

HERNAN CORTES

Letters from Mexico

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With an Introductory Essay by
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The Third Letter



Sent by Fernando Cortés, Captain and Chief Justice of Yucatán, called New Spain of the Ocean Sea, to the Most High and Powerful Caesar and Invincible Lord, Don Carlos, Ever August Emperor and King of Spain, Our Sovereign Lord.

Concerning the very remarkable things which took place during the reconquest of the very great and marvelous city of Temixtitan and of the other provinces subject thereto which had rebelled. In which city and provinces the aforementioned captain and the Spaniards achieved great and notable victories worthy of perpetual memory. Likewise he relates how he discovered the South Sea and many more great provinces, very rich in gold and pearls and precious stones; and how he has even heard tell that there are spices.

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

With Alonso de Mendoza, a native of Medellín whom I dis-

patched from New Spain on the fifth of March of last year, 1521, I sent a second report to Your Majesty of all that had happened here; which report I completed on the thirtieth of October, 1520. But on account of bad weather and the loss of three ships, one of which was to have carried the aforementioned report to Your Majesty, and the other two I wished to send to Hispaniola for help, the aforementioned Mendoza's departure was much delayed, as I explained at length to Your Majesty in a letter which was also sent with him. Toward the end of this same report I informed Your Majesty how, after the Indians of Temixtitan had driven us from the city by force, I had come upon the province of Tepeaca, which was subject to Temixtitan which had rebelled, and with the remaining Spaniards and our Indian allies I had made war upon it and had brought it to the service of Your Majesty; and how I said that as the past treachery and the great harm we had been done, and the death of the Spaniards were so recent in our hearts, I had determined to return against the people of that great city which had been the cause of all our misfortune. For this purpose I had begun to build thirteen brigantines to do them every possible damage from the lake if they persisted in their evil intent. I wrote to Your Majesty that while the aforementioned brigantines were being built, and I and our Indian allies were fitting ourselves out to return against the enemy, I wrote to Your Majesty's officials who reside in the island of Hispaniola for supplies of men, horses, artillery and arms and sent sufficient money to cover the cost. I assured Your Majesty that until I had triumphed over my enemies I would not rest nor cease to direct my every effort toward that end, putting aside whatever dangers, hardships and expense I might have to face; and that, so determined, I was preparing to depart from the aforementioned province of Tepeaca.

I likewise informed Your Majesty how a caravel from Francisco de Garay, lieutenant governor of the island of Jamaica, had arrived in the port of Vera Cruz, in great need of help, with some thirty men on board, who said that two other ships had left for the

Pánuco River, where one of Garay's captains had been routed, and it was feared that if they put into the river they too would be attacked by the natives. I also wrote to Your Majesty that I had sent a caravel in search of those two ships to warn them of all that had happened. After I had written this it pleased God that one of these ships, in which there was a captain with some 120 men, should arrive at Vera Cruz, where they were informed of how Garay's men who had come previously had been defeated. They spoke with the captain who had been defeated, and he assured them that if they went to the river it was almost certain they would be much harmed by the Indians. And while they were in the port, still resolved to go to that river, a storm blew up which drove the ship out to sea, breaking the rigging and then driving them into a port which is called Sant Juan, twelve leagues further up the coast. There, after having disembarked all the men, and the seven or eight horses and as many mares which they had brought with them, they beached the ship because it was leaking badly. When I was informed of this, I wrote to the captain telling him how sorry I was at what had befallen him, and that I had given orders to my lieutenant in Vera Cruz to make him and his men welcome, to give them whatever they might require, and to ascertain what they now intended to do; and, furthermore, if all or some of them wished to return in the ships which were anchored there, to grant them leave and send them on their way as they wished. But the captain and those who came with him resolved to join me; of the other ship we have heard nothing, and as so much time has passed we hold little hope of its safety. I pray God that it may have reached a good harbor.

As I was about to depart from that province of Tepeaca, I learnt how two provinces, which are called Cacatamy and Xalacingo¹ and are subject to the lord of Temixtitan, had rebelled and



14. Title page to Letter III from the Latin translation of Cortés's letters published in Nuremberg in 1524. Courtesy of the British Museum.

had killed some Spaniards on the road between here and Vera Cruz, which passes through there. Thus, to ensure the safety of that road and to punish those Indians in some manner if they refused to submit peaceably, I sent a captain with twenty horsemen and two hundred foot soldiers and some of our allies; and I charged this captain and commanded him in Your Majesty's name to require the natives of those provinces to come in peace and offer themselves as Your Majesty's vassals, as they had done before; and to be as mild with them as possible; but if they would not receive him in peace to make war on them. And once this had been done and those two provinces were subdued, I told him to return with all his company to the city of Tascalteca where I would await him. He departed at the beginning of the month of December, 1520, and proceeded to the aforementioned provinces which are twenty leagues hence.

Having completed this, Most Powerful Lord, I departed from the town of Segura [de] la Frontera, which is in the province of Tepeaca, in mid-December of the same year, leaving behind a captain² with sixty men because the inhabitants begged it of me. I sent all the foot soldiers to the city of Tascalteca, where the brigantines are being built, which is some nine or ten leagues from Tepeaca, while I, with twenty horsemen, went that day to spend the night in the city of Cholula, for the inhabitants desired my presence, as many of their lords had died of the smallpox, which also affects those of the mainland as it does the islanders; and they wished me to appoint new ones on their advice. When we arrived we were very well received by them. And after we had concluded this business to their satisfaction, I informed them that I intended to go in arms against the province of Mexico and Temixtitan and asked them, as they were Your Majesty's vassals, to stand fast in their friendship with us until death, as we would with them. I therefore requested them to provide me with men for the war when the time came, and to welcome and treat the Spaniards who came and went through their lands as friends are bound to do; and they promised to do so.

I remained with them two or three days and then left for the city of Tascalteca, which is six leagues from there; when I arrived all the Spaniards and the inhabitants of the city were very pleased to see me. On the following day all the chiefs of that city and province came to speak with me and told me how Magiscacin, who was their overlord, had died of the smallpox; they knew well how much this would grieve me, as he was a great friend of mine. There remained, however, a son of his who was twelve or thirteen years of age, and it was to him that his father's dominion now belonged; they entreated me, therefore, to recognize him as heir; and I did so in Your Majesty's name, and they were all very gratified.

When I arrived in this city I found that the craftsmen and carpenters working on the brigantines were making great haste to complete the crossbeams and the planking and had achieved much of the work. I then sent to Vera Cruz for all the iron and nails they had, and also for sails and rigging and other necessary things, and as we had no pitch I had certain Spaniards make it on a hill close by. All the equipment for the brigantines was thus made ready so that when, God willing, I arrived in the province of Mexico and Temixtitan I might send for them from there, a distance of some ten or twelve leagues from the city of Tascalteca. And during the fifteen days I remained in that city I concerned myself only with urging on the carpenters and with preparing arms for our journey.

Two days before Christmas the captain who had gone to the provinces of Cacatamy and Xalacingo returned with the horsemen and foot soldiers. I learnt how certain of the Indians had fought with him but that in the end they had all sued for peace, some willingly, some by force. He also brought me several of the lords of those provinces whom, although they clearly deserved punishment for rebellion and causing the death of Christians, I pardoned in Your Royal name and sent back to their lands, for they promised that from then on they would serve Your Majesty as loyal and true vassals. Thus this task was ended and Your Majesty was well served,

for not only were the natives of this province pacified, but also the safety of the Spaniards who had to pass that way to the town of Vera Cruz was assured.

Two days after Christmas I reviewed my company in the aforementioned city of Tascalteca; there were forty horsemen and 550 foot soldiers, eighty of whom were crossbowmen and harquebusiers; and there were eight or nine field guns but very little powder. I formed the horsemen into four troops of ten, and of the foot soldiers made nine companies of sixty men each. When they had all assembled on parade I addressed them and told them that they already knew how they and I had, in Your Sacred Majesty's service, settled in this land and how the inhabitants thereof had offered themselves as Your Majesty's vassals, and had remained as such for some time, receiving many benefits from us and we from them. Likewise I reminded them how, for no good reason, all the natives of Culua, that is, those from the great city of Temixtitan, and those from all the other provinces which are subject thereto, had not only rebelled against Your Majesty, but moreover had killed many men who were our friends and kinsmen and had driven us from their land. I urged them to remember the dangers and hardships we had undergone, and to consider how much it would benefit the service of God and Your Majesty if we were to return and recover all that had been lost, for we had just cause and good reason for it. First, because we were fighting against a barbarian people to spread our Faith; second, in order to serve Your Majesty; third, we had to protect our lives; and, last, many of the natives were our allies and would assist. All of which were very powerful reasons why we should be strong in heart: I therefore urged them to be joyful and courageous. In Your Majesty's name I had drawn up certain ordinances for good government and other matters³ concerning war which I then had publicly announced. I likewise urged them to abide by these ordinances, for they would render a great service to God and Your Majesty by so doing. They all promised to do so, declaring that they would very gladly die for our Faith,

and in Your Majesty's service, or recover all we had lost and avenge the great treachery which the people of Temixtitan and their allies had perpetrated against us. I thanked them in Your Majesty's name, and we all returned to our quarters in high spirits.

On the following day, which was the feast of St. John the Evangelist, I called together all the lords of the province of Tascalteca, and when they were assembled told them that, as they knew, I was to leave the next day for the land of our enemies, and that they had seen how the city of Temixtitan could not be won without those brigantines which were being built there; so I asked them to give the carpenters and all the other Spaniards whom I left there all they might require, and to treat them as well as they had always treated us. I asked them also to be ready for when I sent from the city of Tesuico, if God should grant us victory, for the crossbeams and planking, and for the other equipment of those brigantines. This they promised to do, and furthermore said they wished to send some warriors with me, declaring that once the brigantines were finished they would all go, for they wanted to die where I died, or be revenged on the people of Culua, their mortal enemies. And so, on the following day, which was the twenty-eighth of December, the Feast of the Innocents, I departed with my company in good array, and we put up for the night six leagues from Tascalteca in a village called Tezmoluca,⁴ which lies in the province of Guasucingo, and whose inhabitants have always maintained their friendship and alliance with us like the people of Tascalteca; we slept there that night.

Most Catholic Lord, in the earlier account I said that I had learnt that the people of the province of Mexico and Temixtitan were storing up arms and building walls and earthworks and forts to prevent us from entering their lands, for they knew now that I intended to return against them. And I, knowing this and knowing also how cunning and astute they are in war, had often considered how we might invade and attack them relatively unprepared; for they knew that we had been informed of the three roads by which

we might enter their land. I therefore determined to go by way of Tezmoluca, as the pass there was steeper and rougher than the others, and we would, no doubt, encounter little resistance and find them unprepared.

Thus on the day after the Feast of the Innocents, having heard Mass and commended ourselves to God, we left that village of Tezmoluca; I led the vanguard with ten horsemen and sixty lightly armed foot soldiers, all skilled in battle. We followed the road up the pass in the best order we could and spent the night four leagues from the above-mentioned village, on top of the pass and already on the border with Culua. Although it was very cold, we managed to warm ourselves with the great quantity of firewood we found there; and on the following morning, which was a Sunday, we began to descend to the plain. I sent four horsemen and three or four foot soldiers on ahead to spy out the land, and then, as we were leaving the pass, I ordered the rest of the horsemen to advance, then the harquebusiers and crossbowmen, and finally the others, for no matter how unprepared we might find the enemy, they were certain to set an ambush or some other trap to attack us on the road. As the four horsemen and the foot soldiers proceeded on their journey, they found the road blocked with trees and branches; very large and thick pine and cypress trees, which seemed to have been cut very recently, had been felled across it. Thinking that the road ahead would not be so obstructed, they continued, but the farther they went the more they found it obstructed with pine trees and branches. As, in addition to this, the path was lined on both sides with very dense trees and large bushes, they proceeded with great difficulty. When they saw how the road was, they were greatly alarmed and imagined that the enemy was hidden behind every tree. Because of these dense woods they were unable to make use of the horses, and the farther they went the more afraid they became.

When they had gone for some while in this fashion, one of the four horsemen said to his companions: "Brothers, if you agree,

let us go no further, but return to our captain and inform him of the obstruction we have encountered and the great danger in which we all find ourselves because we are unable to use the horses; if, however, you do not agree to this proposal, let us proceed, for I am as willing as you to surrender my life to accomplish our task." The others replied that although they thought his advice sound they did not think it a good idea to return until they had sighted the enemy, or discovered how far the road continued in that manner. So they began to proceed, but, when they saw that it continued for a long way, they halted and sent one of the foot soldiers to inform me of what they had seen. When I came up with the vanguard, we continued on that bad road, commending ourselves to God, and I sent word to the rear guard urging them to make haste and not to be afraid, for soon we would reach open ground. I caught up with the four horsemen, and we went on together, although with great difficulty, and after half a league it pleased God that we should begin to descend across open ground. There I halted to wait for the others, and when they arrived I told them to give thanks to Our Lord for having carried us that far in safety. From there we could see before us the province of Mexico and Temixtitlan, which lies in the lakes and by their shore. Although we were greatly pleased to see it, recollecting how much harm we had suffered there, we were somewhat sad and all swore never to leave that province alive if we did not do so victorious. And with this resolution we moved on as joyfully as if we were on an outing. The enemy, who had already observed us, now suddenly began to send up great smoke signals all over the land; and I begged and entreated the Spaniards again to do as they had always done, and as was expected of them; no one should leave the path, but all should keep together and in formation on the road.

Already the Indians were shouting at us from some nearby farms and villages, calling on all the people of the land to unite and attack us at some bridges and narrow stretches which lay ahead. We made such haste, however, that we had reached the plain be-

fore they had time to gather their forces. Then certain troops of Indians came out to meet us on the road, and I ordered fifteen horsemen to break through them; this they did, spearing some of them without receiving any hurt. Then we continued on our way toward Tesuico, which is one of the largest and most beautiful cities in these parts; but as the foot soldiers were somewhat tired and it was getting late we slept in a village called Coatepeque,⁵ which is subject to Tesuico and three leagues away from it; we found it deserted. That night it occurred to us that as the city and its province, which is called Aculuacán, is very large and thickly populated, there might well be at that time more than 150,000 men waiting to fall on us, so I, with ten horsemen, took the first watch and ordered all the men to be well prepared.

On the following day, Monday, the last day of December, we continued on our journey in the usual order, and a quarter of a league from that village of Coatepeque, while we were all wondering and discussing amongst ourselves whether the people of Tesuico would come in war or peace, believing that war was more likely, there came toward us four Indian chieftains with a flag of gold, which weighed some four gold marks, on a pole, and by this they gave us to understand that they came in peace; God knows how much we desired and needed peace, being, as we were, so few, so far from help and so deep into the land of the enemy. When I saw those four Indians, one of whom I knew, I halted my men, and went toward them. After we had greeted each other they told me that they had come on behalf of the lord of that city and province, who is called Guanacacin,⁶ and begged me, on his behalf, to do no damage in their land nor to countenance any, for the people of Temixtitan, not they, were responsible for the hurt I had suffered previously. They wished to be Your Majesty's vassals and our friends, as they would always preserve our friendship; they asked us to enter their city, where we might judge their sincerity by their deeds.

I welcomed them through the interpreters and replied that I welcomed their offer of peace and friendship, but, though they sought to exculpate themselves from the war which had been made on me in Temixtitan, they well knew that in certain of their subject villages five or six leagues from the city of Tesuico they had killed five horsemen and forty-five foot soldiers, and more than three hundred Indians from Tascalteca who were carrying much gold and silver and clothing and other things, all of which they had taken. As they could not therefore excuse themselves from all blame, their punishment would be to return what belonged to us, and if they did so, although they all deserved to die for having killed so many Christians, I would make peace with them because they begged me to do so. But if they did not, I would proceed against them with all severity. They answered that the lord and chieftains of Temixtitan had taken everything they had stolen, but that they would search for all they could find and return it to me. They then asked me if I was going that day to the city or would camp in one of the two villages called Coatinchan and Guaxuta.⁷ which are like suburbs to the city, and lie a league and a half from it, though the space between is all built up; this it later appeared was what they wished me to do. I told them in reply that I would not stop until I had reached Tesuico; they agreed to this and said that they would go on ahead to prepare quarters for the Spaniards and myself; and so they departed. When we reached the aforementioned villages some of their chieftains came out to meet us and brought us food; and at midday we reached the center of the city, where we were to be quartered in a large house which had belonged to the father of Guanacacin, chieftain of the city. But before we settled in I called together all my people and commanded them, under pain of death, not to leave the house without my permission. The house was so large that had we Spaniards been twice as many we could still have put up there very comfortably. I did this so that the natives might be reassured and return to their homes, for it seemed to

me that we had not seen a tenth of the people who are normally to be found in the city, nor any women or children, which was a rather alarming sign.

The day we entered this city, which was New Year's Eve, we arranged our quarters, and although we were still somewhat perturbed at seeing so few people, and those whom we did see very well wrapped up, we suspected that it was out of fear that they did not appear on the streets, and this relieved us somewhat. Toward sunset, certain Spaniards climbed onto some high roofs from where they could survey the whole city, and they saw how all the natives were leaving; some, with their possessions, were going out into the lake in canoes, which they call *acales*, and some up into the mountains. Although I immediately ordered their flight to be halted, it was already so late that night soon fell, and they made such haste that we could not prevent them. Thus the chief of the city, whom I dearly wished to have in my power, escaped with many of the chieftains and all their belongings to the city of Temixtitan, which is six leagues away across the lake. For this reason, to carry out their plans in safety, those messengers whom I mentioned above came to meet me, hoping to detain me awhile so I should do them no harm; later that night they abandoned us, and their city also.

We remained in the city for three days, without any encounter with the Indians, for they dared not come to meet us nor were we disposed to go far in search of them, for my considered intention was always, when they wished it, to receive them in peace, and always to require it of them. At this time the lords of Coatynchan and Guaxuta and Autengo,⁸ which are three large villages near to the city and, as I have said, incorporated and joined with it, came to speak to me; and, weeping, they begged me to forgive them for abandoning their land, but said that for the rest they had not fought against me or at least not willingly, and from now on would do all I commanded them in Your Majesty's name. I replied through the interpreters that they knew how well we had always treated them and that in leaving their land and everything

else they were to blame; and so if they wished to be our friends they must return to their homes and bring also their women and children, for we would treat them according to their actions. And so they departed not much pleased, as it seemed to us.

When the lord of Mexico and Temixtitan and all the other lords of Culua (for the name Culua comprises all the lands and provinces in this region subject to Temixtitan) heard that the lords of those villages had come to offer themselves as Your Majesty's vassals, they sent some messengers to tell them that they had behaved very badly; and if they had done this through fear, they should have been well aware that they were many and had such strength that they must very soon kill me and the Spaniards and all the Indians of Tascalteca; and that if they had done it so as not to have to leave their lands, they should indeed leave them and go to Temixtitan, where they would be given bigger and better villages to live in.

These lords of Coatinchan and Guaxuta seized these messengers and bound them and brought them to me. They confessed that they had come on behalf of the lords of Temixtitan, but it was only to persuade those chieftains, as they were my friends, to go to the capital as mediators, to negotiate peace terms between us. This the chiefs of Guaxuta and Coatinchan denied, saying that the lords of México and Temixtitan wanted nothing but war, and although I believed them—and what they said was indeed the truth—because I wished to persuade the people of Tesuico to become our friends, because on that depended whether we had peace or war with the other provinces which were in revolt, I freed these messengers and told them not to be afraid, for I would send them back to Temixtitan. I begged them to tell their lord that, although I had every reason to do so, I did not wish to fight them, but to be their friend as I had been once before. And so as to assure them further and bring them to the service of Your Majesty, I sent to say that I was well aware that the chieftains who had made war on me before were now dead, and that the past should be forgotten, and they

should not give me cause to destroy their lands and cities, for I would be very sorry to have to do so. With this I freed the messengers and they departed promising to bring me an answer. The lords of Coatinchan and Guaxuta and I were by this good deed more closely united, and I, in Your Majesty's name, forgave them their past misdeeds, and thus they were satisfied.

After having remained in this city of Tesuico seven or eight days without any disturbance or conflict with the inhabitants, during which time we fortified our quarters and prepared other things necessary for our defense and for attacking the enemy, I saw that they were not going to take the offensive and left the aforementioned city with two hundred Spaniards, among whom were eighteen horsemen, thirty crossbowmen and ten harquebusiers, together with three or four thousand of our Indian allies.⁹ I marched along the lake shore to a city called Yztapalapa, which by water is two leagues from Temixtitan and six from Tesuico; it has some ten thousand inhabitants and half, or perhaps even two-thirds of it, is built over the water.

The lord of the city, who was Mutezuma's brother, had, after his brother's death, been made king by the Indians, and was the chieftain most to blame for making war on us and driving us from the great city. For this reason, and because I had heard that the inhabitants of Yztapalapa were ill-disposed toward us, I determined to march against them. When they saw me more than two leagues from the city some came out into the fields and others appeared on the lake in canoes. Thus for two leagues we struggled both with those on land and those who landed from the canoes until we reached the city. They then opened a causeway some two-thirds of a league outside the city, which served as a dike between the salt and fresh-water lakes, as Your Majesty may have seen from the map of Temixtitan which I sent. When this dike was opened the salt water began to flow into the fresh with tremendous force, although the lakes are more than half a league apart. We were so

eager for victory we did not notice this subterfuge and passed on until, still fighting with the enemy, we entered the city. As the inhabitants had already been alerted, all the houses on the land had been abandoned and the people with their belongings had taken refuge in the houses over the lake; and there all those who had fled rallied and fought with us very fiercely. But Our Lord gave so much strength to His own that we drove them back into the water, some up to their chests and others swimming, and we took many of the houses on the water. More than six thousand of them, men, women and children, perished that day, for our Indian allies, when they saw the victory which God had given us, had no other thought but to kill, right and left.

Because it was now growing dark, I collected my men together and set fire to some of those houses; and while they were burning it seemed that Our Lord inspired me and brought to my memory that causeway or dike we had seen broken, and revealed to me the great danger we were in. So I left the city as swiftly as possible with all my men, although it was now quite dark. When I reached the water, which must have been at about nine o'clock, it was so deep and it flowed with such force that we had to leap across it; some of our Indian allies were drowned, and we lost all the spoil we had taken in the city. I assure Your Majesty that if that night we had not crossed the water, or had waited but three hours more, none of us would have escaped, for we would have been surrounded by water with no means of escape.

When day broke we saw that the water from the one lake was level with that of the other and flowed no more; the salt lake was full of warriors in canoes expecting to seize us there. I returned that day to Tesuico, fighting at times with some who landed from the lake, although we could do them little harm, for they retreated immediately to their canoes. When I reached Tesuico I found the people I had left there quite safe, having had no encounters at all with the enemy; and they were greatly pleased by our return and

the news of our victory. The day after we returned, a Spaniard who had been wounded died, and he was the first of my company to be killed by the Indians on this campaign.

On the following day there came to this city several messengers from the city of Otumba and four other cities which are near it: these cities are five or six leagues from Tesuico. These messengers entreated me to pardon them for the part they had played in the past war, because Otumba was the place where all the forces of Mexico and Temixtitan had gathered when we were fleeing the city, intending to put an end to us. These people of Otumba well knew that they could not avoid blame, although they excused themselves by saying that they had been under orders; but in order to incline me to leniency they told me how the chiefs of Temixtitan had sent messengers to persuade them to join their cause and to make no alliance with us because, if they did so, they would be destroyed. They said, however, that they would rather be Your Majesty's vassals and obey my commands. I told them in reply that they were well aware how much they were to blame for what had happened, and before I would pardon them or believe what they said, they must bring those messengers to me as captives and all the other natives of Mexico and Temixtitan who were in their land; otherwise I would not pardon them. I told them to return to their homes and show me by their deeds that they were Your Majesty's true vassals. Although we argued at length, they could extract nothing from me, and so they returned to their land, assuring me that they would in future do all that I commanded them, and from then on they have been loyal and obedient to Your Majesty's service.

