IN QUEST OF GOLD

CHARLES EDWARD KNOWLES

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To my Mother
Eleanor Davidson Knowles
this book is
lovingly dedicated

"THE BRILLIANT ARMY NOW UPON THE SEA DREW NEAR TO THIS LAND OF THEIR GLORIOUS EXPECTATION."

IN QUEST OF GOLD

BEING A ROMANCE DEALING WITH THE REMARKABLE EXPEDITION OF FERDINAND DE SOTO AND HIS CAVALIERS TO FLORIDA IN THE YEAR 1539

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CHAPTER I.

"The Muster."

Only one thought filled the young man's mind. It was that of getting away, away from the old town with its familiar streets and the country round about he knew so well, away from his teachers, his schools and his unlearned lessons, away from his home, its pleasant hours and a mother's admiration. Juan de Leon simply wished to get away, away with the noblest sons of Spain and a thousand lovers of Western adventure, away from a place where, as a youth, he had been a general favorite, the very idol of the boys of Seville.

Now, the popular de Leon sought new worlds to conquer. His thoughts that April day were far away, across the "Great Ocean." Standing in the ranks of de Soto's "chosen ones," he gripped his lance like a seasoned veteran, looked not about him at the staring crowd, nor cast stolen glances at the fair damsels who had come to view the muster of the men and watch the ten ships leave the little harbor.

At last his hopes were to be realized. It was no longer a dream, but soldier-life in earnest. His face that day told the tale. He saw, in imagination, the gold and glories of the Incas of Peru. He felt the joy of sailing in the fleet, destined, he believed, to return victorious and rich. He seemed to scent the land of the fabled fountain, and enjoyed the fra-

grance of its distant flowers. He heard the persistent affirmation of all who had gone before, as they cried: "Florida is the richest country in the world."

His loyal heart leaped with pride when the gallant de Soto rode past in review of his troops. De Soto and the young de Leon hailed from the same town, and had been neighbors. Often had Juan heard those wondrous tales of the famous lands away toward the setting sun. Frequently had he ridden with the Adelantado of Florida, and listened entranced to accounts of thrilling adventures in Peru, and unconsciously stole from the great explorer his estimate of the man who dealt so treacherously with the noble Incas, and when de Soto let fall indignant words against Pizarro, his young admirer's eye flashed a ready sympathy and his head bowed in hearty approval.

His hero was without question more honorable than Pizarro, more wise and hearty than the de Leon, who with panting steps pursued the fountain of youth through miry dale and shaggy forest. He saw in de Soto no enfeebled warrior with whitened locks and withered face. It was the picture of a man but recently turned forty, a gentleman of respectable, yet undistinguished parentage, born in the province of Estremandura, among the mountains, where abounded wild passes and swift rivers, where the men who there first saw the light of day were persons of unusual energy and boldness. Juan had heard of the Estremandurans and knew them as a "grave, taciturn people, inoffensive in peace, but indefatigable in war. They had formed the most reliable detachments in the Spanish army,"

and were deservedly renowned for their skillful horsemanship.

But whatever the dignity of de Soto's descent, he began his career as a mere soldier of fortune. All his estate, says his Portuguese historian, was but "a sword and buckler," yet on this account also he was all the more a hero to the youthful and aspiring Juan. Everybody knew how Ayllon had failed in Florida and never returned to tell the story of his folly, how Narvaez in the same vain pursuit left his body in an unmarked grave at sea; yet thousands were ready to follow de Soto, the new leader. Juan de Leon shared with the multitude this unbridled confidence, and pursued the trail for fame and fortune.

So, with the mailed knights, Juan de Leon took his stand in the land of his birth, at San Lucar. He had entered the little village of the sea early in the day, yet not too early to avoid the multitude which had traversed the sandy shores and undulating plains extending along the Guardalquivir and the sea.

He passed round the Moorish castle which lifts its ancient head from the rising hill above the town, and at length found his way to the quarters of the cavaliers of Spain. Among them he was thoroughly at home. Not so popular as Nuno Tobar, the short termed lieutenant-general of Cuba and Florida, not so highly favored as Luis de Moscoso de Alvarado, the camp-master general—not so honored with a worthy trust as Juan de Anasco, the royal accountant; yet Juan de Leon moved in his element among the lances of that goodly host.

Rodrique Gomez met him at the door of the general rendezvous.

"On time to-day, de Leon," said Rodrique. "Promptness is well, but let's hope for proper dress and armament in addition, at this review. Were you among the ornamented knights, last muster, when so many of our countrymen were silk attired, with doublets and cassocks pinked and embroidered, as though we were to march through the public square eager to win the plaudits of the women and children of the town?"

"Nay, Rodrique, the Adelantado had taught me better far than all such vanities. You must remember in that last assembly I stood proudly with the men of Portugal and with chagrin watched my own flesh and blood depart to lay aside their feathery uniforms and return to-day in coats of mail. But wasn't the Adelantado sorely vexed at the unseasonable ostentation of our countrymen! But here he comes and, behold, the concourse of glittering knights which follow him.

"My greetings to you, Rodrique. Tell me, have you full lists of the men, statements of pedigree and the number of parcels which they wish to carry with them to those distant shores? Know you the number of wives the men will take? I mean," conditioned de Soto, as Rodrique smiled, "I mean how many of our wealthy men will take their wives along as I shall Isabel, my queen. I trust the needs of all are satisfied, and that our treasury will not be bankrupt before we sail. So many knights, I find, are brave, but poor; adventurous, but not as yet successful in the acquisition of that which means

so much to us, the treasured gold. And, Rodrique, mark this well, if any Spaniard comes in holiday attire, as though we were upon a summer pic-nic, lead him down to the sea and throw him headlong. Ah, here is de Leon, with polished armor, and look about now. What an array of curiosities and antiques we shall display this day when the warriors assemble in fighting uniforms! Since I sent those fellows home, I should judge, they have raised the dead of twenty centuries, and robbed them of their arms. Glance at Cabeca, yonder, with that rusty coat of mail, and there is Dorantes with a battered headpiece, and Castello and the others with indifferent lances. Yes, it will be a remarkable display; but yet the men are brave and true, and in due time, after the ocean is passed, and a few days' journeys are recorded, when a show of arms is made among the natives of the Eastern wilds, and a skirmish or two to our credit, every man will have his full reward," and the Adelantado of Florida closed his conversation with the assurance of a man who boastingly takes his armor off victorious, at the close of battle.

While the muster was in progress, and the visitors from all Spain were assembling to witness the heralded departure and speed them on their way, and, while Rodrique Gomez was busy at his tasks, and Juan de Leon was soon to take his place finally in the line of lances, two figures passed along the street where stood the parish church, the sacred shrine of San Lucar since the Fourteenth Century. On the steps of the old church they paused, rested awhile and talked. They were from the suburbs,

modest men, with hardened hands of toil, true hearts, and minds observant of passing events.

"Yes, Garcia," began the elder of the two, "Grave doubts disturb my mind. Last night I had a vision of the youths of Spain wasting their manhood on endless barrens and terrible swamps, falling by the silent windings of malarial creeks. Surely have not all reports from this land of Florida been overdrawn and colored to becloud the eyes of the strong, brave and adventurous? The real picture is one of tiring hardships without one redeeming feature to make the scene a bright one. I tell you, Cabesa de Vasa will not return to such tortures which he has already tasted to the full. He may take a title or will try his hand at public office in the Western world. He may talk about the riches of that land, and the great wealth yet to be brought from yonder shores to Spain; but will he go himself again? I tell you, Garcia, de Vasa will not go, or if he goes he will loiter in the cities and towns of the New World, and let others tread the unbeaten roads, sink in the sullen swamps, or stop the poisoned arrows of those hostile tribes."

"My good friend Perez," said the other, "I think you speak more truly than you know. This vast unexplored region, called by Ponce de Leon Florida, will simply prove a graveyard for the best and bravest of our men. These nine hundred knights or more, who have come so merrily into town forget that de Leon and Narvaez found no gold; but simply disaster and death. But methinks as surely as my name is de Marchine, that some in San Lucar and Seville have strong forbodings of ill.

My brother's daughter, the beautiful Leonora, is somewhat troubled in heart, not only because she dreads to lose the sweet companionship of the intrepid Juan de Leon, but because her kinsfolk, and I too, her father's brother, have expressed ourselves, in no uncertain words, that we believe some earnest souls will not find the gold they seek, but melancholy griefs instead."

From the church steps the old men heard the coming of the band of priests, which was to sail with the adventurous army. The conversation halted while the company filed out, and as they passed discoursed upon the mission whither they were bent.

"I seek not wealth," professed the honest Barbidilla. "I go because I have heard the call of new worlds to be conquered for the Church, strange peoples, who have never heard the Saviour's name, nor even seen his glorious cross. I shall raise the crucifix in every town, and as it rises, give the call to worship and bow down."

"Yes, brother Barbidilla, ere long we will greet you as Bishop of Florida, or some new named land of savage tribes; but our toil will be well rewarded in offices in the Church which correspond to our well-used opportunities."

The speaker was a man of twenty-eight, distinguished looking in his priestly garb, with face marked in lines of determination and eyes which were full of kindly humor, free from lust, or the pride of life.

"We shall be of much help to the expedition. You know, Barbidilla, when men are away from

home and Church, they oftentimes forget what they should remember, and do deeds which at home and in Church they themselves would condemn. The freedom of the new land, may lead to license, and we must stay the tide of sin which may arise, bring pardon to the sinner, and work for righteousness and holy joy."

He turned as he finished, and, like a man meeting an old friend, saluted Garcia de Marchine, as in a moment's pause of conversation he watched the marching ambassadors of the Church.

"All's well, de Marchine, I trust. Your three score years and ten must leave their mark. You look well. You rest, I fancy, not because exhausted, but because to hurry is not your habit. I know you rest to pholisophize and go profitably on your way. I hope to see you at the muster, and have you wave us a last farewell, and God bless you. One-half hour is the full length of time, before the call to stand in line, be counted, and led upon the ships. Farewell till then."

The two patriarchs were left alone but for a moment. Waiting until the party of priests had turned the corner, they themselves arose and followed in the train of the soldiers, sight-seers, strange faces from the country, mothers seeking a last look at their sons, and sweethearts prolonging their goodbyes, and pledging faith and loyalty. In the distance they could see the ribboned spears and, at times, above the crowd, a helmeted head. Suddenly Garcia moved forward. At the crossing before him his quick eye recognized familiar forms. Two people walked side by side, a man in armor

and a woman, young and of attractive beauty. They talked as they walked, the man with divided interest, in contrast with the seriousness of the maid.

"Juan," she said, "I have hoped you would not go. The mere quest of gold, as your father says, is a cause unworthy of your zeal. To war against those savage tribes, throw them into confusion with your guns so strange to them, devastate their towns and then perhaps find no gold for all the trouble to yourselves and wrong to them, all this is far from knightly. But, Juan, you are my knight, remember, in whatever land you bear the lance, or in whatever cause you use it."

"Leonora, let's forget the expedition, just for thirty minutes, which is all the time we shall have together. One of these minutes has already passed since you have talked to me like a mother telling her boy not to go away from home. Yes, Leonora, I must go."

Then their faces met, and their eyes—hers and his—and, as Garcia de Marchine and his friend following on behind cast their wandering glances toward the distant couple, they thought they saw their lips meet as well as face and eyes. Well, yes, they did. Juan couldn't help it, and Leonora didn't try to stop him. Thus they sealed their love and talked, grew serious while they presumed to be gay. Thus Juan de Leon took his stand beneath the shadow of coming wealth and glory, and thus he and Leonora glad of hearts as lovers spent the cherished moments of their parting.

CHAPTER II.

"The Delayed Ship."

"The ships have sailed, dear uncle."

"Yes, my child; I also watched them go."

"I didn't see you, Uncle Garcia, nor did I know you had come to town to help us send our heroes on their glorious way."

"No, Leonora; quite true, you did not realize my presence hereabout. You were too busy with your kind farewells, and one in particular, I might venture to affirm, was sweet to you. The birds of San Lucar have told me something. Two young people, the man resembling Juan, the woman, bearing your fair looks—so the birds say—spent thirty minutes saying good-bye, and the couple said it well, with suitable acts and appropriate accompaniments. Yes, I too, was near the water's edge when you waved your tired hand to young de Leon on the San Christoval. Surely he is highly favored by a berth upon the Adelantado's own ship, the largest of the fleet, which also bears, you know, the Governor's wife, the gracious Isabel, with all her family and ambitious retinue. Too bad it was, that one ship was delayed. A mistake, I fancy, or perhaps careless preparation delayed them so they sail not until to-morrow."

"To-morrow, to-morrow, Uncle; to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow the boat will make another attempt to brave the ocean and no doubt next day will

catch the waiting ships. At any rate stopping at the Canaries, they will tarry for her coming, and thence make their way together westward."

In placid meditation Leonora spoke, half to herself and yet ostensibly to Garcia de Marchine: "I wonder, I wonder,"

"Why wonder, Leonora?"

"Oh, nothing, uncle, nothing. I simply wondered whether it would now be too late for another eager heart to go by this belated ship."

"Your heart, Leonora? I supposed that was already on its way upon the San Christoval."

"Yes, it is. I confess it; but yet I wonder as I said before. I wonder if there is yet room for a further addition to the party," and that night the girl's wonderment assumed the aspect of determination. She thus conspired within herself: "Yes, I will board the ship. I will. I know the commander. Father's friend, Captain Arias. I have some gold, a dozen ducats. This I will take, set sail to-morrow, and surprise Juan at the Canaries, or in the new-found countries."

And so, without floating banners, flashing armor, sounding trumpets or discharging ordnance, but with exuberant spirit and a soul firmly fixed upon its new resolve, the lover of Juan de Leon planned that night the means of her departure with the cavaliers of Spain, taking the last, the tarrying caravel.

Like a scholar late at school the tenth vessel of the fleet hurried forth from home. Rising and falling upon the heaving bosom of the deep, it spread its wings upon the unbroken stretch of blue.

It pointed its prow toward its first stopping place, those islands, set like jewels in the murmuring and waiting sea. But before it reached that island port where the twice five boats were to be so honorably received, they sighted in the distance the sails of the San Christoval and her sister ships. The others saw her too, and like the parent birds, which hover protectingly about their needy young, reshaped their course and silently drew near. The hearts of all on board beat with the rising exhilaration of reunion. The lost had been found, and the waves lapping and folding in the wake of the speeding ship were symbolic of the joyous reassembling of all the fleet. Captain Arias at his post on deck, fixed his eyes upon the flag ship. He fancied he saw the heroic form and face of his inspiring leader Ferdinand, and seemed to hear him say: "Captain, we greet you once more to our number. Let's hasten on. No more delays, simply one stop to make our supply of provisions and arms secure." And in reply to this imagined greeting the Captain's face brightened with joyous hopes and anticipated triumphs. Then he muttered to himself: "'Twill be an hour yet before we come together," and as he spoke he turned. Someone had come to his side. It was the sailor de Balbour.

"Captain, you're needed below," he said. "We've one more passenger than we supposed. It's a woman, sir, concealed in one of those casks we brought aboard on leaving port. She's a fair one, and well equipped with good outfit, and almost a dozen ducats to pay her way. Come down and question her. Her name, she says, is Leonora de Marchine, a

daughter of a friend of yours, she stoutly affirms."

"De Marchine, de Marchine," the captain murmured, as he followed the sailor to the row of casks below. "De Marchine, I know him well, also his daughter Leonora. We must at once enroll her among our number. She need not have come this way, but might have sailed in yon Christoval, where reigns her mother's school-friend, Isabel, wife of the trusted Ferdinand. So soon he hears of our new-found passenger he surely will claim the fair adventuress as belonging to his own chosen party."

The great cask lay sidewise on the deck with opened top, from which the frightened Leonora had crawled. About her, as she prepared to plead for favor, were gathered Spanish knights, priests of the Church, sailors of the caravel, among whom was at least one well-paid accomplice.

"Kind captain," the trembling girl cried, "as my father's friend, let me stay and sail upon your ship."

The captain smiled, and his smile seemed reassuring to the maiden.

"But," again he smiled. "But," he repeated, trying to seem severe, "we must put you off this ship." And Leonora, uncertain of her fate, again besought him, scarcely daring to take the officer's words in fun.

"Please, sir, please let me sail with you to those distant lands. I shall fully pay my way, and father will reward you."

The captain of the vessel then spoke seriously: "Daughter, you should not have thus played stowaway. I am full willing to bear you on the way to the far West; but I am convinced your friends upon

the Christoval will want you, and that is why I say—of course in fun—you cannot stay upon this ship. There's a jolly party on the other vessel. I'll signal the Adelantado as his boat approaches."

The captain then left her, and again appeared on deck to salute the Commander of the fleet, the beloved de Soto.

With completed number the boats were now together. The accustomed salutations had been given, the needed questions answered and the fleet was ready for its coming quota of storms and calms on its journey to the Canary Islands. Leonora, finding her way to deck, watched the little boat put off from the San Christoval, and draw near her ship. Never before had sunshine and fresh air seemed so sweet to her. She breathed deep and long, and drank eagerly the gentle breeze, like a thirsty man the cooling spring; then looked across the waves where rocked the little life boat, now rising on the whitened crest, now sinking to the watery valley, yet ever coming, borne by the pushing flood and the strong strokes of the rowers. She saw the crew and two distinguished passengers gently lifted to the deck on which she stood. It was the Adelantado and Rodrique Gomez.

"My Leonora," began de Soto. "I have heard of your remarkable exploit, how, nestling in a cask, you came aboard the boat like so much cargo. Daring girl you are. Surely you have caught the spirit of this expedition and deserve from my hands an appointment of command of troops on special hazard. I have brought Rodrique Gomez along that you might tell him what we may do for you.

Dona Isabel and myself invite you to join our party on the Christoval, if you so desire; or you may wait till we stop to-morrow, or next day, at the Islands, then join us as we set sail again."

Leonora bowed appreciation. She would wait till land was reached, not risk a dreaded splashing by returning in the little boat that day, with the Chief and his men. De Soto now had left her and she stood alone with Rodrique. The two had been friends in old Seville where, as companions of Juan, they had often met. In fact, were playmates there in early youth.

"Well, sister what may be your pleasure?" The courteous Rodrique spoke with intelligent smile, which seemed to say: "I know, I know"; and he did. He knew the inspiration of her daring venture at sea.

"Surely, you will join the merry crowd on the Christoval, for never yet has such a brilliant throng of talent and good looks embarked on such a voyage. Nuno Tobar is there. He can tell you wondrous tales of rich Peru. There also is Luis de Moscoso, rich cavalier, with sumptuous equipment; and there are relatives of the Governor, captains of the infantry and standard bearers to the army. And there also is Juan de Leon, and you know I have kept the best name till the last," said Rodrique, again smiling. "Surely now you will come back with us in spite of a generous ducking on the way."

"You certainly must have a jolly time," the girl remarked. "But, tell me, how is our friend Juan?"

"Our friend, Leonora? Ought you not use the singular and say 'my friend?' But let it reman 'our

friend,' for de Leon is a good fellow and friend. I like him much, nor am I alone in my liking among those who sail. In fact, your friend is a general favorite on our boat. We couldn't sail so happily without our Juan. I do not see why you hesitate to go at once. Just borrow one of those suits of mail to keep off the spray and a helmet to keep your hair dry and come along."

"Now, Rodrique, you are no longer serious. Let the matter of my coming to your ship rest for the time. At the Canaries, perhaps, I shall leave the protecting care of Captain Arias, and sail upon the Christoval; but enough of that for the present. Tell me, are any of the youths of Spain homesick?"

"Not yet, Leonora. We shall have too much pleasure till we reach Florida to think of home, and after that, perhaps, we shall then have too much fighting and labor to think of aught else except war and work."

"I have heard some wise men in Spain voice some such sentiments, just before your sailing, Rodrique," she said, and turned her face away; but as she did so Rodrique turned. Both looked in the same direction, toward the deck of de Soto's ship, where stood Juan. He waved his hand in salutation, and in response Leonora sent him her fondest greeting across the sea.

The winds seemed to whisper a sweet love song and the waves of the old ocean echoed the refrain. Leonora's heart was glad, and with laughter as light as that of a child's she turned once more to Rodrique, resuming their interrupted conversation. From the closed palm of the man's left hand there

"KIND CAPTAIN," THE TREMBLING GIRL CRIED, "LET ME STAY AND SAIL UPON YOUR SHIP."

hung a section of a string of pearls, lustrous and precious. He raised the hand. They flashed into the open. The girl's eyes saw them at a glance, and wondered. She had seen them before. They were the little trinkets Juan had purchased from Estevanico, the negro who sailed to Spain with Cabeca de Vaca, after the wretched men had wandered from tribe to tribe in the Florida wilds for six long years. At Seville with Juan she had wished them hers, and supposed some day, as a gift from her lover, they would find a resting place upon her neck. She fixed her eyes for a closer vision, when across the deck like an arrow from its bow, came Tachuco, the only Indian on the fleet. He had been captured on the western mainland, carried to Cuba and thence unwillingly to Spain, in the ship which bore Cabeca and his men. And now again returned ostensibly in kindness to assuage his injured feelings and his love for home; but in reality to play the part of guide and pilot of the troops in their quest of gold. He was a sort of favored passenger on the ship, wandered about the boat at will, and did no man's bidding, but his own. Yet as an Indian, he never forgot that first sad contact with the white man, when coming innocently to their camp, admiring their clothing, their horses and their loud-sounding guns, he found himself a prisoner, ruthlessly dragged from his familiar forests and thence swept away to strange and startling sights, to scenes which stirred, but failed to satisfy his untamed soul.

So Tachuco's eye was on the necklace. Next second his hand reached out and grasped it, stealth-

ily yet securely; and with vehement acclaim, speaking in accentuation rather than in actual words, he said, "White man, that's mine. For seven moons and more I have waited and watched to see it appear among the stolen treasures of the knights of Spain. It was my mother's, a token of love from him I call my father. I'll have it, if I must die for it."

And as he spoke he held upon the string of pearls like a drowning man the rope thrown for his rescue. Gomez paused a moment, looked about him, thought of law and order, smarted at the savage rush of the mad Indian and then exclaimed: "Tachuco, give it back, and all will be well."

The Indian, as with frozen features and eyes fixed upon the white man, answered, "'Tis mine, and 'twill be mine, or none shall have it. I will throw it in the sea, and feast the fish with a costly meal, before these pearls shall adorn the fairest form of the white man's squaw."

Noble of bearing, stalwart of body, he stood, an untainted denizen of his native wilds, as firm, he seemed, as the undiscovered Rockies, he would rather die than yield. He had said his say, and would withdraw in stately parade, across the deck; but Gomez stepped athwart his path, with rising indignation written large upon his face. "Indian!" he cried. He had him quickly by the throat, and just as quickly lost his hold. Leonora screamed. Hurried footsteps marked the scurry of the men as though responding to a call to arms for some mysterious fight. Toward the water's edge the men still fought, while the form of de Soto appeared,

but twenty feet away. He would stop the wrangle first, then seek an explanation from the Indian and the white man as well. Nearer the gunwale the fighting men drifted, with a dozen of the crew in haste to check them, lest they plunge into the waves below and both be lost. With desperate grasping they tugged and pulled, with furious blows, struck madly; they swore, the one in Spanish and the other in the Indian tongue. Next moment but one of the two antagonists stood upon the deck. In the water below struggled the Indian, the pearls still in his hand; but as he turned his face upward at the passing caravel and the oncoming wave he cast the pearls into the sea, and grunted to himself: "They are gone forever."

