and

belongings and other things had been taken from them. If I would grant them protection, they promised to do as I commanded. Then, after thanking them for their information and their offer, I sent thirteen horsemen and two hundred foot soldiers¹¹⁰ to accompany them together with some thirty thousand of our Indian allies. We agreed that they should travel by roads where they would not be discovered, and once they were outside the city the chief and inhabitants and all his other vassals and supporters would be alerted and would surround the place where the captains were quartered, so they might seize and kill them before their people had time to come to their assistance. When they did come the Spaniards would already be in the city and would fight with them and set them to rout.

So they left and went by way of the city of Churultecal and through some of the province of Guasucingo, which borders on the land of Buacachula four leagues from the city. In a village of the aforementioned province of Guasucingo it is said that they told the Spaniards that the natives of that province had plotted with the people of Buacachula and Culua to trick the Spaniards into going to that city, where, once they were all together, they would fall on the Spaniards and kill them. As they had not yet dispelled the terror with which they had been filled by the Culuans, this intelligence terrified the Spaniards; their captain made investigations as well as he could, and seized all the chiefs of Guasucingo he had with him, together with the messengers from the city of Buacachula, and returned to the city of Churultecal, which is four leagues from there, and sent me the prisoners accompanied by several horsemen and foot soldiers to inform me of what had happened. The captain also wrote to me saying that our men were alarmed and dispirited, and that the expedition now seemed very hazardous.

When the prisoners arrived I questioned them most diligently through my interpreters to learn the truth, and it appeared that the captain had misunderstood them. I at once set them free and placated them, saying that I believed them to be loyal vassals of

Your Sacred Majesty and that I would go in person to rout the Culuans, for, in order to show no weakness before the natives of this land, whether friends or enemies, it seemed to me that we should not abandon an enterprise we had begun. To dispel some of the fear of the Spaniards I decided to lay aside all other business and the dispatch which I was writing for Your Majesty, and departed that same hour with the greatest possible speed. I arrived that day at the city of Churultecal, which is eight leagues from this city [Segura de la Frontera], and there I found the Spaniards who still believed firmly in the treachery.

On the following day I slept at the town in Guasucingo where the chiefs had been seized. The next day after having agreed with the messengers from Buacachula as to where and how we were to enter the city, I set out an hour before dawn and arrived there just before ten o'clock. When I was still about half a league distant certain messengers from the city came out to meet me on the road; they told me how everything was prepared and how the Culuans knew nothing of our arrival, for certain inhabitants of that city had seized the spies which the captains from Culua had placed on the roads, and likewise those who had been sent to the walls and towers of the city to survey the countryside. The enemy was therefore unprepared, confident that they were well protected by their spies and scouts; and so my advance would pass unnoticed. Thus I hastened to enter the city without being discovered, because we were marching across a plain where they could easily have seen us. When the inhabitants of the city saw how close we were they surrounded the houses where the captains were quartered and began to attack the others scattered throughout the city. When I came within a crossbowshot of the city they brought me some forty prisoners, and I made all the more haste to enter. There was a great uproar throughout all the streets of the city. While fighting with the enemy I was guided by a native to the place where those captains were quartered, which I found surrounded by more than three thousand men who had captured the roofs and high places and were

fighting to get in. But the captains and their men fought so well and so fiercely that although they were few they repulsed their attackers. For not only were they most valiant men but also the building they were in was very strong. As soon as I arrived we entered, but so many natives came with us that I was unable to save those captains from being killed almost immediately. I had wished to take some alive in order to learn of the affairs of the great city and who was lord now that Mutezuma was dead, and other things besides; but I was only able to capture one, more dead than alive, who informed me as I shall hereafter relate.

Many of those Culuans who were quartered in the city were killed and the rest, as soon as they heard of my arrival, began to flee to where the others were garrisoned; but many of them died in their attempt to escape. The disturbance was soon heard by the garrison, which commanded a height overlooking the city and the surrounding plain. They came to see what it was and to help, almost at the same time as the others arrived who had fled from the city. They were more than thirty thousand men and the most magnificent we have ever seen, for they wore many jewels and much gold and feathers. As the city is large, they began to set fire to it in the place where they had entered; this was soon discovered by the inhabitants, however, and I went out with only the horsemen, for the foot soldiers were very exhausted. We broke through them and they retreated to a pass which we took and then pursued them, overtaking many on an upward slope so steep that when we reached the top of the hill neither the enemy nor ourselves could either retreat or advance. Thus many of them fell suffocated by the heat without receiving a single wound. Two horses also fell, one of which died. In this manner we did great harm, for we had with us many of our Indian friends who, as they were refreshed and the enemy half dead, killed many of them: so in a short while the battlefield was empty of the living, though somewhat cluttered with the dead. We reached the quarters and shelters they had recently built in the countryside: these were in three groups, each, it seemed, as