Most Fortunate and Excellent Prince, as I told Your Majesty in the second report, when we were defeated and driven from the city of Temixtitan, I took with me one son and two daughters of Mutezuma, together with the lord of Tesuico, who was called Cacamacin, two of his brothers and many other chiefs whom I held captive, and all of them had been killed by the enemy (although

they were all of the same race, and some of them were their chiefs) except the two brothers of Cacamacin, who by great good fortune were able to escape. One of these brothers, called Ypacsuchyl, or by another name Cucascacin,¹⁰ whom I, in Your Majesty's name and with Mutezuma's accord, had made lord of that city of Tesuico and of the province of Aculuacán, had escaped from captivity at the time of my arrival in Tascalteca, and returned to the aforementioned city of Tesuico. But as another of his brothers, called Guanacacin, of whom I have spoken earlier, had been chosen as chief, this brother had Cucascacin killed in the following manner: When he arrived in the province of Tesuico he was seized by the guards who informed their lord, Guanacacin, who likewise informed the lord of Temixtitan, who, unable to believe that Cucascacin could have escaped from us, thought that he must be acting on our behalf to give us information about what was happening in that province. He therefore ordered the aforementioned Guanacacin to kill his brother, and he obeyed at once. Guanacacin, the youngest of the brothers, stayed with me, and, as he was only a boy, our conversation made a greater impression on him and he became a Christian, and we gave him the name of Don Fernando. When I departed from the province of Tascalteca for Mexico and Temixtitan I left him behind with certain Spaniards; and I shall relate hereafter to Your Majesty what happened to him afterwards.¹¹

On the day following my arrival in Tesuico from the city of Yztapalapa, I resolved to send Gonzalo de Sandoval, Your Majesty's alguacil mayor, as captain of twenty horsemen and two hundred foot soldiers, among whom were crossbowmen, harquebusiers and bucklers, for two very necessary purposes: first, to escort from this province certain messengers whom I was sending to Tascalteca to discover in what state the thirteen brigantines were which were being built there, and to provide for other things which both the people of the town of Vera Cruz and those of my company required; second, to make safe that region so the Spaniards might come and go in safety, for until then neither could we leave this

province of Aculuacán without passing through enemy land, nor could the Spaniards in Vera Cruz and other places come to us without being in great danger of attack. I commanded the aforementioned alguacil mayor that, once he had conducted the messengers to safety, he was to go to a province which is called Calco and borders on this of Aculuacán, for I had been assured that the natives thereof, although of the league of Culua, wished to offer themselves as Your Majesty's vassals but had not dared do so by reason of a garrison which had been stationed near them by the Culuans.

This captain then departed, taking with him all the Indians of Tascalteca who had carried our baggage, and others who had come to help us and had gained some spoils from the fighting. These Indians went some way ahead, for the captain believed that, as the Spaniards were marching in the rear, the enemy would not dare attack; but when the inhabitants of the towns and villages on the lake and by the lake shore saw them, they fell on the rear of the Tascaltecan and robbed them of their spoils, even killing some. But when the captain arrived with the horsemen and the foot soldiers he attacked them fiercely and many were speared and killed; and those who remained were routed and fled into the water and to villages nearby. The Indians of Tascalteca, accompanied by my messengers, returned to their country with all that they had left. Once they had all reached safety, Gonzalo de Sandoval continued his journey to the province of Calco, which is close by there. Early on the following morning a large number of the enemy gathered to do battle with the Spaniards; and once they were both in the field our men opened the attack and the horsemen routed two of their squadrons so that they soon fled the field, and the Spaniards pursued them killing and burning. When this was done and the road cleared, the people of Calco came out to welcome the Spaniards and both sides welcomed each other.

The lords said that they wished to come and see me; so they left and came to spend the night at Tesuico. When they arrived

they came before me accompanied by two sons of the chief of Calco, who gave me some three hundred pesos de oro and told me that their father had died, and how at the time of his death he had told them that the greatest grief he had to bear was that of not having seen me before he died, for he had been expecting me for many days. He had commanded them to visit me as soon as I arrived in this province and to look upon me as their father. So when they heard that I was in the city of Tesuico, they had wished to come and see me but had not dared do so for fear of the Culuans. Nor would they now have dared had the captain I sent not arrived in their land, and, they added, I would have to send many Spaniards with them when they returned to ensure that they arrived in safety. They said that I well knew how they had never been against me either in battle or otherwise, and that I also knew how, when the Culuans were attacking our quarters in Temixtitan and the Spaniards I had left there when I went to Cempoal to see Narváez, there were two Spaniards in their land guarding some maize which I had sent them to collect. They had taken these Spaniards to the province of Guaxoc[a]ngo, since they knew that the people of that province were our friends, to save them from being killed, as the Culuans had killed all the Spaniards they found outside Temixtitan. They told me this and many other things, weeping all the while, and I thanked them for their loyalty and their good deeds, promising that I would do always as they wished and that they would be very well treated. They have always until now shown great goodwill, and have been most obedient to all that I, in Your Majesty's name, have commanded them.

These sons of the lord of Calco and those who had come with them remained with me for one day, and then told me that they wished to return to their land and asked me to give them some of my people to conduct them in safety. Gonzalo de Sandoval, with several horsemen and foot soldiers, escorted them, with orders that, once he had taken them to their land, he should thence proceed to the province of Tascalteca, and bring back with him certain Span-

iards who were there, and Don Fernando, brother of Cacamacin, whom I have already mentioned. After four or five days this alguacil mayor returned, bringing the Spaniards and Don Fernando with him. A few days later I discovered that as he was a brother of the lords of this city the sovereignty belonged to him, although there were other brothers. For this reason, and also because the province was without a ruler, for Guanacacín, his brother, had left it and gone to Temixtitán, and, moreover, because Don Fernando was a very good friend of the Christians, I, in Your Majesty's name, ordered that he should be acknowledged as the lord. The inhabitants of the city, although at that time there were few present, did so, and from thenceforth obeyed him. Many of the people who had fled now began to return to the city and province of Aculuacán, and they also obeyed and served Don Fernando; from then on the city began to be rebuilt and reinhabited.

Two days after this the lords of Coatinchán and Guaxuta came to me and said that they knew for certain that all the forces of Culua were proceeding against the Spaniards and the land was full of the enemy. They asked if they should bring their women and children to where I was or should take them into the mountains, because they were very much afraid. But I encouraged them, and told them not to be afraid and to remain where they were in their houses, for I desired nothing so much as to meet the Culuans on the field. I told them to be watchful and send spies and scouts out all over the land; and once they knew the enemy was coming to advise me. Thus they departed much concerned with my orders. That night I alerted my men and positioned watchmen and sentries in every place where it was necessary; we did not sleep at all that night, nor think of anything save the matter in hand. Thus, believing what we had been told by those lords of Guaxuta and Coatinchán, we waited all that night and the following day. The day after, I learnt how some of the enemy were moving along the lake shore, making surprise attacks and hoping to seize some Indians from Tascalteca who fetched and carried things for the camp. I

learnt also how they had been joined by two towns, subjects of Tesuico, which were close by the water's edge, whence they would do us all the harm they were able. They had barricaded themselves in with ditches and earthworks and other things for their defense. After I heard this I set out on the following day with twelve horsemen, two hundred foot soldiers and two small field guns, and rode to the place where they were camped, which lay about a league and a half from the city. As I was leaving, I came across certain scouts and others of the enemy who were waiting to attack, and we scattered them, killing some in the pursuit, while the rest fled into the water. We then burnt a part of those towns and returned to the camp very pleased with our victory.

On the following day three chieftains from those towns came begging my forgiveness for what had happened and asking me to destroy nothing more, for they promised that they would never again receive anyone from Temixtitán. And because these were men of little consequence, and vassals of Don Fernando, I pardoned them in Your Majesty's name. Then, on the following day, several Indians from those towns came to me, injured and ill-treated, saying that when the people of Mexico had returned to their town and had not received the welcome to which they were accustomed, they had turned on them and had taken some of them prisoners; and if they had not defended themselves they would all have been seized. They begged me to be well prepared, so that when the Culuans returned I might know in time to go to their relief; and so they departed home.

The people whom I had left in the province of Tascalteca to construct the brigantines received news that a ship had arrived at the port of Vera Cruz, in which there came, besides the sailors, thirty or forty Spaniards, eight horses, and some crossbows, harquebuses and powder; but as they did not know how the war was going for us, nor were certain of being able to reach me in safety, they were very anxious; and some of the Spaniards stayed there not daring to come, although they desired to bring me such

good news. When a servant of mine, whom I had left there, heard that some of them wished to make an attempt to join me, he had it announced that no one, under pain of the most severe punishments, should leave until I had sent orders to do so. But one of my lads, who knew that nothing in the world would give me such pleasure as to learn of the arrival of this ship and the aid it brought, set out by night, although the road was dangerous, and came to Tesuico. We were very surprised to see him arrive safely and greatly pleased by his news, for we were in extreme need of help.¹²

That same day, Most Catholic Lord, there arrived in Tesuico several reliable messengers from the people of Calco, and they told me that on account of their having offered themselves as Your Majesty's vassals the people of Mexico and Temixtitan were intent on destroying them, and for this purpose had called together and alerted all their neighbors; they asked me to help them in such great danger, for if I did not, they expected to find themselves in the direst straits. I assure Your Majesty that, as I said in my previous letter, apart from our own hardships and privations, the greatest distress was caused us by not being able to help our Indian allies, who, for being Your Majesty's vassals, were harassed and ill-treated by the Culuans, although I and my companions wished always to do our utmost in this, for we believed that in no way could we better serve Your Caesarean Majesty than in helping and supporting Your vassals. But the people of Calco found me in such circumstances that I was unable to do for them all I wished; and so I told them that as I now wanted to send for the brigantines, and for that purpose had alerted the whole province of Tascalteca, whence the parts were to come, I must send horsemen and foot soldiers for that purpose and so could spare them none of my men. I also told them, however, that as they knew the natives of Guaxocingo, Churultecal and Guacachula¹³ were also Your Majesty's vassals and our allies they should go to them, for they live close by, and request them on my behalf to give them help and succor, and to garrison troops there until such time as I was able to help them, for

at present I could give them no other assistance. Although they were not so content as if I had given them some Spaniards, they thanked me and begged me to give them a letter so that they might be believed, and might venture to ask in greater safety, because between Calco and the two other provinces, as they belonged to different alliances, there had been some strife.

While I was occupied in this, certain messengers happened to arrive from the aforementioned provinces of Guaxocingo and Guacachula, and in the presence of the people at Calco, they told me how they had neither seen nor heard of me since I left Tascalteca, even though they had placed lookouts on all the hills which circle their land and overlook Mexico and Temixtitan, so that, should they see many smoke signals, which are the signs of war, they might come to help me with their own people and with their vassals. And because a short while previously they had seen more smoke signals than ever before, they had come to discover how I was and if I required anything, so that they might send me their warriors. I thanked them greatly, and told them that, God be praised, the Spaniards and I were all well, and had always triumphed over the enemy; and that besides being much pleased by their presence and their goodwill, I would be still more pleased to form an alliance and bond of friendship between them and the people of Calco, who were there present; so I requested them, as both parties were Your Majesty's vassals, to become good friends, and help each other against the Culuans, who were wicked and perverse; especially now, as the people from Calco were in need of help, because the Culuans were preparing to attack them; and thus they became firm friends and allies. And after staying with me for two days, they departed well pleased, and thenceforth gave each other assistance.

Three days later, having heard that the work on the thirteen brigantines had been finished and the people who were to bring them were ready to depart, I sent Gonzalo de Sandoval, alguacil mayor, with fifteen horsemen and two hundred foot soldiers to bring them to me. I also commanded him to raze to the ground a

large town,¹⁴ subject to Tesuico, which stands on the borders of Tascalteca, because the inhabitants had killed five horsemen and forty-five foot soldiers who had been coming from Vera Cruz to Temixtitlan when I had been besieged in that city, not suspecting that such a treacherous act could be perpetrated against us. When we entered Tesuico this time we had found in their temples or shrines the skins of the five horses with their hoofs and shoes, sewn up and as well tanned as anywhere in the world; and as a sign of victory they had offered these and much clothing and other things belonging to the Spaniards to their idols. Likewise we found the blood of our companions and brothers sacrificed and spilled in all those towers and temples, and it was such a pitiful sight that all our past tribulations were revived. The traitors of that town and of others in the neighborhood had received the Christians well when they passed by there, in order to make them feel secure and then inflict on them the greatest cruelty that has ever been done, for when the Spaniards were going down through a steep pass, every one on foot and leading their horses so that they were unable to use them to advantage, the Indians ambushed them from both sides of the path; some they killed and others were taken alive to Tesuico, where they were sacrificed and their hearts were torn out before the idols. This seemed to be what had happened, for when the alguacil mayor passed by there, some of the Spaniards who were with him found in a house, in a village which lies between Tesuico and the place where the Christians were killed, a white wall with these words written in charcoal: "Here the unhappy Juan Yuste was held prisoner."¹⁵ He was one of the five horsemen. Surely a sight fit to break the hearts of all who saw it. When the alguacil mayor arrived at the town, the inhabitants, conscious of their great crime and guilt, began to flee, but the Spaniards and our Indian friends overtook them and killed many, and took many women and children as slaves. But Sandoval was moved by compassion and chose not to kill and destroy all he might have, and before he departed from there he even ordered

those who survived to be led back to the town; and so now it is inhabited once again and very repentant of the past.

The alguacil mayor then proceeded five or six leagues to the town in Tascalteca which is closest to the borders of Culua, and there he met the Spaniards and the people who were bringing the brigantines. And the day after he arrived they left there with the timbers and planks, which were carried by more than eight thousand men, all in perfect array; and it was a remarkable sight to see and I think even to hear of: thirteen ships carried overland for eighteen leagues. I assure Your Majesty that there were more than two leagues from the vanguard to the rear. And when they set out there went in front eight horsemen and a hundred Spaniards, and with them and on the flanks went more than ten thousand warriors who had as their captains Yutecad and Teutipil, who are two of the principal lords of Tascalteca. In the rear guard came another hundred or so Spaniards, and with them another ten thousand men, all very well armed, who had as their captain Chichimecatecle,¹⁶ who is one of the principal lords of that province; and he also brought with him other captains.

When they set out, this Chichimecatecle had gone in the vanguard with the deck planks, while the other two captains remained in the rear with the cross timbers. But when they passed over into Culua the masters of the brigantines ordered the cross timbers to be brought to the fore, and the deck planks to be sent behind because they were the more clumsy of the two, and if anything should happen it would happen in front. But Chichimecatecle, who went with the deck planks, and until then had always gone with his warriors in the vanguard, took this as an affront, and it was a matter of some difficulty to quieten him and persuade him to remain in the rear, for he wished to meet any danger that might present itself. When he finally agreed to this, he asked that no Spaniards should remain accompanying him, for he is a most valiant man and wished to keep all the glory for himself. These captains had

brought with them two thousand Indians to carry their provisions. After proceeding in this order for three days, on the fourth they entered this city with much rejoicing and noise of drums as I went out to greet them.¹⁷ And as I said above, there were so many people in this train that from the moment the first one had entered until the arrival of the last more than six hours passed, and not once was that long line broken. When those lords had arrived I thanked them for the good service they had done us and ordered that they be quartered and provided for as well as we were able. They told me that they wished to meet the Culuans and that I should see, when I commanded them, that they and their people were determined to avenge themselves or die with us. I thanked them but told them to rest, for soon I would be giving them plenty to do.

When all these warriors from Tascalteca, who for Indians are certainly very fine men, had rested for three or four days in Tesuico, I prepared twenty-five horsemen and three hundred foot soldiers and fifty crossbowmen and arquebusiers and six small field guns, and without telling anyone where I was going left this city at nine in the morning; and with me went the captains already mentioned, with more than thirty thousand men, all very well organized into battalions, after their fashion. When it was already late, we came upon a group of enemy warriors some four leagues from the city, but the horsemen broke through and routed them, and as the warriors of Tascalteca are very agile they followed us and together we killed many of our foes; that night we slept in the open, under careful guard.

On the following morning we continued our journey, and still I had not said where I intended to go, which I did because I distrusted some of those from Tesuico who were with us, for as yet I had no confidence in them and feared they might betray my intention to the people of Mexico and Temixtitan. We now reached a town called Xaltoca,¹⁸ which is situated in the middle of the lake, and all around were a great many channels full of water, which made the town very strong because the horsemen could not cross

them. The enemy yelled at us loudly and attacked us with darts and arrows, but the foot soldiers succeeded in entering the town, although with some difficulty, and drove them out and burnt much of the place. That night we put up a league from there. When it was light we continued on our way and soon came upon the enemy, who began to shout at us from afar as they do in war, which is truly a terrifying thing to hear. We followed them and came upon a very large and beautiful city called Goatitan;¹⁹ this we found deserted and so slept there that night.

On the following day we moved on and came to a city called Tenayuca,²⁰ where we encountered no resistance whatever and then proceeded to another called Acapulzalco,²¹ also by the lake shore; but we did not stop there either because I greatly wished to reach another city which is close by; this city is called Tacuba²² and is very near to Temixtitan. When we came close to it we found that there also the enemy had dug a great number of ditches and were well prepared for our arrival. When we saw them, we and our allies attacked them, entered the city, killed some, and drove the inhabitants out. But as it was now late we did nothing more that night and lodged in a house which was so large that we were all very comfortable. At dawn our Indian allies began to sack and burn the whole city except for the house where we were quartered, and they were so diligent in this that they destroyed a quarter of it. They did this because after we had been driven from Temixtitan before, we had passed through this city, and the inhabitants, together with those of Temixtitan, had attacked us fiercely and killed many Spaniards.

Of the six days which we spent in Tacuba, not one passed without many engagements and skirmishes with the enemy. The captains of the Tascaltecs and their men many times challenged those of Temixtitan and fought most beautifully with them; they argued at length, shouting insults and threats at each other, all of which was a truly remarkable sight. During all this time many of the enemy were killed without any of our people being endan-

gered, for many times we entered by the causeways and bridges of the city, although as their defenses were very good they resisted us fiercely. Often they pretended to open a way for us, saying, "Come in, come in and enjoy yourselves!" or, at other times, "Do you think there is now another Mutezuma to do whatever you wish?" Once, while they were engaged in these exchanges, I approached a bridge which they had raised, they being on the other side of the water. I signaled my men to be silent; and they also, when they saw I wished to speak to them, silenced their men. I called to them, asking if they were mad and wished to be destroyed. I asked if amongst them there was a lord of the city to whom I might speak. They replied that all the multitude of warriors I saw there were lords, so I might say what I wished. But as I made no answer they began to insult me. And one of my men, I do not know which, told them that they would die of hunger, for we would not let them escape in search of food. They replied that they were not short of food, and that when they were they would eat us and the Tascaltecan. One of them took some maize loaves and threw them toward us saying, "Take these and eat them if you are hungry, for we are not." And then they began to yell and fight with us.

As the reason for my coming to Tacuba had been principally to have talks with the Indians from Temixtitan and discover their intentions, I saw that by remaining I was achieving nothing; and so after six days had passed I decided to return to Tesuico in order to hasten the assembly of the brigantines, so as to be able to surround the enemy both by land and water. The day of our departure we put up for the night in the city of Goatitan, which I have already mentioned, and the enemy followed us continuously, though from time to time the horsemen turned to attack them, with the result that some of them fell into our hands.

On the following day we set out again, and when the enemy saw us leaving they believed it was out of fear, so they gathered together a great number of their people and began to pursue us. When I saw this I ordered the foot soldiers to march on ahead

without stopping, and sent five horsemen to bring up their rear, while twenty remained with me. Six of these I placed in ambush in one place, and six in another and five in another, while I went with three to another. I ordered that as the enemy passed, believing that we were all going on ahead, and on hearing me shout "Señor Santiago" they should come out and fall on them from behind. When it was time we emerged and rode down on them with our lances; the chase continued for nearly two leagues over land as flat as the palm of a man's hand; and it was a most beautiful sight. Thus a great many died by our hands and by those of our Indian allies. Those who remained pursued us no farther, and we hastened to join the rest of our people. That night we slept in a pleasant village called Aculman²⁹ that lies two leagues from Tesuico, for which we departed the following day and arrived about noon. We were very well received by the alguacil mayor, whom I had left there as captain, and by all the other people, who rejoiced greatly at our coming, for since the day we had left they had heard nothing of us or of what had happened, and they were very eager to know. The day after we arrived the lords and captains of the Tascaltecan asked my permissions to depart; and they went away to their land very pleased and with some spoils from the enemy.

Two days after my return to Tesuico there came to me certain messengers from the lords of Calco who told me that they had been ordered to inform me that the people of Mexico and Temixtitan were coming to destroy them. They again begged me to send help, as they had done before. Immediately I arranged to send Gonzalo de Sandoval with twenty horsemen and three hundred foot soldiers. I urged him to make haste, and once he arrived to do all he was able to assist Your Majesty's vassals and our friends.

When he arrived in Calco he found awaiting him many people from that province and from those of Guajocingo and Guacachula. And once he had left orders as to what was to be done, he departed for a town called Guastepeque,²⁴ where the Culuan had a garrison and from where they were attacking the people of

Calco. At a town on the way there appeared a great number of the enemy; but as our allies were many and furthermore had the advantage of the assistance of Spaniards and the horsemen, together they broke through them and, driving them from the field, killed many of them. They spent that night in a village outside Guastepeque and set out again on the following day. As they drew close to the aforementioned town of Guastepeque, the Culuans began to fight with the Spaniards, who soon, however, scattered them and, killing some, drove them from the town. The horsemen then dismounted so as to feed their horses and accommodate themselves, and while they were thus unprepared the enemy returned to the square where their quarters were, and shouting and screaming ferociously attacked them with stones and arrows and spears. The Spaniards armed themselves and together with our allies dashed out against them. Once again they drove them out, and pursuing them for more than a league killed a large number. They were very tired when they returned that night to Guastepeque, where they rested for two days.

At this time the alguacil mayor discovered that there were many enemy warriors in a town called Acapichtla,²⁵ and he resolved to go there and require them to surrender peacefully. This town was very strong and built on a high place such that the horses could not reach it. As soon as the Spaniards arrived the people of the town immediately began to attack them and throw stones down on them. And although many of our allies were with the alguacil mayor, when they saw the strength of the town they dared not attack the enemy. When the alguacil mayor and the Spaniards saw this they determined to take the heights of the city or die in the attempt, and with a shout of "Señor Santiago" they began to climb; and it pleased God to grant them so much strength that despite fierce resistance they took the town, although many were wounded in the attempt. When the enemy saw they were defeated and began to flee, our Indian allies followed them, and there was such a massacre at the hands of our allies and through their being thrown

down from the heights that all who were there agree that the small river which runs past that village was dyed with blood for more than an hour, and they were unable to drink from it, although it was hot and they badly needed to. Having brought this assault to a conclusion, and leaving those two towns in peace, although severely punished for their having earlier refused it, the alguacil mayor returned to Tesuico with all his men; and Your Catholic Majesty may be assured that this was a most notable victory, in which the Spaniards showed singular courage.²⁶

When the people of Mexico and Temixtitlan heard how the Spaniards and the people of Calco had done them such harm they resolved to send several captains with a large force against them. When the people of Calco heard of this they sent me a request to send aid as quickly as possible. Again I sent the same alguacil mayor with several horsemen and foot soldiers, but when he arrived the Culuans and the people of Calco were already engaged in a fierce struggle. It pleased God, however, that the people of Calco should be victorious, and they killed many of the enemy and captured some forty persons, among whom was a Mexican captain and two other chieftains, all of whom the people of Calco handed over to the alguacil mayor so that he might bring them to me. Some of these he sent to me and others he kept, because, for the greater safety of the people of Calco, he remained with all his men in a Calco village on the border with Mexico. Afterwards, when he thought his presence was no longer needed, he returned to Tesuico and brought with him the remaining prisoners. Meanwhile we had had many encounters with the Culuans, which, to avoid prolixity, I shall not recount.