The lowered boat found the unhappy man half a mile to the eastward, upon the vessel's path, and brought him back. Meanwhile the recital of the fray was given the Adeltando, and the captain of the ship, while an explanation of the pearls was made to Leonora. Rodrique himself, recovered from his Indian encounter, enlightened the maiden's troubled mind.

"Leonora, let me now make my presentation speech without the pearls," he began. "The necklace was from Juan. He, unable to come himself, as he desired, when told of your sudden appearance on our fleet, sent me as custodian of his gift. I did my best to save it for you. Before the departure from San Lucar, it was his purpose to give you them to keep. In the excitement of the embarkation he had taken them along. There he stands

on yonder deck not knowing what the cursed Indian has done."

And so the sea swallowed up another treasure hidden forever from the eye of man.

CHAPTER III.

"The First Stop."

The dripping Indian reached the deck like a drowning rat, and was received with as little sympathy from all on board. He had been worsted in the fight; but he gloried in putting the pearls—he said—"where no white man's hand could reach them." Through wet eyelids he eyed the man with whom he fought, looked him full in the face, in proud defiance and perfect satisfaction.

"White friend, we will fight no more over stolen property; but tell me this, from whom did you receive it, from de Leon, friend of this pale face maiden? No, you need not tell me. Whence it came to your hands I know. I traced it from my homeland to the land of Spain, and now know its resting place with the fishes of the sea. I rejoice it rested last in my right hand," and Tachuco retreated to the after deck.

As he went he muttered to himself in a tongue strange to all on board, save the negro, Estevanico, who had shipped among the crew of Captain Arias' caravel. Estevanico heard the Indian speak. With frame shaking with emotion, wearied with his fighting, and exhausted by his swim, he yet spoke distinctly and the negro with his six years' sojourn among Tachuco's kinsfolk in the West, knew well the meaning of his words. "The white man takes me home, he says, to let me once more rove in wild

freedom, the wilderness, and waving forest. He tells me I may find my wigwam once more and have my little sister weave for me the bead-covered moccasins; but now, I know, his tongue is crooked. He takes me with him, to lead the way and make his footsteps safe in his search for gold. I know, I know, and not many moons hence, he'll understand I know. The pale face is no friend of mine, nor of my people. This man who pushed me overboard, Juan de Leon, on whom I have long scented my mother's pearls, the great de Soto in his madness, and this whole tribe of travelling thieves, I shall not serve, but shall destroy, with my people's help. I'll lead them far away from the beaten paths, and lose them in the desert wilds, and for it I shall have my glory in the happy hunting grounds."

The fleet sped on its way with no mishap to boat or man. The days passed merrily. Music and mirth, the songs of the troubadours, and the tales of those who had seen the Western lands varied the monotony of the twenty days or more. Across the unfathomable depths they sailed with their horses for the land of conquest, their herds of swine to provision the fighting force, and a pack of bloodhounds, the Spaniard's most efficient ally in the New World. Thus equipped the armada sailed on, its number augmented by a string of smaller craft which trailed their course to return in pride to tell their townspeople they had been with de Soto's fleet. Others of the number, booked for Mexico, escorted them on their way. The San Christoval with her eight hundred tons, took the

lead in the line of ships, and surpassed the others in her gay array of gallant cavaliers and charming women. About Dona Isabel and de Soto there moved as gallant and brilliant a body of men as ever lifted their swords for conquest. Scarcely one among them had gray hairs. They were young and vigorous, fitted for the hardships of the dangerous undertaking, able also to win their way at court, entertain the ladies or charm the company with some wondrous tale.

On the twenty-first day of April, the ships reached Gomera, one of the Canary Islands, and with great display and princely courtesy they were received by the Count, the Governor of that place. Count de Gomera who thus proudly welcomed them, was, the historian tells us, a "gay and luxurious cavalier." Dressed in white from head to foot, hat, cloak, doublet, breeches and shoes, he greeted the fleet, a picture of some white-clad gypsy captain, as the Portuguese account asserts. Then for three long festive days the white-clad ruler entertained his guests in jovial style, with sumptuous feastings and prolonged rejoicings. Along the pebbly shore of the "Fortunate Islands," where, the historian also tells us, the ancient Carthaginians stopped awhile, there now trod the knights of Spain about to sail for other shores, less hospitable. The youthful cavaliers quickly responded to the royal salutation, like boys just out of school; and chief among the jolly throng was Juan de Leon. He had watched the caravel in which Leonora sailed as it entered port, side by side with the San Christoval, and soon found his love at the landing place, after

receiving orders from the Adelantado where and when to report for duty. So the men and maidens of the fleet were free to wander at will about the little town. A headland overlooking the far-reaching sea, sheltered Leonora and Juan beneath its arching brow.

"I learned the fate of the necklace, Leonora, Tachuco is what Estevanico calls a bad Indian. Little did I know he would lay claim to that string of pearls, for had I such suspicion I never would have sent it as I did; but, would have laid it by, until that time, when, from the toils of war and exploration I had returned to Spain to live in luxury with my Leonora; but here comes Nuno Tobar with some new-found friends. The Adelantado also comes along, with Isabel, and in the rear is Rodrique Gomez. It would appear they come to find us."

"The Count Gomera has sent, bidding us welcome to his home, the castle on yonder hill, where he will give a dinner to our party which sailed so merrily on the Christoval. We also want Leonora de Marchine to come along as of our number."

Nuno Tobar was the speaker and apparently the leader of the band bent on merriment. Introductions followed. The only strange faces were those who had not sailed upon the fleet, the Countess Gomera, her daughter Leonora de Barbilla, and a troup of others, young men and maidens, attended with white-haired matrons and nobles of the town, with menservants and maids in waiting on the lords and ladies, a courtly train.

"In truth, two Leonoras," observed the gallant

de Tobar. "We must see that the ladies do not fight about the name, but each share it equally with the other. It's bad enough to fight about the same man; but names should cause no discord. Now tell us Leonora de Marchine, and for purposes of distinction I must not abbreviate, tell us, Leonora, what were your feelings in that cask as the sailors rolled it on the deck? No doubt at first you regretted your choice of sojourn, and said your prayers more often than at other times."

The maiden promptly answered, "Yes; but when once embarked, like the commander who burns his ships behind him, I could not retreat. I dared not scream, although I felt it would relieve me somewhat. I then shut my eyes and tried to sleep and forget the world of time and space, however small, and simply wait until, like the chick in the egg, it seemed time to come forth to do and to conquer."

"Well, Leonora, you certainly conquered us, that morning on our ship," said Captain Arias. "We felt you had come on board to stay. We received you like the infant which rules the household, for we were constrained by your entreaties and governed by your tears." "And by your fair looks as well," added the smiling de Soto. "Now, let me speak for Isabel who would like to greet you once more. She knew your mother well, and wishes, as she did when first she learned of your coming to the fleet, that she might have you in her household on the San Christoval."

That night the lights from the old castle shown brightly on the bay, and were reflected on the restless waves across the entrance of the harbor. The

music of the band, the tuneful step of the dancers. the laughter of youth and maiden with the sweet perfume of flowers were wafted forth upon the midnight air. Through the halls the young people danced, then along the great veranda of the sumptuous home. The spacious porch served as a retiring place for animated small talk, and sometimes conversation of serious import. The rustle of a dress and the more heavy tread of the accompanying cavalier told of two who made their way to a cosy couch in the far corner. The murmur of the waves upon the pebbly beach did not disturb their intercourse. It seemed to urge them on and covered words they wished none but themselves to hear.

"Leonora, you understand me," said the man in impatient voice.

"Pardon, Juan, I do not. I saw you take the flower from the other Leonora, and heard your words of adoration, as you say, innocent flattery."

"Yes, that was all it was. The daughter of the Count meant nothing. Certainly I did not; but here they come."

At their approach the couple suppressed their petty quarrel. The proud Nuno Tobar drew near, leading the fair daughter of Gomera, the "woman in the case." She first broke the silence of the interrupted séance by launching forth in bold questionings.

"O, my namesake, Leonora," she said, "tell me something more of what Nuno Tobar has already informed me, of your coming on the ship in that unusual way. How did you dare do it? Could you

breathe? Didn't you become hungry, and thirsty; and didn't you want to turn around and stretch a little? You surely mussed your hair, and soiled your skirts? But when I understand why you suffered, that is, for whom you did all this, why then pain to you was pleasure. He couldn't get away from you, could he?"

The words stung the proud daughter of de Marchine. She hadn't seen herself in that light before, pursuing a man; and from that very moment her mind took a different trend. She would no longer seem to follow Juan. She would not even sail in the San Christoval as she had purposed, after the kind and urgent solicitation of the Adelantado and his wife.

Again the couple were left alone, for the young lady of the household with her new admirer, the dashing Nuno, fluttered along the piazza, into the ballroom again, chatting and smiling, enjoying the flying hours, and extracting their sweetness like the bee the treasured honey from flower to flower. De Soto, then, appeared seeking the coolness of the porch with Isabel, the Count and Countess de Gomera.

"We trust to you our daughter Leonora de Bobadilla. To your protection and care we confidently commit her. She's young, just seventeen, has many lessons to learn. You and your youthful cavaliers will guard her well, I know."

"Count Gomera, believe me, I shall protect the beautiful Leonora, cherish her as my own daughter, and if cupid should so dispose, hers shall be an advantageous match among my noble cavaliers.

I'll advance her to rank and fortune in the country we shall conquer."

This conversation, the daughter of de Marchine overheard with unfeigned interest. She turned to Juan and thought she read his heart. It pleased him, she thought, that this coming Countess should sail upon his ship, this girl who had sneeringly charged her with pursuing the admired Juan. Thirty seconds of silence passed. The Count and Countess, with de Soto and his devoted wife were now at the entrance of the music hall beyond. In serious, yet persuasive speech, Juan fixed his eyes on Leonora of Seville, but his first word halted on his lips. Through the railing of the porch behind him a long and sharp-nailed hand was reached. It tugged fiercely at his silken doublet, and jerked him backward violently against the wooden lattice. The startled Leonora, unable to understand her lover's movements, thought him seized with sudden sickness or unexplainable malady, and turned with willing arms to steady him. Then her quick eye saw the hand that held him, a copper-colored hand. She spied the face that owned the hand, peering vindictively through the open woodwork of the porch. She shrieked with trembling voice: "Tachuco, I know you. Away, what want you here?" With desperate grip the redskin grasped the silken garment, tore it in shreds, and letting go his hold upon the white man, he breathed forth hatred and whispered in murderous voice: "De Leon, I am your enemy for life, and the evil genius of your gold-searching party. You take me to my home again. Thanks for your trouble. I will never guide

you as you think. You'll hear from me later. Farewell. Follow me, if you will."

CHAPTER IV.

Cuban Hospitality.

The music stopped; the dancing ceased; the fragrant flowers fell upon the floor to be crushed beneath the feet of the hurrying men, or swept along by the rustling skirts of the trailing women. The Count was greatly stirred, and the ready de Soto indignant. His own ears had heard the woman's cry, as she addressed the Indian. He had barely crossed the entrance to the ballroom. Turning quicker than his prancing steed could move, around and backward, he wheeled, and found himself at the spot where Juan and Leonora had rested.

"Yonder he goes, sir," in intensity of voice, the girl gasped.

"Who goes, my child?" the Gover'nor asked. "Who it it, that has caused this uproar? Speak quickly, girl."

"The Indian, the Indian Tachuco, sir. I saw his face and know him well."

Juan was now standing, facing the darkness, whither the retreating figure of his enemy moved. Rodrique Gomez hastening behind his master, noticed the torn doublet of his friend Juan.

"Are you injured, Juan?" he quickly asked "Your doublet is torn. No more gay promenade for you this night. 'Twas the Indian, Leonora tells us. Yes, our Indian battles have begun this side the great Atlantic; but I wish I had that In-

dian again. I thrashed him once, and would crave another try."

"Leave him to me, Rodrique. He's made himself my sworn enemy; but up and out; let's get him."

"Stay!" counselled the commander of the cavaliers. "It will be two days before we sail. We shall secure the man and put him in irons for the rest of the trip. Then properly subdued we will release him to do our bidding on the other side, where we need his skill and knowledge among strange peoples."

Thus de Soto brought quiet and the festivities went on once more. That night the constable of Gomera and his men were summoned to the castle. The Count informed them of the prowler about his house, told them who he was and gave instructions to seize him at all hazards, and send him in chains to the ship. There the officers of the fleet would take care of him. At daybreak the man was found, securely handcuffed, and placed upon the caravel of Captain Arias, as a prisoner of war, bound hand and foot and left in charge of the negro Estivanico much against the negro's will, and in defiance of the Indian's request. Thus the incident of the ball at the Governor's house was closed; so also was the festivity itself, for soon after midnight the knights and ladies went their way homeward, or to the ship, to sleep late and begin another day of merriment.

Thus they feasted and danced during three days' stop at Gomera. The fourth day again they set out for the New World, taking one new member of their party, Leonora, the daughter of the Count,

sailing on the San Christoval, under the guardianship of de Soto and his hospitable wife. Leonora de Marchine, friend of Juan, however, sailed upon the other ship, the caravel of Captain Arias, in which she at first embarked. The last day at the Canaries she voiced her determination, not to seem to pursue her lover over much.

"I will not be reproached again by that foolish Countess," she said. "The San Christoval is not large enough for her and me. So I shall continue as I began. We shall meet again at Cuba, I hope."

In vain was Juan's persuasion. In vain also were the entreaties of de Soto and the expostulations of his wife. Leonora would not appear again to follow Juan. None should make that charge again. The days passed and the weeks. Across the waving ocean they sailed, as lighthearted as children off for a holiday, and confident of gold as if it were in sight. The end of May found them at the harbor of Santiago de Cuba.

Their coming brought great joy throughout the whole of Cuba. Santiago welcomed them with open arms. A beautiful horse, richly caparisoned, awaited de Soto; a costly mule, emblem of loyalty, was furnished his graceful Dona Isabel. Thus mounted they were escorted to their lodgings by the burghers of the town on prancing steeds. Their men were also entertained with similar hospitality, some quartered in the town, others kindly cared for in the country houses of the wealthy Cubans. For several days the city witnessed one continuous festival. The daughter of Count Gomera enjoyed her new experiences with unbridled pleasure. Nuno

Tobar, the dashing lieutenant-general, led the wild scenes of revel and festivity. Juan and "his Leonora," as Gomera's daughter called her, Rodrique Gomez and a score of others who had come from Spain, wearied themselves with balls and masquerades at night, and by day indulged in tilting matches, witnessed bull fights, contests of skill in horsemanship, running at the ring, and other amusements of a chivalrous nature.

But Juan's enjoyment of the games was short. With Rodrique Gomez he was dispatched on many errands, and had placed upon him manifold responsibilities for the expedition soon to set out for Florida. Leonora of Seville saw very little of her lover. The days passed drearily. Often during these hours of waiting she regretted her refusal to join the party on the San Christoval in their sail from the Canaries; but regrets would not bring back good times which had been thrown away. She seemed to note a certain coldness in the busy Juan, and saw him less and less. Did he stay away to avoid her, or was he thus tight-bound to many duties? She did not know. Thus the weeks sped on and the girl who had braved so much was left alone, while the man who had loved her spent his time in work. Had he forgotten her? Did he cease to love her? Was he playing a game to test her loyalty? True Pedro Porcello had thrice sought her company and was with her in public, forcing himself upon her on festal occasions and at social functions. His tongue had been busy, and his boasts went rampant through the ranks of Juan's friends that "de Leon had been outwitted in his love

affair, that Leonora had jilted Juan, in the interest of another. It was even reported that Pedro had said "I am the new favorite of the maid from Seville," and the words like poisoned arrows had reached the ears of Juan.

Pedro Porcella was his father's son, and had joined the company of the famed de Soto, when Porcella, Senior, united his forces with the new Adelantado. Juan had met him once. It was at the masquerade, when first the dashing cavaliers had touched the soil of Santiago. It was late when de Leon reached the jolly masquerade, too late to enjoy the frolic of the hour. Then had Porcella nettled him, half in jest and half in earnest, telling him he might just as well go home again, for Leonora had danced with him before her lover came upon the scene. The vexing Juan did not seem to mind and the evening passed with pleasant incidents unmarred by the bitter sally of the Cuban. The merry-makers had gone to rest to sleep away the memories of their jolly times and refresh themselves for new ones on the morrow. The morrow came, and with it an afternoon of exceptional beauty.

A bull fight was the order of the hour. Pedro Porcella was among the company that cheered the victor as he felled the enraged beast and slew him where he lay. The man had caught the spirit of the scene and as though unsatisfied with such heartless pleasure, vented his feelings on a helpless slave whose only offense was to move too slowly from Porcella's pathway, as he came along. In a moment Juan was by his side.

"Coward," he cried. "In Spain we thrash such curs as you."

A dozen hads were raised to wave him back. Nuno Tobar among his friends sought to bear him away arm in arm, telling of the Cuban's prowess as a duelist.

"Three have fallen by his sword, and a fourth has wet the soil of Cuba with his blood, while Porcella was but slightly harmed," they said.

But Juan seemed not to hear the words, and Porcella, furious at the words of contumely, approached and flung a challenge in the face of the youth of Seville. At once it was accepted. The seconds were chosen, the place selected, and the day appointed. Both were in their places, and the game of life and death was on. Porcella showed his skill, the ability of experience. De Leon gave at first an exhibition of cautiousness. He parried, withdrew, and for fifteen minutes simply used defensive tactics. Then a quickly directed blow from the Cuban's sword just grazed his neck. A cry half started from the lips of de Leon's friends; but suddenly the tide of battle changed. Caution was replaced by increasing boldness, until the sword of de Leon beat fast upon his opponent's steel, and quick as a flash of light, the blade fell upon Porcella's wrist, dashed his sword from his hand, and brought him to the position of the vanquished. As he fell de Leon placed his foot upon his neck, and raised his sword as if to strike him to his death, then paused, and said: "No, I will not kill you. Go, and practice mercy, as mercy has been granted

you. Succor the weak. Don't beat them, and"—he added—"let your tongue say only what is true."

From that fateful afternoon Pedro Porcella was little seen in the company of those who sailed in the fleet of de Soto from Spain. He failed to appear in the ranks of the new world conquerors, when the cavaliers set sail for their inland march. This exciting incident varied the monotony of gaiety among the soldiers of fortune, and the days of preparation were just sufficient in number to make the time pass merrily along. Some of the company were more busy than the rest. Those who waited on the Adelantado in the work of the equipment of the expedition were hard worked men, and among such toilers was Juan de Leon. So Leonora saw her knight but little. He came and he went. His words to her seemed few. His stay with her was shorter and shorter each time he returned from some imposed task of his chief. Again she wondered and said in her heart, soliloquising, "Has Juan forgotten his love? Is he not greatly changed? Better for me had I remained at home with my people in the far off land."

But her musings did not relieve her moments of darkness. Like a light shining along the pathway of night was Juan's return, from time to time; but there seemed to rest upon her the horror of a great darkness, and so the days dragged on. Nuno Tobar, among the young men of the army, seemed most gay. Evidently he had come to seek pleasure rather than gold. The daughter of the Count of Gomera was his constant companion, and ardent admirer, as he besported himself, made merry and

led in deeds of mimic heroism; and it was not until his degradation in the sight of the honorable de Soto, that he saw before him the serious side of the great undertaking. Rodrique Gomez also played rather than worked. He was to be found at some game of chance and, so it was whispered among the men, he would before long gamble away his life, or the sight of his eyes. Juan de Anasco was a most busy man. Twice it fell to his lot to coast the Florida shores, with a picked crew, in quest of some commodious harbor to which the expedition might sail direct, find secure anchorage, and a safe place of landing for the troops.

Three months elapsed after his departure on his second voyage, and no tidings of him had been received. Then when great fears were entertained for his safety, suddenly his tempest-tossed bark reached Havana. No sooner did Anasco and his crew set foot on land, than they threw themselves on their knees, and thus prostrate they crawled to church to worship, in fulfillment of a vow made in an hour of great peril. This done, they related all the dangers through which they passed on sea and land. Once in midocean they gave themselves up for lost. Again, they were driven on an uninhabited island where for two months they subsisted on shell-fish gathered along the beach, and wild fowl which they felled with clubs. However, the great object of the cruise had been fulfilled. A secure harbor on the coast of Florida was found, and on his return Anasco brought with him four of the captured natives, to serve as interpreters and guides.

It was on this second tour of inspection, the Indian Tachuco was reported missing. Since his outbreak at the Canaries he had been under supervision of the Negro, Estivanico. At first he had been placed in chains. Then apparently becoming more tractable, he was given greater liberty; but as events showed, he was still untamed and just as subtle. At length he was granted full liberty within certain confines of the camp, and Estivanico was expected to play the part of watchdog, report any signs of treachery, and, above all else, to see that the prisoner did not escape. All went well with Estivanico and his ward until the last day of their brief sojourn on the mainland; where they tarried but three short hours. Those hours were fatal to the faithful negro. They found him stabbed to the heart, lying where the Indian had left him and taken to the woods. They buried him where he fell, the expedition's first victim of the inhabitants of the new land. That night as the little brigantine passed out through the waves to return to her port in Cuba, Anasco and his men seemed to hear the shrill voice of the wily Tachuco, and as it died away in the distance these words were borne to their ears on the evening breeze: "You men of Spain will hear from me later. Farewell, all of you, till then!"

CHAPTER V.

"Into the Great Unknown."

It was the month of May, the year of our Lord, fifteen hundred and thirty-nine, the twelfth day, some say; others tell us it was the eighteenth. The Havana harbor witnessed scenes such as it had never known before. From its sunny shores there had gone other companies of men, but none so great and gay as these. Across its smiling harbor other farewells had been said, but none so full of hope. Mankind must move, as by some lurking impulse of restless life; and farewells must be said, and so there travelled seaward from the coast of Cuba's foremost port many fond and tender greetings of God-speed.

That May day was not all smiles. The winds upon the face of the deep were of a contrary temperament; yet fear was not in any heart, but happiness and hope abounded. Still on the well trodden quay, there waved a single hand after all had gone. It was pathetic, one might truly say, like the gentle swaying of the tarrying rose of summer. It was a woman's hand, and, waved with tired yet unremitting steadiness as though fanning the ships with a favoring breeze. The woman spoke. "Gone, gone! My knightly love seeks wealth and honor. But wealth and honor are already his. Why crave them further.

"Would sweet content had been part of Fernando's character. Brave and good he is, but he lacks the accompanying contentment, which is great gain. But I must not complain. He will return, he will, and then, then never again shall we be separated."

The words were not spoken in soliloquy. By the matron's side, another hand was swaying in the Cuban freshness. It was also the hand of a woman, a young and dainty maid, the courageous girl of Seville, clad in crimson, Leonora, who had strangely forced herself upon the sailing fleet, and had found thereon a gladsome welcome. She now rested in the heart and home of Dona Isabel, wife of the great Fernando. The two women, who thus stood side by side and waved across the sea, were the wife of the dashing Adelantado and this daughter of de Marchine, fond lover of Juan de Leon.