large as a small village, for in addition to the warriors, there were many servants and supplies for their camp, because, as I learnt afterwards, they had had some persons of high rank with them. All this was plundered and burnt by our Indian allies of whom, I assure Your Majesty, there were more than a hundred thousand altogether. Having with this victory now driven the enemy from the land to beyond some difficult mountain passes which they still held, we returned to Buacachula, where we were very well received and accommodated by the inhabitants; and in that city we rested for three days, for we were in great need of rest.

At this time there came to offer themselves in Your Majesty's Royal service the inhabitants of a large town called Ocupatuyo,¹¹¹ which stands two leagues above the hills where the enemy camp was, and at the foot of that smoking mountain. They said that their chief had fled with the Culuan when we had pursued them, believing we would not stop at his town; and that for some while they had desired my friendship and would have come to offer themselves as Your Highness's vassals, but their chief would not permit it, although they asked him many times. They now wished to serve Your Majesty; and there remained behind a brother of that chief, who had always been of their opinion and still was. They begged me, therefore, to approve his succession, and that if the other lord returned not to receive him as such, for they themselves would not do so. I told them that as they had until now been allied with the Culuan and in revolt against Your Majesty's service, they deserved great punishments, which I had intended to execute on their persons and possessions; but as they had come and told me that the cause of their rebellion had been their lord, I, in Your Majesty's name, forgave them their past errors and admitted them to Your Royal service. But I cautioned them that if another such crime were committed they would be punished; promising them on the other hand that if they were loyal vassals they would be much honored and assisted by me in Your Royal name.

This city of Guacachulla [*sic*] is situated in a plain bounded

on the one side by some high and rugged mountains and on the others by two rivers about two crossbowshots apart which run through large and deep ravines. Thus the approaches to the city are few, and all of them are so steep that the horses can barely pass either up or down them. The whole city is surrounded by a very strong wall built of stone and mortar which is as high as twenty-four feet on the outside and almost level with the ground on the inside. All along the top of this wall runs a battlement three feet high to protect them while fighting. And there are four gateways wide enough for a man to enter on horseback. At each entrance there are three or four bends in the wall, doubling back on one another; and there are also battlements on each of these bends. On this wall they keep a great number of stones, both small and large and of various shapes, which they use for fighting. This city has some five or six thousand inhabitants, and there are as many more in the hamlets which are subject to it. It occupies a very large area, for within the city are many gardens with fruit and sweet-smelling flowers as is their custom.

When I had rested in this city three days I went to another which is called Yzçucan¹¹² and is four leagues from Buacachula, because I was told that there also many Culuan were garrisoned, and that the inhabitants of the city and of the towns and other places subject to it appeared to be closely allied with the Culuan, for their lord was a native of that country and a relative of Mutezuma too. I was accompanied by such a great number of the natives, Your Majesty's vassals, that they covered the fields and hills for almost as far as we could see; indeed, we must have been more than 120,000 men.

We arrived at that city of Yzçucan at ten o'clock, and found it empty of women and children, but there remained as many as five or six thousand warriors, all very well armed. When the Spaniards who had taken the vanguard arrived, the enemy began to defend their city somewhat, but soon abandoned it because it was easy for us to enter by the place we had been led to. We pursued them through the city until they were forced to jump over the parapet

into a river which ran alongside all that part of the wall. As they had destroyed the bridges, we spent a little time in crossing, but then pursued them for a league and a half or more; and I think that few of those who remained escaped.

When we returned to the city I sent two of the native prisoners to speak to the men of rank, for their lord had gone with the Culhans, to persuade them to return to the city; and I promised them in Your Majesty's name that if they became Your Highness's loyal vassals, they would thenceforth be well favored by me and their past errors would be forgiven.

These messengers departed, and after three days some chieftains came and begged forgiveness for their crimes, pleading that they could not have done otherwise because their lord had so commanded them; but they promised that as their lord had fled and abandoned them they would thenceforth serve Your Majesty most loyally. I reassured them and told them to return to their homes and bring back their women and children who had been taken to towns and other places of their allies; likewise I told them to speak to the inhabitants of those places so that they should come to me, for I forgave them for what had happened. Otherwise I would be obliged to move against them and would surely do them much harm, which would distress me greatly. Thus it was done, and within two days the city of Yzçucan was repopulated, and all the dependencies thereof had offered themselves as Your Highness's vassals; and that province remained very secure, in friendship and alliance with both ourselves and the people of Buacachula.

