

conceal it they had stuck it in the ground and hidden it in the bush. They went to launch it in the water and tied the two one to the other so that they were well secured, and in them Cortés and his servants crossed over, and then with the same canoes he ordered two horses to be sent over, and it was done in this manner: the canoes were paddled, and the horses, tied by their halters, swam near the canoes, and care had to be taken not to give too much rope to the horse lest it should upset the canoe. Cortés sent to say that, until we received an order or a letter from him, none of us were to cross in these same canoes on account of the great risk of the passage, for he had repented of going in them himself as the river came down with such great fury. I will leave off here then go on to say what else happened.

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## CHAPTER CLXXIX.

How Cortés entered the town where the followers of Gil Gonzáles de Ávila were settled, and about the great joy shown by all the inhabitants, and what Cortés decreed.

AFTER Cortés had crossed the great river of the Golfo Dulce in the way I have related, he went to the town where the Spaniards of Gil Gonzáles de Ávila were settled, about two leagues distant and close to the sea, and not to where they made their first settlement named San Gil de Buena Vista.<sup>1</sup>

When these saw a man on horseback and six others on foot among their houses, they were greatly startled, and when they knew that it was Cortés who was so renowned throughout the Indies and in Castile they were beside themselves with delight. After all the caciques had come to kiss his hand and give him a welcome

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<sup>1</sup> Nito, in the Fifth letter of Cortés.

Cortés addressed them very affectionately and instructed the Lieutenant, who was called Nieto, to go to where they careened the ship and bring the two boats they possessed, and if there were any canoes to bring them also, tied two and two, and he ordered them to collect all the cassava bread in the place and take it to Captain Sandoval (for they had no maize bread), that it might be divided and eaten by all of us belonging to his army. The Lieutenant promptly searched but did not find so much as fifty pounds of it, for they lived only on roasted zapotes, vegetables, and some shell fish which they fished for, and even the cassava which they gave us they were preserving as stores for the voyage to Cuba when the ship should have been calked.

By the two boats and eight sailors who came promptly, Cortés at once wrote to Sandoval that he personally and Captain Luis Marin should be the last to cross that great river, and that they should see to it that only those whom he ordered to do so should embark, and that the boats should not be overladen on account of the great current of the river which was coming down greatly swollen and very rapid, and that two horses [should be carried] by each boat, but that no horse should be brought in the canoes, lest it should be lost and the canoes overturned by the raging stream.

About the question of precedence in crossing over, a man named Sayavedra, and his brother Avalos, relations of Cortés, claimed to cross over first, notwithstanding Sandoval's decision that the Franciscan friars (because they were entitled to consideration in the first place) should cross in the first boatload ; but as Sayavedra was a relative of Cortés, and inspired by Lucifer with a desire to command, he did not like Sandoval's raising objections, and wished him to hold his tongue and [therefore] answered him less respectfully than was proper. Sandoval

would not put up with it, and they had words, so much so, that Sayavedra plucked out his dagger, and as Sandoval was standing in the river knee deep in water preventing the boats from being overladen, he seized Sayavedra just as he stood, and caught hold of his hand which held the dagger and flung him into the water, and if we had not promptly thrown ourselves between them and parted them, certainly Sayavedra would have come out of it badly, for nearly all of us soldiers were openly on the side of Sandoval.

Let us leave this dispute and I will state that we were four days in crossing that river, and as for food it was useless to think about it, were it not for some "pacayas" which grow on certain small palms, and other things like nuts which we roasted and broke open, and ate the kernels of them.

One soldier with his horse was drowned in that river ; the soldier's name was Tarifa, and he crossed over in a canoe and never appeared again, neither he nor his horse. Two horses were also drowned, one belonging to a soldier called Solis Casquete, who growled about it and cursed Cortés and his journey.

I wish to speak about the great hunger we endured at the passage of the river, and the grumbling against Cortés and his expedition, and even against all of us who were his followers ; for when we arrived at the pueblo there was not a mouthful of cassava to eat, and even the people in the neighbourhood had none, and they did not know the roads except to two pueblos which used to be close by, but were already deserted.

Cortés next ordered Captain Luis Marin to set out with the settlers from Coatzacoalcos and search for maize, which I will go on to tell about.

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## CHAPTER CLXXX.

How the day after arriving at that town, which I know by no other name than that of San Gil de Buena Vista, we set out with Captain Luis Marin and nearly eighty soldiers, all on foot, to search for maize and explore the country, and what happened I will go on to relate.

I HAVE already said that when we reached the town which Gil Gonzáles de Ávila founded, there was nothing to eat, and there were nearly forty men and four Castilian women and two Mulatto women, and all were ill and very yellow in colour. And as neither we nor they had anything to eat, we could barely await the hour to go and look for it.

Cortés ordered Captain Luis Marin to set out and search for maize, and more than eighty of us foot soldiers went with him to find out if there were roads fit for horses, and we took with us a Cuban Indian who guided us to some farms and pueblos eight leagues distant, where we found much maize and very numerous cacao plantations, and frijoles and other vegetables, where we had plenty to eat and we even sent to say that he [Cortés] should send all the Mexican Indians to carry maize, and we relieved him immediately with ten fanegas of it by means of other Indians, and we sent for our horses.

As soon as Cortés knew that we were in a good country, and learned from Indian merchants, whom they had just then captured in the River of the Golfo Dulce, that the place where we were was on the direct way to Naco, where they beheaded Cristóbal de Olid, he sent Sandoval with the greater part of his army to follow us, and ordered us all to stay in that camp until we received his orders. When Sandoval arrived where we were and saw that there was abundance of food, he was delighted, and promptly sent to

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