Juan had parted from the proud yet faithful soul with expressions of affection; yet try as she would, the asseverations were, she thought, cold and formal. But still she waved her love across the incoming waves, to the outgoing ship on which her lover sailed. He, too, waved from time to time a clear response to the girl in red, which Leonora took to herself and treasured in her heart. The "other Leonora", she of the Canary Islands, had fallen in favor with the ruling lady. In fact, some weeks before she had left the company of the knights and ladies, and was preparing soon to return to her distant home, if Nuno Tobar, who now was hers, should delay his coming overmuch. Thus Isabel, and the Spanish Leonora, stood with faces seaward,

outstretched hands, and now and then a quiet tear-drop stealing down their cheeks, as away, away went the boats, away at last to their "El Dorado, away to the land of cedar and wine, the land that is abloom with perpetual spring, the land of gold, another Mexico, another Peru. Joy broke forth into songs and expressions of delight." The brilliant army now upon the sea drew near to this land of their glorious expectation. They "filled high the cup with Samian wine," and saw themselves in imagination returning to Spain covered with glory and laden with gold.

Thus they rejoiced as the pale blue in the far-off horizon informed them that they were nearing the flowery land. The last day of May found them at the shores of the mainland. The ships, save one caravel and two brigantines to patrol the coast, were sent back to their starting place. Thus the men of adventure learned there was no retreat. "Forward and onward" was to be their motto. If Isabel and Leonora could have looked across the sea from the port of Havana in Cuba to that of Espirito Santo, or what is now known as Tampa, Florida, they would have seen not many hours later, the stirring scenes of war, a sort of warfare cruelly strange, but terrible in its intensity. Tachuco, the evil genius of the expedition, had gone on before. From the spot where he slew the negro Estivanico, he had gone forth to rouse the creatures of the forests, more dangerous than beasts of prey. But little did the Indians need arousement. The unforgetting red man remembered the unthinkable

atrocities of Narvaez. The noseless and motherless Hirrihigua, who had been mutilated and bereaved by the white men of that former expedition, was in waiting with his thousands of fighting men. To such a land of hate and unfriendliness the eager Spaniards came. They passed a peaceful night on shore in careless security; but with the breaking of the day there burst upon their ears savage yells, and a copious rain of fast-driven arrows. The armor of the Spanish soldiers was buckled on in haste and all reinforcements held in readiness. Now was the time to try their noble horses, point the lance, swing the battle axe, or fire their ancient guns.

The elder Porcella, lieutenant of the army, with a band of dashing cavaliers, led the way. The younger men, among them Juan de Leon, Rodrique Gomez, and a goodly company of youths pursued the trail through the winding pathways. Making a quick dash, they drove back the oncoming redskins, and returned flushed with marked elation over victory in the first sniff of battle. But they knew not the persistence of their feathered adversaries. Finding their way to the nearest village, two leagues distant, they prepared their encampment. In the deserted homes, where but recently the natives sojourned, they made their homes, and thus they lived beneath the palm-thatched roofs made by the naked savages. Thither they brought their prisoners of war, and among them a white man, willing prisoner, John Ortiz, by name. The poor man had just been captured, or, better, rescued from his seven years or more of exile.

Hear now, O reader, the white man's story of his days of peril and daily fear of death. Seated at the doorway of the Adelantado's headquarters, he told his tale to the leading officers of the expedition.

"I can tell but a small portion of my manifold trials," he said. "From the hour of my landing at the bay where your ships have just touched, my life has been one long and dismal nightmare. We came in search of Pamphilo Narvaez and his men; and before we landed, saw a letter, raised on a cleft reed, stuck in the ground. Supposing the note contained instructions left by Narvaez, giving information of his movements and destination, we sought to gain it. As we gazed on shore the Indians swarmed from the country round about. The chief pointed to the missive we prized so highly, and called to us to come and get it. This we did, four of us stepping on shore, and according to agreement, placing on our ship four Indians, who volunteered to go as hostages, to prove no treachery was contemplated.

"Thus we came, unsuspecting white men; but no sooner had we reached shore than the four Indians on the ship leaped overboard, swam for land, and joined their fellows in such a scene of craftily contrived vengeance as has never been surpassed, I think. Then the crew of the Spanish vessel, seeing the number of the enemy, and dreading further mishap, made sail with all haste, abandoning us, their luckless comrades, to our fate. In savage triumph we were escorted to this village; in fact, were

brought before this very house, where now I tell my story. I remember it so well, in spite of the dreadful scenes which might well drive from man's mind the picture of the world about him. Here, in this place, we were confined until a certain day of religious festival, placed under a strong guard of determined and watchful warriors.

"The day of vengeful celebration came, and with its coming the tribe assembled, and we, brought forth for torture, that thus we might atone for the offenses committed against the chief by the merciless Narvaez. There the sins of our brethren were visited upon us. Stripped naked, led to the public square, turned loose in the amphitheatre of the wrathful Indians, we were shot at by arrows, one at a time. While I waited my turn, I saw Manuel Garcia fall, and de Lara, my dearest friend. How my very soul went out to him! I would have given my life to save him. Then Philip Ronda went down, pierced to the heart, and then I waited my summons to death. By that time, after witnessing such scenes of studied torment, where my three friends had been forced to run from corner to corner, vainly seeking some nook of safety—by that time I say, my only desire was that my death might be quick, that my tormentors might favor me with the mercy of suddenness of death. I was but eighteen then, without the marks of age, which have hastily crept upon me during these trying years. 'My turn next,' I hopelessly whispered to myself, as they led me into the unfair arena.—'my turn next.' Just then, to my amazement and, I may say, disappointment, for I

wished the ordeal over as speedily as possible, just then the hand of the savage that led me was stayed. I heard a woman's voice, and saw the form of an Indian maid. Her name was Ticitia. I have grateful cause of remembering that name and the good woman who bore it. 'Stay!' she cried in determined accent. 'The Chief's daughter and her mother have interceded in this young man's behalf. Their appeal is heard.'

"My life in this manner was spared, but thenceforth I lived a wretched existence, a living death. From morning until evening I was compelled to bring wood and carry water. I was allowed but little sleep and food. Not a day passed without some cruel beating. On festivals (and they came round with remarkable frequency) I was an object of amusement to the Cacique, who compelled me to run, from sunrise to sunset, in the public square of the village, where my companions had met their untimely end—Indians being stationed with bows and arrows to shoot me should I halt one moment. As each day came to a close I threw myself on the hard floor of my hut more dead than alive. At such times, like guardian angels, the daughter of the chief and her attending women would come with food and clothing, and by their kind treatment my life was preserved. At length I saw in the terrible eye of the Cacique a determined purpose to end my life. At his command I was bound, outstretched upon a wooden frame, in form a huge gridiron. Thus fastened, I was brought to the public square and placed over a bed of live coals, there to be roasted

alive. My cries and shrieks, which I could not restrain, reached my female protectors, who were once more successful with the head of the tribe. I was unbound, dragged from the fire, taken to the nearest dwelling, where again my angels of mercy bathed me with the juice of herbs and attended me with assiduous care.

"After days of agony I recovered from my wounds, though marked with many scars. Once more I was put to a laborious task. In a lonely field, the very bosom of the forest, was I taken, to the wild man's cemetery, there to guard the graves of his dead. Perhaps you passed them on your way—wooden boxes, covered with boards without fastening, except a stone or log of wood laid upon the top; so the bodies, thus poorly protected, were often carried away by wild beasts. Those bodies I was placed to guard. In that cemetery, with bow and arrows, I was stationed to watch day and night, and I was told that, should a single body be carried away I would be burned alive; but there I returned thanks to God for having freed me from the dreaded presence of the Cacique, hoping to lead a better life with the dead than during the weeks past I had spent with the living of the same country.

"While watching thus one wearisome night, sleep overpowered me just before the morning dawned. I was, with fortune suddenly awakened by a mysterious sound. I listened. It was the falling lid of one of the chests. Hastily jumping to my feet, I ran whence the sound had come, and found an emp-

ty casket which, to my knowledge, had contained the body of an infant recently deceased, the child of an Indian of great note. As I pictured to myself the tortures of being burned alive, I set out in pursuit of the beast—for such it was—which had robbed the abode of the dead. A short distance within the woods there came upon my ear the noise as of a dog gnawing a bone. Warily drawing near to the spot I dimly perceived an animal among the bushes, and invoking succor from on high, I let fly an arrow at the ravenous creature. The thick and tangled underwood brought me no sound. The animal did not stir. Impatiently I waited till the dawn of day, hoping my shot had been a fatal one. It was. Next day I found a fierce looking animal of the panther kind, lying dead, with my arrow through his heart. Gathering together the mangled remains of the little child, I replaced them in the coffin, then dragged my victim in triumph to the village with the arrows still in his body.

"The exploit gained me credit with the old hunters of the tribe, and for some time softened even the ferocity of the Cacique. But the old Indian's resentment of the white man's wrongs was too bitter long to be appeased. I received one day a warning from the princess that her father had determined to sacrifice me at the next festival, which was close at hand, and—she said—the influence of herself and mother would no longer avail. She wished me therefore to take speedy refuge with a neighboring cacique, a noble Indian named Mucozo, who loved her, and sought her hand in mar-

riage, and who for her sake these many days has befriended me. At the merciful Ticitia's command, that night, at midnight, toward the northern extremity of the village I met a trusted guide who led me to a little bridge across a neighboring stream, two leagues distant, and pointing away to the west, said, 'Six leagues hence you will find the village of Mucozo. Tell him Ticitia has sent you, and expects him to befriend you in your extremity. This he will surely do. Go, and may your God protect you!'

"Obediently and joyously I went, and found myself at break of day on the banks of a small stream near the village of Mucozo. Speedily I found the noble ruler, brought him the message from his mistress, and thus for full nigh seven years I have lived on his hospitality. The vindictive Hirrihigua has often sought me as a fugitive; but the generous Mucozo again and again has refused to deliver me up to my cruel enemy, maintaining inviolate the sacred rites of hospitality. The very request of the terrible cacique he has treated as a stain upon his honor. His chieftains tell me he seems to have lost the friendship of the cacique and his people, and even forfeited the hand of her he tenderly loved, the beautiful daughter of Herrihigua. But here comes a company of braves from Mucozo, and, methinks the good man himself is also among them, as I besought him. 'Tis he, I know."

CHAPTER VI.

"On the White Man's Trail."

The camp had given itself up to merriment, and the cause of this joy was the liberation of the captive Ortiz. His return to the white man's country brought an outburst of revelry. The first night after his deliverance not an eye was closed among the thousand in the little settlement; and when, three days later, the noble Mucozo, his Indian friend, arrived, the hearts of all were full of gladness. The rescued exile had just finished the complete recital of his extraordinary years of servitude. Looking toward the entrance of the reservation, he discerned the familiar faced warriors who for many days had been his steadfast companions and protectors. Among them appeared the well loved form of Mucozo.

The cacique approached, kissed the hands of the Governor with great veneration, saluted each of the officers, and made a slight obeisance to the privates. After appropriate salutation, de Soto in affectionate words addressed him: "Generous friend and worthy ruler, accept the assurances of my people that their hearts go out to you in grateful acknowledgment of these years of kindness to this man, our countryman and brother. We commend you for your humanity, and thank you for your hospitality."

"What I have done for Ortiz," the Indian respond-

ed, "is but little. He came commended to me by one of greater worth than I, and threw himself upon my protection. There is a law of our tribe, which forbids our betraying a fugitive who asks of us an asylum. We have also found that this man's virtue and courage entitle him to all the respect we have shown him. That I have pleased your people, I rejoice exceedingly, and by devoting myself henceforth, to their service, I hope to merit their esteem."

Gifts were then presented to Mucozo and his officers, and for a week and more the Chieftain tarried in the camp, as de Soto's guest. No unpleasant incident marred his stay among the white men. His spirit was one of perfect confidence toward the strangers. Not so the Cacique's aged mother, who also visited camp, and came to Ortiz in his new quarters, five days after her son's arrival at the place. The poor woman was overwhelmed with grief because her son was in the power of the white men. She passionately entreated the Governor to deliver up her son, and not serve him as Narvaez had served Hirrihigua. "He is young," she said; "only give him his liberty, and take me, who am a poor old woman, and treat me as you please, I will bear any punishment for both."

"Bring her to my quarters," requested the Governor. "There she shall have the best our supplies afford. We shall, of course, treat the good woman with the greatest kindness and esteem."

Thus for three days she sat at the Governor's table; but she still continued anxious and suspicious. She would partake of nothing until Ortiz had tasted it; fearing she might be poisoned.

"How is this," said the Spaniard to her, "that you have now so great fear of death, you who offered to die for your son?"

"I have the same love of life as other mortals," she replied, "but most willingly would I lose it to save a son, who is far dearer to me than life itself."

Even when assured of the perfect liberty of Mucozo, and that he only remained for a time with the Spaniards through choice because they were young braves like himself, she was but poorly comforted, and departed sorrowing to her home. Her parting words she addressed to Ortiz: "My son, you remember, saved you from the evil hand of Hirrihigua. I beseech you liberate my son. Harm him not."

Thus the mother's love drove her along in unremitting anxiety.

But all Indians are not alike. Ortiz knew this to be true. Before many days had passed Juan de Leon, Rodrigue Gomez and a score of other Spaniards found it so. The courtesies with the good Mucozo were soon ended. In those sullen wilds the cavaliers found little place for aught save work and warfare. True they were as ready for pleasure and indulgence as for the quest of gold and, sought gold and glory, not hostilities; but the wilderness called to war. As they went on their way, every tree seemed to hide a hostile Indian, every rock sheltered a dozen foemen, who rained arrows on their heads and at their horses. The voice of the forest sounded the summons to conflict. "I give you war, not peace," it seemed to say. The very streams as they ran murmured vindictively the

hostile refrain, and called for vengeance upon the ruthless invaders. Thus the white men found that the Indian and his abode were not their friends. War, implacable and incessant was the order of their days.

"Some devil is loose in these woods, Ortiz. For these days, in sooth, since we parted with the people of Mucozo, the Fates have been against us. Our very victories are losses. We end one fight, simply to begin another, and we are fighting all along the way."

The speaker was Juan de Leon. The forward march had been begun. De Soto had pushed on ahead, after questioning Juan Ortiz concerning prospects of gold. Ortiz had said, "I know of none. When with Hirrihigua, I was closely watched, and not allowed to wander; and although while dwelling with Mucozo I had perfect liberty, yet I dared not venture far, through fear of being waylaid by my enemies. Away to the west, thirty leagues distant," he added, "I have heard much of a cacique by name Urribarracaxi, the most powerful chieftain of the country. To this chief the other rulers pay tribute. In his land there must be wealth, perhaps abundance of gold." So de Soto advanced with part of his fighting force, to find the country of the wealthy cacique, taking with him Juan de Leon and Juan Ortiz among the number of his aids.

Passing from tribe to tribe, he asked the question: "Where can we find gold?" The universal answer was the single word "beyond." Even the friendly Indian of Mucozo pointed them onward. "Away to the west," they said, "gold can be found.

There is none in this country." Seventeen leagues distant some captured Indians were brought before the Governor. When questioned, the red skins had replies which to a suspicious mind would suggest, the wily natives had been taught the answer which they gave: "Not here in our land, but some leagues beyond gold may be found." These captives Ortiz questioned more at length. From one, more eloquent than the rest, the Spaniards thought they had at length hit upon a promising clue. "There is a country to the west," he said, "called Ocali. There the inhabitants are continually at war with the people of another province. There the spring lasts the whole year long and there gold is plenty, so abundant is it that the warriors wear head pieces of the precious metal upon their heads when they go forth to battle."

With fresh hope the Governor spurred his men to press forward in search of Ocali, the land of gold. Behind him lay the various tribes through whose lands the Spaniards passed, and as they went their way, behind them hid the chiefs and their warriors in the forest wilds, and about them also roamed the lurking savages, ready to fall upon that careless white man who might show himself too far from the line of march. Here and there a chief was captured, and several of his men, that thus secured with hostages of the tribe the Governor and his soldiery might pass through the cacique's territory in perfect safety from attack. Hirrihigua, the ugly chief whom first they sought, had evaded them; and others also warned by their leader of the tribes. Porcella had been sent bearing messages of peace

to Hirrihigua, but as the Spanish soldiers proceeded on their errand messengers met them on the way, bringing information that the cacique had secreted himself in the heart of the forest and could not be found. Disregarding the message Porcella pressed forward and a dozen Indian informants brought the same communication: "Hirrihigua cannot be found. If the white man proceeds he will be lost in the forest maze, or find himself sinking in the murky swamps." This was the only reply Porcella had to bring to his superior, save this polite response from Hirrihigua himself declining all overtures of peace. The cacique's message was as follows: "The memory of my injuries forbids my sending a kind answer, and a harsh one your courtesy will not allow me to return." The old Indian could not forget the evil treatment of Narvaez. Thus the sins of the former white man's visit were visited upon the expedition which followed, as had been done before; but there seemed still another force at work.

Porcella on his return from his unsuccessful advance brought a report which set the mind of Juan de Leon hard at work. It was the saying of the dashing Cuban that, among the couriers of the cacique who met the company, was one who knew the Spanish tongue. Intelligent and alert, he eyed the white man, but was slow of approach until apparently satisfied they were such men as he dared face.

"I told him," said Porcella, "he need not fear us; and he seemed not to be afraid when at length he gave his message; but this is what surprised me, he knew the Spanish tongue so well, I almost asked him, had he ever been to Spain. Another incident

of our meeting brought importance to the Indian. Rodrique Gomez, who was busy nearby, but did not see the man's face, for he turned away abruptly, remarked, 'that Indian's voice seems familiar.' Then after the red man had disappeared completely in his native haunts, Rodrique told me, there came over him as a flash, the thought, that Indian is none other than the treacherous Tachuco."

Juan de Leon therefore reasoned: "The hateful Tachuco is now abroad. His threat voiced months before he is now carrying out. He boasted: 'You will hear from me later." We are now hearing from him."

Juan de Leon conjectured more truly than he thought; but as he went forward in the onward march of the Adelantado's army he determined to catch a glimpse of the wily Tachuco, if such should be the case, that he followed the course of the troops, and was spreading among the tribes and their chiefs an undying spirit of hate, and the summons to unending warfare. He reflected upon the many replies of the messages of the different caciques, where each reply to the question: "Where can we find gold?" was identical. Tribe after tribe brought the selfsame message: "The gold is to be found beyond." The answer once aroused the thoughtful de Leon. With Ortiz he had questioned a captive on the borders of Ocali. The stolid Indian replied: "In our country no gold is to be found. Seek it beyond."

"Tell him, Ortiz," quickly said the nettled Juan. "Tell him we have heard that answer long enough. They are treacherous words. Ask him who taught

his tongue that speech. Was it a bad Indian named Tachuco?"

Immediately the features of the Indian relaxed into show of feeling as he heard the question, and beheld the impatient looks of de Leon. By a river bank the whites and the Indians talked. The conversation had been friendly save for this single ripple on their fellowship; yet beneath that savage's coat of red there burned the hatred of his tribe. The language of de Leon, and his irritated glance, roused the smouldering flame of rage. Quick as the fast running stream by which the men of diverse tongues and thoughts conversed, the sullen Indian raised his arm and with his bow violently struck the Spaniard. Then with a war whoop threw himself into the water. His companions followed. As it chanced with the cavaliers that day was that faithful hound, which on several occasions, by his wonderful sagacity and his innate fearlessness, had endeared himself to the whole company of knights. That special dog was a noble beast. He seemed half human. No soldier of the hundreds beneath the flag of Spain in those vast wilds was his superior in usefulness about the camp. At night his presence meant safety from attack. By day the faithful beast seemed ever alert; and when he was loose no hostile Indian dared draw near. That impulsive savage with whom the white men talked knew not the prowess of the hound.

The blow had scarce been struck. The savages had hardly reached the waters of the swollen stream, when the dog plunged forward. In he went after the swimmers. Passing several of the Indians with-

out molesting them, he reached that brave who had made the assault upon the unsuspecting de Leon; and laying hold of the man, in fierce attack, he tore him to pieces. De Leon and Ortiz returned to the camp; and as they went, they seemed to hear the angry cries of the companions of the hapless man, as the warriors, after reaching the opposite bank, sank still deeper into the forest. Their voices were dying away. Just then there seemed to join theirs another voice.

"It is the voice of the evil Tachuco," whispered de Leon, speaking rather to himself than to Ortiz by his side. "Yes, it is Tachuco's voice. I think I understand his words. Listen, Ortiz. Does the wretch not say: 'White men, you are hearing from me now.'"

Juan had not seen the unforgiving Indian, nor, heard him speak since that eventful and pleasant night he sat with Leonora on the porch of the Count Gomera's palace. That scene now came before him as he heard Tachuco once more hurl defiance at the white man. In his tent that night he threw himself down in meditation. A restless spirit came upon him, such as drives a man to change some course of life he has pursued. He could not sleep. Had he felt a battle were near at hand, he would have sought forgetfulness in mad strife of conflict. For many weeks he thus had stilled his mind in quiet forgetfulness; but that night certain memories would not down. Like the sight of some friendly coast to the tired mariner, or, as the scenes of home to the home-sick wanderer, there came to Juan de Leon the sweet face of the woman he really loved.

The vision would not leave him. Nor did he wish it to depart. At first he fancied it reproached him for his coldness, when the man and the woman were last together.

"Yes," Leonora," he said, as though she were present to hear. "Yes, Leonora, we might have had a better time in Cuba, you and I. It was not that I loved you less; but, preparing as I was, for the coming months of hardship and separation, I steeled my face against you; but my heart was not so hard. Forgive me, if you can, sweet maid."

Then the features of the face which graced the vision marked a smile of kindliness and love. Lines of pain, which had rested there, quickly departed. A new expression appeared, and, as the soldier fondly gazed, he read the message: "Juan, dear, now all is well I know." The night passed hurriedly, without incident, save now and then the movement of the sentinel who watched the camp, or the sound of the crushing in the underbrush as the faithful hounds warned off the prowling spies of the neighboring cacique. Thus the night rolled on as many others had done, eight hours of tired sleep to be followed by an early advance with the break of day.

On the army marched, eager to enter the vast province of the chieftain Vitachuco, or whom the Spaniards had heard so much. Having captured thirty Indians to serve as guides, they pressed forward. "The gold was just beyond," they thought. True, some of the rank and file at times grew skeptical; but the determined de Soto never faltered. Of course, the gold "was beyond." It certainly was

not yet at hand. So on they went. The Genoese, Francisco, by name, the only shipwright in the army built the needed bridges across the streams. They were rude affairs; but answered every purpose for man and beast, camp equipment, and provisions carried along the way. Thus on they went, across fords, through wooded field and quiet valley, on, through the never-ending wilderness, and, as they went, they seemed to read the message in the woods through which they passed, "The gold is beyond." Thus they came in eagerness to the famed land of the cacique, Vitachuco.

Vitachuco was the strongest chieftain of three brothers, ruling in that land. Passing through the villages of the weaker brothers, with clamor of drum and sound of trumpet, seizing the Indians terrified and amazed, surrounding the mansion of the cacique, overcoming the guards, bringing general dismay, they caused the people to bow in submission. So the army pressed on to that portion of the land where Vitachuco ruled. This wily chief was not so easily brought into subjection. His first answer to the Spanish invasion of his land revealed the spirit of the man. He sent this message: "Go tell these white men I love them not. They come to enslave my countrymen. My people have already felt their chains, and have seen their evil deeds. Are they not the same nation and subject to the same laws as those who formerly committed so many cruelties in our land. Their manner of life proves them to be children of the Evil Spirit, and not of the sun and moon, our gods. Go they not from land to land plundering and destroying, taking the wives

and daughters of others instead of bringing their own with them; and, like mere vagabonds, maintaining themselves by the laborious toil and sweating brow of others? Were they virtuous they never would have left their own country, since there they might have practiced virtues, planting and cultivating the earth, maintaining themselves without prejudice to others or injury to themselves; instead of roving about the world committing robberies and murders, having neither shame of men, nor fear of God before them. Warn them," he said, "not to enter my dominions, for I vow that, as valiant as they may be, if they dare to put foot upon my soil, they shall never go out of my land alive—the whole race will I exterminate."