As the road between this city of Tesuico and Vera Cruz was now safe, those in Vera Cruz received news of us every day, and we of them, which was not possible before. They now sent me a messenger with some crossbows, arquebuses and powder, which pleased us greatly. Then, two days later, they sent me another messenger to say that three ships had arrived at the port bringing many

men and horses, and that they would be sent to me at once; and so, miraculously, God granted us assistance in proportion to our need.²⁷

I have always sought, Most Powerful Lord, by all the means at my disposal, to bring the people of Temixtitan into friendship with us; partly so that they might not be destroyed, and partly so that we might rest from the hardships of all the past battles, but principally because I knew that it would promote the service of Your Majesty. Whenever I captured anyone from the city I always sent him back to require and demand that they make peace. So on Wednesday of Holy Week, which was the twenty-seventh of March, 1521, I had the lords of Temixtitan whom the people of Calco had captured brought before me. I asked if there were any among them who would go to the city and speak on my behalf to their lords and entreat them to cease the war and submit themselves as Your Majesty's vassals as they had been before, because I did not wish to destroy them but to be their friend. And although they took it badly, for they were afraid they would be killed if they took such a message, two of those prisoners resolved to go and asked me for a letter because, though they would not understand what was in it, they knew it was the custom among us, and by carrying it they would be given more credence by the people in the city. Through my interpreters, however, I explained to them what was in the letter, which was what I had said to them personally. Thus they departed, and I commanded five horsemen to escort them to safety.

On Easter Saturday the people of Calco and some of their friends and allies sent to tell me that the Mexicans were marching against them, and on a large white cloth they showed the symbols for all the towns which were to attack them and the routes they were to follow. They asked me at all costs to send them assistance, and I answered that within four or five days I would send it, and that if in the meanwhile they found themselves in great need they were to tell me and I would help them. On the third day after Easter they returned and entreated me to send help at once, because

the enemy was advancing rapidly. I replied that I would help them and ordered that twenty-five horsemen and three hundred foot soldiers should be ready for the following Friday.

On the Thursday before, certain messengers from the provinces of Tuzapan, Masicalcingo and Nautan²⁸ and from other cities in that neighborhood came to Tesuico and told me they wished to offer themselves as Your Majesty's vassals and our allies, for they had never killed any Spaniard nor risen against Your Majesty's service. They brought with them some cotton clothes, for all of which I thanked them and promised that if they behaved well they would be well treated; with this they left well pleased.

On Friday, which was the fifth of April of the same year, 1521, I left Tesuico with the thirty [*sic*] horsemen and three hundred foot soldiers who had been prepared, and I left behind there another twenty horsemen and three hundred foot soldiers. As their captain I appointed Gonzalo de Sandoval, the alguacil mayor. More than twenty thousand men from Tesuico came with me, and we marched in good order until we reached a town of Calco called Tlamanalco,²⁹ where we were well received and quartered; and there we spent the night. As there are good defenses there, ever since the people of Calco became our friends they have maintained a garrison there, for it lies on the borders of Culua. We arrived at Calco on the following day at about nine in the morning, but stopped no more than to speak with their chiefs and explain my intention, which was to follow a route around the lakes, for I believed that once I had finished this task, which was most important, I would find the brigantines completed and ready for launching. After I had spoken to the people of Calco I left that day at vespers and reached a village where more than forty thousand of our allies joined us in arms and we slept there that night. And because the inhabitants of this village told me that the Culuans were waiting in the fields, I ordered that the men should rise and be prepared by a quarter before dawn.

On the following day, after hearing Mass, we set out. I took

the vanguard with twenty horsemen, while ten others rode in the rear, and in this fashion we crossed some very steep mountains. At about two o'clock we reached a very high and steep rock on top of which were many women and children. The slopes were covered with warriors, who soon began to howl and make smoke signals, attacking us with stones, which they hurled down by hand or from slings and with spears and arrows, so that in approaching them we received much harm. Even though we had seen that they dared not face us in the field, it seemed to me that, although our road led elsewhere, it would be cowardly to pass by without giving them a lesson, and our allies might think we were afraid; so I began by examining the circumference of the foot of the hill, which was almost a league round. Certainly it was so strong that it seemed madness to attempt to take it, for I could not spare the time to lay siege to it and force them to surrender from hunger. Being thus perplexed, I resolved to scale the slopes in three places that I had seen, and so I ordered Cristóbal Corral, ensign [*alférez*] of sixty foot soldiers, whom I kept always in my company, to scale the steepest part with his flag, with certain harquebusiers and crossbowmen behind him. The captains Juan Rodríguez de Villafuerte and Francisco Verdugo I sent to attack in the second place with some harquebusiers and crossbowmen, and the captains Pedro Dircio and Andrés de Monjaraz with another few harquebusiers and crossbowmen were assigned the third place. I told them that when they heard a harquebus fired they should ascend, and triumph or die.

When the harquebus was fired they immediately began to ascend, and captured from the enemy two sides of the slope but could advance no farther, for the steepness and roughness of that crag was without compare and they could not find hand- or footholds. A large number of stones were hurled and rolled down on them, which shattered into fragments doing infinite harm. So fierce was the defense that two Spaniards were killed and more than twenty wounded, and in no manner could they advance farther. When I saw that they could do no more than what they had al-

ready done, and that large numbers of the enemy were arriving to reinforce those on the crag, so that the countryside was full of them, I ordered the captains to withdraw. When the horsemen had descended we fell upon those in the plain and drove them from the field, spearing and killing many of them during a chase which lasted for more than an hour and a half. As there were a large number of them, the horsemen had spread out on either side, and when they re-formed again I learnt from some how they had come upon another rock with many people on it about a league and a half from there, but this one was not so strong as the other; and there were many people in the plain thereabouts. Furthermore, we would find there two things which we lacked at the first crag: one was water, and the other that the hill was not so well defended, and we might capture it without danger. Although we were greatly saddened by not having won a victory, we left and slept that night close to the other rock, where we endured considerable hardship and privation for we found no water there, and neither we nor the horses had drunk all day. Thus we passed that night to the sound of drums and trumpets and the shouts of our enemies.

When it was light I took with me certain captains and began to examine the slopes of the rock, which seemed to us almost as strong as the other, save that before it there were two hills which were higher but looked easier to climb; these were defended by many warriors. Those captains and myself together with some other gentlemen took our bucklers and went on foot (for the horses had been taken to drink at a place a league from there) toward the hill merely to see how strong the crag was and where we might best attack; yet when the rest of our people saw us go, they followed, although we had said nothing to them. When we reached the foot of the crag those who defended the two hills, believing we planned to attack in the center, rushed to the assistance of their companions. When I saw the mistake they had made, and that once those two hills had been captured we might do much harm from them, I quietly ordered a captain to quickly climb and capture the

steepest of the two hills which they had abandoned; and so it was done. I took the rest of the men and began to climb the hill where the enemy was strongest; and it pleased God that we should take one side of it and reach a height almost level with where they were fighting, which had seemed an impossible thing to do, at least without extreme danger. One of the captains had already placed his banner on the highest point of the hill, and from there he began to assail the enemy with crossbows and harquebuses. When they saw the harm they were suffering and that all hope was lost, they signaled that they wished to surrender, and laid down their arms. And as it has always been my intent to persuade these people that we wish them no harm, no matter how guilty they may be, especially if they wish to be Your Majesty's vassals, and they are so intelligent a people that they understand this very well, I ordered that they should be done no further harm, and welcomed them well. When they saw how well they were treated, they informed those of the other crag, who, although they were victorious, likewise resolved to become Your Majesty's vassals and came to me asking forgiveness for what had occurred.

For two days I remained in this town by the rock, and from there I sent the wounded back to Tesuico and later departed myself, reaching Guastepeque, which I have mentioned above, at ten in the morning. There we were all quartered in a chief's country house amid the most beautiful and refreshing gardens ever seen. They are two leagues round about and through the middle of them runs a pleasant stream. There are summer houses spaced out at distances of two crossbowshots, and very bright flower beds, a great many trees with various fruits, and many herbs and sweet-smelling flowers. Certainly the elegance and magnificence of this garden make a remarkable sight. We rested there that day and the natives provided us with all the services and pleasures that they could.

On the following day we departed and at eight o'clock in the morning reached a fine town called Yautepeque,³⁰ where large numbers of the enemy were awaiting us. As we arrived, however, it

seemed as if they wished to make some sign of peace, either through fear, or in the hope of deceiving us, but immediately after, without more ado, they began to flee, abandoning their town. I had no desire to remain there and so pursued them with thirty horses for some two leagues, until we trapped them in another town which is called Gilutepeque,³¹ where we speared and killed many. We found the people in this town unprepared, for we had arrived ahead of their spies; some were killed and many women and children were taken, and all the rest fled. I stayed there two days, thinking that the lord would come and offer himself as Your Majesty's vassal, but as he did not come I ordered the town to be set on fire before I left. Before I did so, however, certain persons from the previous town of Yautepeque came, begging me to forgive them and offering themselves as Your Majesty's vassals. I received them willingly, for they had already been well punished.

On the day I departed, at nine o'clock, I came within sight of a very strong town called Coadnabacad,³² in which a large force of enemy warriors had gathered. So strong was the town and surrounded by so many hills and ravines, some of which were sixty feet in depth, that the horsemen could not enter except by two places, which were unknown to us at that time, and even they required that we make a detour of a league and a half to reach them. There were also entrances across wooden bridges, but they had raised them, and were thus very strong and so safe that had we been ten times our number they could have held us with scorn. As we approached, they propelled many arrows and javelins and stones at us at their ease. While they were thus engaged with us an Indian from Tascalteca crossed over a ravine in a manner so dangerous that at first he was unobserved,³³ but when at last they did catch sight of him they believed that the Spaniards were coming the same way and fled in terror, with the Indian following behind. Three or four youths, who were servants of mine, and two from another company saw the Indian cross, followed him and reached the other side. I then went with the horsemen up into the mountains to find an

entrance into the town, and all the while the enemy attacked us with arrows and javelins, for between us and them there was only a narrow ravine. As they were so busy fighting with us they had not seen the five Spaniards who took them suddenly from behind and began to attack them with their swords. They were so surprised and unprepared that they were quite unable to turn and defend themselves, for they did not know that their people had abandoned the path by which the Indian and the Spaniards had come. They were so terrified they dared not fight, and the Spaniards killed many of them until, realizing the trick, they began to flee. Our foot soldiers were already in the town and had begun to set it on fire; the Indians all fled before them and retreated to the mountains, although the horsemen pursued and killed many.

When, at about midday, we discovered a way into the town, we lodged in some houses in a garden, although the place was almost entirely burnt. When it was already very late, the chief and other chieftains, seeing that they had been unable to defend themselves despite the strength of their town, and fearing that we would go and kill them in the mountains, decided to come and offer themselves as Your Majesty's vassals, and as such I received them, and they promised me that thereafter they would always be our friends. These Indians and the others who came to offer themselves as Your Majesty's vassals, after we had destroyed and burnt their houses and land, explained that they had delayed their coming in the belief that they might atone for their wrongs by allowing us to do them harm; thus they hoped that once we had finished we would not be so angry with them.

We slept that night in the town and in the morning continued our journey through pine forests without habitation or drinking water, and a pass which we crossed with much difficulty, without being able to drink, so that some of the Indians in our company died of thirst. Seven leagues from the town we camped for the night in some farms. When it was light we set out again and came within sight of a pleasant city called Suchimilco, which is built on

the fresh-water lake.³⁴ As the inhabitants had been warned of our coming, they had constructed many earthworks and ditches and had raised all the bridges leading into the city, which is three or four leagues from Temixtitán. Within the city there were very many brave-looking people all resolved to defend themselves or die.

As soon as we arrived, and all our men had been collected and drawn up in good array, I dismounted and, followed by certain of the infantry, advanced toward a dike which they had made, on the far side of which were an infinite number of warriors. When we began to attack the dike the crossbowmen and harquebusiers did them so much harm they abandoned it, whereupon the Spaniards threw themselves into the water and crossed to the other side. After fighting with them for half an hour we captured the greater part of the city and forced them back along the waterways in their canoes. They fought until dusk, however, when some of them sued for peace, but the rest did not cease fighting for all that, and they made so many overtures without fulfilling them that at last we realized that they were doing it for two reasons: first, so that they might salvage their property while we talked, and, second, to gain time for help to arrive from Mexico and Temixtitán. This day they killed two Spaniards who had separated themselves from the others in order to pillage and found themselves cut off from all hope of assistance.

In the evening the enemy debated as to how they might cut off our retreat and prevent us leaving their city alive. They collected together a large number of their men and came against us in the place where we had entered. As we saw them advancing so rapidly, we were alarmed at their cunning and speed; six horsemen and myself, who were more prepared than the others, broke through the middle of them. They were frightened by the horses and began to flee, so we rode out of the city, killing many of them, although we found ourselves hard pressed, for they were courageous men, many of whom dared to face the horses with their shields and bucklers. While we were engaged with them and in great confusion, the

horse I rode collapsed from exhaustion; and when some of the enemy saw me on foot they rushed upon me. I had begun to defend myself with my lance, when an Indian from Tascalteca saw the danger I was in and came to my aid; together with a servant of mine³⁵ who arrived soon after, we raised the horse. Meanwhile the Spaniards arrived, whereupon the enemy fled the field altogether, and as I and all the other horsemen were very weary we returned to the city. Although it was now almost night and time to rest, I ordered that all the bridges which had been removed should be filled up with stones and adobes which were at hand, so that the horses might enter and leave the city without hindrance; and I did not leave there until all those dangerous crossings had been well repaired. That night we were most vigilant and kept special watch.

On the following day all the natives of Mexico and Temixtitan, who already knew that we were in Suchimilco, resolved to come with great forces by land and water and surround us, for they believed that this time we could not escape their clutches. I then climbed one of the towers where they keep their idols, to see how they were coming and where they would attack us, so that I might make preparations accordingly. When I had completed all the preparations there arrived from across the water a fleet of canoes so large that I think there were more than two thousand of them; in these canoes were more than twelve thousand warriors, and over the land came such a multitude of people that all the fields were covered with them. Their captains went in front, carrying our captured swords and crying the names of their provinces, "Mexico! Mexico! Temixtitan! Temixtitan!" They hurled insults at us, saying that they would kill us with those swords which they had taken from us before in the city of Temixtitan.

When I had allotted to each captain his position, I took twenty horsemen and five hundred Indians from Tascalteca and went out against a horde of the enemy gathered on the mainland. We divided into three companies, and I ordered them, as soon as they had broken through the enemy, to rally at the foot of a hill

which was half a league away, where there was also a large number of the enemy. When we separated, each company pursued the enemy on its own side; and once we had routed them and killed many we regrouped at the foot of the hill. I then ordered certain foot soldiers, servants of mine, who had served me and were very able, to attempt to scale the hill in the steepest part. I, with the horsemen, would circle around behind, where the ground was more even and we would take them in the middle. Thus, when the Indians saw the Spaniards climbing the hill, they turned their backs, thinking that by so doing they were safe and encountered us, who were some fifteen horsemen. We fell on them and those of Tascalteca did likewise, so that, in a brief while, more than five hundred of the enemy were killed and the rest fled to the mountains. The other six horsemen determined to follow a very wide flat path and attack the enemy with their lances. Half a league from Suchimilco they met a company of Indians in very bright array who were coming to the help of their companions; these the horsemen routed, killing some with their lances. Now that all the horsemen were together—it was about ten o'clock in the morning—we returned to Suchimilco, and at the entrance to the town I found many Spaniards who desired our return and wished to know how it had gone with us. They told me they had been hard pressed, but had done all they could to drive out the enemy, many of whom had been killed. They gave me two of our own swords that they had recaptured, and told me how the crossbowmen had no bolts nor any supplies whatsoever. While we were thus occupied, before we had even dismounted, a large number of the enemy appeared on a broad causeway, screaming fiercely; we attacked them at once and drove them into the water on either side of the causeway. Thus we routed them, and once the men had collected we returned, much exhausted, to the city, where I ordered everything except the house in which we were quartered to be burnt. We remained three days in that city and not once did the fighting cease. In the end we left it burnt and ruined, and it was a notable sight, for there had been many houses

and towers for their idols all built of stone and mortar; but in order not to be prolix I shall forbear to list the many remarkable things in this city.³⁶

On the day I departed I went out into a square on dry land, where the inhabitants hold their markets, and I gave orders that ten horsemen should ride in front; another ten went in the middle with the foot soldiers, while I, with a further ten, brought up the rear. When the inhabitants of Suchimilco saw that we were leaving, they thought that it was through fear of them, and, shouting fiercely, they fell on us from behind. The ten horsemen and myself turned and drove them into the water; thus they troubled us no further and we were able to continue our journey. At ten o'clock in the morning we reached the city of Cuyoacan, which is two leagues distant from Suchimilco, and near to Temixtitan, Culucan, Uchilubuzco, Yztapalapa, Cuitaguaca and Mizqueque,³⁷ all of which are built on the water, the most distant lying about a league and a half away. We found it deserted and lodged in the chief's house, where we remained that day and the next.

As I intended to surround the city of Temixtitan as soon as the brigantines were complete, I wished first to know the plan of the city, its entrances and exits and where the Spaniards could make an attack or might receive one. On the following day, therefore, I took six horsemen and two hundred foot soldiers and went down to the lake, which is close by, along a causeway that leads into the city of Temixtitan; and there we saw a great many canoes on the water and an infinite number of warriors in them. Then we came to a barricade which they had built across the causeway, and the foot soldiers began to fight; and although it was very strong and well defended, and ten Spaniards were wounded, at last they captured it and killed many of the enemy, although the crossbowmen had no bolts, nor had the harquebusiers any powder. From there we could see how the causeway led over the water straight into Temixtitan, a full league and a half away, and both on that one and the other, which goes to Yztapalapa, there were countless numbers of people.

As soon as I had seen all I needed to see, and had decided that a garrison of horsemen and foot soldiers would have to be established in this city, I called together my men and we returned, burning the houses and towers where they keep their idols.

On the following day we left Cuyoacan for Tacuba, which is some two leagues distant, and we arrived at nine in the morning, attacking with our lances in one place or another as the enemy came from the lake to assail the Indians who carried our baggage; finding themselves worsted, however, they soon left us in peace. Because, as I have already said, my prime intent was to make a reconnaissance tour of all the lakes in order to inspect and acquaint myself better with the land, and also to give assistance to some of our allies, I did not wish to stop in Tacuba. When the inhabitants of Temixtitan, which is so close to there that it almost reaches dry land at Tacuba, saw us leaving they recovered much of their courage and with intrepidity fell upon our baggage train; but as the horsemen were well placed, and the ground was level, we were able to take advantage of the enemy without placing ourselves in danger. As we galloped hither and thither, some youths, servants of mine, had been accustomed to follow us, but on that occasion two failed to do so, and found themselves trapped and were captured, and we feared that the enemy would put them to death in the most cruel fashion, as was their custom.³⁸ God alone knows how grieved I was, for not only were they Christians but also most courageous men who had served Your Majesty well in this campaign.

After leaving this city we proceeded on our journey through other towns close by and drew near to the enemy. Here I learnt how the Indians had taken those youths, and to avenge their death, and also because the enemy was following us with the greatest arrogance possible, I concealed myself with twenty horsemen behind some houses. As the Indians saw the remaining ten horsemen with all the men and baggage moving on ahead, they followed them fearlessly along a very broad and level road. When we saw that some of them had passed, I cried out the name of the apostle St.

James (Santiago) and we fell upon them most fiercely. Before they could escape into the canals nearby we had killed more than a hundred chieftains, all brilliantly arrayed, and they followed us no farther. This day we spent the night two leagues farther on in a city called Coatinchán, which we found deserted; we were tired and wet, for it had rained heavily that afternoon. On the following day we set out again, charging from time to time at some Indians who came and yelled at us; and we slept in a town called Gilutepeque, which we likewise found deserted. On the following morning at twelve o'clock we reached the city of Aculman, which lies within the domain of Tesuico, where we slept that night. We were very well received by the Spaniards, who rejoiced exceedingly at our arrival as if we had brought them their salvation, because after my departure they had had no word of me until the day I returned. There had been several disturbances in the city, whose inhabitants had told them daily that the people of Mexico and Temixtitan would fall on them while I was away. Thus, by the Grace of God, this undertaking was completed, and it was a very great achievement by which Your Majesty was well served for many reasons, which I shall explain later.

Most Powerful and Invincible Lord, when I was in the city of Temixtitan on the previous occasion I ordered, as I informed Your Majesty in a previous account, that certain farms should be built for Your Majesty, in two or three of the most suitable provinces, and that each farm should produce grain and other things according to the disposition of the province. To accomplish this I sent two Spaniards to one of these provinces, which is called Chinantla,³⁹ and is not subject to Culua. In the others, which were subject, they killed the Spaniards on the farms at the same time as they were making war against me in Temixtitan, and seized all that was there which, after the manner of this land, was a substantial amount. Of the Spaniards who were in Chinantla, however, I knew nothing for almost a year, because as all those provinces were in

revolt, we could not hear from them, nor they from us. The natives of Chinantla, as they were Your Majesty's vassals and enemies of the Culua, had told those Christians that on no account should they leave that land, because the Culua had been fighting us fiercely, and they believed that few or none of us remained alive. So these two Spaniards stayed in that land, and one of them, who was a youth and of warlike disposition, was made their captain; and at that time he went out with them to fight their enemies and often returned victorious. Later, when it pleased God that we should reorganize, and obtain some victories over those who had routed and driven us from Temixtitan, the people of Chinantla told those Christians that they had heard there were Spaniards in the province of Tepeaca, and that if they wished to learn what was really happening, they would risk two Indians, who, although they must travel a long way through the lands of their enemies, would journey by night and off the main roads until they reached Tepeaca. With those two Indians, the more reliable of the two Spaniards⁴⁰ sent a letter, the substance of which was the following:

Noble Sirs, I have written two or three letters to Your Lordships but do not know if they ever reached you; and as I have received no reply from the others I doubt that I will receive one now. I wish to make it known to you that all the natives of the land of Culua have rebelled and are in arms and many times have attacked us; but always, praise be to God, we have been victorious. Likewise we fight daily with those of Tuxtepeque who are allies of the Culua. Seven towns in Tenez still serve His Highness and remain his vassals, and Nicolás and I have remained in Chinantla, which is the capital. I would greatly like to know where the captain is, so that I may write and inform him of all that has happened here. If by chance you should reply and tell me where he is, send me twenty or thirty Spaniards and I will come with two chieftains from here who desire to see and speak with the captain. It would be well for them to come now for it is time

to harvest the cacao and the Culuans hinder us with the fighting. May Our Lord watch over and preserve Your Lordships. From Chinantla, I do not know what day of the month of April, 1521. At Your Lordships' service: Hernando de Barrientos.

