

Fortunately for Alvarado a swell of Christian war-cries and the beat of galloping horses came, about the same time, from the further side of the canal to distract the attention of his foemen. Immediately Cortez appeared, with Sandoval, Morla, Avila, and others,—brave gentlemen come back from the land, which they had safely gained, to save whom they might of the rear-guard. At the dread passage all of them drew rein except Morla; down the slope of the dike he rode, and spurring into the lake, through the canoes and floating *débris*, he headed to save his friend. Useless the gallantry? The assault upon Alvarado had ceased,—with what purpose he knew. Never should they take him alive! Hualpa's lance, of great length, was lying at his feet. Suddenly, casting away his sword and shield, he snatched up his enemy's weapon, broke the ring that girdled him, ran to the edge of the canal, and vaulted in air. Loud the cry of the Christians, louder that of the infidels! An instant he seemed to halt in his flight; an instant more, and his famous feat was performed,—the chasm was cleared, and he stood amongst his people, saved.

Alas for Morla! An infidel sprang down the dike, and by running and leaping from canoe to canoe overtook him while in the lake.

"Sword and shield, Señor Francisco! Sword and shield! Look! The foe is upon thee!"

So he was warned; but quick the action. First, a blow with a Christian axe; down sank the horse; then a blow upon the helmet, and the wave that swallowed the steed received the rider also.

"*Al-a-lala!*" shouted the victor.

"The 'tzin, the 'tzin!" answered his people; and forward they sprang, over the canoes, over the bridge of the dead,—forward to get at their hated enemies again.

"Welcome art thou!" said Cortez to Alvarado. "Welcome as from the grave, whither Morla—God rest his soul!—hath gone. Where is Leon?"

"With Morla," answered the captain.

"And Mesa?"

"Nay, Señor Hernan, if thou stayest here for any of the rear-guard, know that I am the last of them."

"*Bastante!* Hear ye, gentlemen?" said Cortez. "Our duty is done. Let us to the land again. Here is my foot, here my hand: mount, captain, and quickly!"

Alvarado took the seat offered behind Cortez, and the party set out in retreat again. Closely, across the third canal, along the causeway to the village of Popotla, the 'tzin kept the pursuit. From the village, and from Tlacopan the city, he drove the bleeding and bewildered fugitives. At last they took possession of a temple, from which, as from a fortress, they successfully defended themselves. Then the 'tzin gave over, and returned to the capital.