Some dispute arose about whom the sovereignties over the city and province of Yzçucan belonged to in the absence of the lord who had gone to Mexico. There had arisen some controversy between a bastard son of the rightful lord of the land (whom Mutezuma had put to death, and in his stead placed the present lord, marrying him to one of his nieces) and a grandson of the same rightful lord, son of his legitimate daughter and the ruler of Buacachula. At last it was decided that as the son of the ruler of Buacachula

came from the legitimate line, he should inherit, because, although the other was the lord's son, he was a bastard and therefore should not rule. In my presence they paid homage to that boy, who is some ten years old; and they decided that as he was not of age to rule that his illegitimate uncle and three other chieftains, one from the city of Buacachula, and the other two from Yzçucan, should govern the land and care for the boy until he came of age.

This city of Yzçucan has some three or four thousand citizens, and its streets and marketplaces are very well ordered; it had a hundred temples and shrines, well fortified with towers, all of which were burnt. It is in a plain at the foot of a medium-sized hill where there is a very good fortress. On the other side, which faces toward the plain, it is bordered by a deep river that runs very close to the walls and is surrounded by the deep gorge of the river, on the edge of which they have built battlements two yards high which run all the way around the city; and all along this wall they have piled many stones. The valley is circular and very fertile in fruit and cotton, which does not grow anywhere above the passes on account of the great cold; but here the land is warm, for it is well sheltered by mountains. The whole valley is irrigated by well-built channels which are well dug and laid out.

I remained in this city until it was secure and all the inhabitants had returned; and while I was there the lord of the city of Guasucingo and the lord of another which is ten leagues from Yzçucan, both of which share borders with Mexico, came to me offering themselves as Your Majesty's vassals. Chieftains also came from eight of the towns in the province of Coatoaca,¹¹³ which I have mentioned in previous chapters, as the province which those Spaniards visited who went to look for gold in Cucula, and Tamazula nearby, where there were very large towns, better built than any seen in these parts. This province is forty leagues from Yzçucan; and the natives of the aforementioned eight towns likewise offered themselves as Your Highness's vassals and said that four others from the same province who had remained behind would come

very soon. They asked me to forgive them for not having come before, but they had not dared to for fear of the Culuans. They had never taken arms against me, however, nor killed any Spaniard, and after they had offered to serve Your Highness they had always been loyal and true vassals, but had not dared show it. So Your Highness may be assured that if it please Our Lord to favor Your Royal good fortune, all that was lost, or a great part of it, will shortly be regained, for each day many of the provinces and cities which had been subject to Mutezuma come and offer themselves as Your Majesty's vassals, for they see how those who do so are well received and favored by me, whereas those who do not are destroyed daily.

From those who were captured in the city of Bacachula [*sic*], and especially from that wounded captain, I learnt in great detail of all that had happened in the great city of Temixtitan, and how, after the death of Mutezuma, a brother of his, called Cuetravacin,¹¹⁴ lord of the city of Yztapalapa, had inherited the land because Mutezuma's son and heir had been killed on the bridges,¹¹⁵ of his other two sons they said that one was mad and the other palsied. For these reasons the brother succeeded him, and also because he had made war on us and they held him to be a wise and valiant man. I learnt also how they were fortifying that city and all the others in the land and had built many walls and earthworks and trenches and every type of weapon. I learnt above all how they had made long lances like pikes for the horses, and indeed we have already seen some of these, because in the province of Tepeaca we found some with which they had been fighting; and in the houses where the Culuans had been quartered in Buacachula we likewise found many of them. Many other things I learnt besides but will not mention them lest I bore Your Majesty.

I sent to the island of Hispaniola four ships to bring at once horses and men to aid us; and likewise from Hispaniola and the city of Santo Domingo horses, arms, crossbows and powder, for those are what we most require in this country, for the foot soldiers with

bucklers can do very little alone, as the enemy are so numerous and have such great and strong cities and fortresses. I have also written to the licenciado Rodrigo de Figueroa and to Your Highness's officials who reside on that island asking them to give all the help they can. For it will be a great service to Your Majesty and to the security of our persons, since I intend, as soon as such help arrives, to return to that country and its great city, and I believe, as I have already told Your Majesty, that it will shortly be restored to the state in which I held it before, and thus all our past losses shall be made good.