CHAPTER VII.

"Uncertain Friends."

Most amusing were the menaces of the cacique Vitachuco. Day after day his messengers entered camp with sounding trumpets, always bringing greater bravados and taunts than any they had yet hurled at the white man's head. "Enter my province," he said, "and the earth will open and swallow you up; the hills will unite and bury your army beneath them; the trees of the forest, through which you pass, will be uprooted and crush you; the birds of heaven will stay their flight to pounce upon you with corroding poison in their beaks; the waters along the way, herbs, trees and even the air you breathe with bring forth such poison that neither horse nor rider, men nor beasts, can possibly escape."

The Spaniards laughed. "We will try to quiet this chief," de Soto remarked. "These remarkable messages which Vitachuco sends are wasted words. We fear not his tongue; yet we can travel faster and we can better win the gold we seek, if this man is pacified. Let us send Oculi, and his other brother, our friend, and cool his hostile ardor."

So the two brothers of the chief were dispatched on their mission of peace. The fierce chieftain pretended at length to be won by their persuasion. He agreed to enter into friendly intercourse with the strangers. He asked, however, certain pertinent questions. He said: "How many days will these

visitors remain in my domain? What provisions will they seek when they depart, and what other things will they wish to take with them, from my country, for their journey?"

"Bring your brother this answer," responded de Soto. "The days of our sojourn will be few, no more than Vitachuco desires. Let him name the day and we shall immediately depart. We wish no more provisions than his majesty sees fit to give. Neither have we need of aught save his honest friendship."

These words of de Soto pleased the chief. He muttered: "I am content, with the Great White Man's answer, and I will come, as he requests, and fellowship with him and his people."

The appeased cacique came, bringing with him an abundant supply of provisions for the troops and horses of the Spanish. He came in splendid array, accompanied by his two brothers, and five hundred warriors, men of graceful bearing, adorned with plumes of various colors, and armed with bows and arrows of the finest workmanship. Thus attended, bringing his gifts, visible tokens of friendship, he met the Governor and his army in the beautiful valley distant two leagues from the Indian's wigwam. The meeting was cordial. The cacique was the first to speak.

"I wsh to atone for past threats and menaces," he said. "I pledge my friendship, and place myself at your service."

Very graciously did de Soto receive the wily Indian and accepted in good faith the pledges of affection and promises of helpful alliance.

"We will come to-morrow to your village," volun-

teered the Governor, "and there return your courtesies."

That night the Spanish Governor and his men lay down to sleep in sweet assurance that another hostile encounter had been avoided.

"I trust we shall have no more fighting, brother. I am wearied with this march through strange lands and constant battles with swift-footed savages."

It was a priest who spoke. He was talking with a fellow priest. There were now a dozen or more of them in the company. The clerical addressed was Barbidilla, he who, at San Lucar, talked with the two country philosophers, the old men, at the door of the ancient church. The hopes of doing good he then so honestly cherished had somewhat failed him; and the aspirations of advancement in the church, he then so strongly voiced, had not yet been realized.

"Oftentimes, Barbidilla, I lose my faith in making mankind good. How hard have I tried with some of these cavaliers!"

"But," quickly responded Barbidilla, "is not Juan de Leon a noble youth? And there is Ortiz, the Christian we found when first we landed in this wild. Is not Ortiz a good sort of fellow?"

"Yes, Barbidilla; but notice Rodrique Gomez. Good and true boy he was at home in Spain; but see him now. He has long since forgotten his prayers, and now, thinks only of revel and ceaseless gambling. He has gambled away everything he brought from home, except what the Creator fastened on him as skin and bone. He would stake his head, I fancy, if he didn't need it to play the

game; and, before long, he will lose at some venture that prized slave-girl of his, the peaceful Ulia, whom he but a week ago secured in the province of Uculi."

"My brother, have I not often sought to teach you not to see the evil, but rather to discern the good in your fellow man?" said Barbidilla. "And, so here in this wild life in Florida, let us look at the honest Oritz and the virtuous de Leon. Even among these dark-skinned brothers of ours, these denizens of the forests, we can find some truly noble specimens of virtuous life. That friendly Mucozo, who shielded Ortiz, is a truly noble soul. I talked with him thrice when he spent those eight days in our company. He's a good Indian; and, by the way, I'd like to see him gain the princess Ticitia. I myself would like, some day, in the solemn rites of the Church, to make them man and wife."

"True, Barbidilla, this example seems to belie the assertion that the only good Indian is a dead one; but from my heart I dread this new-made Indian friend of ours, the cacique called Vitichuco. He changed too quickly from angry foe, to ardent friend. His conversation was too sudden to be sincere."

"Ah, there you are again, my brother, seeing the good with one eye, or a blinded eye, and staring at the evil with two eyes, and both open. We must believe Vitichuco. Did he not repent of his former evil talk? Did he not bring us presents? See, you yourself, have there a pair of moccasions, made by one of his squaws."

"Yes, but I speak more fully than you know. I noticed Ortiz, when the cacique had left, not many hours ago. Hurriedly he disappeared in de Soto's quarters. An errand also brought me thither at that time. As confidant of both men I tarried and heard such a tale of promised treachery, as should make each white man's blood boil and his fighting power as the strength of a thousand men. Listen, Barbidilla, that cacique plots the destruction of our forces."

"What tells this?"

"Ortiz. He says he learned it from four different Indian friends of his. In four days' time—the day thus had been set—in four days' time he has called a general muster of his warriors, drawn up in battle array, presumably in sham battle to show their skill; but actually to overawe and slay the Spanish troops and take the Governor prisoner. The plan is well devised. Several companies of his choicest soldiers are to conceal their weapons in the neighboring bushes, and at the signal of their leader are to begin a general assault, first seizing the Adelantado and binding him fast. Thus they hope to end this expedition and forever rid themselves of the hated white man."

That very night while the two priests talked the captains of the army were assembled in the house of their leader.

"This, then, will be our plan," said the Governor, after extended consultation. "We shall beat this crafty chief at his own game."

"Yes," said Muscoso, "we will play medicine man, and give him some of his own remedies."

Tobar counselled immediate battle, for since his downfall before his chief, he had shown untiring zeal, and remarkable courage. Juan de Leon and Ortiz, and with them, the others—Nuno Tobar finally included—then said "Amen" to de Soto's scheme. They would ensnare the subtle Vitachuco in his own trap, and so when the message of the Cacique was brought inviting the Spanish knights with de Soto at their head to witness a display of their Indian friends in order of battle de Soto was alert and on his guard. The Indian wished the Spanish commander to tell him "whether the braves of that country knew how to form their squadrons as well as the soldiers of the white nations."

"I have heard," he said, "your people are so skilled in the art of war. Come and view the training of my men. As many warriors as the space will hold I shall lead, unarmed, remember, into the open. Let the brave chief of the white men study their maneuvers. Perhaps even from the child of the forest, he may learn some lesson."

With unsuspicious air, the Governor replied: "Your soldiery in their peaceful display will please me much. My eyes shall look upon their movements, and I shall ponder them well. But, likewise, I and my troops shall furnish the Indians with a similar exhibition of martial skill. I shall bring my squadrons of soldiers on horseback, and my companies of fighting men on foot; and we shall have a mock fight for each other's entertainment."

For a moment the treacherous cacique was silent. He seemed to think this direful plotting was mis-

carried. Was there some traitor among his wigwams? What could this counter show of the quality of fighting forces mean? Then, next moment, he checked himself, and broke the silence, saying: "It is agreed. Let us see the white man playing war," and as he stalked away, with his back upon the Spanish camp, he boasted to his four chosen leaders: "We outnumber these pale faces, and we surpass them in valor. So let them come, in peace or warlike preparation, and we shall make their soldiers as the fields of maize after the hurricane has swept them, and beaten down the grain."

"The arrangements were completed, and the Spaniards marched forth, horse and foot, in battle array, with glittering arms and fluttering banners. The Governor remained behind to accompany the Cacique on foot. Thus he would appear to be unsuspicious of the latent treason. He went, however, fully armed, and ordered two of his finest horses to be led forth caparisoned for service. One of these, the historian mentions, was a "beautiful and noble-spirited animal." His name was Aceytuno, after Mateo de Aceytuno, cavalier who had made him a present to the Governor. The companies of soldiers, the white and the red, had now reached the plain. The fighting ground was level and spacious, a well-chosen fighting place for the knights of Spain. To the left lay the dense forest, growing thick and splendid in its native beauty, miles to the West. On the right rested two placid lakes, whence the Indians took their fish, and where they bathed in summer; and where, in chill December, they found

their winter's pastime. The nearest lake was about a league in circumference, with its banks clear of trees; but so deep, three or four feet from shore, no footing could be found. It had no bottom, so the superstitious Indians declared. The second lake was further off, and appeared like a vast river, extending as far as eye could reach. Between the forest and these lakes, the Indians formed their squadrons, having the lakes on their right flank, and the forest on their left. In the thick grass of the neighbornig woods, they had concealed their bows and arrows, and thence came forth plainly unarmed; yet each savage knew, in an instant, he could find the tested bow and arrows and the deadly tomahawk, his ready weapons.

Thus here between lake and forest, the Indian force of well nigh ten thousand chosen warriors marched. With lofty plumes, which made the tallest look like giants and those of medium height like good-sized men, they passed in military order. It was surely a beautiful display. De Soto felt it such, so turning to the Cacique, he spoke in hearty praise.

"Your men demand my admiration," said the Governor.

The Cacique replied: "Well said, white man."

The conversation was short, in fact, abrupt, for in blind spirit of contest, each was burning with the same desire and determination, one against the other.

It was early morning. The sun had not yet risen high, with its burning heat to smite the earth. Again

de Soto was about to speak in commendation of his Indian rivals, when he noticed signals being passed between the Cacique and the dozen leaders who walked by his side. Before the signs had been fully given, a Spanish trumpet gave a warning blast. In an instant the twelve Spaniards who stood by their Governor's side rushed upon the Cacique. In turn the attending Indians threw themselves into the fight over the body of their chief to repel the capture of the king; but all in vain. Vitachuco was borne off a captive. Then the battle raged, one of the fiercest the Spaniards had yet known in Florida. De Soto on his favorite steed pushed into the thickest of the fight. With headlong valor he and his men drove the savages in confusion. They could not withstand the impetuous charge of armed man and driven horse. On upon the Indian squadron rode the Spanish troops, with the brave de Soto on his noble horse and gathered about him the bravest of his men. These were Moscoso and Anasco, de Leon and Ortiz. Rodrique Gomez was also at that point, in utter recklessness, fighting to get forward and hew down the ranks of the red men before they could escape.

The Indians were not cowards. They rallied about their leaders, and charged upon de Soto.

"Look," cried de Leon, "de Soto is unhorsed."

True, a dozen arrows had pierced that much-prized horse and there he lay, as though shot through the body with a rifle shot. A knight quickly alighted and gave the Governor his horse. Once more the intrepid leader was at the head of his cavalry

and spurred among the hasting, fighting Indians. With no lances to defend them the savage horde had broken in a body and fled in all directions. Some plunged into the entangled forests. Others leaped into the quiet lake. Still others scattered themselves wildly over the plain, where more than three hundred were killed, and a few were taken prisoners.

The scene of carnage now turned to the smaller lake. Thither nine hundred of the bravest men of Vitachuco fled, in fact, were driven, unable to resist the fierce onslaught of their eager foe. Here was a peculiar situation. These savages were good swimmers. The lake was deep, too deep for wading horses. The Indians had their bows and arrows and could use them, even in the lake, by mounting on the shoulder of some comrade. Ortiz for the officers of the army spoke to the swimming braves.

"We promise you safety, if you come to shore and surrender."

The only reply was an arrow, fast driven, past the Spaniard's shoulder. Then threats were made. The cavaliers would shoot down the swimming braves. This they did, and many a savage felt the missile of the cross-bow and arquebuse. But among those nine hundred there were tireless fighters. They would not surrender. The night came on. About the shore the Spaniards posted horsemen, by two and two, and footmen in parties of six near to each other, lest the Indians should escape in the dark. Skillfully some of the battling tribe swam noiselessly to shore, covered their heads with leaves

of the water lily; but the watchful troopers, perceiving the turmoil and bubbling in the water, would spur their horses to the bank, and drive the fleeing Indians again into the channel. They would not capitulate; neither did they seem to tire. So obstinate were they, that midnight came, and not one of them submitted. At that time they had passed fourteen hours in the water, and not one brave had yielded. Finally, one too tired longer to continue the struggle, surrendered, and at break of day, fifty had given up the fight. Others yielded for a moment, but returned again to the middle of the lake, and then once more yielded through love of life. At ten o'clock slowly and reluctantly two hundred surrendered themselves after having been swimming in the water four and twenty hours. They were in wretched condition, swollen with the water they had swallowed, overcome with fatigue, hunger and want of sleep.

As the Spaniards looked across the face of the little lake, there were yet seven who had not surrendered, seven men of unconquerable spirit, unmoved either by the beseechings of the interpreter or the promises of the Governor. Even the example of their comrades who surrendered had no effect on them. They simply treated all promises with scorn and defied both menaces and death. In this way they remained until three o'clock in the afternoon, when the Governor moved with admiration at the men's courage and endurance, said: "Such men shall not perish." He therefore ordered twelve Spaniards, expert swimmers, to go into the lake

with their swords in their mouths, and draw the seven warriors forth. The white swimmers quickly plunged into the lake as directed, seized the Indians, now too exhausted to resist, and drew them to the land, where they lay extended on the bank more dead than alive, having, according to the Spanish narrator, been for thirty hours in the water, apparently without putting foot to the ground, or receiving any other relief. With the landing of the seven obstinate braves the battle ended and the night closed upon the scene.

CHAPTER VIII.

"The Revolt of the Slaves."

The valiant de Soto sat in state, arrayed as best he could to awe the Indian captives. By his side sat the leaders of the Spanish force, and grouped about them were the bravest soldiers of the expedition. This was no review of troops as was to be the ill-starred exhibition of the day before. It was a court scene in which the conqueror called the vanquished foe before him. To the beaten Indians it seemed the hour of execution. The Governor's face shone with apparent anger. Four of the Indian leaders, those of the seven, who desperately resisted in the lake were brought before him. They were young men, in the prime of manhood, chosen captains of the cacique they served, and their acts and bearing justified the choice.

To these four men de Soto spoke in thundering tones, translated by Ortiz: "Wherefore did you not surrender yesterday, as your comrades had done? Why were you so obstinate and foolishly hostile to the last degree? The white men had you in their power. They could have made for you a grave in yonder lake, or even now we have it in our power to kill you and throw your bodies to our dogs."

The savage warriors replied in words which breathed the spirit of their mad resistance: "We, O White Chief, are called to be examples to our

children and teachers of our brother warriors. Surrender means disgrace; and after inglorious defeat to be alive suggests that we have failed to do our duty. We would vindicate our honor. In your kindness you spared and rescued us, when we were too exhausted further to resist. Our only regret is, you did not suffer us to perish in the lake; if you would show us further favors, take our lives."

The Governor listened with evident admiration to these heroic words of the four brave men, but answered nothing. He wished further to question the remaining three who had so long contended in the lake. These three men were sons or heirs to the cacique of the adjacent province.

"And why did you young men thus resist?" asked de Soto. "You are not bound by the same obligations as your fellows, for your allegiance is to a neighboring chieftain."

The three replied, they had entered the conflict merely through a thirst for glory. They were not chiefs, but some day would be such. They wished to signalize themselves by bravery in action, and by a contempt for suffering and death. "These, O Offspring of the Sun," they said, "are the reasons for our obstinate hostility: if they are sufficient in your eyes, pardon us; if not, we are at your mercy. Strike us dead, for nothing is prohibited to the conqueror."

The noble spirit and courageous words of these youths charmed the Spaniards, and their hearts were softened. The Governor himself was moved to pity. With unconstrained emotion he embraced the

young men as his own sons, commended their valor and heroic endeavor.

"This," he said, "is evidence of your noble blood and illustrious descent." Turning to Moscoso, captain of the camp, he said: "We shall set these men free; but not until they have feasted at my table, and learned the most genuine hospitality of the knights of Spain. When we have finished their entertainment we shall send them home again laden with our choicest gifts."

Accordingly these youths who came to battle not because of hatred for the white men, were sent back home after two days of sojourn in the camp. In their arms they bore the tokens of de Soto's generosity, cloths, silks, mirrors, and other articles of Spanish manufacture, to be thenceforth the envy of the young men of their tribe. The four captive leaders, however, those of the tribe of Vitachuco, were held prisoners; and on the morrow, as commanded, appeared before de Soto in company with their cacique. Most severely did de Sóto reproach them for their treachery, in the murderous plot devised against him and his soldiers.

"Such an act," he told them, "merited death: yet I shall pardon even you who deserve to die. Inform your people of my mercy, and show yourselves worthy of the favor shown you."

Then the men were set free. Vitachuco, however, remained a sort of prisoner in his own house; yet he was treated with the greatest kindness and respect, and dined at the Governor's table. The Indians who left the lake and surrendered themselves

were distributed among the Spaniards to serve them as menials, during their sojourn in the province. This was partly as a punishment for their participation in the late treason, and partly as an example to warn the neighboring Indians from like aggressions.

Thus nine hundred of Vitachuco's most noble, valiant and well-tried warriors were dispersed among the Spaniards; and as he saw them from day to day, his heart conceived another scheme of vengeance. These Indian slaves in camp were full as many as their Spanish masters, nine hundred strong, not counting the numerous women, carried captive along the way. Some of the more powerful braves were chained for reasons of safety. Some of them, however, were free, but under certain simple restraints. Vitachuco himself was attended by four young Indians of his tribe, who served him as pages. To these four lieutenants he unbosomed a plot of further treachery against the white men he so much hated. He showed his men how easy it would be, at meal-time, when they waited on their masters, to rise against their conquerors. Then the Spaniards would be seated and off their guard; many of them would be without weapons. Thus having the white men at a disadvantage, the savages, by a preconcerted movement, could strike a signal blow and rid themselves at once of their oppressions.

From that moment those four messengers of the wily cacique brought the principal prisoners into the scheme. Secretly and adroitly the word was

passed around among the slaves and all were told to hold themselves in readiness, and at the appointed time, strike the blow, and this time strike hard. It was the same device as was planned before. Vitachuco would be with the Governor at dinner. He would watch his opportunity, spring upon de Soto, and kill him; giving at the moment of assault a war-whoop that should resound throughout the camp. Then every Indian should grapple with his master, or with any Spaniards at hand, and dispatch him on the spot. So the hours passed and the Indians yet were slaves, but not for long they thought, for "the day of our deliverance," they said, "will soon come. We can afford to wait."

And as they waited, like the crouching tiger, prepared to leap upon his prey, the Indian captives feigned submissiveness. Never before had the slaves who waited on de Soto been so passive. Moscoso and Anasco both told how well their orders were obeyed by the simple children of the forest. Ortiz and de Leon, all, could testify to the strict obedience of the conquered tribesmen; but it was simply the calm before the coming storm. With Rodrique Gomez it mattered not whether the recently captured braves were calm or full of discord. He had his Ulia, his faithful slave, who, obedient woman that she was, fondly waited on him hand and foot; and so the other slaves might start an insurrection, and little did he care for trouble in another soldier's tent. Ortiz alone wondered at the remarkable peacefulness of the tribe, so recently subdued.

"I do not altogether understand it," he volunteered to Juan de Leon the afternoon of that day, when the dread blow was to be given. "This is not Indian nature, as I have seen it, during my eight years' living in the savage wigwams."

"You look somewhat troubled, Ortiz. What's on your mind?" queried de Leon. "Perhaps you are in love. Say, do you ever think of that copper-colored maiden, Ticitia, who saved your life so many times, bathed your wounds, and covered you from the cold and the hatred of her father, the unforgiving Hirrihigua?"

De Leon didn't know but that Juan Ortiz's heart did lie twenty leagues or more backward upon their trail. Other white men had found their wives among the Indian women. So he pushed his question further home.

"Tell me, Ortiz, can't I stand with you at your wedding, assist you when one of our good fathers says the words that make you man and wife, and thus bridge the chasm between the hostility of the white men and the red?"

Ortiz answered nothing. He smiled and simply said, "Ticitia is worthy of the noblest man, white, red, or any color; but, listen to my thoughts," he said, suddenly changing the conversation again. "I don't like the way these nine hundred warriors of Vitachuco act. They are too ready to be slaves, and any full-brained student of the Indian knows that's not like the man of the forest. He's born in freedom. He will be free. He'd rather die than lose his freedom; for death, he thinks, will set him free,

and place him in the happy hunting grounds where he can roam at will in unbridled liberty and life eternal. De Leon, you have told me of your Leonora. Willingly you have come away from those lands where her people and yours now dwell. But suppose you had been torn from your loved ones and your lover. Picture a strange nation marching to your father's shores, taking the strong men captive, carrying you away, and stealing the beautiful Leonora, with other girls to serve at the table of foreign masters, set in order their rooms, cook their meals and make their beds. What would you do? How would you feel? Would you smile upon that conquering nation, and count them masters to be obeyed at once, and eyed with manifest delight?"

Again the face and form of Leonora was before Juan de Leon. He pictured her in Spain; at Seville, in his early play ground, where they romped together; at San Lucar he saw her, when the ships of de Soto sailed; along the rocky shores of Gomera they walked arm in arm. In Cuba he seemed to see her, and then he asked himself the question, "Is Leonora still in that island of the Western ocean? Perhaps she has returned to her home in Spain." Rousing himself from the homesick mood which enshrouded him he said, "Ortiz, let's see. How long have we Spaniards been at this business of running down Indians in Florida? Looking for gold! Oh, yes, we're looking for gold. But these skulking tribes make us forget why we came to this land of swamps and troubles. But, let me answer

my own question. I asked you how long have we been chasing Redskins, and hearing them tell us, if we want gold we can find it, 'just beyond,' not in their territory. How long? Seven full months it is now, since we bade good bye to Cuba; seven months since, I say, we left the Havana harbor. Surely Tachuco now has full sway. I think I hear him laughing at us as we pass. He seems to move as we advance, and passes as an emissary of the evil one, from tribe to tribe, bidding the Indians send us on our way with those words, 'gold is not here in our land. It is just beyond.' No, Ortiz, if I were to send a message home, it would be this, 'We have found no gold; but have found other things, trouble and trials, and, well, this certainly would startle them, we have found nine hundred slaves.'"

"Careful, de Leon," said Ortiz, "perhaps the Governor is listening. He will say your words sound like rebellion."

"No, Ortiz, I do not rebel. I shall be loyal to the last. I was only thinking aloud, when you, my good friend, are near. But now I see I have wandered from the track of the conversation, which a moment ago you began so wisely. Yes, it does seem strange that these nine hundred sun-burned, stalwart fighting men of this land should turn themselves so suddenly, completely and cheerfully into hewers of wood and drawers of water. In sooth, they have become glad-hearted slaves."