When the two Indians arrived in the aforementioned province of Tepeaca with this letter, the captain whom I had left there with several Spaniards sent it on to me at Tesuico. When it arrived we were all greatly pleased, for although we had always trusted in the friendship of the people of Chinantla, we thought that if they had allied themselves with the Culuans, they might have killed those two Spaniards. I then wrote to them telling all that had happened and urging them to have hope for, although they were surrounded by the enemy on all sides, if it pleased God, they would soon be freed and might come and go in safety.

Once I had made a tour of the lakes and learnt thereby many things which would be useful in laying siege to Temixtitan by land and water, I returned to Tesuico, equipped myself as best I could with men and arms, and hastened to finish the brigantines and a canal by which they were to be transported to the lake. This had been begun as soon as the planks and crossbeams had arrived. It reached from our quarters right down to the lake, and was fully half a league in length from the place where the brigantines were constructed to the lake shore. More than eight thousand natives from Aculuacán and Tesuico provinces worked for fifty days on this task because the canal was more than twelve feet deep and as many wide. It was well lined with stakes, so that it would fill with water from the lake, and thus the brigantines might be transported without danger or effort; it was certainly a magnificent achievement and a notable sight.

When, on the twenty-eighth of April of the same year, the brigantines were ready and launched into the canal,⁴¹ I called all my men out on parade and reckoned eighty-six horsemen, 118 crossbowmen and harquebusiers, some seven hundred foot soldiers with swords and bucklers, three large iron guns, fifteen small bronze

field guns and ten hundredweight of powder. When I had finished the inspection I charged and exhorted all the Spaniards to abide, as far as they were able, by the ordinances which I had drawn up concerning war, and to take fresh courage and fight hard, for they had seen how Our Lord was guiding us to victory over our enemies. They knew well how we had entered Tesuico with no more than forty horsemen, and that God had helped us more than we had hoped, and ships had come with horses, men and arms, as they had seen. Above all, they were fighting to increase and spread our Faith and to submit to Your Majesty's service all those lands and provinces which had rebelled; this should fill them with courage and the desire to conquer or die. They all responded readily, showing that they were most willing in all this; and so that day we spent rejoicing, hoping soon to see ourselves engaged in the siege whereby this war, which would decide whether or not these parts would be subdued, would be brought to an end.

On the following day I sent messengers to the provinces of Tascalteca, Guaxocingo and Churultecal to inform them that the brigantines were ready and that I and all my people were prepared to surround the great city of Temixtitan. I requested them, therefore, that, as they had already been advised by me and had alerted their own people, they should come, as many and as well armed as possible, to Tesuico, where I would wait ten days for them; and that on no account should they exceed this, for it would most seriously disconcert my plans. When the messengers arrived the natives of these provinces were already prepared and eager to face the Culuans; those from Guaxocingo and Churultecal came to Calco, for so I had ordered them to do, as the siege was to begin close by there. The captains from Tascalteca with all their men, well armed and in splendid array, arrived in Tesuico four or five days before Whitsunday, which was the time I had assigned to them. As I knew that they were arriving on that day, I went joyfully out to meet them; and they arrived so confident and well disciplined that none could be better. According to the count which the captains gave us,

there were more than fifty thousand warriors, who were all very well received and well quartered by us.

On the day after Whitsun, I ordered all the foot soldiers and the horsemen to gather in the square of Tesuico, and there I allotted them to three captains who were to lead them to three cities close to Temixtitan. I made Pedro de Alvarado captain of one company, and gave him thirty horsemen and eighteen crossbowmen and harquebusiers, and 150 foot soldiers with swords and bucklers, and more than 25,000 warriors from Tascalteca; these were to encamp in the city of Tacuba.

I made Cristóbal de Olid captain of another company and gave him thirty-three horsemen, eighteen crossbowmen and harquebusiers, 160 foot soldiers with swords and bucklers and more than twenty thousand warriors of our allies; these were to quarter themselves in the city of Cuyoacán.

I made Gonzalo de Sandoval, the alguacil mayor, captain of the third company, and I gave him twenty-four horsemen, four harquebusiers and thirteen crossbowmen, and 150 foot soldiers with swords and bucklers, fifty of whom were chosen from those of my own company, together with all the people from Guaxo-cingo, Churutecal and Calco, who numbered more than thirty thousand men. They were to go by way of the city of Yztapalapa and destroy it, and thence continue along a causeway over the lake, supported by the brigantines, until they met with my garrison at Cuyoacan, so that after I had entered the lake with the brigantines the alguacil mayor might set up camp where he saw fit.

For the thirteen brigantines with which I was to cross the lake, I left three hundred men, most of whom were sailors and very able, so that there were twenty-five Spaniards in each brigantine, and each one had a captain, a lookout and six crossbowmen and harquebusiers.

When I had given these orders the two captains who were to go to Tacuba and Cuyoacan, after they had received their instructions, left Tesuico on the tenth of May and spent the night

two leagues and a half from there in a good town called Aculmán.⁴² That day I learnt that there had been a dispute between the captains over their quarters, so, that night, in order to settle this dispute and make peace, I sent someone to reprove and pacify them.⁴³ On the following morning they left there and spent the night in a city called Gilutepeque, which they found deserted, for they were now on enemy soil. On the following day they continued their journey as instructed and slept in a city called Guatitlan, of which I have already written to Your Majesty, which they likewise found deserted. That day they also passed through two other cities and towns, and found no people in them. At the hour of vespers they entered Tacuba, which was also deserted, and quartered themselves in the houses of the chieftain of the city, which are very large and beautiful. And although it was already late, the Indians of Tascalteca went to examine the entrance of two causeways leading into the city of Temixtitan; they fought valiantly for two or three hours with its inhabitants, and when the night separated them they returned to Tacuba in safety.

On the following morning the two captains arranged, as I had ordered them, to cut off the fresh water which flowed along the aqueducts to the city of Temixtitan. One of them, with twenty horsemen and some crossbowmen and harquebusiers, went to the source, which was a quarter of a league away, and destroyed the pipes, which were made of wood and stone and mortar. He fought and defeated the enemy, who tried to prevent him by land and from the water, thus succeeding in his purpose, which was to deprive the city of fresh water, which was a cunning stratagem.

That same day the captains had some bad places on the causeways, bridges and channels in the vicinity leveled, so that the horses might pass freely from one part to another.

This occupied them for three or four days, and during that time they had many encounters with the people of the city, in which some Spaniards were wounded and many of the enemy killed and many bridges and barricades taken. Many arguments and

insults were exchanged between the Tascaltecan and the Culuan which were most remarkable and worthy of note. Then the captain Cristóbal de Olid left together with those who were to proceed to Cuyoacan, which is two leagues from Tacuba. Meanwhile, Pedro de Alvarado remained with the garrison at Tacuba, where he had daily battles and skirmishes with the Indians. Cristóbal de Olid arrived at ten in the morning in Cuyoacan and lodged in the house of the lord of that city, which they found abandoned.

On the following morning they went to examine the causeway leading to Temixtitan with about twenty horsemen and some crossbowmen, and with six or seven thousand Indians from Tascalteca. They found that the enemy was prepared and had broken the causeway and put up many barricades. They fought with them, the crossbowmen killing and wounding some; and this continued for six or seven days, on every one of which there were many skirmishes and encounters. One night, at about midnight, certain enemy scouts from the city came and shouted close to the camp; the Spanish sentries sounded the alarm, whereupon our men rode out but found none of them, for the shouting which had caused the scare had been far from the camp. As our force was divided into so many parts, the people in those two garrisons dearly desired my arrival with the brigantines as if it were to be their salvation; with this hope they held out those few days until I arrived, as later I will relate. The people from those garrisons met on every one of those six days, for they were very close to each other; the horsemen overran the countryside, spearing many of the enemy, and in the mountains collected much maize which is the staple food of these parts, and much superior to that of the Islands.

In previous chapters I have told how I remained in Tesuico with three hundred men and the thirteen brigantines, for, as soon as I knew that the garrisons had set up their camps, I would embark and inspect the city and do some harm to the canoes. Although I greatly wished to go overland to take command of the camps, as the captains were men who could well be trusted with what they had in

hand, I resolved to embark in the brigantines, which were of the greatest importance and required much care and discipline; furthermore, I expected to encounter the greatest dangers and risks on the water. Nevertheless, I was requested by certain officers of my company to go with the soldiers, for they believed that they would bear the greatest risks. On the day following the feast of Corpus Christi,⁴⁴ on Friday at dawn, I sent Gonzalo de Sandoval, alguacil mayor, with all his men, out of Tesuico and ordered him to go straight to the city of Yztapalapa, which is rather less than six leagues from there. They arrived a little after midday and began to burn the city and to fight with the inhabitants. But when they saw the superior forces of the alguacil mayor, for more than thirty-five or forty thousand of our allies had gone with him, they took to the water in their canoes. The alguacil mayor, with all his forces, lodged in that city, remaining there that day to await my orders and discover what had happened to me.

When I had dispatched the alguacil mayor I immediately boarded one of the brigantines and we set out using both sail and oar. At the time the alguacil mayor was burning the city of Yztapalapa we came within sight of a large and well-fortified hill⁴⁵ near the city, surrounded by water; on it were many people who had come from Temixtitan and all the villages around the lake; they knew that our first encounter would be with the people of Yztapalapa, and so they had gathered there to defend themselves and attack us if possible. When they saw the fleet approaching they began to shout and make smoke signals, so that the other cities by the lakes should know and be prepared. Although my intention had been to attack that part of the city which is in the water, we turned back to that hill or knoll, and I landed with 150 men, although it was very steep and high. With great difficulty we began to climb, and at last captured the fortifications which they had built for their defense on the top. We broke through them in such a manner that none of them escaped, save the women and children; in the struggle twenty-five Spaniards were wounded, but it was a most beautiful victory.

As the inhabitants of Yztapalapa had made smoke signals from some temple towers that stood on a very high hill close to the city, the people of Temixtitan and the other cities on the water knew that I was already crossing the lake in the brigantines and quickly gathered a large fleet of canoes to attack us and discover what sort of thing these brigantines were; as far as we could judge there were more than five hundred canoes. When I saw that they were sailing straight for us, I and all the men who were on the hill embarked with great haste, but I ordered the captains of the brigantines not to move, so that the canoes, thinking that we did not go out to them through fear, might themselves attack us; and indeed they began to direct their fleet toward us with considerable force. But when they had come within some two crossbowshots of us they stopped and remained motionless. I was anxious that this first encounter with them should result in a great victory, so that they would be inspired with a terror of the brigantines, for the key to the war lay with them, as both the Indians and ourselves were most exposed on water. And it pleased God that as we were watching one another a land breeze, very favorable to attacking them, sprang up, and I ordered the captain to break through the fleet of canoes and to drive them back into the city of Temixtitan. As the wind was good, we bore down through the middle of them, and although they fled as fast as they were able, we sank a huge number of canoes and killed or drowned many of the enemy, which was the most remarkable sight in the world. We then pursued them for three leagues or more until we had confined them among the houses of the city; and so it pleased Our Lord to grant us a greater and better victory than we could have asked or desired.

The garrison of Cuyoacan, which was better able than the one at Tacuba to witness the arrival of the brigantines, assured me afterwards that there was to them nothing in the world so desirable nor anything which gave them so much joy as to see all thirteen sails over the water with a fair wind, and us scattering the enemy canoes. For, as I have said, they and those at Tacuba eagerly

awaited my arrival, and with good reason, for both garrisons were in the midst of a multitude of the enemy. But Our Lord miraculously gave them courage and quelled the spirits of the enemy so that they did not attack the camp; for, had they done so, the Spaniards would most certainly have suffered greatly, although they were always well prepared and determined to conquer or die, realizing that they were cut off from all help save that which they hoped to receive from God.

When the garrison at Cuyoacan saw us pursue the canoes they set out with most of the horsemen and foot soldiers, proceeding toward Temixtitan, and fought very bravely with the Indians on the causeway. They reached and took the barriers that the enemy had built, and on foot and on horseback, with the support of the brigantines, which sailed close to the causeway, crossed many channels where the bridges had been removed by the defenders. The Spaniards and our Tascaltecan allies pursued the enemy, killing some, while others threw themselves into the water on the far side from where the brigantines were sailing. In this fashion they advanced for more than a league along the causeway until they arrived where I had stopped with the brigantines, as I shall hereafter relate.

We chased the canoes with the brigantines for fully three leagues, and those that escaped us sought refuge among the houses in the city. As it was late and already after vespers, I collected the brigantines together and sailed with them up to the causeway, and there I resolved to land with thirty men and seize two small temple towers which were surrounded by a low stone enclosure.⁴⁶ When we landed, they fought most fiercely to defend those towers, but at last with great danger and much effort we captured them. I then ordered three heavy iron guns to be landed; and as the rest of the causeway from there to the city, which was half a league, was full of the enemy, and the water on either side of the causeway covered with canoes full of warriors, I had one of the guns loaded and discharged along the causeway, which did much damage to the

enemy. Owing to the carelessness of our gunner, however, all the powder we had in that place was ignited. It was no great quantity, however, and that night I sent a brigantine some two leagues to Yztapalapa, where the alguacil mayor was, to bring all the powder that was there.

At first my intention, once I had embarked with the brigantines, had been to go to Cuyoacan and ensure that the garrison there was well protected and might do the enemy every possible harm, but, after I had landed that day on the causeway and captured those two towers, I decided to set up camp there and keep the brigantines close by the towers. I ordered half of the people at Cuyoacan together with fifty of the alguacil mayor's foot soldiers to come there the following day. Having made these provisions, we kept careful watch that night, for we were in great danger and all the people from the city had gathered there on the causeway and on the water. At midnight a great multitude of people arrived in canoes and poured along the causeway to attack our camp; this caused us great fear and consternation, especially as it was night, and never have they been known or seen to fight at such an hour unless they were certain of an easy victory. But as we were all well prepared, we began to fight with them, and the brigantines, each of which carried a small fieldpiece, began to fire at them and the crossbowmen and harquebusiers likewise. After this they dared advance no further, nor did they even come close enough to do us any harm;⁴⁷ and so they left us in peace for what remained of the night and attacked us no more.

On the morning of the following day there arrived at my camp fifteen crossbowmen and harquebusiers and fifty soldiers with swords and bucklers and seven or eight horsemen from the garrison at Cuyoacan; and, even as they were arriving, the people from the city fought with us on the causeway and from their canoes. So great was the multitude that neither by land nor water could we see anything but people, shouting and screaming so it seemed the world was coming to an end. We began to fight with

them up the causeway and gained a channel whose bridge they had removed and an earthwork which had been built behind it. We did them so much harm with the guns and from horseback that we drove them back almost as far as the first houses of the town. As on the far side of the causeway, where the brigantines could not go, there were many canoes from which they did us much harm with the arrows and javelins they hurled at us, I ordered a breach to be opened in the causeway near to our camp and sent four brigantines through. These drove the canoes in among the houses of the city so that in no place dared they come out into the open. On the other side of the causeway the remaining eight brigantines fought with the canoes and drove them in amongst the houses, even pursuing them there, which they had not dared do before, for there were so many stakes and shallows to hinder them. But as now they found canals by which they might enter in safety, they fought with those in the canoes, taking some of them and burning many houses in the suburbs of the city. We spent the whole day fighting the enemy in this manner.

On the following day the alguacil mayor, together with all the people he had in Yztapalapa, Spaniards as well as allies, departed for Cuyoacán, which is joined to the mainland by a causeway, a league and half long. After the alguacil mayor had covered about a quarter of a league he reached a small town, which is also built on the water, but it is possible to ride through it in many places; the inhabitants began to attack him, but he routed them, killing many, and destroyed and burnt their town. When I learnt that the Indians had destroyed much of the causeway so that the men could not cross without difficulty, I sent two brigantines to help them cross, which they used as bridges for the foot soldiers. When they had crossed they set up camp at Cuyoacan, and the alguacil mayor with ten horsemen took the road to the causeway where we had pitched our camp, and when he arrived he found us fighting. He and his men then began to fight alongside us with the Indians on the causeway. While the aforementioned alguacil mayor was fighting he was

pierced through the foot with a javelin; but although he and some others were wounded that day, we did so much harm to the enemy with the heavy ordnance, the crossbows and harquebuses, that neither those in the canoes nor those on the causeway dared approach us very close, and showed more fear and less arrogance than before. In this manner six days were spent, and on each day we fought them; the brigantines burnt all the houses they could around the city, having discovered a canal whereby they might penetrate the outskirts and suburbs. This was most advantageous and kept back the canoes, which now dared not come within a quarter of a league of our camp.

The following day Pedro de Alvarado, who was captain of the garrison at Tacuba, informed me how on the other side of the city the people of Temixtitan came and went as they chose along a causeway, and another smaller one which joined it, to some towns on the mainland. He believed that once they were hard pressed they would all abandon the city by these causeways. Although I desired them to leave more than they did themselves, for we could take greater advantage of them on the mainland than in that huge fortress on the water, I thought it wise to surround them on all sides so that they might avail themselves of nothing on the mainland. I ordered the alguacil mayor, wounded though he was, to move his camp to a small town at the end of one of these causeways. He left with twenty-three horsemen, a hundred foot soldiers and eighteen crossbowmen and harquebusiers, leaving me the other fifty foot soldiers which I kept in my company. On the following day, he arrived and set up camp as I had ordered, and thenceforth the city of Temixtitan was surrounded at all the points where it might be possible to escape along the causeways.

Most Powerful Lord, I had in the camp on the causeway two hundred Spanish foot soldiers among whom were twenty-five crossbowmen and harquebusiers, without counting the men on the brigantines who numbered more than 250. As we had the enemy somewhat confined, and many warrior allies, I resolved to penetrate

along the causeway as far as possible into the city, with the brigantines covering us on either side. I sent word for some horsemen and foot soldiers from Cuyoacan to come to the camp and join us in the assault, and that ten horsemen should remain at the entrance to the causeway guarding our rear. Some others were to remain behind in Cuyoacan, for the natives of the cities of Suchimilco, Culhuacan, Yztapalapa, Chilobusco, Mexicalcingo, Cuitaguaca and Mizqueque, all of which are on the lake, had rebelled in support of Temixtitan; should they attempt to take us from behind, we were protected by those ten or twelve horsemen I ordered to guard the causeway, and the same number who remained in Cuyoacan with more than ten thousand of our Indian allies. Likewise I ordered Pedro de Alvarado and the alguacil mayor to attack from their positions at the same time, because I wished to gain as much as possible on my side.

I left the camp in the morning, and moved up the causeway on foot. There we found the enemy in defense of a breach in the causeway as wide and as deep as a lance, and they had built a barricade. We fought with them and they with us, both very courageously, but at last they were defeated and we proceeded up the causeway until we reached the entrance to the city, where there was a temple tower, at the foot of which had been a very large bridge which they had removed, over a broad channel of water, with another strong earthwork. When we arrived they began to fight with us, but as the brigantines attacked from both sides we were able to capture it without danger, which would have been impossible without them. As the enemy began to abandon the barricade, the men from the brigantines came ashore and we crossed the water together with the Indians of Tascalteca, Guaxocingo, Calco and Tesuico, who numbered more than eighty thousand men. While we filled in that broken bridge with stone and adobes, the Spaniards took another barricade on the principal and widest street in the city, and as there was no water nearby it was easier to capture. They then pursued the enemy up the street until they reached

a bridge which had been destroyed save for a broad beam over which the Indians crossed, and, once they were on the other side and protected by the water, they drew it after them. On the far side of the bridge they had built another great earthwork with clay and adobes. When we arrived we found that we could not cross without throwing ourselves into the water, which was very dangerous as the enemy fought most bravely. On both sides of the street there was an infinite number of them, who attacked us very fiercely from the roof tops, but when the force of crossbowmen and harquebusiers arrived and we fired two guns up the street we were able to do them great harm. When we saw this certain of the Spaniards threw themselves into the water and struggled toward the other side, which took more than two hours to capture. But when the enemy saw them cross they abandoned the earthwork and the roof tops and fled up the street, whereupon all our people crossed over. I then ordered the earthworks to be destroyed and the channel filled up. Meanwhile the Spaniards and our Indian allies continued for about two crossbowshots, until they reached another bridge which was next to the square containing the principal dwellings of the city. But this bridge they had not removed nor had they built any earthwork in front of it, for they had not believed that we could have gained any part of what we had won that day, nor had we imagined that it would be even half as much.

At the entrance to the square I had a gun placed, and with it we did much harm to the enemy, who were so many that there was no room for them all in the square. When the Spaniards saw that there was no water there, the thing by which they were most endangered, they resolved to enter the square. When the inhabitants of the city saw them put this into effect and beheld the great multitude of our allies—although without us, they would have had no fear of them—they fled, and our allies pursued them until they were confined in the enclosure where they keep their idols, which is surrounded by a stone wall, and, as I explained in my earlier account, is large enough to hold a town of four hundred inhabitants.

They soon abandoned it, and the Spaniards and our allies captured the place and remained inside it and inside the towers for a considerable while.⁴⁸ But when the enemy saw that there were no horsemen they returned and drove the Spaniards out of the towers and the courtyard and the enclosure, where they found themselves hard pressed and in great danger; and as they were retreating rather too hastily, they turned and faced them beneath the arches of the forecourt. But the enemy attacked them so fiercely that they were forced to withdraw to the square, whence they were driven down the main street, abandoning the gun which was there.⁴⁹ The Spaniards, as they were unable to resist the enemy, continued to retreat in great peril of their lives, and indeed they would have been much harmed had it not pleased God that at that moment three horsemen arrived. When the enemy saw them enter the square they thought that there were more and began to flee. The horsemen then killed some of them and regained the courtyard and enclosure that I have mentioned. Ten or twelve of the principal lords of the city barricaded themselves into the largest and highest of the towers, which has a hundred or more steps to the top; but four or five Spaniards fought their way up and killed them all, although they fought most bravely in their defense.⁵⁰ Afterwards, another five or six horsemen arrived, and they and the others prepared an ambush in which they killed more than thirty of the enemy.

As it was already late I ordered my people to collect and withdraw, and in withdrawing we were assailed by such a multitude of the enemy that were it not for the horsemen the Spaniards would have been much injured. But as I had had all those dangerous crossings in the street and on the causeway, where we expected most danger, filled in and leveled by the time we withdrew, the horsemen could come and go with ease. When the enemy attacked us in our rear they charged them, killing some with the lances; as the street was very long they were able to do this four or five times. Although the enemy had witnessed the hurt they received, they came at us like mad dogs, and in no way could we halt them or

prevent them from following us. The whole day would have been so spent had they not already recaptured many of the roof tops overlooking the street, and so placed the horsemen in great danger. For this reason we retreated up the causeway to our camp, and no Spaniard was endangered, although some were wounded. We set fire to most of the better houses in that street, so that when we next entered they might not attack us from the roof tops. This same day the alguacil mayor and Pedro de Alvarado fought very fiercely from their own positions; and at the time of the fighting we were about a league from the one, and a league and a half from the other, but the built-up area of this city extends so far that it made these distances seem less. Our allies who were with them in infinite numbers fought very well and withdrew that day without loss.⁵¹

In the meantime, Don Fernando,⁵² lord of the city of Te-suico and the province of Aculuacan, whom I have already mentioned to Your Majesty, had attempted to win over to our friendship all the inhabitants of his city and province, especially the chieftains, who were not then so firm in their friendship as they afterwards became; and every day there came to Don Fernando many chiefs and brothers of his, all resolved to join us and fight against Mexico and Temixtitan. As Don Fernando was only a boy and bore a great love for the Spaniards, for he recognized that he had been granted his great dominion by favor of Your Majesty, because there were others who took precedence over him, he did all he could to persuade his vassals to come and fight against Temixtitan and expose themselves to the same danger and hardships as ourselves. He spoke with his brothers, who were six or seven in number and all well-disposed youths, and entreated them to go to my assistance with all the people in their domains. He sent as captain one of them called Istlisuchil, a very valiant youth of twenty-three or twenty-four years, loved and respected by all. He arrived at the camp on the causeway with thirty thousand warriors, all well armed after their fashion, while another twenty thousand went to the other camps. I received them joyfully, thanking them for their

good intention and for having come so readily. Your Caesarean Majesty may well imagine how valuable this help and friendship of Don Fernando was to me, and what the people of Temixtitan must have felt on seeing advance against them those whom they held as vassals and friends, relatives and brothers, even fathers and sons.