Meanwhile I am building twelve brigantines with which to cross the lake, and already the decks and other parts are being constructed, so that they may be carried overland in pieces and swiftly assembled on arrival. Likewise nails, pitch, tow, oars and sails and other essential things are being made. I assure Your Majesty that until I have achieved this I shall not rest, nor leave untried any way or means open to me, ignoring all the hardships, danger and expense that this may cost me.

Three days or so ago I learnt in a letter from the lieutenant¹¹⁶ whom I had left at Vera Cruz how there had arrived at the port a small caravel with some thirty sailors and soldiers aboard, who said that they had come in search of the people whom Francisco de Garay had sent to this land and about whom I have already given Your Highness an account. They had arrived in great want of provisions, so much so indeed that had they not found help there they would have died of hunger and thirst. From them I learnt how they reached the Pánuco River and anchored there for thirty days during which time they saw no one on land or on the river; and from this we believe that the people have abandoned the land because of what happened. The men from this caravel also said that two other ships belonging to Francisco de Garay were to have followed them with men and horses, but were thought to have sailed on down the coast. It seemed to me therefore to be in Your Highness's service, in order that the ships and their passengers might not be lost, to send

that caravel in search of them, to warn them of all that had happened, for, being ignorant of this land, they might receive greater harm from the natives than the first party, and once they had found them to bring them to Vera Cruz, where the first captain sent by Francisco de Garay awaited them. I pray to God that they may be found before they land, because, as the natives are already prepared and the Spaniards are not, I fear they may be much harmed, and this would be a great disservice to the Lord our God and Your Highness; because it would enrage those curs still further and give them the courage and daring to attack those who may follow after.

In a previous chapter I told how I had learnt that, on the death of Murezuma, Cuetravacin, his brother, had become lord and had stored up all manner of arms and fortified the great city and others by the lake. And a little while ago, I learnt how he has sent word throughout all the provinces and cities in his domain that he will grant his vassals exemption for one year from all tributes and services they are obliged to render him, provided that they, by every possible means, wage very savage war on the Christians until they are all killed or driven from the land; and to do likewise with all the natives who are our friends and allies. Although I trust in the Lord God that in nothing will they achieve their purpose, I find myself in great need of help, for each day the Indians who are our friends come from many cities and towns and villages to seek our aid against the Culhuans, their enemies and ours, who make war on them because they are our allies, and I am unable to help them as I desire. But, as I have said, I pray to God to assist our small forces and speedily to send us His help as well as that I have asked for from Hispaniola.

From all I have seen and understood touching the similarity between this land and that of Spain, in its fertility and great size and the cold and many other things, it seemed to me that the most suitable name for it was New Spain of the Ocean Sea,¹¹⁷ and so in Your Majesty's name I called it that. I humbly entreat Your Highness to look favorably on this and order it to be so called.

THE SECOND LETTER

[159

I have written to Your Majesty, although in poor style, the truth about all that has happened in these parts and all that is most necessary for Your Highness to know. And in another letter which I send with this one, I beg Your Royal Excellency to send a trustworthy person to make an examination and inquiry of everything and to inform Your Sacred Majesty thereof. In this report I like-wise humbly entreat the same, for I would hold such a singular favor as giving entire credit to all I say.

Very High and Most Excellent Prince, may Our Lord God preserve for very many years the life and Very Royal Person and Most Powerful Estate of Your Sacred Majesty and grant You the increase of much greater Kingdoms and Dominions, as Your Royal heart so desires. From the town of Segura de la Frontera in New Spain on the thirtieth day of October, 1520. From Your Sacred Majesty's very humble servant and vassal, who kisses the Very Royal feet and hands of Your Highness—FERNÁN CORTÉS.¹¹⁸

After this, there came on the first of the month of the March past news from New Spain, of how the Spaniards had taken by storm the great city of Temixtitan, in which there had died more Indians than Jews in Jerusalem during the destruction of that city by Vespasian and, even so, there were more people in it than in the Holy City. They found little treasure because the natives had thrown it deep in the water; in all only 200,000 pesos de oro were taken. But the Spaniards, of whom there are at present fifteen hundred foot soldiers and five hundred horsemen, are very well fortified in that city, and they have more than a hundred thousand Indian allies in the countryside.

*These are great and wonderful things and it is without doubt like another world, which we who live beyond are most envious merely to see. This news is all that we here have for certain up to the beginning of April, 1522.*¹¹⁹