The plotting Vitachuco knew the reason why the slaves were so submissive: and the hour had come

when the Spaniards also were to learn the cause of such remarkable subjection. The Cacique dined that day as usual at the Governor's table. The meal was nearly ended. The Chief straightened himself upon the bench whereon he sat. Twisting his body from side to side, stretching first one arm, then the other, to the full extent, with clenched fists, then raising his arms in such a way that his fists rested on his shoulders, he jerked them out two or three times, until every joint cracked like a snapped reed. In this way the Indians of Florida were accustomed to rally their strength for any extraordinary feat. Thus Vitachuco prepared himself as he sat at de Soto's table. Then suddenly he sprang to his feet and madly closed with the Governor. With the left hand, he seized the white man by the collar, and with the other hand, clenched, dealt him a stinging blow full in the face. The Governor fell; and as he lay bruised and bleeding, the Indian, savage-like, threw himself upon his victim, thinking to finish his work, giving at the same time the signal war-whoop. The whole camp was aroused. The officers nearest to their leader reached his senseless body, as the ferocious cacique had aimed the fatal blow. They drew their swords, and with them smote the unrelenting chieftain, the man who knew not mercy or forgiveness, the subtle Vitachuco, and the savage fell never to rise again. But the fatal war-whoop sounded from the lips of the Chief, now dead, was caught up by a hundred waiting Indians, impatient for the fatal signal. These Indian slaves assailed their masters, seizing

whatever weapon they might perchance obtain. Some fought with pikes and swords, the weapons laid aside by the cavaliers; others grasped the pots in which the meat was stewing at the fire, and thus armed beat the Spaniards about the head, bruising and scalding them at the same time; some savages caught up plates, pitchers, jars, and pestles wherewith they pounded the maize, and with these utensils of peace pounded their foreign masters; others took the bones remaining from the repast; and others lay hold of the stools, benches and tables, striking with impotent fury when their weapons had not the power to harm; still others snatched up burning firebrands, and rushed like incarnate fiends to burn and destroy.

Thus many of the cavaliers were bruised, burned or scalded; and some were killed. Dozens carried scars for many days, and others were maimed for life. De Soto himself was frightfully disfigured. So the battle raged, like a domestic brawl, fused with rage; not like a battle in the open field, between opposing armies. Finally the revolt was quelled, and the Spaniards exasperated at the wounds thus treacherously inflicted at first were moved to vent their rage on every Indian in their power; but wiser counsels prevailed. They brought their prisoners to the grand square of the village, and delivered them into the hands of the archers of the general's guard, who dispatched them with their halberts. Among the cavaliers who thus brought their slaves to be executed, so the historian records, was one of small and delicate form, named Fran-

cisco de Soldan. He entered the square trailing after him a powerful Indian, led by a cord tied around his neck. No sooner did the savage perceive the white man's purpose and the fate that in the square awaited him, than instantly he closed upon Saladan as he walked before him. He seized him with one hand about the neck, and with the other grasped his thigh, raised him like a child, turned him head-downwards, dashed him to the ground and stunned him. Jumping then upon his body he would have slain him in an instant had not a number of Spaniards rushed with drawn swords and rescued their comrade. The Indian then seized Saladan's sword and received the cavaliers so bravely that, though they numbered more than fifty, he kept them all at bay. Grasping the sword with both hands he threw himself among them, whirling about, dealing his blows so rapidly and madly that no one dared oppose him. Whereupon they were obliged to shoot him down with their fire arms. This suppressed revolt ended a contest in which there fell Vitachuco and thirteen hundred of his warriors, "the flower of his nation," among whom were the four brave leaders who had survived in wonderful endurance the terrors of the lake."

CHAPTER IX.

"The Call of the More Friendly Coast."

The call of the white man for his home, and the call of the sailor for the sea, had come. Summer and fall had passed, and the winter was at hand; yet the Spaniards found no gold. Apalachen, far famed and much heralded as the land of the precious metal, had deceived them as it had Narvaez, before their coming. Their provisions, brought with them from the coast, had been exhausted, and the country through which they passed afforded but little for their sustenance. Thus the more friendly sea coast called them to turn back; and they therefore returned to the sea as a refuge for the approaching winter.

Along the way de Soto urged his followers to greater courage. "Some of my men," he said, "have hearts of women, good, but timid in face of danger. My ears have not been stopped, nor have my eyes been bound. We have seen struggles, and there are yet trials in store for our company; but I shall not leave this new-found land; until I have faced every danger in our pathway. Come, be men. We shall winter on the coast, then with the approach of Spring, depart inland once more."

So their first winter was spent in the neighborhood of Apalachen Bay, and the point where Narvaez had built his boats and, whence he had started

on his fatal voyage. Communication was held with Cuba; arrangements were made for future supply of provisions, and twenty Indian women were sent as slaves to Dona Isabel, de Soto's wife, as an earnest of good things to come. With the ships which bore these so-called tokens of a prosperous expedition there sailed several members of the exploring army. Among them was Juan de Leon, who went on business for his commander; but also in his heart there lurked sad regrets, mingled with hope of seeing her once more whose vision had so often come to charm him in the wilds of Florida. He would tell Leonora how in spirit she had been with him, how thus, in fancy, he had told her of his sorrow for his seeming neglect before the party left Cuba. He would free his mind of all suspicion and suspense concerning her he loved. He asked himself, "Has she returned to Spain? If, yet in Cuba, how is her time spent? Who are her friends? What are her plans?"

The sail from the mainland to the island, where his expectations lay, was one long voyage of conjecture and sometimes fear. He seemed to think all was not well. Havana harbor was now sighted. The landing was effected. Messages of greeting were borne to the Adelantado's wife, and the officials of the city. The gifts also were presented, among them the twenty slaves, who wandered like lost souls, looking for some familiar habitation and found it not. Diego de Soto, a kinsman of the Governor, also sailed on the ship; and with de Leon acted for the Adelantado in greeting Isabel, making

the gifts, and attending to the business of the errands for which they came. Diego de Soto found the faithful Isabel patient in the absence of her honored lord.

"How is Fernando? Tell me, Diego. Tell me, Juan de Leon. How soon will he come back to me again? These days have been weary ones; but then, I suppose, men must be men and fight, and those who have gold must search for more. Our noble Spanish cavaliers will not be content at home. They hear the call to go beyond the good land of their birth and training."

"The call to go beyond, my gracious lady, seems growing louder in the wilds of yonder Florida," said Juan de Leon impulsively. "The gold we seek is ever somewhere 'beyond.' One Indian tribe tells us it is not in their land; but 'beyond' on the province of some distant tribe. Beyond, beyond; and so your intrepid lord leads us on. For the winter we tarry on the sea coast; but with the Spring which will soon be upon us, we shall plunge once more inland and the forests will close upon us; but—tell me—is Leonora de Marchine in your household still? I remember you took her to your home when the daughter of Count Gomera left your care."

"Yes, de Leon," answered Isabel, "the daughter of Gomera now, wife of Louis de Anasco has returned to her father's home in the Canary Islands. Your Leonora, as you know we called your maid of Seville, has also left me. I had counted on her company. You saw us together when the Christoval left for Florida. Our hands were the last to wave

farewell, and we waved in sympathy. After you were out of sight, we found sweet consolation in each other's companionship. But she, too, is gone."

"Gone," gasped de Leon, "gone? Tell me, whither, and I shall go at once, and find her."

"Stay," said the stately woman. "I know not where Leonora went. Let me tell you all."

Juan was now beside himself. "Gone," he muttered, "Leonora gone. What does all this mean? Is she dead, and was that vision simply her departed soul, communing with the living? How strange!"

"Stay, Juan, I will speak of her departure as I know it. It made me sad, surprised me, and still I understand it not."

Juan, now began to think of brigands, kidnappers, murderers. Perhaps the black slaves of Cuba had arisen, as did their Indian brothers in the land of Vitachuco. He would give his life to find her. He would go at once. Why did not Isabel in a word clear the mystery of his lover's disappearance. Calming himself he said: "I wait to hear the story. Tell me, I pray, where she went, and how she went and why she left your kindly protection, she, thus alone."

"But, Juan, she was not alone."

Again de Leon was puzzled. This time he was not only perplexed; but distressed at heart.

"Leonora gone, and gone with some other man?" he gasped. "Well, if such is the situation, between us, as lovers the affair is ended. Diego, let's go back to Florida as fast as possible and look for

gold. Then let the Indians stand aside, and be our slaves, both women and men."

Isabel knew Juan well enough, thus to keep him in suspense. The voyage from Spain, the stay at the Canary Islands, had served to make the members of de Soto's party throw aside mere conventionalities, and, even, at times indulge in teasing conversation. But, Isabel, now was in real earnest, and her words conveyed her meaning.

"Juan de Leon, I speak plainly, not in jest. Leonora, your Leonora has gone. Two months ago there came from Spain an aged man, attended by a girl of Leonora's age. It may have been a kinsman, I cannot say; although Leonora tried to tell me; but it was all so quickly done; and so much has happened in my life these days, that I am not responsible for what I hear; and sometimes I fear I am not responsible for what I say. This, then, is the tale you are to hear. All Havana has learned it, too. Leonora departed with this old man and his daughter. She bade me good-by; but at the time I was so engrossed with my troubles from that villain Hernan Ponce, that all I heard was 'good-by, my beloved Dona Isabel,' and all I could say was 'farewell, my dear girl, I wish you wouldn't go.'"

"But, to what land did they go? Or, did they simply leave Havana and settle elsewhere in the island?"

"No," said the woman thoughtfully, "they did not stay in Cuba; but sailed away, somewhere, I know not the direction. Two ships left port that day.

This I learned afterward, when I sent out an alarm to learn the facts, which the day before, had escaped me, because of my financial difficulties. There were two ships which sailed, one to Spain and one to Mexico. Leonora and her companions may have taken either of these. I could not learn her purposed destination. Since her departure—and it is now two months—it is as though the grave had closed upon her. But this sort of mystery has fallen to my lot. In like manner, when the fleet sailed Westward, and carried to the mainland, all that I count dear, my Ferdinand; and when the dark horizon rolled above your sailing army, it seemed as though him whom I love, had disappeared forever. The messages which you bring soothe me; but they do not satisfy as would his own kindly presence. When you return tell him not to stay away too long; but come back, come back soon. I await his coming."

"Tell me," interrupted Diego, "tell me of your trouble with Hernan Ponce. Ferdinand must needs know of such affairs. I supposed we had forever squelched the meanness of that man Ponce. It was I, you remember, who first told Ferdinand of the coming of that ship, which, tempest-tossed, was forced to make the harbor of Havana. The crafty fellow did not want to land. The captain of the vessel told me so. Hernan Ponce knew the partnership, he made with the Adelantado years before, was still binding. He feared he might be called upon to share his gold, silver, jewels and precious stones, which were his, but also according to con-

tract, part of your lord's possessions. So Hernan Ponce, that stormy afternoon, wished the ship to pass the port, and go direct to Spain; but the very sea was set against his grasping soul."

"I, too, remember the man," said de Leon, joining in invective against de Soto's faithless partner. "I was with the guard, which seized the coffers, when Ponce concealed them on shore, that night, thus hiding all appearance of his stores of wealth. How crestfallen was his face, when he held before him his beloved treasure, so faultily possessed. I see him now, in imagination, as he listens unwillingly to the Governor's indignant words, as he reproached him for his dissimulation and attempted escape with money which was not all his. But, then, I supposed the matter had been finally settled, that Ponce was to share with the other, all worldly possessions, as before had been agreed."

"Yes, Juan, affairs were apparently settled," explained the Governor's wife. "Ten thousand dollars was paid into my hands as Ponce's settlement, the articles of co-operation were renewed, and during his stay, Hernan Ponce was always addressed as his Excellency, and received the same personal honors as the Governor; but—believe me—the heart of Hernan Ponce rests always with his money bags, and delights not in what he esteems mere empty honors. Under various pretexts, he deferred sailing for Spain until after the departure of my lord and his army for Florida. Then eight days after the Governor had sailed, when there was no likelihood of his prompt return, Hernan Ponce addressed

an instrument in writing to Juan De Rojas, the lieutenant-governor, declaring that the ten thousand dollars given to my honest Ferdinand had not been paid as a just debt, but extorted through fear lest he should make use of his power to strip him of all his property. He begged, therefore, that I should be compelled to refund the money, otherwise he would complain to the Emperor of the injustice with which he had been treated."

"Surely this made troublesome times for you," said Diego in sympathy; "but, tell us, how did you meet this unjust accusation and claim?"

"I replied," answered the wife of the Governor, "I replied, that there were many accounts both new and old to be settled between Hernan Ponce and my husband, as would be seen by their writings of co-partnership. I told how Hernan Ponce now owed Ferdinand more than fifty thousand ducats, as half of the amount expended in the outfit for the conquest. I accordingly demanded that the man be at once arrested and held in safety until all these accounts could be examined and adjusted, to which, I offered immediately to attend in the name of my absent husband. Then the wily Hernan scenting trouble for himself, and fearing, should he fall into the hands of justice, he would meet but little mercy, hoisted sail before the harpies of the law could get hold of him, and made his way to Spain, leaving his ten thousand dollars and all the unsettled accounts in my hands."

"Well done, Dona Isabel," said the men in unison. "And now tell me," said de Leon, speak-

ing to his commander's wife, "tell me where can I find Juan de Rojas, lieutenant-governor? Perhaps he can give me news of Leonora. At any rate he can tell me of the ships that sailed that day she disappeared."

"I verily believe your thoughts for thirty minutes have been far away. In fact, since I told you how your Leonora had vanished all consciousness of what has been said among us here since, has vanished. Your mind has been far away, where I do not know, nor could you tell how far you wandered. But I sympathize with you. For these long months my soul has traveled far away, across this little harbor to Florida's shores. In fond imagination I have followed every step my Ferdinand took on that hostile shore, as best I could; and I, too, have been lost in thought, these many months. When you go back and join those cavaliers, tell my lord not to keep me waiting longer. Tell him I will come to him, if he says the word."

"I shall tell him, gracious Lady; and now answer my question, where can I find the lieutenant-governor to-day?"

The Governor's wife told him as best she could, just where, that day, the lieutenant-governor could be found, and de Leon sought him. In the garden of his handsome residence he found him. Recognizing him as one of de Soto's party, de Rojas rose to meet him.

"De Leon," he said, "I heard you had come, and am pleased to see you again. How fares the Governor? The lady he left behind has missed him, in fact—they say—she is disconsolate."

Then Juan told him of the experience of the army, how they suffered, how they fought, how they heard that gold was "just beyond."

"We are now in winter quarters on the coast, and soon after the ship's return from Cuba, we shall march inland once more. I shall count it an honor to bring the Governor some message from his worthy lieutenant."

Then Juan fell upon the subject nearest to his heart, the missing Leonora. Rojas, however, could not enlighten him. They talked of the ships that sailed that day; and, as Juan learned of other vessels that stopped at that port and went their way to various lands, he felt the mystery deepen. The men then talked of the sway of Spain in the Western World. There passed in quick array the names of former Spanish adventurers, with incidents of their work, how Balboa reached the Pacific Ocean, how Ponce de Leon sought freshness of life in Florida, how Pizarro and Cortez were still more brilliant instances of Spanish energy. More in detail they talked of Cortez and the rich and religious Aztecs and their ancient cities. They named the natural products of that land, brought from the mountain forest and dug from the rich and much-sought mines, the silver and gold, which the Spaniards so eagerly sought. Thus, Juan de Leon learning much of the West Indies, Cuba, Florida and Mexico; but of Leonora there came not the slightest news. As the dejected lover left the lieutenant-governor's home, he sighed: "Gone, gone. Whither? Who can tell?"

CHAPTER X.

"The Eternal Search Resumed."

"Gold, gold, where can it be found? This, Barbidilla, is the constant question of our countrymen." The speaker was the priest, Father Phillipe. He and the charitable Barbidilla were constant companions and incessant, but friendly, disputants. They had left the company of their brethren, that day, and wandered some distance from camp. Next morning the march inland was to begin, and the eternal search for gold would be resumed. Father Phillipe and Barbidilla, his friend, agreed, and yet disagreed. Their difference, however, was mainly temperamental. Phillipe sought righteousness with great severity; Barbidilla would ever "speak the truth in love." Barbidilla's heart had gone out in deepest sympathy and chagrin for the poor Indians who had, that winter, perished from the cold, scantily covered as they were, and bound together with chains in the white man's camp, where they served; but Barbidilla uttered scarce a single reproach. Phillipe stormed at the sight of the suffering savages.

So that bright spring morning the two advocates of religion sauntered across the clearing of the encampment, and entered the neighboring woodland beyond.

"I hope, brother, our cavaliers will find some

gold before another winter comes upon us. But gold is not the only treasure of this land. Better would it be, I think, for us to settle in some more favorable spot and build up a fixed dwelling place. From such a center those who so desire may leave, to scour the country near and far for gold. Thither they can retire, like the tired workman, at night and find some place of refuge and good cheer; but, I fancy, I detect, in our taciturn commander, the frenzy of a man whose mind is firmly fixed to find what he seeks or, die. An air of reckless adventure and abandonment to any sensual wish assails the Governor. He seems to foregt the home-land, and his fond Isabel. If this spirit is indulged our expedition will be simply a mad rush through a vast wilderness, without profit, without increase of knowledge for mankind, without interesting discovery, without successful search for gold."

Thus the two friends talked. Barbidilla's mind was fixed upon uplifting the savage of the forest. He said: "But, Barbidilla, I sometimes think the denizens of these roadless wilds, count us the savages. True, we have endeavored to explain to them just why we have come to their lands; but too often our knights are compelled to explain in terms of war, too often our enslavement of their women is not completely understood. Too often they cannot solve the problem why our cavaliers did not bring their own women from Spain, instead of robbing the Indian wigwams of their fairest maidens."

"Phillipe," replied his companion, "you are always looking for the 'flies in the ointment.' I sup-

pose the only answer we can give is, all these improprieties are necessary and, moreover, natural, to men placed, as our men are, in such circumstances."

A crackling in the woods, not far away, told of the approach of some one. The men were now a mile or more from camp. Who could this be?

"An Indian, Phillipe. I verily believe. Shall we run?"

Before the suggested retreat could be successfully planned, the Indian addressed them. He used the Spanish tongue, and spoke, in half-broken accents, yet with marked distinctness and complete understanding. It was Tachuco; but the two priests did not know him. They had sailed on another ship from Spain. They had taken no interest in his escape from the company, at their first landing on the shores of the mainland. They had not learned from Juan de Leon, or Ortiz, of the white man's suspicions, that this wily Indian was on their trail, to set the tribes against them, and spread the chosen message of dissimulation, "Gold is just beyond."

"I perceive you are priests, not fighting men," the savage began. "I understand your calling, and know your coming to my land is in desire of peace; but, tell me, can't you teach your Spanish soldiers to be more considerate of us, who own this land? Remember, my people view your army as intruders. We did not invite you to come. We do not want you here."

"But, my red-skinned brother, this land belongs

to Spain. My countrymen have discovered it," said Barbidilla, by way of reply, rather than defense.

"Discovered this land," retorted the Indian. "My land did not need to be discovered. Whatever else it may require, it wishes not what you call discovery; but tell me of your men. I have heard of some who journey with you. Is Rodrique Gomez yet in your party? Is the young man Juan de Leon still serving with the proud de Soto? What plans do your leaders contemplate?"

At these words of inquiry, put so plainly, the men of peace were silent for a moment. They had learned caution in the days of warring and nights of vigil through which they had passed. They, therefore, said: "We know not our Governor's plans. We simply follow where he leads, and try to help the people of your tribe."

"You can't help us," replied the Indian. "We, too, have our religion. We reverence certain laws of what is right, and anticipate rewards in our happy hunting ground in the world beyond. If you want to help my people, go home to Spain, and there teach your cavaliers how to plant their fields with maize and how to live at peace among themselves."

Turning suddenly, the persistent Tachuco was gone, as quickly as he came; but as he disappeared, he called through the leafy pathway: "Tell your discoverers, there's no gold within a thousand leagues of this province. It's far beyond," and with a sprightly bound the son of the forest passed from sight.

"Let us return to camp," said Phillipe. "If we have found one savage, or better, if one savage has found us, perhaps we might be discovered; yes, that's a good word in this connection. Perhaps we might be discovered by some other Indians, and, who can tell, whether our new discoverers will be half as friendly as this fellow we have just met. But who comes now? Ah, I see, it is Ortiz. I wish he had come sooner; and there is de Leon. We must tell them, an old friend has just mentioned their names. The Indian spoke of Juan, did he not?"

"Yes, his inquiry was concerning de Leon, as well as Gomez; but let us ask de Leon, if he knows this Spanish-speaking native. What shall we call him? Let's question de Leon. It seems most strange to find such a red skin; still, we are not far from the coast. He may have been in Cuba when our cavaliers were there, just before we sailed for Florida."

The priests and the two cavaliers were now together. The recent incident of their conversation with the Spanish-speaking Indian was told. At hearing it de Leon hastened forestward, calling on Ortiz to follow.

"He can't be far away, by this time. Let us capture him and bring him into camp."

"No, my good de Leon, don't," said the priest, "the Indian is fleet of foot, and, has had time to reach some place of safety, or perhaps has joined some band of savages, who simply wait their chance to thrust you with a dozen arrows and take your scalp. Did you not hear what recently befel the

five halberdiers of the General's army, who, with the two soldiers, sailed forth from camp without sufficient armor? Aguilar, the only survivor of those seven men, still tells that woeful tale of unfair conflict. More than fifty Indians sprang from the thicket, as the Spaniards passed heedlessly along; and with agile foot leaped madly about the unarmed men, like so many demons. With horrible laughter they shot them down, like beasts, deprived of opportunity to close with them."

"Yes," responded de Leon reflectively, "the Governor warned us only yesterday to take no chances with these lurking savages, who simply wish to allure us far enough away from the army to get our scalps. Let's all return to camp. Before long we'll be on our way once more inland."

Quickly after the wanderer's return, the Spaniards broke camp, and traveled Westward. Anasco, the brave Calderon, Silvestre, and Gomez Arias, leaders of the Governor's forces, now pushed forward in thorough earnest, a united army. Many brave deeds marked their course. Frequent excursions were made by the way, for de Soto sought more friendly passes through the trackless wilderness. Encountering a great morass, the army, moved only by reason of the most skillful generalship, and dogged perseverance. The friendly Mucozo alone of the Indian chiefs, gave them his blessing as they were leaving camp. The day before their departure he came and wished them success and safety on their journey. Many presents

were left with the noble cacique, and he was thus greatly pleased.

Progress at first was exceedingly slow. The scouting and study of the most favorable line of advance for the cavaliers and their horses retarded rapid travel. Among those dispatched on trips of reconnoitre were Ortiz and Juan de Leon.

"We are not far from my former haunts in the territory of Mucozo," Ortiz remarked. "I know the region well. Let's draw nearer to this friendly province, for here I feel, the white man is safe."

They had not gone far, when marks of the presence of two Indians were discovered.

"They are of the friendly tribe, I think," said the man who had spent so many years among that nation. See here is where the two red skins traveled together, and from their tracks, I should say, they were not two braves; but persons on a peaceful errand. One I think is a woman."

"Beware then," said de Leon. "Don't mix in some love affair or interfere between man and wife. You remember how that company of cavaliers fared last week when they met that Indian couple. The brave, apparently feared injury to his squaw and, therefore, attacked the entire company of knights. At first the Spaniards did not take the man seriously; but before many seconds they found he was a dangerous enemy to meet, and in order to save their own lives, so fiercely did he fight, they were compelled to kill him in his tracks. So be careful, Ortiz."