Two days after this was the battle in the city, as I have related, and when these people had come to our assistance, the natives of Suchimilco, which is on the water, and certain of the Utumies⁵³ who are a mountain people more numerous than those of Suchimilco, and were once slaves of the lord of Temixtitan, came to offer themselves as Your Majesty's vassals, begging me to forgive them for having delayed so long. I received them very well and was much pleased by their coming, for had the garrison at Cuyoacan received any harm it would have been from them.

As we had burnt many houses in the outskirts of the city from the brigantines operating from the camp on the causeway, and now no canoe dared venture near us there, it seemed to me that seven brigantines were sufficient to guard our camp, and so I decided to send three brigantines each to the alguacil mayor and Pedro de Alvarado. I instructed their captains to cruise by night and day from one camp to the other, for thereabouts the natives obtained much support from the land, and carried water, fruit and other supplies in their canoes; I told them, moreover, to cover the rear of the people from the camps every time they attacked the city. So these six brigantines departed for the other two camps; this was a necessary and advantageous move, for each day and night they made remarkable raids, taking many of the enemy and their canoes.

When this had been seen to, and all the peoples I have mentioned had come willingly to our assistance, I spoke to them all, telling them that two days later I intended to enter the city, and therefore they should all be prepared for war by that time, for by this I would know whether they were truly our friends; and they promised to do as I said. On the following day I prepared and

equipped my men, and wrote informing the camps and the brigantines of all I had arranged and of what they had to do.

On the following morning, after I had heard Mass and instructed the captains in what they were to do, I left the camp with fifteen or twenty horsemen and three hundred Spaniards and all our Indian allies of whom there was an infinite number. When we had gone three crossbowshots along the causeway from the camp we found the enemy awaiting us with loud cries. As we had not attacked them for three days they had undone all we had achieved by filling up the breaches in the causeway, and had made them very much stronger and more dangerous to capture than before. But the brigantines arrived on both sides of the causeway, and as they could come in close to the enemy with their guns, crossbows andarquebuses they did them much harm. When our men saw this they landed and captured the first earthwork and the bridge; and we crossed over to the other side and began to pursue the enemy, who barricaded themselves in behind other breaches and earthworks which they had made. These we also captured, although with greater difficulty and danger than before, and we drove them from the street and the square containing the principal houses of the city. I then ordered the Spaniards to advance no farther, while I went with our allies filling in with stones and adobes the breaches in the causeway, which were so many that, although more than ten thousand Indians were engaged in this task, by the time we had finished it was already the hour of vespers. During all this time the Spaniards and our allies were fighting and skirmishing with the people of the city and setting ambushes for them in which many of them were killed.

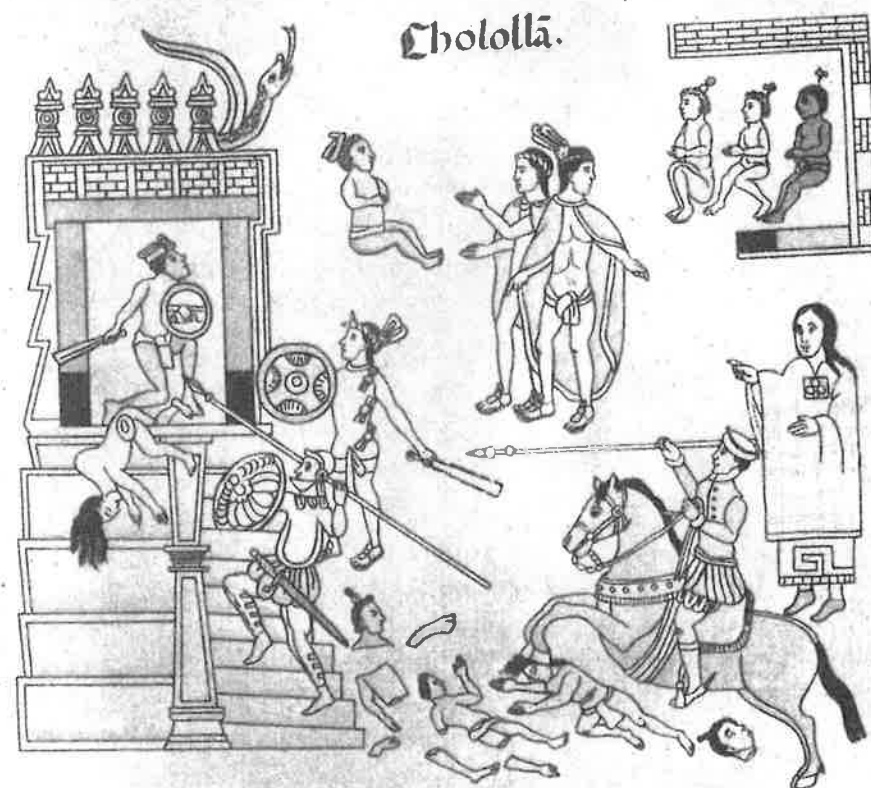
I rode with the horsemen for a while through the city, and in the streets where there was no water we attacked with our lances all those whom we met, and drove them back so that they dared not venture onto dry land. When I saw how determined they were to die in their defense I deduced two things: that we would regain little, or none, of the riches which they had taken from us, and

that they gave us cause, and indeed obliged us, to destroy them utterly. On this last I dwelt with more sorrow, for it weighed heavily on my soul, and thus I sought to find a way whereby I might frighten them and cause them to recognize their error and the harm they would receive from us; so for this reason I burnt and tore down the towers of their idols and their houses. In order that they should feel it the more, I commanded my men to set on fire those big houses in the square where the Spaniards and I had previously been quartered before we were expelled from the city. These were so large that a prince with more than six hundred people in his household and his retinue might be housed in them. There were also some others next to them which, though somewhat smaller, were very much prettier and more delicate; Mutezuma had kept in them every species of bird found in these parts. Although it distressed me, I determined to burn them, for it distressed the enemy very much more; and they showed great grief, as did their allies from the cities on the lakes, for they never believed that our force was sufficient to penetrate so far into the city, and this greatly dismayed them.

Once we had burnt these houses, I called together the men, as it was late, and returned to the camp; and when the people of the city saw that we were withdrawing, an infinite number fell upon us and attacked our rear guard with enormous force. But as the horsemen could gallop the whole length of the street we turned to attack them, killing many at every charge; but for all that they did not cease to come, shouting loudly at our backs. That day they showed great dismay, especially when they saw us enter their city, burning and destroying it, and with us the people of Tesuico, Calco and Suchimilco,⁵⁴ and the Utumies, each calling out the name of his province, and in another part the Tascaltecan, who all showed them their countrymen cut to pieces, saying that they would dine off them that night and breakfast off them the following morning, which in fact they did. Thus we returned to our camp to sleep, for we had labored hard that day; moreover the seven brigantines I had

with me had sailed up the canals in the city and burnt a large part of it. The captains of the other camps and the six brigantines all fought very well, and I could speak at length of their exploits, but to avoid prolixity I will state only that they returned to their camps victorious and without having received any harm.

Early on the following morning,⁵⁵ after having heard Mass, I returned to the city with my people in the same order so that the enemy should have no time to open the breaches and put up the barricades. Early as we were, however, of the three canals that cross the street which runs from our camp to the great houses in the square, two were as they had been on the previous days, and were so hard to capture that we fought from eight in the morning until one o'clock in the afternoon, during which time nearly all the bolts, ammunition and shot which the crossbowmen and harquebusiers had were expended. Your Majesty may well believe that the dangers we encountered each time we captured these bridges were beyond compare, for to take them the Spaniards were required to swim across to the other side, and many were unable or unwilling to do this, for the enemy thrust us back with the blades and butts of their spears to prevent us from reaching the other side. But as they now had no roof tops from which to do us harm and we, being but a stone's throw away, showered them with bolts, the Spaniards became each day less afraid and more determined to cross; they also saw how determined I was and that, sink or swim, it could not be avoided. Your Majesty may think that once we had gained those bridges at such risk we were negligent in not holding them, so that we were obliged to return each day to the same danger and toil, which were indeed great; and thus it would appear to all who were not present. But I assure Your Majesty that in no manner could it have been done, for to achieve it two things would have been necessary—either for us to move our camp to the square and enclosure of the temple towers, or to mount a guard on the bridges by night, both of which were most dangerous, and indeed impossible, for once we had set up our camp in the city we would have had to fight

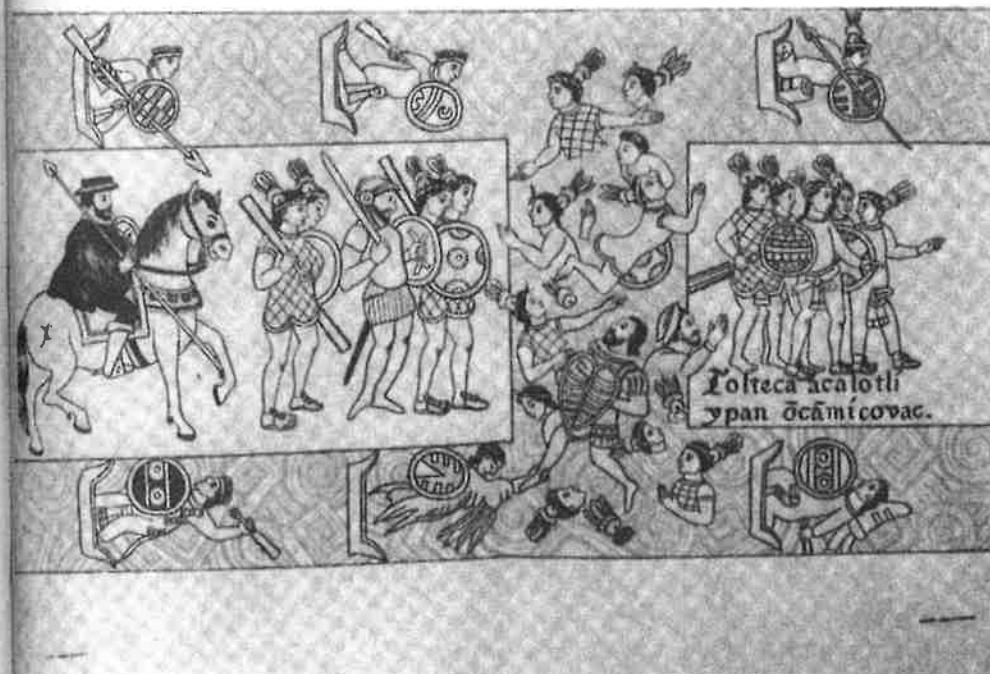


154. PLATE 9. The Massacre at Cholula. In the middle of the drawing a priest tells two Tlaxcalteca of a plot and they in turn warn Marina. The mounted horseman to the left of Marina looks like Sandoval but may have been intended to be Cortés though he is usually depicted with a beard. The figures in the top right-hand corner are the Tlatoque of Cholula.

15. Plates 9, 14, 18, 28, and 48 of the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* from the edition published by Alfredo Chavero in *Antigüedades Mexicanas*, Mexico, 1892, 2 vols. (For a description of the *Lienzo* and its history see Charles Gibson, *Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century*, New Haven, 1952, pp. 247–253). Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.



15b. PLATE 14. The attack upon Alvarado's forces in the palace of Axayacatl. The legend reads: *icqñyaocaltzacca*, "They have shut them into the palace with war."



15c. PLATE 18. The flight from Tenochtitlan on the *noche triste*. The horseman is presumably Cortés. The legend reads: *Toltecaacalotli ypanoncan micovac*, "In the breach called *Toltecaacalotli* there they died."



15d. PLATE 28. The arrival of the Spaniards in Hueyotlipan. Cortés is received by Maxixcatzin (?) who is carrying a bunch of flowers and is accompanied by a number of Tlaxcalteca nobles. The legend reads: *Quenamicque intlatoque quemacaque yxquechqualoni*, "Here they went out to meet the Tlatoque (the Spaniards) and gave them all manner of foods."



15e. PLATE 48. The fall of Tenochtitlan and the surrender of Cuauhtemoc. Cortés is shown with some outlandish feathers in his cap seated on the roof of the house of Aztacoatzin whose glyph, a white urn and water, appears beneath it. According to Chavero the figures in the bottom right-hand corner are the defeated Mexica warriors; to me they look more like the victorious Tlaxcalteca. Marina is standing behind Cortés and above the heads of Cuauhtemoc and his companion are those of a group of women. Only the queen Tecuhichpoch is distinguished by a glyph. (The head of an old woman, *tecul*, a cotton flower, *ichcatl* and the symbol for smoke *poch[tli]*.) The legend reads, *Ycpalínque Mexica*, "Here ended the Mexica."

with them all night long; they would have caused us intolerable difficulty and attacked us on all sides, for we were few and they were many. As for placing guards by night, the Spaniards were so tired with fighting during the day that we could spare no one for the night; thus we were obliged to capture them again each day we entered the city.

That day, as we spent so long in recapturing and repairing those bridges, there was little time left for anything else, save that on another main street which leads to the city of Tacuba two other bridges were captured and filled in and many good houses were burnt. By then it was late and time to withdraw, which was hardly less dangerous than capturing the bridges, for once they saw us retreat they recovered as much strength as if they had won the greatest victory in the world and we were fleeing before them. For this withdrawal it was necessary that the channels should be well filled in and level with the road, so that the horses might gallop freely across them. Sometimes, when we were thus withdrawing and they pursued us so eagerly, the horsemen would pretend to be fleeing, and then suddenly turn on them; we always took a dozen or so of the boldest. By these means and by the ambushes which we set for them, they were always much hurt; and certainly it was a remarkable sight for, even though they well knew the harm they would receive from us as we withdrew, they still pursued us until we had left the city. With this we returned to our camp, and the captains of the other camps informed me that they had done very well that day and that many people had been killed on land and in the water. Pedro de Alvarado, who was captain in Tacuba, wrote informing me that he had won two or three bridges, for, as he was on the causeway which runs from the market in Temixtitan to Tacuba, and the three brigantines which I had given him could tie up on one side of the causeway, he had not been in such danger as previously. Where he was, there were more bridges and gaps in the causeway than in other places but fewer roof tops.

During all this time the natives of Yztapalapa, Uchilubuzco,

Mexicalcingo, Culucan, Mizqueque and Cuitaguaca, which, as I have recounted, are on the fresh-water lake, would never come peaceably to us, although we had never been attacked by them. But as the people of Calco were Your Majesty's very loyal vassals and saw that we were fully occupied with the people in the great city, they joined forces with some other towns which are around the lake and did as much harm as they were able to the aforementioned towns who, seeing that we were each day victorious over the people of Temixtitan, and realizing the injuries they were suffering and might further suffer from our allies, decided to submit.⁵⁶ When they reached our camp they begged me to forgive them the past and to command the people of Calco and their other neighbors to do them no more harm. I told them that I was well pleased and harbored anger against no one save the people of the city, but so that I might have proof of the sincerity of their friendship, I asked them, as I would not raise the siege until the city surrendered, or was captured, and as they had many canoes with which they might help me, to make ready as many as they could, with all the warriors in their towns, in order to help us thenceforth on the water. I also asked them, as the Spaniards had for their quarters but a few ruinous huts, and it was now the rainy season, to build as many houses as possible in the camp and to carry adobes and timber in their canoes from the houses in the city which were nearest to the camp. They replied that the canoes and the warriors would be ready each day; and they were so diligent in building the houses that on both sides of the two towers on the causeway where I was encamped they built so many that from the first to the last was a distance of more than three or four crossbowshots. From this Your Majesty may see how wide this causeway is which traverses the deepest part of the lake, for these houses were built on both sides of it, and yet there still was space for us to pass most comfortably between them on horseback. There were continuously more than two thousand people in the camp, counting the Spaniards and the Indians who served them. All the other warriors, our allies, were stationed at Cuyoacan, a league

and a half from the camp. The people from those towns, which I have already mentioned, also supplied us with provisions, of which we were in great need, especially with fish and cherries, of which latter there are such quantities hereabouts that in the six months which their season lasts they are sufficient for twice the population of this land.

As we had entered the city from our camp two or three days in succession, besides the three or four previous attacks, and had always been victorious, killing with crossbow, harquebus and field gun an infinite number of the enemy, we each day expected them to sue for peace, which we desired as much as our own salvation; but nothing we could do would induce them to do it. In order to put them in greater difficulties and to see if we might oblige them to surrender, I proposed to enter the city each day and to attack the inhabitants in three or four different places. I therefore commanded all the people from those cities on the water to come in their canoes; and on the morning of that day there gathered in the camp more than a hundred thousand of our allies. I then ordered that four brigantines with half the canoes, of which there were as many as fifteen hundred, should approach on one side, while the other three brigantines, with the same number of canoes, were to go to the other; and they were all to circle the city and burn and do all the damage they could. I entered along the main street and found it free from obstruction right up to the great houses in the square; nor had any of the breaches been reopened. I then advanced to the street which led to Tacuba, where there are six or seven bridges. From there I ordered a captain to enter another street with sixty or seventy men. Six horsemen went to guard his rear, and with them went more than ten or twelve thousand of our Indian allies. I then ordered another captain to do the same along another street, and I myself, with all the men who were left, proceeded up the road to Tacuba, where we won three bridges. These we filled in, but because it was already late we left the others for another day when they could be better taken, for I greatly desired to capture that

street so that the people from Pedro de Alvarado's camp might communicate with ours and pass from one camp to the other, and the brigantines likewise. That day was one of great victory both on land and in the water, and we took some spoil from the city. The alguacil mayor and Pedro de Alvarado were also victorious.

On the following day I re-entered the city in the same order as before, and God granted us such a victory that in the places where I entered with my people there seemed to be no resistance, and the enemy retreated so swiftly that we appeared to have won three-quarters of the city. Pedro de Alvarado also drove them quickly back, and I was certain, on this day as on the previous one, that they would sue for peace, which, I assured them in every possible way, I greatly desired, with or without a victory; but, for all that, they never gave any sign of peace. That day we returned joyfully to our camp, although we could not but be saddened by their determination to die.

In these days past Pedro de Alvarado had won many bridges, and in order to hold them had placed a guard of foot soldiers and horsemen on them during the night, while the rest of his men returned to the camp, which was three-quarters of a league from there. But because this task became intolerable, he decided to move his camp to the end of the causeway leading to the marketplace of Temixtitlan, which is a square much larger than that of Salamanca, and all surrounded by arcades. To reach this he had only to capture two or three bridges, but the channels there were very broad and dangerous, so he had to fight for several days, although he was always successful. On that day, of which I have already spoken, when he saw the enemy weaken, and saw how I constantly attacked them with great ferocity, he became so enamored of the taste of victory, with all those bridges and fortifications he had captured, that he resolved to cross and take a breach where more than seventy paces of causeway had been torn up and replaced by water to a depth of eight or nine feet. As they attacked that same day and were greatly assisted by the brigantines, they

crossed the water, gained the bridges and pursued the enemy who fled. Pedro de Alvarado then made haste to fill in that breach so that the horses might also cross over, and because I had cautioned him each day, both in writing and in person, not to take an inch of ground without first making it safe for the horsemen, who were the mainstay of the fighting. When the people of the city saw that there were only forty or fifty Spaniards and some of our allies on the other side, and that the horsemen were unable to cross, they turned on them so swiftly that they drove them back into the water. Three or four Spaniards were taken alive to be sacrificed and some of our allies were killed.⁵⁷

Finally Pedro de Alvarado succeeded in retreating to his camp, and when that day I returned to mine and heard of all that had happened it distressed me more than anything else in the world, because it might have encouraged the enemy and led them to believe that we dared not enter the city again. The reason why Pedro de Alvarado wished to capture that dangerous breach was partly because, as I have said, he had defeated a great part of the enemy forces and they had shown some weakness; but above all he did it because his men were urging him to capture the marketplace, for, once that was taken, the city was almost won, as all the Indian forces had gathered there and placed all their hopes in it. As Alvarado's men saw how I continually defeated the Indians, they feared that I might capture the marketplace before they did, and, as they were closer to it than we, they held it a point of honor to take it first. For this reason Pedro de Alvarado was much importuned, and the same happened to me in my camp, for all the Spaniards greatly urged me to enter by one of the three streets leading to the marketplace, for we should meet with no resistance and, once it was captured, we would have less trouble thereafter. I made every possible excuse for not doing this, although I concealed the real reason, which was the disadvantages and dangers which I had observed; for in order to reach the marketplace we would have had to pass an

infinite number of roof tops and broken roads and bridges, so that every house on our way would be like an island.

When I returned to my camp that afternoon and learned of Alvarado's defeat, I decided to go to his camp on the following morning to rebuke him, and to see what he had gained and where he had moved his camp, advising him as to what he must do for his own defense and for an attack on the enemy. When I reached his camp, however, I was truly astonished to see how far into the city he had gone and the dangerous bridges and passes which he had won, and I no longer blamed him as much as he had seemed to deserve. And when I had discussed with him what was to be done, I returned to my camp that same day.⁵⁸

Once this was over I made several sorties into the city in the usual places. The brigantines and canoes attacked in two places while I fought in the city in four others. We were always victorious and killed great numbers of the enemy, for every day a multitude of people came to join our forces. I hesitated, however, to advance farther into the city, because the enemy might still abandon their stubborn resistance; furthermore, our entry could not be effected without much danger, for they were all united, full of courage and determined to die. But when the Spaniards saw this delay, for they had been fighting without cease for more than twenty days, they urged me strongly, as I said above, to enter and take the marketplace; for once that was captured the Indians would have very little left to defend and would be forced, if they did not surrender, to die of hunger and thirst, there being nothing left to drink except salt water from the lake. When I excused myself, Your Majesty's treasurer told me that the whole camp demanded it and that I must therefore comply. To him and to the other good people who were there I replied that their intention and desire were commendable, and that no one wished to see this business finished so much as I; but I would not attempt it for the reason which his demands had forced me to reveal, namely, that although he was

willing there would be others who, on account of the dangers, would not be. But finally they pressed me so much that I agreed to do all I could once I had spoken to the people in the other camps.

The following day I conferred with some of the officers among us, and we agreed to inform the alguacil mayor and Pedro de Alvarado that next day we would enter the city and attempt to take the marketplace. I wrote telling them what they were to do on the Tacuba side, and as well as writing, I sent two of my servants to inform them of the entire operation. The order they were to follow was that the alguacil mayor should go with ten horsemen, a hundred foot soldiers and fifteen crossbowmen and arquebusiers to Alvarado's camp, leaving ten horsemen behind in his own. With these he should arrange that on the following day they should lie in ambush behind some houses; he would then remove his baggage as if he were breaking camp; when the enemy began to pursue him, the horsemen would fall on them from behind. The alguacil mayor, with three of his brigantines and three of Pedro de Alvarado's, was to take that dangerous breach where Alvarado had been driven back, and fill it in with all haste, and then continue his advance; but on no account was he to leave a bridge which he had won without having it repaired and leveled. I also told them that if they could reach the marketplace without exposing themselves to extreme danger, they should make every effort to do so, for I would do the same; but they should note that, although I told them to do this, it did not oblige them to take any step that might lead to their defeat or misfortune; this I told them, for I knew that they would follow where I led, even if they knew it might cost them their lives. My two servants then went with my message to the camp, where they found the alguacil mayor and Pedro de Alvarado, whom they informed of the plan, as we had agreed in our camp. As they were to fight only in one place, but I in many, I sent asking for seventy or eighty foot soldiers to enter with me the following day; these arrived that same night with my servants and slept in our camp, as they had been ordered.

