

if we cast out their Idols we would see how much harm it would do us, for we should be lost at sea. Then Cortés ordered us to break the Idols to pieces and roll them down the steps,<sup>1</sup> and this we did; then he ordered lime to be brought, of which there was a good store in the town, and Indian masons, and he set up a very fair altar on which we placed the figure of Our Lady; and he ordered two of our party named Alonzo Yáñez and Álvaro López who were carpenters and joiners to make a cross of some rough timber which was there, and it was placed in a small chapel near the altar and the priest named Juan Díaz said mass there, and the Cacique and the heathen priest and all the Indians stood watching us with attention.

The Caciques in this Island of Cozumel are called Calachiones as I have already said when telling about our doings at Potonchan. Now I will leave off here, and will go on to tell how we embarked on board ship.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

How Cortés allotted the ships and appointed captains to go in them, and gave instructions to the pilots and arranged lantern signals for the night time, and what else happened to us.

CORTÉS himself took command of the flagship, Pedro de Alvarado and his brothers took charge of the *San Sebastian*, a very good ship, and the commands of the other ships were given to Alonso Hernández Puertocarrero, Francisco de Montejo, who had a good ship, Cristóval de Olid, Diego de Ordás, Juan Velásquez de Leon, Juan de Escalante,

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<sup>1</sup> In the "Itinerary of Grijalva" a temple or oratory of the Idols is thus described:—"It was eighteen steps (of a stairway) in height and the base was solid, and the measurement round it was one hundred and eighty feet. On the top of this was a small tower the height of two men one above the other and inside were certain figures and bones and *Cenis* which are the Idols which they worship."

Francisco de Morla, the Page Escobar, and the smallest vessel of all, a launch, was commanded by Gines Nortés. Each ship had its pilot; Anton de Alaminos was Pilot in Chief, and instructions were given about the course to be steered and other matters, and about the lantern signals for the night time.

Cortés took leave of the Caciques and priests and confided to their care the Image of Our Lady and told them to reverence the cross and keep it clean and wreathed with flowers and they would see what advantage they would gain by so doing, and the Indians replied that they would do so, and they brought four fowls and two jars of honey and they embraced him.

We embarked and set sail on a day in the Month of March 1519, and went on our way in fair weather. At ten o'clock that same morning loud shouts were given from one of the ships, which tried to lay to, and fired a shot so that all the vessels of the fleet might hear it, and when Cortés heard this he at once checked the flagship and seeing the ship commanded by Juan de Escalante bearing away and returning towards Cozumel, he cried out to the other ships which were near him "What is the matter? What is the matter?" And a soldier named Luis de Zaragoza answered that Juan de Escalante's ship with all the Cassava bread on board was sinking, and Cortés cried, "Pray God that we suffer no such disaster," and he ordered the Pilot Alaminos to make signal to all the other ships to return to Cozumel. So this same day we returned to the port whence we had sailed, and sent the Cassava bread on shore, and we found the image of Our Lady and the Cross well cared for with incense burning in front of it, and this pleased us greatly. The Cacique and priests came to speak to Cortés and asked why we had returned, and he replied, because one of the ships was leaking and we wished to caulk her, and he asked them to

come in their canoes and help the ships boats to bring the Cassava bread on shore, and this they did.

We were four days repairing the ship. Now I will stop writing about this, and will relate how the Spaniard named Aguilar who was a prisoner among the Indians heard of our return, and what else happened.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

How the Spaniard named Jerónimo de Aguilar, who was a prisoner among the Indians, heard that we had returned to Cozumel and came to us, and what else took place.

WHEN the Spaniard who was a prisoner among the Indians, knew for certain that we had returned to Cozumel with the ships, he was very joyful and gave thanks to God, and he came in all haste with the two Indians who had carried the letters and ransom, and embarked in a canoe, and as he was able to pay well with the green beads we had sent him, he soon hired a canoe and six Indian rowers, and they rowed so fast that, meeting no head wind, in a very short time they crossed the strait between the two shores, which is a distance of about four leagues.

When they arrived on the coast of Cozumel and were disembarking, some soldiers who had gone out hunting (for there were wild pigs on the island) told Cortés that a large canoe, which had come from the direction of Cape Catoche, had arrived near the town. Cortés sent Andrés de Tápia and two other soldiers to go and see, for it was a new thing for Indians to come fearlessly in large canoes into our neighbourhood. So they set out, and as soon as the Indians who came in the canoe which Aguilar had hired caught sight of the Spaniards, they were frightened and wished to get back into the canoe and flee away. Aguilar told them in their own language not to be afraid,