"I shall be careful," came the response. "I sim-

ply said, I think it is a brave and his lover. Others seem to be about; but the man and woman keep at a distance from the rest."

Two Indian guides suddenly came into view. Ortiz saluted them. They were of Mucozo's nation, and so talked freely.

"Our Cacique is resting a league further on," said the sentinel. "There you can see him; but you will find him in company with one you knew some years ago."

Ortiz and de Leon hurried on. Off the beaten Indian trail they saw the forms of two persons, the one a stalwart Indian, tall and noble of mien.

"It is our good Mucozo," whispered Ortiz. "But, stop. Who is that person by his side, so close, as lovers walk, or, like you and Leonora, of whom you have told me, I fancy, Juan."

"But, who is the clinging maid, Ortiz? Hold back a little. We have drawn too near. Mucozo crushes the woman to his breast. Listen, he calls her Ticitia."

"Ah! I understand. I understand," said Ortiz. "He has won the gracious, good and tender princess at last. The noble woman, freed from his father's power and country, now dwells where her heart has been for many days. Mucozo and Ticitia, we, your white friends salute you."

Taken by surprise the man and the woman turned. At first the Cacique was angry at the interruption. His attendants should have guarded the approach of strangers; but when he recognized the voice of Ortiz, both he and his betrothed queen,

freely expressed their pleasure. Ortiz and Ticitia talked of the white man's days of trial.

"My father's death has made it possible for me to join Mucozo and, now, I am his bride-elect."

The interview was short. Excusing themselves the white men withdrew, and returned to the army. With the seekers after a land of gold, they pushed forward. Along the way, they took to themselves companions in the persons of an Indian leader, Patofa, and four thousand of his men, warriors fully armed. Their purpose in accompanying de Soto was afterward apparent, when the Governor found his allies had wreaked vengeance on the land and subjects of a neighboring tribe, through whose country they passed. For years Patofa had sought to overthrow his hated foes and when the Spaniards appeared, he saw his much-sought opportunity. Thus taking advantage of the presence of the daring cavaliers, he formed alliance with the white men and without the Adelantado's knowledge fell upon his enemies, and when the blow was struck, the country round about was lined with bodies of the slain.

Thus the procession of cavaliers, slaves and four thousand red skins, slowly moved forward through the wilderness, the savages bent on revenge, the Spaniards seeking gold. The Indians and the white men slept in separate camps by night; but when the day began they joined forces and proceeded on their way in manifest peace. In fact, in manifold ways Patofa and his men assisted de Soto in hastening the march; and, although they had their

separate sentinels at night, this show of caution was simply to observe the practices of war.

On the fourth day an Indian deserted. The Governor saw him quietly steal away. It was at the break of day and, he had passed de Soto's tent, near by which he had stood on guard. Patofa immediately sent four young warriors in pursuit of the fugitive, with orders to bring him back manacled. Like the swift-footed deer, the runners set out, and soon returned bringing the man a prisoner. The Cacique ordered him to be led to the banks of a small stream that flowed through the encampment. De Soto followed near enough to learn how the red man disciplined his soldiers. Here the deserter was stripped, commanded to throw himself upon the ground, and drink the streamlet dry. The poor culprit drank until he could drink no more, but the moment he raised his head from the stream, five Indians, posted over him, with clubs, belabored him cruelly until he resumed his task. As the Governor drew near, two Indians approached. In language so couched that the Governor could understand, they said: "We pray the Great White Chief that, he come nearer and plead with Patofa for our brother."

De Soto approached and found the man half dead. Moved with compassion for the wretch who would be compelled to drink until he died, de Soto spoke the words of intercession which brought the man's release and pardon.

They were now nearing an Indian village. It was the long-wished-for province of Cofachiqui.

There by night, the unforgiving Patofa wreaked his vengeance on his hated foe. For miles about, he and his men ravaged the country, slew its people, men, women and children, and burned their homes. When de Soto received word of this cruel act, he made all haste to rid himself of such bloody allies. Sending to Patofa, he thanked him for his valuable escort; and giving him presents of knives, trinkets, and clothing, for himself and his Cacique—for Patofa was simply a subordinate—he dismissed the savage and his four thousand braves.

Passing on the Spaniards came at length to another village. The inhabitants terrified at the strange appearance of the cavaliers and their dashing horses, betook themselves in flight. The news of the coming of these unusual travelers spread through the village. Soon, a large canoe was launched on the stream nearby. It crossed the river, propelled by several rowers and, in it sailed six Indians, men of most noble appearance. The craft drew near while the Governor and his officers intently awaited its coming.

CHAPTER XI.

"Copper, Not Gold."

The half dozen Indians stepped on shore. Evidently they were important personages in their tribe. As became their rank these ambassadors of their sovereign—for such they were—received at de Soto's hands, every mark of respect. The chair of state, carried by the Spaniards for such occasions, was brought forth; and, the Governor seated therein, like a king awaited his visitors. As they advanced, they saluted thrice, once to the sun with their faces Eastward, second time, to the moon, turning Westward, and yet again facing the Governor, they bowed still lower with their greetings.

Whereupon they made the usual demand: "White Chief, do you come for peace or war?"

"For peace," de Soto answered, "and a free passage through your country. We also desire provisions for our people, and assistance with canoes or rafts for passing the river."

"Our supplies are small," replied the messengers. "Our land, last year, was ravaged by a pestilence. Many of our tribe abandoned their homes and villages, took refuge in the woods, and neglected to sow their corn. So food is scarce among us. We will return to our Queen, by whom we are governed. She is a discreet and generous woman, despite her youth. We know, she will serve you as best she can."

With these words the six red men departed. Shortly movements of preparation appeared on the opposite shore. The Spaniards observed a litter borne by four servants and brought to the water's edge. From this carriage there alighted an Indian queen, or cacica, beautifully arrayed. Before her floated a decorated canoe, canopied, carpeted and cushioned, suitably for its royal passenger. Seating herself therein the maiden ruler sailed across the water, attended by eight ladies in waiting, and, escorted by the principal men of her nation, who sailed in other boats by her side, with the six ambassadors, already mentioned, leading the way to the place where the Spanish Commander was seated. With them also floated a number of canoes with armed warriors which completed the procession across the river.

At her approach the Spaniards were filled with admiration. She came as a queen and a queen indeed she was. Youthful and beautiful, but eighteen years of age, with native grace and dignity, she made her obeisance before the Governor. With pleasant face he, rising, returned her salutation. Then both were seated, the Cacica on a stool placed for her by her maids; and, de Soto resting in his chair of state. Thus the two rulers entered into conversation, while her subjects and his, about them preserved a most respectful silence. Ortiz played the part of interpreter.

A string of large pearls passed thrice around the woman's neck, and descended gracefully, to her waist. When the conference with the white man

was drawing to a close, the queen disengaged the jewels and, requested Ortiz to present the necklace to his chieftain. This gift was to mark the woman's parting salutation.

Ortiz replied: "It must greatly please the white chief, if you yourself would place the pearls about his neck."

"I cannot," she said, shrinking in unfeigned modesty. "I dare not infringe the proprieties of my sex."

Whereupon de Soto apprehending the Cacica's scruples urged her yet further, saying: "It will be no breach of decorum; for we are persons unknown to each other, simply treating of peace and amity."

Then in queenly grace the woman rose, and placed the pearls about the neck of de Soto; he likewise stood up; and, taking from his finger a ring of gold, set with a ruby, presented it to her, as a token of peace and friendship. Placing the ring upon her finger, she returned to her village, whither, also, the Spanish camp was destined soon to come. The following day they crossed the stream on large rafts and a fleet of large canoes, and lodged partly in wigwams, under the shade of the luxuriant mulberry trees, with which the province abounded. Around the village they saw many forsaken wigwams, long untenanted, a token that, the pestilence of which the Indians spoke, had sorely smitten their homes. Here the army tarried several weeks. Some of the Spaniards wished to settle in that fertile spot. The priests Barbidilla and Phillipe believed that here the heathen savages could readily be

reached and won to the Church. They would start a mission there at once and abide beneath the sway of the friendly queen.

"These people," remarked Barbidilla, "are the most civilized of any of the Floridians we have met. See, they wear shoes and clothing made of skins well dressed and colored. They adorn themselves in mantles, made of feathers, or, robe themselves in their textile fabric of woody fibre. They evidently have learned something from the white men who have chanced to wander hither before we found the place."

"You mean, some of Ayllon's men, in their visit, taught them these arts of civilization?" asked Phillipe.

"Yes," answered the other," if you will have it so; for, have we not already found in this village, a dagger and some beads, and a coat of mail, showing we are not the first teachers from civilized lands to come among these people."

"Still, I fear," ventured Phillipe, "we cannot sojourn here. Already I detect among the Indians signs of unrest at our presence. Have you not heard of the intended capture of the mother of the Princess?"

Juan de Anasco and thirty companions had already been dispatched to bring to de Soto, the Queen's mother. Her daughter, the young Queen, first had sent twelve of her principal subjects, to bring the elderly woman that she might see the wonderful visitors and the strange animals they had brought; but the mother would not come. So Anas-

co and his men were sent to bring her by fair and gentle means; but yet to bring her, as the Governor desired.

They were guided by a youthful warrior, whom the princess had appointed for the purpose. Ortiz studied the young man well.

"He is a near relative of the coy widow," he told Anasco, "and loves the woman you seek with the love of a son for his mother. She is dear to him, and for this very reason the Queen has sent him on this errand with us Spaniards."

Twelve miles away, down the river, the royal mother was supposed to dwell, in hiding. Along that stretch of a dozen miles the searching party traveled, under the guidance of the noble youth. With head decorated in lofty plumes of different colors, wearing a mantle of dressed deer skin, carrying a bow of exquisite workmanship, and a quiver full of arrows, he went on before them with light and elastic step. Ortiz was drawn to him at once. Three leagues had passed. The party stopped for their mid-day meal, resting beneath the shade of a widespreading tree. The handsome youth grew pensive. Turning to de Leon, who sat a few feet away, Ortiz said: "I notice a change in the spirit of our guide. He acts as though his mission were an unpleasing one. Perhaps some bad Indian has aroused his suspicions against us. If I had seen the form of Tachuco in this forest round about, I would avow that this young man has caught the spirit of that mischief-making red skin. See, Juan, the man grows moody and thoughtful. He falls

into a reverie. Listen, he repeats deep-drawn sighs. Why does he act thus? Perhaps till now he has been feigning that he loved this errand; but now, perhaps, his Indian mistrust has arisen, and he fears we may harm his kinswoman."

As they watched, the guide quietly removed his quiver and, placing it before him, drew out the arrows slowly, one by one.

"Let's examine them," said Ortiz. "They are admirable in skill and elegance. Are they not? Here is one tipped with buck's horn, wrought with four corners like a diamond. Here is one pointed with the bone of a fish curiously fashioned. Here is a three-pronged point."

Then Ortiz handed the arrows to de Leon and de Leon passed them to the rest of the company, until they went the rounds and were returned with high praise for their workmanship portraying the skill of their maker and owner.

But the quiver was not yet empty. As the Spaniards watched, the remaining arrows were withdrawn, until the last shaft was reached. It was a weapon of peculiar beauty and deadliness, with point of flint, long and sharp and shaped like a dagger. Anasco and his men were busy inspecting the last few weapons shown them, while the Indian stood with the dagger-like arrow in his hand, the last one from his quiver. Casting a furtive glance about him, he saw the busy and much-interested Spaniards. Then suddenly he took the company by surprise and brought great sorrow to them all. Quickly in his dejected mood, he did that which

was difficult of explanation. For a moment he held the deadly weapon, then plunged it in his throat, and fell dead at their feet.

Shocked and grieved, unable to prevent the terrible deed, the Spaniards called to them, their Indian attendants, and demanded the reason for the melancholy act of him who just before had been so joyous. The Indians broke in loud lamentations; for they dearly loved the youth.

They said: "The only explanation we can give is that this young warrior became perplexed about his embassy. He knew the errand would be disagreeable to the mother, and, he fancied the Spaniards planned to carry her away. He alone knew the place of her concealment, and it was, he thought, an unworthy return for her love and confidence, thus to betray her to strangers. On the other hand, he dared not lose the favor of his young mistress by refusing to guide the Spaniards. Either of these alternatives would be worse than death," the Indians reasoned. "So he has chosen death," they said, "as a proof to his mistress of his loyalty and devotion."

So Anasco and his men returned, reported the death of their noble guide. A second time, Anasco and his companions set out, to find the object of this search, led by an Indian who volunteered his services, but by this time the old lady, having heard of the vigorous attempt to capture her, quickly took refuge in the depths of a forest which they found was impossible to penetrate. Then the Governor gave up further effort to reach her.

There was, however, a more desired quest. It was the search for gold. Inquiry among the natives of the tribe, brought the information that, traders had trafficked among them for metal similar to the gold and silver shown by the Spaniards. They had also traded with them for pearls, which abounded in their country. The Governor made the natives describe to the youthful queen the metals he sought and begged her, if such treasure existed in her territories, to have specimens brought to him.

"I shall send for them," the fair lady said, and in a little while several Indians appeared, laden with the supposed treasure. Eagerly the Spaniards watched it; but, to their disappointment found the yellow metal was a specimen of copper of yellowish tint much resembling gold. The white metal, though shining and resembling silver, was valueless, and crumbled in their hands like dry earth. The historian tells us: "Some have supposed it was a species of quartz, but it probably was mica. Thus vanished of a sudden the golden treasures of Cofachiqui," the land of the beauteous Indian queen.

To console the Spaniards for their evident disappointment, the Cacacia sent them on a hurried search for the pearls of which they had been told. Then began a mad scramble for that which might be riches. At one end of the village was built a mausoleum, the sepulchre of all the chieftains and great warriors of that place. Within the walls of the temple, the Spaniards were told, reposed great quantities of pearls. Thither eager feet quickly sped, and, greedy hands robbed the dead of their

unneeded wealth. The men found pearls of every size, and in incredible quantities, together with the figures of children and birds fashioned in pearl. The Portuguese narrator says: "The expedition obtained fourteen bushels of the gems and they were informed, if neighboring villages were searched they might find enough to load all the horses of the army." The general scramble for treasure thus precipitated was quickly checked by de Soto.

"You are at present," he said, addressing his men, "discovering the country, not dividing it. We have yet to make our way through a vast wilderness. This heavy treasure, therefore, will be a burden to us. We shall simply take some specimens to send to Cuba; but let us leave the temples of our Indian friends just as we found them. Then dividing several handfuls of the choicest pearls among his officers, he called them aside to determine on future plans.

The leaders talked the situation over in every detail. Muscoso complained of certain brawls which had occurred between the natives and some white soldiers.

"Some of our men," he said, "seem to be too grasping in the eyes of the Indians."

"I perceive also," remarked Ortiz, "a great change of feeling in the young and high-minded princess."

"True, Ortiz, only yesterday," added the Governor, "the girl was cold and indifferent toward me. She eyes us with great distrust, I fear."

"More, also, Ferdinand," said Diego, the Governor's kinsman, "I have private information that

the Princess has planned to take flight, and leave us without guides for our march, or, porters for the baggage of the army."

The priest Phillipe was seated in their councils that night. Throughout the discussion he maintained the most studied silence; but as the conference concluded, he remarked to his brother priest: "If you were living at Seville, and there, some Englishmen, strangers to you and your land, should meet you, compel you to guide them to San Lucar and, more than that, carry their packs upon your back, what would you do?"

"I understand," said Barbidilla. "Well, I suppose it is natural for these savages to grow lukewarm and indifferent in their love for us roaming white men."

"And, now," Phillipe added, "this night our men will seize the graceful queen as a precaution for our safe passage through her land, and our soldiers will enslave her councillors, to carry our baggage along the way. . . ."

So, true to Phillipe's prophesy, next day, de Soto set forward on his adventurous course, taking with him the beautiful Princess of Cofachiqui in his train. The fair lady went unwillingly; but the orders of the Governor were final. She must go, although no indignity should be offered her. A guard was placed about her, including two negro slaves and a Barbary Moor. The cavaliers and the lady left the city by the river, early in May, and traversed the northern part of what is now Georgia. On, on, the Spaniards went, with the Princess, es-

corted by her maidens and carried in her palanquin by her own warriors. "One day, the lovely maiden of whom the whole army was proud, proved herself not only a dignified queen, and an ideal hostess, but true Indian as well, for, suddenly leaping from her couch and running with the fleetness of a deer, she darted beneath the underbrush of the dense forest," and de Soto and his men never heard from her again. De Leon first noticed her escape, and, informed the Governor. Ortiz was called to question the attending Indians who carried her; but all that could be said was: "The fair bird had taken flight, and left the cage behind." The two negro slaves and the Barbary Moor accompanied her, and were harbored by the natives.

"All along," reflected Juan de Leon, "my sympathy has been with this royal captive," and he pictured to himself Leonora, his queen, thus led away, where, he did not know; and as the soldiers conjectured on the Cacici's disappearance, Juan also turned his mind toward her who, just as mysteriously, had passed out of his life; and speaking to himself he sighed: "Surely it cannot be forever."

CHAPTER XII.

"Paying the Price."

Tuscaloosa was no ordinary Indian. He had made his power felt far beyond the confines of his province. Cosa, the neighboring cacique, had felt this hand rest heavily upon him. The other captains, whom the Spaniards met, as they pressed Westward, were not unfamiliar with his name. In stature he was a giant and, towered head and shoulders above the tallest of his warriors. In disposition he was proud and warlike. In battle he was ferocious, and in every dealing he was treacherous. The first message from this wily chief who once ruled what are now the present States of Alabama and Mississippi, was brought by his son, a youth of eighteen, the image of his father. The son pledged the father's friendship, but the pledge was worthless. He also proffered his services and invited de Soto to his residence, but all this show of kindness was purely feigned. He wished to snare the Spaniards and wipe out their army by one bold stroke. Vitachuco had formed such a plot before and failed. Now Tuscaloosa was to play a similar game. Would he succeed?

Tuscaloosa's son met de Soto and his men, twelve leagues from the fierce cacique's stronghold. Graceful and courteous he won the favor of the Governor, and was dismissed with presents for him-

self and his father. He then departed with assurances that the Spaniard's friendship was reciprocated. The invitation for de Soto to visit the Chieftain was gladly accepted and, the second night from this friendly meeting with the son of Tuscaloosa, de Soto encamped about two leagues from the Indian's village. At an early hour of the morning the Governor preceded by his camp-master-general and several of the cavaliers, was on his way to see the Chieftain face to face. They found him posted on the crest of a hill. Below the rising ground was spread a rich and beautiful valley, through which the Spaniards passed, up to the plateau above. There the haughty chieftain appeared. The cavaliers who preceded de Soto arranged themselves in the Indian's presence; but he would not notice them, although the troopers sought in every way to incite his attention. They made their horses curvet and caracole, as they passed, and sometimes spurred them to his very feet. Still he maintained his gravity undisturbed and from time to time cast his eyes upon them in haughty and disdainful glances. When the Governor approached he rose to meet him. The two embraced, conversed at some length, then proceeded to lodgings near the house of Tucaloosa, where de Soto was to stop; while the troops sought quarters in the village allotted to them.

After two days' rest the Governor continued his march, accompanied by Tuscaloosa, whom he kept with him as sort of hostage for sake of security. So they journeyed on. Next day, two soldiers were reported missing.

"Ask the Indians, Ortiz," said the Governor. "Perhaps they can tell us where the men have gone."

The reply of the warriors was insolent.

They said: "Why do you ask us about your people? Are we responsible for them? Did you place them under our charge?"

There followed then a war of words between Tuscaloosa and the Spanish leader and the Indian chief grew sullen.

"We shall hold you as hostage, till the men are returned," de Soto threatened; but this menace was of no avail.

"They have been massacred," suggested Ortiz, and this the Governor believed, and from that time the red men and the white men were distrustful of one another.

At length the strained relations ended in outbreak of hostilities. The village of Mauvilla was reached. This was the stronghold of the cacique. There he and his principal men resided. Lying, as it did, on the frontiers of his territories, it was strongly fortified, surrounded by high walls, formed of huge tree trunks driven well into the ground, side by side and wedged together.

"They welcome us with song and dance," said de Leon who, with Ortiz, was in advance; for toward the Spanish soldiers there marched a splendid train of warriors, painted, decorated and clad in robes of skins and flaunting feathers of every brilliant color, and as they marched, they sang and danced to the accompaniment of rude instruments of music. Behind the dancing braves followed a band

of young damsels, beautiful in form and feature. Side by side with the Governor rode Tuscaloosa in flaming mantle of scarlet, followed by a train of horsemen in glittering armor and preceded by dancing groups of Indians. Turning to Ortiz the cacique gave information of the Spaniard's resting place that night.

"Yonder house is large. Let your Chief lodge there and in the building just beside it your master's servants and attendants can find their stopping place. The rest of your soldiers must encamp a bow-shot distance without the walls.

This arrangement of the stopping places for de Soto and his army, so far apart, did not please the Governor. His reply to Tuscaloosa was: "Our lodging places will be assigned when the camp-master arrives."

The Cacique yielded sullenly, then said: "I wish the white men no longer to make me follow in their company."

De Soto answered: "Tuscaloosa is our friend. He shall go with us to lead us on our way through his country."

The haughty spirit of the Indian rose within him. "I will not do as the White Chief orders," he said in anger; then left de Soto and made his way to an Indian dwelling where his armed followers were gathered.

At his departure a Spanish cavalier approached the Governor. "I have found," he said, "what seems to be plain evidence of treachery. In the few houses which we see about the village are scattered

ten thousand chosen warriors. None of them are old, or of the servile class; but all, fighting men, noble and young, and well armed. The women and children have been hurried away. The palisades around the village are being strengthened. The fields about the village are being prepared as for a battle-field."

The Governor looked troubled, then said: "Tell the troops to hold themselves in readiness for action. Inform the Master-of-the-camp of what you have seen and direct him to act accordingly. In the meantime let us play the part of friends and conciliate the Cacique by courteous treatment."

The morning came after a restless night. Ortiz, at de Soto's command, bore Tuscaloosa an invitation to dine with the Governor. The invitation was spurned. In fact, the attendants of the Cacique met Ortiz at the threshold and refused him admittance. Twice was the message of the Governor denied recognition. A third time it was brought, this time in plain announcement: "Tell Tuscaloosa to come forth; the food is on the table, and the Governor is waiting for him."

At this last call for dinner, there sallied forth an Indian, who seemed to be a general of the Cacique's army. The officer's eye flashed fire, as he cried: "Who are these robbers! these vagabonds!" cried he, "who keep calling for my chief, Tuscaloosa, come out! come out! with as little reverence as though he were one of them! By the sun and moon this is insolence no longer to be borne. Let

us cut them to pieces, and put an end to their wickedness and tyranny."

The words had scarcely passed his lips, when another Indian, stepping up behind him, placed in his hand a bow and arrows. The Indian commander rolled back from his shoulders the folds of his rich mantle of martin skins which was buttoned round his neck, and bared his arms. Quickly then he placed an arrow in his bow, and aimed at a knot of Spaniards in the square fifty yards away. Before he could wing the shaft, a quick sword-thrust of the cavalier de Callegos laid open the man's body, thus exposed through the open mantle. The Indian staggered a moment, then fell, dead. His son, a youth of eighteen, sprang to avenge his father's death, and let fly seven arrows as fast as any brave could draw them. The weapons struck harmlessly on de Gallegos' armor. Then, the frantic boy, grasping his bow with both hands, dealt the Spaniard four mighty blows upon the head. The blood ran down Gallegos' forehead. The beating had almost stunned the knight; but recovering himself, he thrust the son as he did the father, and laid him dead at his feet.