Everything having been arranged as mentioned, on the following day, after Mass, the seven brigantines left our camp with more than three thousand allied canoes; I, with twenty-five horsemen and the other men I had, together with those seventy from the camp at Tacuba, marched forward into the city. When we arrived I disposed my men in this manner: From where we were, three roads led into the marketplace, which the Mexicans call *Tianguizco*⁵⁹ (and the whole place where it is located is called *Tlatelulco*). I told Your Majesty's treasurer and *contador*⁶⁰ to take the principal one with seventy men and more than fifteen or twenty thousand of our allies and to place in the rear guard seven or eight horsemen. As soon as he captured the canals and earthworks he was to level them, for which purpose he took a dozen men with picks, as well as some of our allies whose task it was to fill up breaches. The other two streets, which ran from the Tacuba causeway to the marketplace, were narrower and consisted more of causeways, bridges and canals. I sent two captains with eighty men and more than ten thousand of our Indian allies along the broader of the two, at the entrance to which I placed two large guns with eight horsemen to guard them. With eight horsemen and some hundred foot soldiers, among whom were more than twenty-five crossbowmen and arquebusiers, and a huge number of our allies, I continued my march and moved as far up the other, narrower road as I was able. But at the entrance to it I halted the horsemen and ordered them on no account to move from there, nor to follow me unless I first ordered them to do so. I then dismounted and we arrived at a barricade they had built at the end of a bridge which we took with a small field gun, supported by the crossbowmen and arquebusiers. We then moved on along a street which they had breached in two or three places.

Apart from these three attacks which we made on the inhabitants of the city, our allies who attacked them on the roof tops and other places were so numerous it seemed that nothing could resist us. When we had taken these two bridges, the barricades and the

causeway, our allies followed up the street without any protection from us while I remained on a small island with some twenty Spaniards, for I had seen that certain of our allies were engaged with the enemy and were sometimes driven back into the water; with our help they might return to the attack. In addition to this, we took care that the enemy was prevented from attacking the Spaniards in the rear from certain side streets in the city. These same Spaniards sent to inform me at this time that they had gained much ground and were not far from the marketplace; they greatly wished to press on, for they could already hear the attack being made by Sandoval and Alvarado on their side. I sent to tell them that on no account should they advance a step until they had first made certain that all the bridges were well filled in; thus, should they be obliged to retreat, the water would not hinder them at all, for it was there, as they knew, that the greatest danger lay. They answered that all they had won was well repaired, and I might go there and see for myself if it was so. And I, fearing that they might have been thoughtless and not taken enough care in filling up the bridges, went there and discovered that they had crossed a breach in the road ten or twelve paces wide, in which the water was more than eight feet deep. When they crossed they had thrown wood and reed grass into the breach, and because they had passed over one at a time and with great care this had not sunk; now they were so drunk with the joy of victory they imagined that they had made it quite safe. But at the very moment I arrived at that feeble bridge I saw the Spaniards and many of our allies in full retreat, with the enemy like hounds at their heels; and as I could see the impending disaster I began to cry, "Stop! Stop!" But when I reached the bank I found the water full of Spaniards and Indians as though not a straw had been thrown into it. The enemy attacked so fiercely that in attempting to kill the Spaniards they leapt into the water after them. Then some enemy canoes came up the canals and took some of the Spaniards away alive. As this affair happened so suddenly and I saw that my men were being killed, I determined to make a

stand and die fighting. The best that I and my companions could do was to help out some wretched Spaniards who were drowning; some of these were wounded, some half-drowned and others had lost their weapons. I sent them on ahead, at which point we were attacked by such a multitude of the enemy that I and another twelve or fifteen were surrounded on all sides. As I was so intent on rescuing the drowning, I neither saw nor gave a thought to the harm I might receive. Certain Indians then came to seize me and would have carried me off were it not for a captain of fifty men, who always accompanied me, and a youth in his company, who, after God, was the one to save my life, and in doing so, like a valiant man, gave his own.⁶¹

Meanwhile, the Spaniards who had escaped the rout were retreating along the street, which was narrow and level with the water, the dogs having made it so on purpose; as many of our allies were also fleeing that way, the road was soon so blocked with people who moved so slowly that the enemy was able to attack them from the water on both sides and kill and capture as they chose. The captain who was with me, who was called Antonio de Quiñones, said to me: "Let us go and save at least your own person, for you know that if you are killed we are all lost," but he could not persuade me to go away. When he saw this, he seized me by the arms to turn me back, and, although I would have rather died than escape, as a result of the insistence of that man and other companions of mine who were close by, we began to retreat, fighting with swords and bucklers against the enemy, who pursued us and wounded some of us. At this moment a servant of mine arrived on horseback and cleared a little room; but they speared him through the throat from a low roof top and forced him to retreat. While we were engaged in this desperate struggle to detain the enemy until our men had passed up that narrow street to safety, there came a servant of mine with a horse for me to ride; the people who had escaped from the water had brought so much mud onto the street that no one could stand upright, especially as we were being pushed

about by those who were trying to escape. I mounted, but not to fight, because that was impossible then on horseback; had it not been so, those eight horsemen whom I had left on a small island farther up the causeway would have been there, whereas they were unable to do anything except retreat. Retreat, however, was so perilous that two mares, ridden by two of my servants, fell from that causeway into the water, one of which was killed by the Indians and the other saved by the foot soldiers. Another of my servants, a youth named Cristóbal de Guzmán, took a horse which they had given him on that island to bring to me so that I might escape, but both he and the horse were killed by the enemy before they could reach me. His death caused such sorrow to the entire camp that those who knew him still bear the grief to this day.

Now, after all our hardships, it pleased God that those of us who remained should reach the Tacuba causeway, which was very wide. There I mustered my men and took the rear guard myself with nine horsemen. The enemy came after us so swollen with the pride of victory that it seemed not one of us would escape alive; and withdrawing as best I could I sent word to the treasurer and contador to retire to the square in as orderly a fashion as possible. I sent the same orders to the other two captains who had gone along the street which led to the market; both parties had fought most bravely and captured many bridges and barricades, which they had also leveled very well, which was the cause of their being able to retreat unharmed. Before the treasurer and contador began to retreat, the people of the city had thrown, over the barricade where they were fighting, two or three of the heads of the captured Christians, although they did not at that time know whether they came from Pedro de Alvarado's camp or our own. When we had all gathered in the square, the enemy pressed upon us from every quarter, and in such numbers that it was all we could do to resist them, and in places where before our defeat they would never have dared attack. Then suddenly in a high temple tower close to the square they offered up to their gods as a sign of victory many per-

fumes and incense of a gummy substance which is found in these parts and resembles resin.⁶² And although we greatly desired to put a stop to this we were unable to do so, for our people were already retreating to the camp as fast as possible.

In this rout the enemy slew thirty-five or forty Spaniards, and more than a thousand of our Indian allies; more than twenty Christians were wounded, I myself being injured in the leg; we lost a small field gun and many harquebuses, crossbows and other arms.⁶³

Once they had gained their victory, the people of the city, in order to terrify the alguacil mayor and Pedro de Alvarado, took all the Spaniards they had captured dead or alive to Tlatelulco, which is the market, and on some high towers which are there sacrificed them naked, opening their chests and tearing out their hearts as an offering to the idols. The Spaniards of Alvarado's camp could see this clearly from where they were fighting, and recognized those who were being sacrificed as Christians by their white naked bodies. And, although they were grieved and greatly dispirited by the sight, they retreated to their camp, having fought very well that day and won through almost to the marketplace, which would have been taken if God, on account of our sins, had not permitted such a great disaster. We returned to our camp somewhat earlier than usual, and much saddened, for we had heard that the brigantines were lost, as the enemy canoes had fallen on us from behind, but, thank God, this was not true, although the brigantines and the canoes of our allies had been in great difficulties. So much so, indeed, that one brigantine was almost lost, and the captain and master were both wounded; the captain died within a week. All during that day and the following night the enemy celebrated with drums and trumpets so loudly it seemed as if the world was coming to an end. They opened all the streets and canals as before, and lit fires and posted sentries only two crossbowshots from our camp. And as we were so sorely defeated and wounded and without weapons, we needed to rest and recuperate.

In the meantime the people of the city sent messengers to many subject provinces, informing them of how they had won a great victory and had slain many Christians and that shortly they would have done with us, and advising them on no account to discuss terms with us. The proof they sent of their victory was the heads of those two horses which they had killed and of some Christians. These they carried about and displayed wherever they saw fit, which served further to confirm the rebels in their obstinacy. In order, however, that our enemies should not become too arrogant or perceive our own weakness, each day some Spaniards on horse and foot, together with many of our allies, went to fight in the city, although they could never gain more than a few bridges in the first street before reaching the square.

Two days after our defeat, news of which had now spread throughout the countryside, the natives of a town called Cuarnaguacar,⁶⁴ who were once subjects to Temixtitan but had declared themselves our allies, arrived in the camp. They told me how the inhabitants of Malinalco, who were their neighbors, were doing them much harm and ravaging their land, and had now allied themselves with the province of Cuisco,⁶⁵ which is a large one, and intended to fall upon them and kill them for having offered themselves as Your Majesty's vassals and our allies; furthermore, they said that once they had destroyed the people of Cuarnaguacar they would attack us. And although our defeat was so recent and we needed help more than we could give it, I determined to go to their aid because they entreated me with such insistence; so, in the face of opposition from some who claimed that I would destroy us all by reducing our numbers in the camp, I sent back with those messengers eighty foot soldiers and ten horsemen under the command of the captain Andrés de Tapia. I greatly urged him to do whatever was most convenient to Your Majesty's service and our safety, since he saw the difficulties in which we found ourselves, and therefore to return within ten days. He departed, and arriving at a small town between Malinalco and Coadnoacad he found the enemy

awaiting him. Then he and his men together with the people of Coadnoacad began the battle in the fields, and our men fought so well that they routed the enemy and drove them back to Malinalco, which is situated on top of a very high hill where the horsemen could not follow. When the Spaniards saw this, they destroyed all they found on the plain and returned victorious to our camp within ten days. In the upper part of this town of Malinalco are many springs of good clear water, which is most refreshing.

While this captain was away some Spaniards on horse and on foot, together with our allies, entered the city, as I have already said, and reached close to the great houses in the square; but they could advance no farther, for the enemy had opened a deep broad canal at the entrance to the square, and on the far side had built a large and strong barricade where fighting took place until night overtook them.

A chieftain of the province of Tascalteca, called Chichimecatecle, of whom I have already spoken, the man who brought the planks for the brigantines from that province, had, since the beginning of the war, been staying with all his people in Alvarado's camp; when he saw that after our defeat the Spaniards did not fight as well as before, he determined to enter the city alone with his own people. He posted four hundred archers at a dangerous bridge which he had won from the enemy (though he could never have done so without our help), and then advanced at the head of his men, who made a terrible noise, screaming and calling out the name of their province and lord. They fought very fiercely that day and there were many wounded and many killed on both sides. The people of the city, however, believed they had trapped their enemies, for as they are a people who, whether they are victorious or not, pursue their adversaries in retreat with great determination, they thought that once the Tascaltecan came to cross the water, where the danger was greatest, they would make good their revenge. For this reason Chichimecatecle had stationed his four hundred archers at this point. As soon as the people of the city saw that

their enemies were retreating, they at once charged down on them, whereupon the Tascaltecan threw himself into the water, and with the help of the archers reached the other side. The enemy, faced with such resistance, halted, much surprised by Chichimecatecle's daring.

Two days after the Spaniards had returned from fighting the people of Malinalco—as Your Majesty will have seen in the chapter before—there arrived at our camp ten Indians of the Utumies who were slaves of the Culuan and, as I have said, had offered themselves as Your Majesty's vassals and each day fought by our side. They now told me that the chieftains of the province of Matalcingo, who are their neighbors, were making war on them and laying waste their land; they had burnt a village and carried off some of its inhabitants and were now advancing, destroying all they could, and intending to come to our camps and attack us, so that those within the city could come out and have done with us forever. We were all the more ready to believe their story because, for the past few days, each time we entered the city the enemy had threatened us with the arrival of reinforcements from this province of Matalcingo, of which we had heard little, save that it was large and lay some twenty-two leagues from our camps. From the complaints these Utumi people made against their neighbors, we were given to understand that they required assistance, and although the request came at a most difficult time, we trusted in God's help to clip the wings of those defending the city, who each day threatened us with these reinforcements, and seemed to place a great deal of confidence in their aid; for, indeed, they could expect help from no other quarter; I therefore determined to send Gonzalo de Sandoval, alguacil mayor, with eighteen horsemen and one hundred foot soldiers, among whom was but a single crossbowman; he departed with some of our Utumi allies in his company.

God alone knows the danger in which they went, and, indeed, that in which we remained; but as we had now to show

greater courage than ever before and to die fighting if need be, we concealed our weakness from friend and foe alike. And not once but many times the Spaniards declared that they asked of God only that they should live to triumph over the defenders of the city, even if this should mean that they gained nothing else in the entire land. From this may be seen the risks and extreme hardships our lives and persons were forced to bear.

That day the alguacil mayor spent the night in a village of the Utumies on the border with Matalcingo; very early on the morning of the following day he departed, and came to some farms belonging to the Utomi, which he found deserted and mostly burnt, and, descending to the plain, beside a small river he found a large number of the enemy, who had just burnt another village. When they saw the Spaniards they turned and fled; and while pursuing them, our men came across many sacks of maize and roasted babies which the enemy carried as provisions and had abandoned when they saw the Spaniards. Once they had crossed a river which was farther up the valley, the enemy began to muster their troops, whereupon Sandoval and the horsemen broke their ranks and pursued them as they fled back toward Matalcingo, which lies three leagues from there. The horsemen then drove them all the way to the town and confined them there, and awaited the other Spaniards and our Indian allies, who were killing those whom the horsemen had intercepted but left behind. More than two thousand of the enemy were slain during this chase. As soon as the foot soldiers arrived, they, together with our allies, who numbered more than seventy thousand men, began to run toward the town, where the enemy turned and faced them while their women and children and their belongings were carried to safety in a fortress, built on a high hill close by. But so fierce was the attack that the defenders were likewise forced to retreat to this fortress on the hill, which was very steep and almost impregnable. The town was burnt and sacked in a very short time, but as it was late and as the men were very tired,

for they had fought all day, the alguacil mayor decided not to attack the fortress. The enemy spent most of that night howling and beating drums and blowing trumpets.

On the following morning the alguacil mayor began to lead his men up toward the fortress, although he was afraid that he would find himself hard pressed by their resistance. When he arrived, however, the place seemed to be deserted, and several of our Indian allies came down and said that they had found no one, for the enemy had left shortly before dawn. While they were thus occupied they saw that all the valleys thereabouts were full of people. These were Utumies, but the horsemen, thinking that they were the enemy, charged them and killed three or four with their lances. As the Utomi language is different from that of the Culuans, they could understand nothing, except that they saw the Indians throw down their arms and approach them; yet even after that they killed three or four more. But our allies understood that it was because they had not been recognized. As the enemy had departed, the Spaniards decided to move against another of their towns which was also involved in the fighting; but when the inhabitants saw so many advancing toward them they sued for peace. The alguacil mayor then spoke with the chieftain of that town, telling him how I always welcomed those who offered themselves as Your Majesty's vassals, however guilty they might be, and begged him to persuade the people of Matalcingo to come over to me. This lord promised to do as he was asked and also to bring the people of Malinalco to surrender. With this victory the alguacil mayor returned to his camp.

That same day some Spaniards had been fighting in Temixtitan, and the enemy had sent asking for our interpreter to come because they wished to talk peace, which, however, it seemed, they wanted only on condition that we leave the entire land. They made this move only to gain a few days in which to rest and refurnish their supplies, for we never succeeded in breaking their will to fight. While we stood arguing through the interpreter, with noth-

ing more than a fallen bridge between us and the enemy, an old man, in full view of everyone, very slowly extracted from his knapsack certain provisions and ate them, so as to make us believe that they were in no need of supplies, for we had told them they would all die of hunger. Our allies warned us that these talks were insincere and urged us to attack them, but we fought no more that day, for the lords had told the interpreter to convey their proposals to me.

Four days after Sandoval⁶⁶ returned from Matalcingo the lords of that province and of Malinalco and of the province of Cuiscon,⁶⁷ which is very large and important and had also rebelled, came to our camp and begged forgiveness for the past and offered to serve us well, which they did and have done until now.

While the alguacil mayor was at Matalcingo, the people of Temixtitan decided to attack Alvarado's camp by night, and struck shortly before dawn. When the sentries on foot and on horseback heard them they shouted, "To arms!" Those who were in that place flung themselves upon the enemy, who leapt into the water as soon as they saw the horsemen. Meanwhile the rest of our men came up and fought with them for more than three hours. We heard in our camp a field gun being fired, and, fearing that our men might be defeated, I ordered my own company to arm themselves and march into the city to weaken the offensive against Alvarado. And the Spanish attack was so fierce that the Indians decided to retreat. And that day we entered and fought in the city once more.

By this time those of us who had been wounded during our defeat were now healed. News arrived from Vera Cruz that a ship had arrived belonging to Juan Ponce de León,⁶⁸ who had been defeated on the mainland or island of Florida; and with this news the citizens of Vera Cruz sent me some powder and crossbows, of which we were in dire need. Now, thanks be to God, all the lands round about had come over to our side. But when I saw how rebellious the people of this city were, and how they seemed more determined to perish than any race of man known before, I did not

know by what means we might relieve ourselves of all these dangers and hardships, and yet avoid destroying them and their city which was indeed the most beautiful thing in the world. They paid no heed to us when we told them that we would not strike camp, nor would the brigantines cease to attack them from the water, that we had destroyed the peoples of Matalcingo and Malinalco and that there was no one in all the land who could help them, nor could they acquire maize or meat or fruit or water or any other provision. The more such things were told them, the less signs they showed of weakening; rather they seemed to attack each time with greater spirit. Then, seeing that the affair was continuing in this way, and that we had been besieging the city for more than forty-five days, I decided to take steps to ensure our greater safety and to place the enemy in further difficulties; my plan was to raze to the ground all the houses on both sides of the streets along which we advanced, so that we should move not a step without leaving everything behind us in ruins; and all the canals were to be filled in, no matter how long it took us.⁶⁹ To this end I called together all the chiefs and principal persons among our allies and told them what I had decided, and asked them, in consequence, to call up many of their farm laborers, asking them to bring their *coas*, which are sticks which they use much as workmen in Spain dig with spades. They replied that they would willingly do as I asked, and that they welcomed my decision, for it seemed to them a way to destroy the city and this they desired more than anything else in the world.

Two or three days passed while arrangements were being made. The enemy were well aware that we were planning an offensive and they, as it afterwards appeared, were making every preparation for their defense, as we guessed they would. Having agreed with our allies, therefore, that we would fight the enemy on land and water, we left the next morning after Mass and took the road to the city. When we reached the bridge and barricade close to the great houses in the square the enemy called to us to advance no farther, for they desired peace. I ordered the men not to attack and

told the enemy to call the lord of the city to come there and speak to me about terms. They then told me that they had sent for him and so detained me more than an hour, for in reality they had no wish for peace, and soon demonstrated the fact by beginning, as we stood quietly by, to hurl arrows, javelins and stones. When I saw this we attacked the barricade and captured it; but on entering the square we found it strewn with boulders to stop the horses crossing it, because on land it is they who carry the attack. Likewise we found a street walled up with stones and another covered with stones so that the horses could not pass up them. From that day forward we filled in that canal so thoroughly that the Indians never opened it again; and thenceforth we began, little by little, to destroy the houses and block all the canals we had won. As we were accompanied that day by more than 150,000 warriors, we made much progress. So we returned to our camp, and the brigantines and the canoes of our allies, which had likewise done much damage, also returned to rest.

On the following day we again entered the city in the same array, and when we reached that enclosure and the forecourt of the temple towers I ordered the captains and their men to do no more than block up the canals and level out the dangerous areas which we had won. Some of our allies I sent to burn and raze the houses and others to fight in the usual places while the horsemen were placed on guard in the rear. I myself climbed the highest of those towers, for the Indians recognized me and I knew it would distress them greatly to see me there. From there I encouraged our allies and sent them help when necessary; for, as they fought without pause, they sometimes forced the enemy to retreat and at other times were forced to retreat themselves. When this happened they were reinforced by three or four horsemen, which gave them immense courage to turn again upon our enemies. In this manner we entered the city five or six days in succession; and every time we withdrew we sent our allies out in front and positioned certain Spaniards in ambush in some houses while the horsemen remained

behind and pretended to retreat suddenly, so as to bring the enemy out into the square. With these devices and the ambushes set by the foot soldiers we killed a number of them with our lances every afternoon. On one particular day seven or eight horsemen were waiting in the square for the enemy to emerge, and when we saw that they would not, we feigned a retreat, but the enemy, fearing that the horsemen would turn and charge them, as they had done before, placed themselves in vast numbers behind walls and on roof tops. The horsemen then turned and charged them, but they defended, from above, the entrance to a narrow street, where the horsemen could not follow and were at last forced to retire. The enemy, encouraged that they had caused our men to retreat, ran eagerly forward to kill, but so cautious were they even so, that they took up positions where they could not be harmed, and from along the walls some of them forced the horsemen to retreat, wounding two of their horses. This gave me an opportunity to set a most successful trap for them, as I shall later recount to Your Majesty. That evening we returned to our camp leaving all that we had gained most secure and leveled, and the enemy very boastful, believing we had retreated through fear. That same evening I sent a messenger to the alguacil mayor asking him to appear at my camp before dawn with fifteen horsemen from his own and from Pedro de Alvarado's camp.

On the following morning the alguacil mayor arrived with fifteen horsemen. I had there another twenty-five from Cuyoacan, which made forty in all. Ten of them I sent out together with the rest of our people and the brigantines, ordering them to enter the city as before and to capture and destroy all they could. I would be there with the thirty horsemen when the time came to retreat, for as they knew that we had leveled much of the city I ordered them to pursue the enemy in force until they were confined in their canals and strongholds, and to hold them there until the hour came to retreat. Then I and the thirty horsemen, unobserved, would set an ambush in some large houses near to the other large ones on the

square. The Spaniards did as I commanded, and half an hour after midday I set out for the city with the thirty horsemen. When we arrived I left my companions in the aforementioned houses and I myself climbed the high tower as I was accustomed to do. While I was present, some Spaniards opened a grave which contained more than fifteen hundred castellanos worth of gold ornaments.

When the time came I gave orders for my men to retreat in good order and for the horsemen to begin a charge when they reached the square, but to pretend to be afraid and stop short. This they were to do as soon as they saw a large force of people in and around the square; my men in ambush were eagerly awaiting the signal to begin their attack. They were keen to do a good job, and somewhat tired of waiting. I then joined them, and already the Spaniards, both on horse and on foot, and our Indian allies who knew of the ambush, were retreating across the square. The enemy pursued them with such wild cries that one might have thought they had conquered the world. The nine [*sic*] horsemen made as if to attack them across the square and then withdrew suddenly. When they had done this twice the enemy were so enraged that they attacked at the horses' flanks until they drove us into the entrance of the street where we were waiting in ambush. When we saw the Spaniards pass in front of us and heard a harquebus shot, which was the signal to attack, we knew it was time to emerge; and so with the cry of "Señor Santiago" we fell suddenly upon them, and charged up the square spearing them, cutting them down and overtaking many of them, who were then slain by our allies, so that in this ambush more than five hundred of their bravest and most notable men were lost. That night our allies dined sumptuously, for all those they had killed were sliced up and eaten. So great was the surprise and shock they received in seeing themselves so suddenly beaten, that not once did they shout or scream that evening nor dared they appear on the roof tops or in the streets unless they were quite certain of being safe. As it was almost dark when we finally withdrew, it seems that the enemy sent certain slaves to see whether

we were retreating or what we were doing. When they appeared in the street ten or twelve horsemen attacked and pursued them so that not one escaped alive.