The terrible warwhoop now rang through the village. Like a mountain torrent, warriors, ready armed, poured from every house, and attacked the Spaniards like a disastrous flood. The white men were well nigh overwhelmed; but boldly faced the enemy, the while retreating from the city, to join forces with the remainder of the army. Five men were left slain in the streets. A danger now beset

the cavaliers. Many of them had tethered their horses in the outskirts of the town. Among them was Juan de Leon and Rodrique Gomez. Juan first noticed their predicament, and called to Rodrique: "Quick, get to your horse. They're almost on us." Just then an arrow grazed the speaker's face, another furrowed his neck, simply drawing blood. Across their path, an Indian moved, raised his tomahawk to strike, but Gomez following close behind, tripped the savage, and left him sprawling in the road, while the two youths sought their chargers. They had reached them none too soon; for the plans of the savages were well devised, and partly carried into effect.

Dividing into two bands; one was to fight the retreating Spaniards, the other purposed to kill the horses, and gather the baggage and effects of the army, which had by this time arrived, and lay heaped along the wall and about the fields. Juan de Leon and Rodrique and most of the cavaliers secured their horses; but the camp supplies and equipment were borne away by the red skins. With the luggage they took the slaves, freed them from their chains, and placing weapons in their hands, urged them to fight and preserve their liberty. Juan and Rodrique now found themselves beneath the village walls. The heavy gates of the stockaded town were closed, and as they paused at the entrance, the Indians sought to terrify them with the beating of their wooden drums and their unearthly yells, as they triumphantly displayed for the Spaniards' benefit, various pieces of the baggage they

had captured. The horsemen, with the fighting forces behind them, then assailed the village walls. Now they drove the Indians from their stronghold; again they retreated, for they found the missiles thrown from the sheltered defense, above their head, wrought havoc on their men. Seeing them withdraw, the savages made bold to rush forth. Again the Spaniards made assault, beat down a hundred of the bravest, and quickly drove them back within the gate. Thus the two armies fought, backwards and forwards, without cessation, for three long hours.

Already the cavaliers had suffered losses they could not well overcome. Don Carlos Enriquez, nephew of de Soto, when the battle was scarce begun, fell mortally wounded. Juan first saw the young man's difficulty. His horse was wounded in the breast. An arrow had pierced the noble animal, and remained imbedded in the flesh. His squadron had retreated, and Don Carlos sought to withdraw the shaft, and thus relieve the horse.

"Let me hold your spear, Don," said Juan who rode by his side. Not hearing him, the Governor's nephew retained his lance, simply passing it from his right hand to his left, as he leaned forward over his horse's neck to seize the dart. He tugged at the arrow, leaned sidewise, thus exposing his neck, the only portion of his person unprotected. In an instant an arrow, tipped with flint, came with the swiftness of lightning, buried itself in his throat, and the poor man toppled from his horse. Juan, with heroic endeavor, caught him as he fell and

bore him from the field of conflict; but strive as best he could to save his life, next day he died. Urged on by the fierceness of the battle before the gate, the Governor ordered a company of his cavalry to dismount, and, thoroughly armed, taking bucklers for their defense, and battle axes in their hands, thus by dint of incessant attack to break open the gates, and take the village by storm. In an instant a band of two hundred resolute cavaliers dashed forward to the assault. Their names were honored ones, Muscoso, Juan de Leon, Anasco, Gomez, Gallegos and others equally deserving of mention. With impetuous dash the brave men rushed, and with equal boldness the Indians received them, giving blow for blow. Now they are repulsed. Again they return to the attack. No words passed between them. Only blows were the order of the day, and these rained like so many battle rams, at one time on the falling stockade, at another on the arms and heads of the exposed savages.

At last the gate was broken down. Juan and Rodrique were among the first to enter. They plunged forward impetuously amidst a shower of darts and stones. Those who knew him, thought they saw the form of the ever-present Tachuco among the warriors. Rodrique was about to speak. He began: "Look, Juan, is not that Tachuco yonder? I think he sees us also."

Juan turned in the direction of the designated red man, and, as certain as the sun rose that day, Tachuco fought upon the wall. For miles and

miles that unrelenting savage had followed the white men's army, spreading hatred in his pathway and, at each new nation's door, giving the Indians that clew with which they might pass the expedition on its fateful way. Tachuco had met the wily Tuscaloosa, and before the question could be asked: "Is gold here to be found?" Tuscaloosa had struck the blow which was yet falling on the heads of the Spanish cavaliers and the army.

There was not time for Juan to reply to Rodrique's question as he glanced at Tachuco. Every moment called to action. The strife was exceptionally fierce about the men who forced the gateway. The passage was narrow, and those who entered did so at great hazard. Then the hundred and more cavaliers without the gate attacked the wall with their telling axes. The facing of straw and clay fell before them. The cross beams also were laid bare, and their fastenings broken. The barricade yielded in a dozen places, and a mad scramble of the knights began, not only through the open gate, but over the broken walls, up and on through the village streets. Through the length of the town they fought. From the tops of houses they contended with the ubiquitous Indian. They fired the homes of the savages, and wrapped in flames, the smoke rose heavenward a further token of the wrath of man.

The defense of the hosts of Tuscaloosa was a desperate one. The battle was everywhere, without the walls, within the walls, and through the city streets it traveled like the wind. When the siege

on the wall was raised, some corner of the town became another strong fortress, or some fortified dwelling marked a place within and without which armed bands fought. The battle raged at length about the large house in the square, the one assigned the Governor for his private use. There the Indians were assailing, and a company of white men within maintaining the siege. The savages evidently sought to despoil the Governor's camp equipage and slay his retinue. They had not attacked the building at first as they supposed it completely within their power; and even now they approached the place simply to take away the spoils. To their surprise the Indians found it strongly fortified. Within were three cross-bow men and five halberdiers of the Governor's guard, also an Indian, armed with bow and arrows, a red skin who had been faithful from the first landing of the Spaniards. Besides these fighting men were the two priests, Barbidilla and Phillipe, and two slaves belonging to the Governor. This constituted the entire garrison; and they defended the house stoutly; the laymen with their weapons, the priests in fervent devotions.

The Indians tried in vain to gain the portal. Mounting the roof, they broke it open in a dozen places; but so well did the cross-bow men and the friendly Indian ply their weapons that scarcely did an enemy show himself than he was transfixed by an arrow. Thus the white guard fought and kept their enemies at bay until de Soto and his bands came to their relief. The Governor at the head of

his daring cavaliers spurred his charger up and down the principal streets, trampling down some, lancing others, leaving a track of carnage wherever they passed. Toward the end of the battle Muscoso, master of the camp, arrived. He had foolishly loitered on the way, and, as he sauntered toward the village where to him the unknown battle was raging, he heard the distant alarms of drum and trumpet, and beheld a column of smoke rising in the air. Suspecting the cause he pressed forward with his men in all speed to the scene of action. It was late in the afternoon. He and Diego de Soto, kinsman of the Governor, entered the town together. While hastening to join the fighting forces of his uncle Diego de Soto learned the sad fate of his cousin Don Carlos Enriquez, to whom he was most devoted.

"I will avenge his death," cried Diego, as he threw himself from his horse and rushed into the village with his sword and buckler. Juan watched Diego as he plunged into the thickest of the fight. He also saw him as he fell with an arrow in his brain. He fell as did his cousin Don Carlos two hours before. De Leon carried him away and laid him with the fallen knight he so much loved. Thus for nine long hours the battle raged. The savages refused to surrender, or lay down their arms, and fought until all were slain. The last warrior that wielded a weapon was among those fighting in the village. So blinded was he with fury that he became unconscious of his comrade's fate, until glancing about him he saw all lying dead. Further contest

was hopeless, so he turned in flight. Reaching the wall he sprang lightly to the top thinking to escape across the fields. Here, however, to his great dismay he beheld the squadrons of horse and foot below him, and the fields about covered with his slaughtered countrymen. Escape now was impossible; death or slavery awaited him. In his despair he snatched the string from his bow, passed it round his neck, fastened the other end to the branch of a tree, and threw himself from the wall, strangled in the presence of the Spaniards before they could prevent it. Thus he perished, and with him that day five thousand of his fellows, for it was a day of great slaughter. Thus the haughtiness of Tuscaloosa was overcome; but not without great havoc to the white men as well as their enemies. The day of strife closed with great loss of noble blood, and with destruction of their baggage and possessions, they could never replace in those unfriendly forests. Such was the price paid by the seekers after gold.

CHAPTER XIII.

"The Forbidden Vision."

The first night after the battle found the army in great misery. It was a night of lamentations and groans of the dying. Many brave comrades would be seen no more along the weary march. Many loved faces would now be missed in the advance upon the futile quest. Such was the price the Spaniards paid; but the end was not yet. That night those who were able bore arms, patrolled as sentinels, and maintained a vigilant watch, expecting further to be assailed. Thus the dreary night passed away; and eight days sped along, as the wounded strove to get well; and those who were well cared for them and buried the dead. Yet further, fifteen days rolled away, while the Spaniards tarried still amid the dreadful scenes of carnage. They foraged for food, going as far as four miles in a circuit about their camp, and from the deserted hamlets round about, they brought back enough provisions for the army. Also to the white man's credit, it must be said, he shared with the wounded, starving Indians in the village, the food he brought from near and far.

From these Indian survivors the Spaniards learned how the treacherous Tuscaloosa had planned the destruction of de Soto and his men, from the time he first heard of their approach.

"Tachuco, I feel sure, had gone on before us," remarked Juan de Leon. "Without doubt he inspired the evil heart of Tuscaloosa, and joined forces with him against us."

"I trust he fell among the slain," said Rodrique Gomez.

"If not," broke in Ortiz, "no doubt he is on his way to greet another tribe, and tell them how they may be badly thrashed."

"But, my children," said Barbidilla, the ever-present priest, "pray that we shall have no more of such experience as those of this terrible day."

"Yes, father, pray that prayer for us. Your prayers served some purpose in the Governor's house that afternoon when your little garrison was so sorely pressed, but finally relieved," Ortiz suggested.

"I have just left the Governor, Barbidilla, and find the burdens of the expedition weigh heavily on his shoulders." The speaker was the clerical Phillipe. He had gone to de Soto's tent at the summons of the Adelantado. The great man was depressed. He had just received word that ships from Cuba with fresh supplies for his army were now in Pensacola Bay, a few days' march distant. Thither he could send his men to bring recruits and provisions for his army; but rumors had reached his ears. His men had grown disheartened. Juan de Leon had told him so; Ortiz, too, brought a similar message; Rodrique Gomez, further, supported the statements of the others, but added: "I am well pleased. This life now suits me. I don't like too

much fighting; but there are compensations. A good game and agreeable companions and enough for one day is all I want. Let's go on and get rich before we return, or let's not go back at all."

To confirm or refute these messages of discontent de Soto summoned Father Phillipe. Now the good father was bound to tell the truth. His disposition, moreover, would lead him not to make the truth less baneful looking than it was. He sympathized somewhat with the complaints he heard. Barbidilla had called him contentious and complaining these many days; but from this honest servant of the Church, the Governor at any rate could gain an answer to his question. So the priest appeared before the commander of the Spanish forces.

"Tell me, father, is it true my men are in rebellious temper? Are they ready to return to Spain? Have they had enough of this search for gold, or —as I have heard you call it—this running battle, from the sea-coast to the grave? Tell me plainly, father. I will listen."

"They whisper, Governor, that you are a man of few words, ready to listen to advice, but slow to follow it. If I should tell you what I hear it would not please your majesty. To speak the truth, the men are discouraged. They say the search before them is vain. Mexico or Peru would have been much better. Spain is a great way off; but they long for Spain. They say with one acclaim: 'We have had enough of this.'"

"I have heard you, faithful priest, now return to

your quarters. To-night I will pass in disguise among the cavaliers, peep in at the tents of some, I fancy, now revolt and listen. If possible go this night to the tent of our treasurer, Juan Gaytan. I am told he and his comrades have determined to leave the expedition. Remember, now, Phillipe, I shall be about the camp this night. Others whom I have taken into my confidence know this. See that my purpose is successful."

Throughout the camp that night there wandered the Governor in disguise. From the tent of de Leon and Gomez he passed. There he stayed not, for he knew their mind and the messages they had brought him. In company with Ortiz he approached the tent of Juan Gaytan who bore the title "treasurer," but long since had lost everything but that title. Gaytan was talking with several cavaliers.

"Yes," said one of them, "I have heard a rumor that vessels from Cuba are soon to stop at Pensacola. That port is now not many miles away. Let us in some way go with the company who meet the ships to bring the recruits and supplies inland. Once at the sea-coast and with Spanish ships at our disposal. . . ."

"How at our disposal?" broke in a second.

"That question will easily be settled, brother, when we reach the port and present our credentials in the shape of three score well-armed knights who wish to sail for Mexico, Peru, or even Spain itself."

"Careful, my men," said the treasurer, "talk is sometimes dangerous, and sometimes it reaches ears which we desire not to hear. Hush, what is that

noise? Quick, peer out into the dark a moment."

Before the nearest to the entrance could do as the treasurer directed, the rustle had ceased, two forms were passing the tent just beyond.

"It's nothing," said the cavalier after he had thus carelessly investigated the sound without. "It's nothing," he repeated. "Just two of our men passing by. One is Ortiz and the other I could not recognize. Some good-sized soldier it was. Perhaps it was Gomez. He is given to staying up at night."

Then the figures of the two men, Ortiz, and the other man passed on to the tent of de Leon, twenty rods beyond. The two rested there awhile. Juan was not surprised to see them. He, too, was party to the midnight expedition of de Soto to learn the feeling of his men.

"I have learned the worst, Juan," said the Governor, when he and Ortiz were well beneath the shelter of the tent. "There is a spirit of discontent abroad; and some even whisper rebellion when the right time comes. Well, I am not surprised. It is not strange for some of our knights to feel as they do after the fearful battle we have just fought; but when we find that gold, or when we settle in some fertile resting place, and have more comfortable quarters, and recuperate, then all this discontent will pass away. Then, too, I know it is hard for some to be separated from their loved ones. They tell me, Juan, you are on the list of those who have left some one behind. Ah, yes, I know the lady well. Juan, she's made of the right material. How well I remember her when she joined our fleet, a day's

sail from San Lucar. But come, Ortiz, if I talk like this to Juan I shall make him both homesick and rebellious. We must get us home to our beds."

As they passed on through the night the Governor said: "Ortiz, I take you further into my confidence. I have not told others what I now tell you, although some of the unruly cavaliers in camp surmise it. Not many hours ago messages reached me that our boats from Cuba had reached Pensacola. Arias and Maldonado, with whom I left instructions when at the coast, have now reached Pensacola, which is not more than seven days' journey distant, from the point where we now encamp. Come to my tent. I have there one of the men who brought me this report. He is one of those prisoners whom Anasco brought to camp last night. The man talks the same language as my faithful Indian, Sozo. He tells Sozo he learned this news from Indians living near the southern waters. I do not doubt him. The vessels are there as planned by me. He also tells of a brave white girl, who met the Spaniards when they landed, and wished to be carried by them inland in search of our expedition. Why should this white maid thus seek us?"

"Perhaps it is Dona Isabel, your majesty," said the smiling Ortiz.

"No, it is not she; and this you know, for I besought her not to come to Florida; and then, if she did make the journey, it would be in the vessels themselves and not by land, or some other way, so as to meet the ships at their landing place."

"Ah, listen, your majesty, that maiden can be

none other than de Leon's friend, she who followed him across the sea, as I am told."

"Ortiz, I think you are right; but we must not let him know even these suspicions; nor need he know the boats await us at the coast. More, swear to me, now, that none of the army shall know the secret I have told you. Let it die with you, or, better live with you, if God so wills that you shall return to far-off Spain. Let's now steal a few hours' needed sleep. Rest here to-night, my man. You need not go. Lie down, sleep, you surely need it."

Ortiz was soon in the "land of Nod"; not so de Soto. That night refreshing sleep would not favor the great Adelantado. He was greatly dejected. He talked to himself as Ortiz slept.

"No, I will not tell my cavaliers this news I have thus strangely received. They, one and all, will desert me. No, I thought too quickly. Not all will leave me. Many of my bravest and most beloved are already gone. Is not Don Carlos among the slain and the well-beloved Diego? Their departure was not ignoble. Juan Gaytan, however, would play the coward, would run. From what I heard this night he might even become a rebel, take my ships, and spread the news that my expedition had failed, and he alone and his favorites could escape from the terrors of the forest. No, none of these men shall have the chance thus to outwit me and sail away unbidden guests of my ships. Then, what messages will they take to Cuba, and thence to Spain? My wealth, my honor, my life itself have

I staked on this undertaking. These men shall not know of those vessels which await. We will press on, and the gold will yet be found. Then with our riches we shall return at length, and I will at that time tell them all and they will give me thanks for these days of silence. Ortiz will keep this secret, I am assured."

The morning broke upon the resting place of the Governor. It found the wearied soldiers asleep. All night long he had meditated and muttered to himself; and with the break of day sweet sleep, like a tender nurse, soothed his troubled soul. But his rest was soon broken and he went about his work; but from that day de Soto was a changed man. Phillipe met him as he passed the "Church," as the men called the lodging place of the company of priests and friars who were numbered among the company. He hailed the Governor. "Your majesty, I would like to speak with you a moment." The Governor seemed not to hear him, but went on his way as one whose thoughts were afar off. And so it was, thoughts of colonization now filled the mind of the Adelantado; but this was not the only reason for his absentmindedness.

The great man, by what he heard that night, had lost confidence in his followers. Muscoso found it so, and Gaytan, the treasurer was certain of their commander's coolness. Instead of manifesting his usual frankness, he became moody, irritable, a discontented man. He seemed to have been robbed, in a day, of his energy and ambition. He was stung with secret disappointment. Juan de Leon talked

with Ortiz of the Governor's changed appearance and behavior.

"I think I understand our brave de Soto's malady," he said. "His proud spirit is somewhat broken; but yet it will not yield. Even if he would return, what a sad spectacle we ragged and penniless cavaliers would present! A man of our Governor's mould could not endure such poverty and humiliation after the taste of wealth and popularity he has enjoyed. No, he must succeed or die. Gold to him is more precious than life; and disgrace is worse than death."

Thus the man of iron will came to the desperate decision of heading off his mutinous men by refusing even to inform them about the ships which brought recruits and provisions. Turning northward he would plunge into the wilderness again.

Thus the suffering soldiers eyed their commander. Thus also he watched them; and none, save Ortiz, knew of the actual coming of the Spanish ships at Pensacola. Thus the blissful vision passed. The army wearied with war and incessant marches was doomed yet longer to battle, and further to march until it reached the southern coast where no waiting ships would meet them.

The mystery of the vanished Leonora had not been solved. Juan did not hear the story of the white maiden who had come to the ships, as the Indian captive said. Even de Soto, had he given the incident a moment's thought, could not say that the woman was the girl who so lovingly waved to de Leon from the Havana shores; and whom the man

sought so longingly. What time Juan gave to reflection on the subject was soon carried away by another call to arms, or some strenuous summons to duty. He pictured Leonora, perhaps, returned to Spain, or living somewhere in Mexico, perhaps a captive against her will, or, it may be, death had claimed her as his own. De Leon did not know. Therefore he sought to clear his mind of the sweet vision which so often haunted him. He plunged once more into the rigors of the trying campaign. He sipped what honest pleasure he could along the way; not, however, like the careless Rodrique Gomez, who gambled and forgot the comforts of his home in Spain, and contented himself with the companionship of his Indian slave Ulia.

Juan sought forgetfulness in urging on the expedition. "There is nothing else to do," he said. "The Governor, however, seems to have forgotten in sad fashion. He has forgotten the homeland and his former splendor, now departed. He has forgotten even the faithful Isabel who longs for him in Cuba. We who last visited that island brought him those messages of loving devotion and earnest pleadings that he returned to her; but the once grand Spaniard is no longer himself. Those two fair-formed Indian slaves of his seem to content him in his loss of Isabel. I think it is true as Ortiz says, the great man has broken with his past, the ties of home-life as well as those of country. He simply plunges forward without purpose or ambition." Thus sadly and wearily the army turned again to resume its journey through the unexplored forest. "The march," as the historian tells us, "from this day was

aimless and almost hopeless. They wandered from place to place, caring little whither they went. The army was without tents or baggage. Their clothing had turned to rags, and they dressed themselves in skins. Through illness and incessant fighting with the Indians, their numbers were constantly decreasing. But few of their horses remained, and most of the men traveled on foot." Thus they moved on with crushed hopes of conquest and forbidden desires for home and country.

CHAPTER XIV.

"The Arch-Enemy Overtaken."

"The men must die. I cannot pardon this offense. The act was wanton, accompanied by force. It has greatly aroused the natives, I am told. For this same sort of crime, but yesterday, we shot to death two natives, and, mutilating a third, sent him back as an example and warning to the rest of the tribe. If we deal thus with the savages who steal, certainly we are compelled to treat the white men in similar fashion." These were the words of the Governor, and they were spoken in all fairness; but the priests and the officers of the army pleaded for the men and Ortiz also made bold to speak in extenuation.

"Perhaps the Governor will mitigate the sentence of these our comrades in arms," he ventured. "I pray that Osorio and the brave Gomez shall not be put to death."

"The men have provoked trouble with the Indians," said the Governor. "The Chief feels aggrieved, and will vent his anger on us all, unless in some way we make amends."

Then the conversation turned to what the white men had suffered from the lurking, thieving Indians about the camp.

"Three warriors were lurking about the camp last night," remarked de Leon. "In the moonlight I saw them. The rustle of the leaves, the crack-

ling of the underbrush caught my ear as I stood on guard," Juan continued. "They pry about our sleeping places for no good purpose. I had in mind to rouse the camp; but said to myself, 'I shall wait and see.' Just then the moonlight fell upon the face of the leader of the three, and as I looked more carefully at his features, I knew I had seen the man before. Behold, it was none other than that same Tachuco, who, I believe, and have always held, has followed us all the way, and stirred up against us the hatred of every tribe through whose province we have passed. Believe me, my noble commander, he now seeks occasion against us, and urges this cacique to seek revenge for some real or fancied wrong."

The Governor laughed, then said: "My good de Leon, I have heard before from your lips of this bad Indian; this evil genius of our expedition, as you suppose. No, no, my boy; we left Tachuco at the coast. The Indians are like our colored slaves. They all look alike, it seems to me. This ever-present Tachuco is simply some red brother who resembles the prisoner we lost on our first landing. Next time, Juan, capture the sly fellow and bring him to me. Then, seeing him with my own eyes, I shall believe."

So the Governor placed no credence in the oft-repeated assertion of de Leon and others of the company that the threats of the Indian who struggled with Rodrique for the necklace, who roused the gay party at the Count's palace at Gomera, who slew the Negro Estivanico, had been carried out. In short, that Tachuco had pursued the company

from their landing at the coast and was that very moment among their enemies without the camp, stirring up strife and deadly hate.

"It will not help much to sacrifice these white men. The cacique will still wage war against us. Their deaths will not appease his wrath. It will not stop his preparations for war," said the priest Barbidilla. "Let me urge the worthy commander to spare these men."

In spite of such earnest supplications de Soto was obdurate. He simply said: "I leave you now, and expect the sentence of death to be executed."