The enemy was so terrified by this victory of ours that never again during the whole course of the war dared they enter the square when we withdrew, even if there was only a single horseman there, nor dared they attack so much as one of our foot soldiers or Indian allies, thinking that an ambush would be sprung on them from beneath their very feet. And the victory which Our Lord God gave us that day was the principal cause of the city being won the sooner, for the inhabitants were much dismayed by it and our allies greatly encouraged. So we returned to our camp resolved to bring a speedy end to the war, and not to let one day pass without entering the city. That day there were no casualties in our camp, except that when we emerged from our ambush some of the horsemen collided with each other, and one fell from his mare, which rushed straight at the enemy, who shot at and wounded her with arrows; whereupon, seeing how badly she was being treated, she returned to us but so badly wounded that she died that night. And although we were much grieved by this loss, for our lives were dependent on the horses, we were pleased that she had not perished at the hands of the enemy, as we thought would happen, for their joy at having captured her would have exceeded the grief caused by the death of their companions. The brigantines and the canoes of our allies wrought great havoc that day in the city and returned unharmed.

We already knew that the Indians in the city were very scared, and we now learnt from two wretched creatures who had escaped from the city and come to our camp by night that they were dying of hunger and used to come out at night to fish in the canals between the houses, and wandered through the places we had won in search of firewood, and herbs and roots to eat. And because we had already filled in many of the canals, and leveled out many of the dangerous stretches, I resolved to enter the next morn-

ing shortly before dawn and do all the harm we could. The brigantines departed before daylight, and I with twelve or fifteen horsemen and some foot soldiers and Indians entered suddenly and stationed several spies who, as soon as it was light, called us from where we lay in ambush, and we fell on a huge number of people. As these were some of the most wretched people and had come in search of food, they were nearly all unarmed, and women and children in the main. We did them so much harm through all the streets in the city that we could reach, that the dead and the prisoners numbered more than eight hundred; the brigantines also took many people and canoes which were out fishing, and the destruction was very great. When the captains and lords of the city saw us attack at such an unaccustomed hour, they were as frightened as they had been by the recent ambush, and none of them dared come out and fight; so we returned with much booty and food for our allies.

The following day we returned to the city, and, as our allies now saw how far we had advanced toward destroying it, they came to our camp in such multitudes we could no longer count them. That day we finally captured the Tacuba road and leveled the difficult stretches, so that the people in Alvarado's camp could communicate with us by way of the city; and on the main street which leads to the market two more bridges were captured and filled in. We also burnt the houses of the lord of the city, the second since Mutezuma's death, a boy of eighteen years of age called Guatimucín;⁷⁰ these houses had been very strong, for they were large, well fortified and surrounded by water. Two other bridges on other streets which run close to the main road to the market were also captured, so that three-quarters of the city was now in our hands, and the Indians were forced to retreat to the strongest part of the city, which consisted of the houses farthest out over the water.

On the following day, which was that of St. James (Santiago),⁷¹ we entered the city in the same manner as before, following the main street which leads to the market, and we captured a very wide canal which they had thought a great safeguard, although,

indeed, it took us a long time and was hard to win, and because it was so wide we were unable that day to fill it in so that the horses could cross over. As we were all on foot and the Indians saw that the horses had not crossed, they turned on us afresh and many of them were fine warriors. But we resisted their attack and, as we had many crossbowmen, forced them to retreat behind their barricades, although not before we had done them much injury with the bolts. In addition to this all the Spaniards carried pikes which I had ordered to be made after our defeat, and these proved most advantageous. That day we did nothing save burn and raze to the ground the houses on either side of that main street, which indeed was a sad sight; but we were obliged to do it, there being no other way of accomplishing our aims. When the enemy saw how much we had laid waste they cheered themselves by telling our allies to get on with burning and destroying the city, for if they were victorious they would, as they well knew, make them rebuild it, and if we were victorious, it would make little difference, since they would have to rebuild it for us; which latter was, thank God, the case, save that it is the inhabitants of the city who are rebuilding it, not our allies.

The following morning we entered the city in the usual manner and found the breach in the main street closed, as we had left it the previous day. We then advanced two crossbowshots and captured two large channels which they had broken in the middle of the street, and reached a small temple tower where we found the heads of several Christians whom they had killed, and this caused us much sorrow. From that tower, the right-hand road, which was where we were, ran straight until it reached the causeway where Sandoval had pitched his camp; on the left another street led to the marketplace, which was now free of water except for one canal that the Indians still defended against us; although we fought hard with them we were unable to advance any farther that day, and as it was already late we returned to our camp. But each day Our Lord God gave us victory, and they always suffered the worst of it.

On the following day, at nine o'clock, as we were preparing to re-enter the city, we saw from our camp smoke rising upward from the two very high towers in the Tlatelulco or market of the city; we could not guess what it meant, for it seemed to be more than that from the incense the Indians are accustomed to burn to their idols. We surmised, however, that Alvarado had reached there, which, though it later proved to be true, we hardly dared believe at the time. And in fact that day Alvarado and his men carried off a valiant achievement, for we still had many bridges and barricades to capture, and the greater part of the inhabitants continually came to defend them. When, however, he saw that we were harassing the enemy on our side, he made every effort to break through into the marketplace, which was their strongest point. But he only succeeded in coming within sight of it and in capturing those two towers and many others close to the market, which is in size almost equal to the whole area enclosed by the many towers of the city. The horsemen found themselves hard pressed and were forced to retreat, and in doing so three of their horses were wounded. Pedro de Alvarado and his men then withdrew to their camp; and we failed that day to take a canal and bridge, which was all that now stood between us and the market square, except for leveling off or filling in all the dangerous places. When we withdrew they pressed us hard, although it was to their cost.

The following morning we entered the city⁷² and launched an attack upon the last channel and barricade before the marketplace, next to the small tower, as I have said. An ensign [alférez] and two or three other Spaniards threw themselves into the water, whereupon the enemy fled the bridge and we began to fill in and level the ground so that the horses might cross. While this was being done, Pedro de Alvarado rode up along this same road with four horsemen, and both his men and mine rejoiced greatly at his arrival, for now we were together we might put a swift end to the war. Alvarado left sentries in the rear and on the flanks both for his own

defense and to preserve all that we had won. As soon as the crossing had been repaired I took some of the horsemen and went to look at the market square, ordering the rest of my company, however, not to advance beyond the bridge. We then rode around the market square for a while and saw that the roofs above the archways were full of the enemy, but as the square was very large and we were mounted they dared not approach. I climbed that high tower which is close to the market, and there I found, as in other such towers, the heads of Christians as offerings to their idols, and also the heads of our Tascaltecan allies, for between them and the people of Culua there is a most ancient and bitter feud. And looking down from that tower, I saw all that we had won of the city, for, indeed, of eight parts we had taken seven. Seeing also that it was not possible for so many people to survive in such a confined area, especially as all the houses that remained to them were small and built almost on top of one another in the water; and, moreover, that they suffered greatly from hunger, for in the streets we had found roots and strips of bark which had been gnawed, I decided therefore not to fight that day but to offer them terms so that so large a multitude of people might not perish. For it caused me the greatest sorrow and pain to see the harm that was being done them, so I continually called on them to surrender but they replied that they would never on any account give in, and when only a single warrior remained he would die fighting. They also swore to burn or throw deep into the water all that they possessed so that we should not have it. And I, so as not to repay evil with evil, dissimulated by not attacking them.

As we now had very little powder, we had been discussing for a fortnight or so whether to build a catapult.⁷³ And although we had no engineers for the task, some carpenters had offered to make a small one, and, although I did not expect they would succeed in their hopes, I permitted them to try. While we were keeping the Indians confined to a corner of the city, the machine was finished and carried to the market square and placed on a kind of stage which is in the middle of it, built of masonry, rectangular, about

fourteen feet high and some thirty paces from corner to corner. Here they used to hold celebrations and games on their feast days, so the participants could be seen by all the people in the square, and also by those under and on top of the arcades. The catapult then took three or four days to set up while our Indian allies threatened the inhabitants of the city with it, saying that it was going to kill them all. Even if it were to have had no other effect, which indeed it had not, the terror it caused was so great that we thought the enemy might surrender. But neither of our hopes was fulfilled, for the carpenters failed to operate their machine, and the enemy, though much afraid, made no move to surrender, and we were obliged to conceal the failure of the catapult by saying that we had been moved by compassion to spare them.

The day after we had set up the catapult we again entered the city, and as we had not fought for three or four days we found the streets along which we passed full of women and children and other wretched people all starving to death, thin and exhausted; it was the most sorrowful of sights, and I ordered our allies to do them no harm. But not one of their effective warriors came near us, although we could see them on the roof tops, unarmed and wrapped in the cloaks they use. That day I again sued for peace, but their replies were evasive. For most of the day they kept us occupied in this fashion until at last I told them that I intended to attack and that they should withdraw their people, for, if they did not, I would give our allies permission to kill them. They then answered that they wanted peace; and I replied that I saw no chief with whom I might treat; once he came, and I would give him all the security he wished, we would talk of peace. We soon realized, however, that it was all a trick and that they were all prepared to fight us. Having then warned them many times, so as to press them into still greater straits, I ordered Pedro de Alvarado to take all his men and enter a large quarter still held by the enemy where there were more than a thousand houses; I entered by another place with the foot soldiers because there we could not make use of the horses. And although

they fought fiercely with us we at last captured the whole quarter. So great was the slaughter that more than twelve thousand perished or were taken prisoner, and these were so cruelly used by our allies that not one was left alive, even though we severely censured and reprimanded them.

On the following day we returned again to the city, but this time I ordered that the enemy should not be attacked or harmed. When they saw such a multitude of people coming against them, that their own vassals, over whom they had formerly held sway, were coming to kill them; when they realized their great privations and that they had no place to stand save on the bodies of their own dead, they were so eager to be delivered from their misery that they begged us to have done with them, and hurriedly asked that I should be called, for they wished to speak with me. As all the Spaniards were most eager for the war to be ended and much grieved by the harm that was being done, this pleased them greatly, for they believed that the Indians desired peace, and most willingly came and called and begged me to go to a barricade where certain lords were waiting to speak to me. Although I knew that nothing would be gained thereby, I nevertheless resolved to go, for I well knew that it was only the lord of the city and three or four others of the principal persons who had determined not to surrender; the rest wished only to see themselves out of this pass dead or alive. When I reached the barricade they said that as they held me to be a child of the Sun which, in the short space of one day and one night could make a circuit of the whole earth, why did I not slay them all in so short a time and put an end to their suffering, for they already wished to die and go to heaven to rest with their Uchilobus, who was awaiting them; for this is the idol whom they most venerate. I said many things to persuade them to surrender but all to no avail, although we showed them more signs of peace than have ever been shown to a vanquished people, for we, by the grace of Our Lord, were now the victors.

Having now reduced the enemy to the last extremity, as

may be gathered from what I have said, and in order to persuade them from their evil intention, which was for every one of them to perish, I spoke to a person of great standing among them, a prisoner whom an uncle of Don Fernando, lord of Tesuico, had captured in the city two or three days before; although he was badly wounded, I asked him if he would be willing to return, and he replied that he would. So when, on the following day,⁷⁴ we again entered the city, I sent him with some Spaniards who handed him over to his people. I had spoken to this man at length, asking him to persuade the lord of the city and the other rulers to come to terms; and he promised to do all he could. The Indians received him with much reverence as a person of rank, but when he was taken before Guatimucín his lord, and began to speak of peace, they tell me he was immediately sent to be sacrificed; and the reply which we awaited they gave us by coming with loud screams and shouting that they wished only to die. Whereupon they rained javelins, arrows and stones down upon us and fought so fiercely with us that they killed a horse with a saber made from one of our swords. But in the end it cost them dear, for very many of them were killed; and thus we returned that day to our camp.

On the following day we returned to the city,⁷⁵ and so enfeebled were the enemy that huge numbers of our allies dared to spend the whole night there. When we came within sight of the enemy we did not attack but marched through the city thinking that at any moment they would come out to us. And to induce them to it I galloped up to a very strong barricade which they had set up and called out to certain chieftains who were behind and whom I knew, that as they saw how lost they were and knew that if I so desired within an hour not one of them would remain alive, why did not Guatimucín, their lord, come and speak with me, for I swore to do him no harm; and if he and they desired peace, they would be well received by me. I then used other arguments which moved them to tears, and weeping they replied that they well knew their error and their fate, and would go and speak to their lord,

begging me not to leave, for they would return very soon. They went, and returned after a while and told me that their lord had not come because it was late, but that he would come on the following day at noon to the marketplace; and so we returned to our camp. I then gave orders that on the following day a platform, such as they are accustomed to, should be erected on that high stage in the middle of the square; I also ordered food to be prepared, and so it was done.

On the following day we went to the city and I warned my men to be on the alert lest the enemy betray us and we be taken unawares; and likewise I warned Pedro de Alvarado, who was there with me. When we reached the market I sent to inform Guatimucín that we awaited him, but he, it seemed, had decided not to come, and sent me in his stead five principal persons whose names, as they are not pertinent, I shall not give here. When they arrived they said that they had come on behalf of their lord, who begged my forgiveness for not coming himself, but he was afraid of appearing before me and, furthermore, had fallen ill; they, however, would do all that was asked of them. And although the lord had not come himself, we rejoiced that those other lords were present, for it seemed to us that we might now put a speedy end to this affair. I received them cheerfully and ordered food and drink to be given them, in consuming which they plainly showed their extreme privations. Once they had eaten I told them to speak to their lord, telling him that he need fear nothing, and that I promised him that in appearing before me he would suffer no indignity nor be detained, for without his presence no agreement or understanding could be reached. I ordered them to be given some refreshment to take away to eat, with which they departed, promising to do all they could in this matter. After two hours they returned, bringing me some fine cotton wraps of the sort they use, and told me that on no account would Guatimucín, their lord, come, so it was pointless to discuss the matter further. I repeated that I knew no reason why he should be afraid to appear before me, for he saw that they, whom I

well knew to be the principal instigators of the war and responsible for prolonging it, were well treated and were allowed to come and go in safety without any harassment. I therefore begged them to speak to him again and to try very hard to persuade him to come, for it was greatly to his own benefit. They replied that they would indeed do so and would return the following day with his reply; and so they departed and we returned to our camps.

Early the following morning those chieftains came to our camp, asking me to go to the marketplace, for their lord wished to speak to me there; and I, believing this was so, rode out to the marketplace and waited there three or four hours, but he did not come. When I saw that I had been tricked and that although it was already late neither the lord nor his messengers had appeared, I called our Indian allies who had remained behind at the entrance to the city, almost a league away. I had given them orders not to advance beyond that point, for the enemy had asked that none of them should be within the city while we were discussing terms. Neither they nor Alvarado's men were slow in coming, and when they arrived we attacked some barricades and canals which were the enemy's last defenses, and both we and our allies broke through with ease.

On leaving my camp, I had commanded Gonzalo de Sandoval to sail the brigantines in between the houses in the other quarter in which the Indians were resisting, so that we should have them surrounded, but not to attack until he saw that we were engaged. In this way they would be surrounded and so hard pressed that they would have no place to move save over the bodies of their dead or along the roof tops. They no longer had nor could find any arrows, javelins or stones with which to attack us; and our allies fighting with us were armed with swords and bucklers, and slaughtered so many of them on land and in the water that more than forty thousand were killed or taken that day. So loud was the wailing of the women and children that there was not one man amongst us whose heart did not bleed at the sound; and indeed we had more trouble in

preventing our allies from killing with such cruelty than we had in fighting the enemy. For no race, however savage, has ever practiced such fierce and unnatural cruelty as the natives of these parts. Our allies also took many spoils that day, which we were unable to prevent, as they numbered more than 150,000 and we Spaniards were only some nine hundred. Neither our precautions nor our warnings could stop their looting, though we did all we could. One of the reasons why I had avoided entering the city in force during the past days was the fear that if we attempted to storm them they would throw all they possessed into the water, and, even if they did not, our allies would take all they could find. For this reason I was much afraid that Your Majesty would receive only a small part of the great wealth this city once had, in comparison with all that I once held for Your Highness. Because it was now late, and we could no longer endure the stench of the dead bodies that had lain in those streets for many days, which was the most loathsome thing in all the world, we returned to our camps.

That evening I arranged that when we entered the city on the following day three heavy guns should be prepared and taken into the city with us, for I feared that the enemy, who were so massed together that they had no room to turn around, might crush us as we attacked, without actually fighting. I wished, therefore, to do them some harm with the guns, and so induce them to come out to meet us. I also ordered the alguacil mayor to make ready the brigantines, so that they might sail into a large lake between the houses, where all the canoes had gathered; for they now had so few houses left that the lord of the city lived in a canoe with certain of his chieftains, not knowing where else to go. Thus we made our plans for the morrow.

When it was light I had all the men made ready and the guns brought out. On the previous day I had ordered Pedro de Alvarado to wait for me in the market square and not to attack before I arrived. When all the men were mustered and all the brigantines were lying in wait behind those houses where the enemy was gathered, I

gave orders that when a harquebus was fired they should enter the little of the city that was still left to win and drive the defenders into the water where the brigantines were waiting. I warned them, however, to look with care for Guatimucín, and to make every effort to take him alive, for once that had been done the war would cease. I myself climbed onto a roof top, and before the fight began I spoke with certain chieftains of the city whom I knew, and asked them for what reason their lord would not appear before me; for, although they were in the direst straits, they need not all perish; I asked them to call him, for he had no cause to be afraid. Two of those chieftains then appeared to go to speak with him. After a while they returned, bringing with them one of the most important persons in the city, whose name was Ciguacoacin,⁷⁶ and he was captain and governor of them all and directed all matters concerning the war. I welcomed him openly, so that he should not be afraid; but at last he told me that his sovereign would prefer to die where he was rather than on any account appear before me, and that he personally was much grieved by this, but now I might do as I pleased. I now saw by this how determined he was, and so I told him to return to his people and to prepare them, for I intended to attack and slay them all; and so he departed after having spent five hours in such discussions.

The people of the city had to walk upon their dead while others swam or drowned in the waters of that wide lake where they had their canoes; indeed, so great was their suffering that it was beyond our understanding how they could endure it. Countless numbers of men, women and children came out toward us, and in their eagerness to escape many were pushed into the water where they drowned amid that multitude of corpses; and it seemed that more than fifty thousand had perished from the salt water they had drunk, their hunger and the vile stench. So that we should not discover the plight in which they were in, they dared neither throw these bodies into the water where the brigantines might find them nor throw them beyond their boundaries where the soldiers might

see them; and so in those streets where they were we came across such piles of the dead that we were forced to walk upon them.⁷⁷ I had posted Spaniards in every street, so that when the people began to come out they might prevent our allies from killing those wretched people, whose number was uncountable. I also told the captains of our allies that on no account should any of those people be slain; but they were so many that we could not prevent more than fifteen thousand being killed and sacrificed that day. But still their warriors and chieftains were hiding in corners, on roof tops, in their houses or in canoes on the lake, but neither their dissimulations or anything else availed them anything, for we could clearly see their weakness and their suffering. When I saw that it was growing late and that they were not going to surrender or attack I ordered the two guns to be fired at them, for although these did some harm it was less than our allies would have done had I granted them license to attack. But when I saw that this was of no avail I ordered the *harquebus* to be discharged, whereupon that corner which they still held was taken and its defenders driven into the water, those who remained surrendering without a fight.

Then the brigantines swept into that inner lake and broke through the fleet of canoes; but the warriors in them no longer dared fight. God willed that Garci Holguín, a captain of one of the brigantines, should pursue a canoe which appeared to be carrying persons of rank; and as there were two or three crossbowmen in the bows who were preparing to fire, the occupants of the canoe signaled to the brigantine not to shoot, because the lord of the city was with them. When they heard this our men leapt aboard and captured Guatimucín and the lord of Tacuba and the other chieftains with them.⁷⁸ These they then brought to the roof close to the lake where I was standing, and, as I had no desire to treat Guatimucín harshly, I asked him to be seated, whereupon he came up to me and, speaking in his language, said that he had done all he was bound to do to defend his own person and his people, so that now they were reduced to this sad state, and I might do with him as I

pleased. Then he placed his hand upon a dagger of mine and asked me to kill him with it; but I reassured him saying that he need fear nothing. Thus, with this lord a prisoner, it pleased God that the war should cease, and the day it ended was Tuesday, the feast of Saint Hippolytus, the thirteenth of August, in the year 1521. Thus from the day we laid siege to the city, which was on the thirtieth of May of that same year, until it fell, there passed seventy-five days, during which time Your Majesty will have seen the dangers, hardships and misfortunes which these, Your vassals, endured, and in which they ventured their lives. To this, their achievements will bear testimony.

Of all those seventy-five days not one passed without our being engaged in some manner with the enemy. On the day that Guatimucín was captured and the city taken, we gathered up all the spoils we could find and returned to our camp, giving thanks to Our Lord for such a favor and the much desired victory which He had granted us.⁷⁹

I spent three or four days in the camp attending to many items of business and then departed for the city of Cuyoacan,⁸⁰ where I have remained until now, concerning myself with the good order, government and pacification of these parts.

When the gold and other things had been collected they were melted down with the agreement of Your Majesty's officials and valued at more than 130,000 *castellanos*, a fifth of which was accorded to Your Majesty's treasurer, together with a fifth of other things such as slaves, which also belonged to Your Majesty, as will later be shown in a list of everything that belongs to Your Majesty, which will be signed with our names. The remainder of the gold was divided up between myself and the other Spaniards, according to the rank, service and merit of each. In addition to the aforementioned gold, there were certain gold objects and jewelry, a fifth part of which, consisting of the best items, was given to Your Majesty's treasurer.

Among the spoils taken from the city were many gold buck-

lers, plumes, feather headdresses and things so remarkable that they cannot be described in writing nor would they be understood unless they were seen; and because they were of such a kind it seemed to me that they should not be divided, but all of them be given to the service of Your Majesty. For this purpose I called together all the Spaniards and entreated them to approve of all these things being sent to Your Majesty, and that the part due to them and to me should be used in Your Majesty's service; this they rejoiced in doing with much goodwill. This was then forwarded to Your Majesty with the delegates sent by the councils of New Spain.⁸¹

As the city of Temixtitan was so renowned throughout these parts, it seems that it came to the notice of the lord of a very great province called Mechuacan,⁸² which lies some seventy leagues from Temixtitan, how we had destroyed and razed it to the ground. It seemed to the lord of that province that, considering the great size and strength of the city, if it could not resist us then nothing could; thus, out of fear or because it pleased him, he sent some messengers to me. These spoke to me through the interpreters of their language and told me how their lord had heard that we were vassals of a great lord, and, if I would accept, he and his people wished to be his vassals also, and to hold us as their friends. I replied that we were, in truth, all Your Majesty's vassals, and that their lord had been wise in wishing to become one also, for we were obliged to make war on those who did not.

As I had some time ago received news of the Southern Sea I enquired of them whether it could be reached by crossing their land. They replied that it could, so I requested them, in order to inform Your Majesty better of that sea and of their province, to allow two Spaniards to return with them.⁸³ They replied that they would willingly do so, but that in order to reach the sea it was necessary to pass through the land of a powerful lord with whom they were at war, and for that reason they were, for the moment, unable to reach the coast. These messengers remained with me for three or four days, and during that time I ordered the horsemen to

skirmish before them so that they might take word of it back, and after I had given them certain jewels I dispatched them and the Spaniards to the aforementioned province of Mechuacan.

Most Powerful Lord, as I informed You in the previous chapter, I had received news a while before of the Southern Sea and knew that in some two or three places it was but twelve to fourteen days' march from here. This pleased me greatly, for it seemed to me that by discovering this sea we would render a great and memorable service to Your Majesty, especially as all those who have some learning and experience in the navigation of the Indies are quite certain that once the route to the Southern Sea has been discovered we shall find many islands rich in gold, pearls, precious stones and spices, and many wonderful and unknown things will be disclosed to us. This is also confirmed by men of learning and those tutored in the science of cosmography. Thus, as I wished to render Your Majesty such a singular and notable service, I dispatched four Spaniards, two of whom traveled through one province and the others through another; and once they had been shown the roads they were to take, and been assigned some of our allies to guide them, they left. I ordered them not to stop until they reached the sea, when they should take Royal and entire possession of it in Your Majesty's name.

The first pair of these traveled some 130 leagues through many beautiful provinces without encountering opposition; and when they reached the sea took possession of it, planting crosses by the shore as a sign. After some days they returned with an account of their discovery, informing me of everything at length. They also brought back with them some natives from the shores of that sea, together with good samples of gold from the mines in some of the provinces through which they had passed, which together with other samples of gold I am now sending to Your Majesty. The other two Spaniards returned somewhat later, for they had traveled close on 150 leagues before reaching the sea, of which they likewise took possession, and brought me a lengthy account of the coast.

They also brought back some natives, all of whom I received kindly, and after informing them of Your Majesty's great power and giving them some gifts, I sent them back to their land.

Most Catholic Lord, in my previous report I informed Your Majesty how, when the Indians defeated us and drove us from the city of Temixtitan, all the provinces subject to the city had rebelled against Your Majesty's service and had made war on us. In this report Your Majesty may judge how we have once again subjected most of these rebellious territories to Your Royal service. But certain provinces, which lie on the coast of the Northern Sea, some ten, fifteen and thirty leagues from here, had rebelled at the same time as the city of Temixtitan, and the natives of these provinces had killed by treachery more than a hundred Spaniards who had safe-conducts. Until the city had fallen I had been unable to move against them, but now, as soon as I had dispatched those Spaniards to the Southern Sea, I determined to send Gonzalo de Sandoval, alguacil mayor, with thirty-five horsemen and two hundred foot soldiers, together with some of our Indian allies and some chieftains and natives of Temixtitan, to those provinces, which are called Tactetelco, Tuxtepeque, Guatuxco⁸⁴ and Aulicaba;⁸⁵ and once he had received his orders he began to prepare for the journey.

At this time the lieutenant whom I had left in the town of Segura de la Frontera, which is in the province of Tepeaca, came to this city of Cuyoacán, and informed me how the natives of that province and others in the neighborhood, Your Majesty's vassals, were being attacked by the natives of a province called Guaxacaque because they were our allies; besides it being essential to remedy this, it would be most advantageous to pacify the province of Guaxacaque, as it lay on the route to the Southern Sea, as well as for other reasons with which I will in due course acquaint Your Majesty. The aforementioned lieutenant also told me that he had received most detailed information concerning that province, and it could be subdued by a small force; for while I was encamped before Temixtitan he had gone there, on the instigation of the people

of Tepeaca, to make war on the natives; but as he had taken only twenty or thirty Spaniards with him he had been forced to return—and somewhat more hurriedly than he might have wished. When I had read his account I gave him twelve horsemen and eighty foot soldiers. He and the alguacil mayor⁸⁶ then departed from Cuyoacán on the thirtieth of October of 1521.

When they reached the province of Tepeaca they mustered their men and each departed to his conquest. After twenty-five days the alguacil mayor wrote to me saying that he had reached the province of Guatuxco, and although he had been much afraid lest he find himself hard pressed, for the enemy were very skillful in war and had many forces in their land, it had pleased Our Lord that they should come in peace; and although he had not yet reached the other provinces he was certain they would offer themselves as Your Majesty's vassals. Fifteen days later he wrote again, telling me how he had advanced farther and how all that land was now at peace. It therefore seemed to him that it would be well to settle in the most suitable places, thus ensuring the continued subjection of the province, as we had discussed many times before, and he asked me to inform him what he was to do in this matter. I then wrote thanking him for all he had done on that expedition in Your Majesty's service, and informing him that I was in agreement with what he had said about settling. I instructed him to build a town for Spaniards in the province of Tuxtepeque and to call it Medellín. I also appointed alcaldes, regidores and other officials, whom I commanded to look after Your Majesty's service and to ensure that the natives were well treated.⁸⁷

The lieutenant of the town of Segura de la Frontera left with his men and many Indian allies from that region for the province of Guaxaca, and, although the natives resisted him and he fought fiercely with them two or three times, at last they surrendered without receiving any hurt. He wrote me a detailed account of all that had happened and informed me that the land was very fertile and rich in mines, from one of which he sent me a sample of

gold which I now forward to Your Majesty. He himself remained in that province awaiting my further orders.

After I had dispatched these two expeditions and heard the good news of their success, I realized that although I had now established three colonies of Spaniards there were many still with me in Cuyoacan. I therefore discussed where we might found another colony by the lakes; for the peace and security of all these parts required such a town; and, considering that Temixtitlan itself had once been so renowned and of such importance, we decided to settle in it and also to rebuild it, for it was completely destroyed. I distributed plots of land among those who wished to settle there and appointed *alcaldes* and *regidores* in Your Majesty's name as is customary throughout Your realms.⁸⁸ While the houses are being built, however, we have agreed to live in the city of Cuyoacan, where we are at present. In the four or five months that we have been rebuilding the city it is already most beautiful, and I assure Your Majesty that each day it grows more noble, so that just as before it was capital and center of all these provinces so it shall be henceforth. And it is being so built that the Spaniards will be strong and secure and well in charge of the natives, who will be unable to harm them in any way.⁸⁹

In the meantime, the lord of the province of Tecoahtepaque, which lies by the Southern Sea and through which the two Spaniards passed on their journey there, sent me certain of his chieftains, through whom he offered himself as Your Majesty's subject; he also made me a gift of gold ornaments, jewelry and articles of featherwork, all of which I handed over to Your Majesty's treasurer. I then thanked those messengers for what they had said to me on their lord's behalf, and gave them certain things with which they returned very happy.

Likewise at this time, the two Spaniards returned who had gone to the province of Mechuacán (whence those messengers had arrived saying that the Southern Sea could also be reached through their land except that they would have to cross the domain of a lord

who was their enemy), and with them came a brother of the lord of Mechuacán, and also other chieftains and their attendants, who numbered more than a thousand persons. I received them with much friendship, and they on behalf of their lord, who is called Calcucin,⁹⁰ gave me for Your Majesty a gift of silver shields of considerable weight in marks,⁹¹ and many other things besides, all of which were handed over to Your Majesty's treasurer. So that they should see our strength and report it to their lord, I ordered the horsemen to parade and skirmish before them in a square. The foot soldiers were then sent out in formation, the *harquebusiers* fired their weapons and I attacked a tower with the artillery. They were all much alarmed by this and by the speed of the horses; I also sent them to see how Temixtitlan had been destroyed and razed to the ground; and when they saw the strength and size of it and how it was built on the water they were even more impressed. After four or five days I made them gifts of some of the things they most prize for their lord and for themselves, and they departed very happy and contented.

I have already written to Your Majesty concerning the Pánuco River, which is fifty or sixty leagues down the coast from the town of Vera Cruz; and how the ships of Francisco de Garay had gone there two or three times but had been much harmed by the natives, because the captains had been imprudent in their dealings with the Indians. Afterwards, when I saw that there were few harbors along the north coast and none so good as that river, and also because the natives of those parts had previously come to me offering themselves as Your Majesty's vassals, but have made and are still making war upon our allies, I decided to send a captain with some people to pacify the whole province. I instructed him, if it was land suitable for settling, to set up a town by that river to ensure the peace of the surrounding countryside. And although we were few and separated into three or four groups, for which reason there was some opposition to my further depleting our forces here, nevertheless, both in order to assist our allies and because, since the

fall of Temixtitan, ships had arrived carrying men and horses, I equipped twenty-five horsemen and 150 foot soldiers, whom I placed under the charge of a captain and sent to the aforementioned river.

As I was dispatching this company, I received word from the town of Vera Cruz of how there had arrived in the port a ship, bearing Cristóbal de Tapia, veedor of the foundries of Hispaniola, from whom I received on the following day a letter, informing me that he had come to this land for the purpose of assuming control of the government thereof on behalf of Your Majesty, and that to this end he brought decrees from Your Majesty which he did not wish to present anywhere until we met.⁹² This he had hoped would be immediately; but as his horses had been made ill by the crossing he had been unable to set out. He asked me to arrange a meeting either by his coming to me or by my going to him on the coast. When I received his letter I answered it immediately, saying that I was glad he had come and, as we had lived as neighbors on Hispaniola and knew each other well, I could wish for no better person to take over the government of these parts by Your Majesty's command. But because the pacification of these lands was not yet so complete as we desired, and any change might arouse the natives, I requested Father Pedro Melgarejo de Urrea, Commissioner of the Crusade, who had shared all our hardships and was well acquainted with the state of things here—indeed, Your Majesty has been well served by him and we have benefited from his learning and advice—to go and see Tapia and examine Your Majesty's decrees. Since he better than anyone knew what would be most expedient for Your Majesty's service and the well-being of these parts, I entreated him to reach an agreement with Tapia in whatever was most advantageous, as I had confidence in him that he would not accept anything unjust. I made this request of him in the presence of Your Majesty's treasurer, who also impressed it upon him.

Then he left for Vera Cruz, where Tapia was quartered;

and so that the aforementioned veedor should be well received and attended there and in any town through which he might pass, I dispatched with the aforementioned priest two or three worthy people from my company. When these had left I remained awaiting Tapia's reply, preparing meanwhile for my own departure and arranging certain matters concerning Your Majesty's service and the pacification and subjugation of these parts. After ten or twelve days had passed, the justiciary and municipal council of Vera Cruz wrote to me saying that Tapia had presented to them the decrees which he brought from Your Majesty and Your governors in Your Royal name, and that they had respected them with all the reverence they required; but as to putting them into effect, they had replied that the greater part of the municipal council was at present with me and must be informed, whereupon they would all do whatever was most expedient for Your Majesty's service and the good of the land.⁹³ This reply had somewhat displeased Tapia, who had attempted certain scandalous things. Although this distressed me, I replied entreating and requesting them, that, having regard primarily to Your Majesty's service, they should attempt to satisfy Tapia and to give no occasion for any disturbance; furthermore, I was traveling to meet him to carry out all that Your Majesty commanded and was most appropriate to Your service. Having first recalled the captain and those men who were going to the Pánuco River, so that this region might be well defended in my absence, I had already departed when the representatives of the councils of New Spain demanded with many protestations that I should not leave the area, for this province of Mexico and Temixtitan had been so recently conquered that, were I to leave, it would surely rebel, which might result in unrest throughout the land and grave disservice to Your Majesty; and in their demands they gave many other reasons for my not leaving this city at present. They said that they, with the authority of the councils, would go to Vera Cruz and examine Tapia's decrees and do all that they were able in Your Royal service. As there now seemed to me to be no alternative, I dis-

patched the aforementioned representatives, and with them sent a message to Tapia, informing him of what was being done and how I was sending Gonzalo de Sandoval, alguacil mayor, as my deputy, and that he and Diego de Soto and Diego de Valdenebro, who were there present in Vera Cruz, would act on my behalf together with the municipal council of Vera Cruz and the representatives of other municipal councils, in seeing that everything was done in the interests of Your Majesty's service and the good of the land; for they were and are people who can be trusted in that respect.

They encountered Tapia, accompanied by Brother Pedro, on the road leading from the town and requested him to return. Together they went to the town of Cempoal, where Cristóbal de Tapia presented Your Majesty's decrees, which were received by all with the respect due to them. As for putting them into effect, however, they replied that they would first send a petition to Your Majesty, as this was in Your Majesty's best interests, for the several causes and reasons set down in this same petition which they enumerated at the time. The representatives from New Spain are carrying it signed by a notary public. After further statements and requests had passed between Tapia and the representatives, he embarked on his own ship as he had been requested to do, for his presence and his having announced publicly that he had come as governor and captain general of these parts had caused some disturbance. The people of Mexico and Temixtitan had agreed with the natives of these parts to rebel and perpetrate so great a piece of treachery that, had it succeeded, it would have been worse than the past one.⁹⁴ It happened that certain Indians from Mexico had agreed with some of the natives of those provinces which the alguacil mayor had gone to pacify to come in great haste to me, and they told me that twenty ships with many men on board were sailing off the coast but would not land. They must therefore be hostile, and, if I wished to go there to see who it was, they would arm themselves and go with me; and so that I should believe them they drew these ships on a piece of paper.

But as they brought this information to me in secret I realized immediately that their intentions were pernicious and that it was a ruse to rid the province of me; for certain chieftains had known for some days that I intended to leave, but seeing that I did not move they had devised this plan. I dissimulated with them and then seized some of the ringleaders. Thus, as Tapia had no experience of the land or its people, his arrival caused much upheaval and his presence would have caused great harm if God had not remedied it. He would have served Your Majesty better had he remained in Hispaniola, and consulted Your Majesty, and acquainted You with the affairs of these parts, which he must have known from the ships I sent to that island for help. He must also have known how we had remedied the disturbances which we had anticipated would be caused by the arrival of the fleet of Pánfilo de Narváez—which were largely prevented by the governors and Your Majesty's Royal Council—and so should not have come, especially as the admiral, judges and officers who reside in Hispaniola had many times required Tapia under threat of certain penalties to desist from his intention to come to these parts without first informing Your Majesty of all that had happened in them. But he, looking more to his own profit than to what might best serve Your Majesty, persuaded them to lift their ban against his coming. I have only now made account of all this to Your Majesty because, when Tapia departed, the representatives and I agreed that he would not prove a reliable bearer of our letters, and so that Your Majesty may now see that in not receiving him Your Majesty was well served, as will be more fully proved whenever such proof be required.

In a previous chapter I told Your Majesty how the captain I had sent to the province of Guaxaca had pacified it and was there awaiting my orders. But because I required his presence, as he was alcalde and lieutenant of Segura de la Frontera, I wrote commanding him to give the ten horsemen and eighty foot soldiers under his command to Pedro de Alvarado, whom I then sent to conquer the province of Tatutepeque,⁹⁵ which lies forty leagues beyond Gua-

xaca beside the Southern Sea. The inhabitants of this province had done much harm to those who had offered themselves as Your Majesty's vassals, and to the people of Tecoahtepec because they had permitted us to pass through their lands on our way to the Southern Sea. Pedro de Alvarado left this city on the last day of January this year, and with the men he took from here and those he received in the province of Guaxaca he assembled forty horse and some two hundred foot, among whom were forty crossbowmen and harquebusiers and two small field guns. After twenty days I received letters from Pedro de Alvarado informing me that he was on the road to Tatutepec, and had captured several enemy spies, who had told him that the lord of Tatutepec and his men were awaiting him in the fields; he intended to go and do whatever he could to pacify that province, for which purpose, in addition to the Spaniards, he had brought many good Indian warriors. I waited anxiously to receive further news from him about his attempt, and on the fourth of March of this year he sent me letters saying he had entered the province, and that three or four towns had tried to resist him but had not held out for long. He had entered the city of Tatutepec, where they had to all appearances been welcomed. The lord of the city had asked them to lodge in some large houses of his whose roofs were thatched with straw, but because these were situated in a place where the horses could hardly be used to advantage, they had insisted on moving down to a flatter part of the city; they also did this because just then they had heard that the natives planned to kill them all by setting fire to the houses during the night when all the Spaniards were inside. But God had disclosed this plot to him, and he had dissimulated and taken with him to that flatter part the lord of the city and one of his sons as prisoners. Alvarado had been given 25,000 *castellanos* and he believed from what the lord's vassals had told him that their lord was very wealthy. The whole province was now completely pacified, and the natives carried on their markets and commerce as before. He said that the land was very rich in gold mines, from which they

had, in his presence, taken a sample which he sent to me. Three days previously he had been by the sea and taken possession of it in Your Majesty's name; and in his presence they had brought up a sample of pearls, which he also sent and which, together with the gold, I am forwarding to Your Majesty.

As Our Lord God has so favored this business, and was so fulfilling my desire to serve Your Majesty in this matter of the Southern Sea, which is of such importance, I have, with much diligence, provided, in one of the three places where we have reached the sea, for the building of two medium-sized caravels and two brigantines; the two caravels for voyages of discovery and the brigantines for charting the coast. For this I have sent, under the care of a trustworthy person, some forty Spaniards, among whom are master carpenters, shipwrights, woodcutters, blacksmiths and seamen; and I have sent to Vera Cruz for sails, nails and other necessary equipment. All possible haste will be made to complete and launch these vessels, and when this is done Your Majesty may be assured that it will be the greatest achievement and the one from which Your Majesty will derive the most benefit since the Indies were first discovered.

While we were in the city of Tesuico before leaving to lay siege to Temixtitan, preparing and supplying ourselves with all we required for that siege and quite unaware of a plot which certain persons were hatching, one of those involved in the conspiracy came to me and informed me how certain friends of Diego Velázquez, who were in my company, had plotted to kill me, and that they had elected from amongst themselves a captain, an *alcalde mayor*, an *alguacil* and other officers. He begged me to prevent it at all cost, for, besides the disturbance which would follow my death, if we turned against each other, it was certain that no Spaniard would escape alive, for not only would we find the enemy alerted but even those whom we held as allies would make every effort to put an end to us. When I saw how great was this treachery that had been disclosed to me I gave thanks to God, for in my knowledge of

it lay the remedy. I then had the chief man among the conspirators seized, and he voluntarily confessed that he had plotted and conspired with many others to seize and kill me, and to usurp the government of the land in the name of Diego Velázquez; and that it was true they had appointed a new captain and alcalde mayor and that he himself was to have been alguacil mayor and to have taken or killed me himself. Many people were involved in this, but when the list of them was found in his quarters it had been torn to pieces. He admitted, however, to having plotted with some of the aforementioned persons and not only in Tesuico, for they had also discussed it during the fighting in the province of Tepeaca. When I had heard the confession of this man, a native of Zamora, whose name was Antonio de Villafañá, and was assured that he spoke the truth, an alcalde and I condemned him to death, and the sentence was duly executed. And even though there were others involved in this crime who had a large share of the guilt, I dissimulated with them and treated them as friends, for, as this was a personal matter, though perhaps I might more accurately say Your Majesty's, I did not wish to deal harshly with them.⁹⁶ This has done me little good, however, for Velázquez's men have since set me many traps and secretly caused many disturbances and quarrels against which I have found I have to be more on my guard than against the enemy. Our Lord God, however, has always guided us in such a manner that without punishing those men there is complete peace and tranquillity; but if I hear of anything further I will punish them as justice demands.

After the fall of Temixtitán, while we were in Cuyoacán. Don Fernando,⁹⁷ lord of Tesuico, died, which caused grief to us all, for he was a very loyal vassal of Your Majesty and a friend of the Christians. With the consent of the lords and chieftains of that city and province, in Your Majesty's name I entrusted the position to his younger brother, who was baptized and christened Don Carlos; and until now he has followed in his brother's footsteps and our customs and conversations please him greatly.

In the earlier report I told Your Majesty that close to the provinces of Tascalteca and Guaxocingo there was a high circular mountain from which an almost continuous column of smoke rose upwards as straight as an arrow. The Indians gave us to believe that it was a most evil thing and all those who climbed it died. I therefore ordered certain Spaniards to climb it and see what it was like up there. When they ascended, however, that smoke came out with such a noise that they neither could nor dared approach the opening. Then, later, I sent some more Spaniards, and they climbed it twice until they reached the opening from which the smoke comes. From one side to the other it measures two crossbowshots; it is nearly three-quarters of a league round, and so deep they were unable to see the bottom. They found some sulphur round about which is deposited by the smoke. When they were there they heard the great noise the smoke makes and hurried down, but before they had reached halfway a huge number of stones began to roll down toward them, from which they found themselves in great danger. The Indians thought it a great thing to have dared go where those Spaniards had gone.

In a letter of mine I informed Your Majesty how the natives of these parts are of much greater intelligence than those of the other islands; indeed, they appeared to us to possess such understanding as is sufficient for an ordinary citizen to conduct himself in a civilized country. It seemed to me, therefore, a serious matter at this time to compel them to serve the Spaniards as the natives of the other islands do; yet if this were not done, the conquerors and settlers of these parts would not be able to maintain themselves. In order therefore to avoid enslaving these Indians, and at the same time to provide the Spaniards with their needs, it seemed to me that Your Majesty should command that from the income which belongs to Your Majesty here we should obtain assistance for the expenses and maintenance of the settlers; and in this matter Your Majesty should decree as You saw most fitting to Your service. Since then, however, I have been almost forced to deliver the chieftains

and other natives of these parts to the Spaniards in recognition of the services they have rendered to Your Majesty, because Your Majesty's expenses have been continuous and considerable, and we ought rather to try by every means to increase Royal revenues than to give cause for spending them; also we have been at war for a long time and have all contracted debts thereby and find ourselves in difficulties. Furthermore, on account of the inevitable delay in ascertaining Your Majesty's commands on this matter, and because I was so pressed by Your Majesty's officials and the other Spaniards, I could not in any way avoid it. So until some new order is made, or this one confirmed, the aforementioned chieftains and natives will serve the Spaniards with whom they have been deposited in all they may require in their affairs.⁹⁸ This conclusion was reached on the advice of persons who have considerable knowledge and experience in this land; moreover, nothing better or more convenient could be devised either for the maintenance of the Spaniards or for the safety and good treatment of the Indians; of all this the representatives who are now leaving New Spain will give a more detailed account to Your Majesty. Your Majesty's farms and estates have been established in the cities and provinces which seem the best and most suitable. I entreat Your Majesty to approve this and command how You may best be served in these matters.

Most Catholic Lord: May Our Lord God preserve the Life and Very Royal Person and the Most Powerful Estate of Your Caesarean Majesty, and increase it with yet greater realms and dominions, as Your Royal Heart desires. From the city of Cuyoacan in this New Spain of the Ocean Sea on the fifteenth day of May in the year 1522. Most Powerful Lord—From Your Caesarean Majesty's very humble servant and vassal who now kisses Your Majesty's Very Royal hands and feet—HERNANDO CORTÉS.

Most Powerful Lord: As Your Majesty may observe, Fernando Cortés, Your Captain and Chief Justice in this New Spain of the Ocean Sea, hereby sends a report to Your Caesarean Majesty.

We the officials of Your Catholic Majesty are obliged to give an account of events and state of these parts, and as all this is described in great detail here in this letter, and is the truth as we ourselves would have written it, there is no need for us to add anything, but only to refer You to the aforementioned Captain's account.

Most Invincible and Very Catholic Lord, may Our Lord God preserve the Life and Very Royal Person and most Powerful Estate of Your Majesty and increase it with many more realms and dominions as Your Royal Heart desires—From the city of Cuyoacán, on the fifteenth day of May in the year 1522. Most Powerful Lord—From Your Caesarean Majesty's most humble servants and vassals who kiss the Very Royal Feet and Hands of Your Majesty. JULIÁN ALDERETE. ALONSO DE GRADO. BERNARDINO VÁZQUEZ DE TAPIA.⁹⁹