As he finished the sentence, messengers from the injured cacique reached the scene. Ortiz as interpreter interviewed the men, while his commander awaited several rods away to learn the meaning of their coming. What passed between them de Soto did not know. Observing the manner of the men he scented hostilities. Growing impatient at the thought of another conflict, he passed on to his quarters, telling Ortiz to bring him information of the embassy.

The message of the cacique demanded recompense of some sort; at least the punishment of the offenders by death. The fate of the men seemed sealed. Now there could be no escape; but, suddenly, Ortiz grew pensive. "The Governor is gone," he said. "Now, Muscoso, we can settle this matter among ourselves. We shall disregard the message of this cacique. We can tell these messengers the White Chief will put the culprits to death. This will satisfy."

So, turning to the waiting Indians, Ortiz said:

"Go, tell your chief that these men will at once be punished as he demands," and the messengers departed apparently appeased. "But what shall I now tell de Soto?" queried Ortiz of Muscoso.

"Tell him," came the reply, "that the cacique has sent these Indians to say the soldiers were not guilty and had in no wise offended him and that he would consider it a great favor if they were pardoned and set at liberty."

Immediately the false interpretation of the complaints of the indignant chieftain was carried to de Soto, and the criminals were pardoned.

This diplomatic move did not suffice to stop hostilities. Already in the forest round about the warriors swarmed. A dozen braves approached the camp in hostile demonstration. An equal number of cavaliers started in pursuit, and the redskins were quickly overtaken. None at that time showed fight, save one, who hurled an arrow at Juan de Leon, upon his coming, then fled precipitately into the wilderness with the assailed white man close upon him. He ran like an escaping deer. On through the winding forest pathway the hot chase led. The creatures of the wood startled as the men crashed on their way; but the hunted and the pursuer heard them not. On, on they sped, leaving the company of knights far in the rear.

"De Leon can take care of himself with but one Indian to fight," they said. So they followed slowly. The road stopped suddenly. A high bluff appeared, and below it a gully ran off for twenty rods, steep and rocky. It had once been the bed of a small flowing stream. The Indian leaped forward, then

downward, and disappeared, as though the earth had opened to receive him. The knight with impatience checked his horse. Turning back fifty rods he found another trail which, after a few moments of hard riding, brought him to the spot where the savage had plunged down the bluff.

The two men were now face to face. The red man, bruised by his fall, sought to recover himself. He had risen slowly, limping, and carrying by his side his bruised right hand. He looked about him and saw his several weapons, scattered broadcast, where he fell and rolled along the rocky stream bed. Each of the combatants rested momentarily—the Indian on foot, thinking to gather up his bow and arrows, if possible; the knight on horseback, with sword ready to strike. A look of recognition passed between the men.

"Tachuco!" cried Juan.

The Indian was silent, and as calm as the face of mother earth before a storm. The panting horse was close upon him; yet he moved not, nor seemed to fear. With a single blow the rushing knight might have hewn the defenseless man in twain; but something stayed his hand. Perhaps it was compassion on a helpless foe. It does not please a strong, brave soul to strike a man who is down. Perhaps it was curiosity, on Juan's part, to learn the full story of Tachuco's long trail of organized hatred toward the white man. He seemed to meditate and ask himself how long the Indian had tracked the army, how much havoc he had brought upon the expedition. Perhaps de Leon paused that he might secure Tachuco as a placid prisoner; but as he thus

pondered, the Indian sought his weapons, and simultaneously hurled defiance at the horseman. The Spaniard dashed upon him, smote him to the ground, did not wound him, as he might have done.

"Speak, Indian," he said. "Tell me. Did I not see you at the storming of the walls of Mauvilla? Did I not catch sight of your face last night as I stood on guard? Tell me, how long have your wandering feet followed the white man's footsteps?"

Tachuco answered slowly, as though many days of anger surged within him, and could not find expression.

"Since first I met the white men I vowed to give them naught but hatred," he said. "I love to hate the whole detested brood. Your race has brought me trouble. It has slain my people and robbed me of my home. For many moons I have skirted about your traveling band of armed robbers, and I have passed on ahead of you, from tribe to tribe, to warn new nations of the white men who come to bring them woe. I know you search for gold. My people know it, and one and all have sought to have you pass their borders, and so have told you where the yellow metal is to be found, not in their domain, but just beyond. Thank Tachuco for the many messages you have received of gold which is just beyond you."

The Indian's fire ceased not its fury. His tongue was loosed and he would have showered more of hate upon his foe, when suddenly both men turned toward the South. Here and there in the distance there appeared a moving speck among the trees.

The Indian spoke again, now rather in conciliation. "De Leon," he said, "you have spared my life. Let me now spare yours. A band of two thousand bravest of my tribe now follow down this stream bed. The signs are not wanting that before the sun has settled far on the western sky, these warriors will be upon you. Leave me. Get you to the village, and I will hold them back until you are well upon your way. Then we shall forget that we both have spared the other's life."

De Leon turned, spurred his horse and was gone, yet glancing back a moment, he seemed to see forms of a dozen savages stealing through the forests to reach the curving stream. Finding the path along which he and Tachuco hastened, he sought his comrades. Seeing them not, he skirted the woods, for a mile about the village where their camp was placed. An hour passed; and he heard the familiar sound of stepping horses, and with joy greeted his comrades in arms. His story was quickly told. Tachuco was now no longer an uncertain vision, at least to Juan, and, although the faces of his friends betrayed some traces of unbelief; yet Juan knew the truth at last. Along their trail there wandered an evil heart of hate. It went before them on their way and multiplied a thousandfold until it engulfed them in one vast abyss of hatred.

So the day stole on; and in its aftermath followed a dark and cloudy night. The north wind swept down furiously upon the village, and with it a fiercer storm. Under cover of darkness three bands of savages approached the white man's camp

within the town. Silently the three red columns pursued their march of expected triumph. At midnight they had advanced within a hundred paces of the sleeping cavaliers, and the sentinels about the camp had failed to see them. When de Soto and his men were in their deepest sleep, just before the morning had begun to dawn, the air was rent with the terrifying war-whoop, resounded with the blasts of conch shells and re-echoed with the rumbling of wooden drums, as the savages rushed forward like demons to the assault.

In their mad rush they carried blazing torches, so prepared as suddenly to rush into being, and with these further means of inspiring terror they plunged among the sleeping soldiers, promising slaughter and conflagration. The sleepers now long used to sudden attack rubbed sight into their sleepy eyes, caught up their armor and weapons and sallied forth for life or death. The Governor, sleeping in his doublet and hose, as was his wont, in expectation of hourly trouble, quickly took his place at the head of his men, followed closely by a dozen horsemen, equally alert for sudden approach of any foe.

This battle was an evil one. The fire raged about the Spaniards. Smoke rolled upon them, blinded them, and hindered them in preparation for the sudden call to arms. Again, the restless horses were not easily controlled. Many of the brave beasts could not be reached in time. Some dashed away, riderless, and perished, or drove at length, pell mell, into the oncoming band of red warriors. That night

was unkind to the white men. Fifty soldiers of de Soto's army stampeded in the eastern portion of the village, where the flames raged fiercely and the battle was hot. The half hundred men in their dismay fled into the fields as if in flight and separation from the camp they might find a refuge. Nuno Tobar rushed hastily among them, sword in hand, his coat-of-mail left unbuckled in his haste. "Turn soldiers, turn!" he cried. "Whither are you flying? Here is neither Cordova nor Seville to give you refuge. Your safety lies in your courage and in the vigor of your arms; not in flight." While he thus pleaded with the maddened fugitives, thirty soldiers from another portion of the village reached the spot and intercepted the fugitives. They taunted the recreant Spaniards with their shameful flight, and thus inducing them to join forces, they hastened together to renew the combat.

When thus united their combined force could not withstand the maddened Indians. The impact of the rushing savages was like a mighty avalanche, which must expend its force and carry everything before it. Thus the tide of plumed warriors swept on until two dozen chosen cavaliers, daring horsemen, dashed upon the scene. These fighting men were knights who had seen service on the African frontier, tried fighters. These skilled horsemen charged the main body of the enemy, just in the nick of time, and in the fury of their assault, forced the savages to retire. New courage then seized the Spanish force. They fought like men, de Soto in the lead, and by his side de Leon, Anasco and the

rest, as brave a band of soldiers as ever donned the garb of war.

Would the brave deeds of the noble cavaliers had been expended in some worthier cause than that of search for gold! Had these sons of Spain really desired to plant a colony in the wilds of Florida, they would have suffered less; but spurning the call to settle in some fertile spot and found a white man's city, they dashed forward in confusion and constant warfare, through their thirst for gold. So again the conflict raged about their camping place. Once more the victory was the white man's; but he bought it at a dreadful price.

The battle was now over. The Indians were disappearing in the dusk of the early morning. The wounded were dragging themselves away, the savage to his native haunts, the white man as near his camping place as possible, and beneath the shelter of that which he called his tent. The recall had been sounded by de Soto, and the pursuing troopers were returning, and the Governor once more, after another hard-fought battle, began to count his losses.

"Forty of our men have fallen this night," he said. Among the slain was a Spanish woman, the only female in the army, a brave wife who dared to follow her husband through the new land. This white woman perished in the flames that night; and there they found her when the census of the dead was taken.

"Fifty horses, also, are lost," the Governor said in sadness.

"The swine also are gone," remarked Muscoso,

captain of the camp. "Our projected settlement now will miss this live stock."

As Muscoso spoke there lay before the Spanish cavaliers the ruins of the once straw-thatched enclosure which contained the swine; but the occupants had perished in the flames. So intent were the Spaniards in counting their losses that they failed to see a dark figure pass about their camp, so near that an arrow could have reached him. It was Tachuco. He heard the Governor lament his loss, and chuckled with fiendish glee. He listened to the words of reproach, heaped upon Muscoso, for imperfectly guarding the camp that night; and, paused awhile to catch the words of condemnation, when de Soto deposed Muscoso from his post of master-of-the-camp. Had Juan de Leon turned again de Soto would have called him mad; for once more would he have reported having seen the bad Indian, Tachuco, arch-enemy of that famous search for gold.

CHAPTER XV.

"The Irrepressible Rumor."

Even in the wilderness rumor steals its quiet way. It travels like the wind, and like the wind, "you cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." Thus the rumor about the ships at Pensacola had traveled far and wide. The tribes along the Gulf coast had passed it on; and the natives up and down the Mississippi heard of the waiting vessels. De Soto sought to stop the information reaching camp, and when it came, he silenced it at once. Only he himself and Ortiz knew, and Ortiz was pledged to secrecy.

But rumor is a fiery thing. It will even burn its way through iron-bound secrecy; and so at last it worked persistently to the ears of de Soto's followers. Muscoso knew it, Anasco also and Juan Gaytan, the treasurer. Rodrique Gomez heard it also, and so did Juan de Leon and the rest of the cavaliers. Some listened with displeasure, a few with indifference, even satisfaction, and some received the news with anger, among them the treasurer, Gaytan, whose voice was heard in loud complaint. But the time was long past, the soldiers felt, to meet the ships. They had long ago left port. Perhaps had returned to Cuba or Spain. The thought of escaping by the vessels was, therefore, completely abandoned by the rebellious members of

the company. They could complain, however, and this they did. They murmured; and still withal, pressed on, whither, they knew not.

Through manifold trials and vicissitudes the army passed. After days of marching and nights of keeping guard, their eyes at length beheld that river, the sight of which has made their expedition famous in history. It was the great Mississippi, that majestic current, a mile and a half in width. They watched it sweeping by, that "Father of waters," bearing upon its breast trees and logs and islands of driftwood as it had for ages unknown. They called it the Rio Grande, and proceeded to cross, still cheered on by hope of gold.

Four barges were built by the river banks. In these the Spanish army finally crossed the mighty stream; but not without contention. All along the road from the ocean to the Mississippi they were compelled to fight their way, and so at the crossing of the great river further display of opposition did not surprise them.

"A pretty sight, Ortiz. See how gracefully the crowded canoes draw near the shore."

"They must number full two hundred, Juan, and must contain a thousand warriors. But do they come for peace or for war? I suppose the Governor will take no chances and presume their coming is for battle."

"Surely not," said de Leon, "for they bring us fish and fruit and bread. They would thus welcome us and do us homage. See, they are about to land. No, no, they hesitate."

This spirit of halting was fatal to the fleet of Indian ships.

"The Governor calls to them to land, Ortiz, does he not?"

"Yes, but they seem in confusion. Our commander will look upon this move as a signal for hostilities. Yes, the order is given to fire."

The words had hardly passed his lips before the cross-bow men let fly their arrows. Six men fell forward in the tiny ships of war as the fleet retreated quickly, yet in good order. Thus the enemy was for a season driven back.

At the end of twenty days the four newly made boats of the Spaniards were launched, and before the dawn of day each vessel was manned with four troopers of tried courage, and two hours before the sun went down the whole army had crossed over. The month of May had come, and the Spanish soldiers forgot the hard winter through which they had passed. They found themselves in a fertile country, and sought the friendship of the people through whose land they passed; yet they found but little peace.

"Even our friends among these tribes make us allies, simply to use us in battle with their enemies," remarked de Leon one day.

The man was right. An Indian chieftain named Casquin before long appeared. He came with suitable and sumptuous presents for de Soto and his men. The treasurer, Gaytan, looked pleased, and Muscoso, captain-of-the-camp, also rejoiced; but Ortiz and de Leon did not rejoice. "It is another

payment for our brave men to risk their lives and jeopardize the expedition," they said.

True to this prophecy, the Spaniards were quickly embroiled by their allies into a dangerous position. They fought upon an island whither Capaha, an old-time enemy of Casquin, the latest ally of the Spaniards had withdrawn. The followers of Casquin were in the lead with the Spaniards bringing up the rear; but Casquin's men were fearful fighters and came like a rushing hurricane upon their foes. The Spaniard's Indian friends were quickly worsted; and even the cavaliers themselves, placed as they were upon the defensive, were in great danger and were saved, as by a miracle, in the strange withdrawal of the besieged Capaha.

"We are delivered once more, Phillipe. Did you not see how our men were saved in the hour of their extremity? Why, the mighty Capaha ceased to fight at that time when he could have brought destruction upon our cavaliers, I cannot tell, except the Dear Lord, that moment, held him back."

"Yes, Barbidilla, we are once more delivered, but only to fight again before many days have passed. We thus fight our way and find no gain. We have not yet discovered any gold. I verily believe that tale de Leon tells, how an evil genius follows our army, leads the tribes against us, and teaches them to give the information 'gold is just beyond.' We surely seem to have been chasing phantoms and wandering like useless dreamers. I don't wonder some of our men complain. Here

comes Juan Gaytan. Let us hear what he has to say."

As Gaytan approached, the priests accosted him. "Let's walk together," they said. Then the two men of the Church and the treasurer of the army passed through the camp, and, as they went, they talked.

"Yes, I protest against this useless search wherein no sign of gold has come to us. We have seen some copper; but, we seek gold. Better would it have been for us to have gone to Peru or Mexico. Yes, even if the Governor does hear me, I shall complain."

"Hush, Gaytan, we are now passing the Governor's tent."

This fact the grumbling treasurer soon discovered to his discomfiture, for de Soto sallied forth. The three men quickly disappeared, the priests hurrying to their quarters; Gaytan to his, feeling guilty. His guilt was more than that of troublesome complaining. That very night he had refused to patrol the post assigned to him, giving his official position as excuse. The fact of his insubordination had reached the Governor's ears; and when, in addition, rebellious words passed through the camp that night and into the Governor's tent, de Soto could no longer restrain himself. Emerging from his resting place he cried that all could hear, even those who slept were rudely awakened with the enraged man's resounding voice.

"What is this, soldiers and captains?" he cried. "Do the mutineers still live, who, when in Mauvilla,

talked of returning to Spain or Mexico? and do they now, with the excuse of being officers of the royal retinue, refuse to patrol the four hours that fall to their share? Why do you desire to return to Spain? Have you left any hereditary estates that you wish to enjoy? Why do you wish to go to Mexico to prove the baneness and pusillanimity of your spirits? That, having it in your power to become chieftains in a vast and noble country you have discovered, you preferred living as dependents in a stranger's house, with no table of your own! What honor will this confer upon you? Shame—shame on you! blush for yourselves, and recollect that, officers of the royal treasury or not, you must all serve your sovereign! Presume not upon any rank you may possess; for, be he who he may, I will take off the head of that man who refuses to do his duty, and, to undeceive you, know that whilst I live no one shall leave this country until we have conquered and settled it."

These words, uttered in great rage, showed the moody melancholia of the Governor. Gaytan's voice thereafter was quiet and his nightly patrol duty was done without a murmur. Even Phillipe, the outspoken and honest priest, was careful about his talk. Muscoso and Anasco, de Leon and the reckless Gomez were most punctilious in their duties. So when the cacique Capaha, with a train of one hundred warriors, marched into the village, they found a model camp.

The village, long the chieftain's home, had been desecrated. Most pathetic was it to see the noble

savage, a young man of twenty-six, enter the town a few days before so beautiful, but now spoiled and polluted by his foes, Casquin and his cowardly band. There Capaha beheld with suppressed rage the sepulchres of his fathers shamefully wasted. Ortiz and de Leon addressed the chief as he approached. They saw him gather up the scattered bones of his father and his father's father before him. Tenderly he kissed them and with this touch of deep reverence, returned them to their coffins.

"Chief," said Ortiz, "we will lead you and your company to the quarters of the Governor."

The band of Indians and their cacique were soon presented to the white commander. Seated side by side with Casquin, the opposing cacique saluted the Adelantado, but deigned not to notice the Indian by his side. The Governor embraced him as a friend. Likewise the officers treated him most honorably; but his heart was evil toward the offending Indian chief whom yet he had not even honored with a look of recognition. Then suddenly turning to his rival cacique, he spoke in rising anger. Ortiz listened to his words and translated them for the Governor.

Thus he spoke: "Doubtless, Casquin, you exult in having revenged your past defeats; a thing you could never have hoped or effected through your own forces. You may thank these strangers for it. They will go, but we shall remain in your own country as we were before. Pray to the sun and moon to send us good weather, then. . . ."

At Ortiz' explanation of Capaha's words Juan

took up the conversation, speaking somewhat aside until the troubled waters had subsided. "Some one will see evil days when we depart," he said. Then turning further aside, that de Soto should not hear, he added: "But I fancy the Indian deserves it. Look at him, Ortiz. He's a coward. His presents of fish with mantles and skins of various kinds have not appeased the Governor for his cowardice in that island battle. The gift of his daughter to de Soto as a hand-maid may for a time assuage the Adelantado's longing for the fair Isabel; but, look now, it's a fact, this Indian chief is not admired in our camp."

The worst enemies, however, may for a time live on terms of friendliness. So at the earnest solicitation of de Soto the two enemies repressed their wrathful feelings, embraced each other and all sat down to dine. Occasional glances, portends of a coming storm passed between the chieftains; but the prepared feast passed on without an outbreak of hostilities. It was a royal supper. Two Indian kings were there, surrounded by their courtiers. De Soto, a mighty sovereign in the estimation of his guests, sat in his chair of state, about him grouped the noblest and bravest of his men. They talked of their various territories, describing their lands and defining their borders. From the white chief they learned of Spain and the great countries, far across the sea, to the East, while in wonder the tribesmen listened.

"Ortiz," said the Governor, "as the feast drew to a close, do I understand this cacique Capaha? He

gives, does he, these two fair-formed women to join my household?"

"True, Governor," replied Ortiz.

The women were led away. "The Governor was persuaded," so the condoning historian writes, "to receive them under his protection." To the quarters of the Governor they were led, these handsome and well-shaped Indian damsels. Ortiz and Juan took them to their abiding place. On the way they talked and their words burned with strong interest in the heart of Juan de Leon. After the two men left them at the entrance of de Soto's apartments Ortiz related to Juan what Mancanoche, the most beautiful of the women, had told him.

"Juan," he said, "this Indian maid tells a most remarkable story. She verifies the rumors which have passed throughout the camp about the ships which waited at Pensacola."

"It must then be true, my good friend," responded Juan. "'Tis well the soldiers did not hear it. The repetition of that lost opportunity to flee to Spain, Mexico or Peru, might lead to further rebellious feeling."

"It might, Juan; but let me tell you all this fair one said. She told me that which in part I had heard before. At the landing of those ships of which the rumor tells a white maid approached the Spanish officers and urged them to proceed inland and search for our company, taking her along. She sought some one among our number, she said, and had traveled far to meet the ships, for she possessed special information of the vessel's movements and

of de Soto's hope of reaching the ships at that port."

"Who was this white girl, Ortiz? Whom did she seek?"

"Juan, surely you are as well equipped to answer such questions as I am. But I have not told you all."

"Finish that, my good Ortiz. Finish."

"The concluding facts are these," the response came. "When the Spanish commander of the ships would not march inland, but prepared to sail away with his vessels, then that daring white woman herself, alone, turned forestward. Whither she went the rumor does not tell; but simply this, she plunged into the vast wilderness to seek alone, if so she must, the men of our company and, that one knight in particular."

"Leonora, Leonora," gasped Juan. "How much like her!"

"But, hold, Juan. I did not say it was Leonora."

"No, true, you did not. Nor did I say it was she," retorted Juan. "I simply said: 'How much like her.'"

Juan de Leon's words were words of caution. "How much like Leonora," he said; but in his heart he groaned: "Yes, it is Leonora."

Not hearing his heart language, Ortiz proceeded: "Further, the Indian woman showed me a piece of some white woman's garment. Perhaps you saw it. It once was white; but long since had it become soiled and torn."

"Yes, Ortiz, I saw the woman show you something, but did not give attention to it."

"Yes, that was it, Juan. That piece of white cloth was found twenty miles south of Pensacola, and other garments were found. The woman did not tell me all, but she said: 'Something had befallen that daring white girl.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

"The Forlorn Hope."

It was now a year since Juan heard the rumor of the presence of the ships at Pensacola. During those twelve months many troubled thoughts passed through his mind. The rigors of the campaign, the further search for gold, the words of Ortiz, "Perhaps, the wounded white girl is not Leonora," could not drive away the deep and dismal conviction which had seized his very soul. "So much like her," he sighed.

He plunged into the fastnesses of the neighboring region, at the Governor's behest, in search of the hidden gold they sought. He returned half famished and unsuccessful. The same soul-burden weighed upon him. He could not throw it off. "Leonora, lost! Worse than that," he muttered. "Slain, perhaps. Who knows but that in some solitary waste she is dragged along, a captive, a slave girl, beaten into submission."

Then he thought of the two handsome Indian maids led along in the Governor's retinue, and said: "Were not these two, Macanoche and Mochifa, princesses among their own people? But view them now. God help me find the queenly Leonora!" He thought of the plotting Tachuco and his brow was clouded. "Can it be that the hand of that subtle savage herein also works me mischief? Why

did I not slay him that day I had him at my mercy when he lay bruised beneath my horse's feet?"

Ortiz sought to comfort him, but all in vain. The man's thoughts were in the past, and his vision far away. One day Ortiz was taken ill, and de Leon forgot his own troubles caring for the man who meant so much to the entire expedition. De Soto as well as Juan and the whole army loved Juan Ortiz. He was a man of sterling qualities; but more, he was extremely useful for intercourse with the many tribes and diverse tongues. Ortiz had become a skillful medium of communication between the Spaniards and the natives. His illness, therefore, was of serious moment to the cavaliers and soldiers.

Juan de Leon carefully nursed his sick companion, yet the man grew worse. Those days of hardship, when first captured, told upon the man in later years. He could not stand the strain and stress of daily conflict and privation. A fierce fever was upon him. It would not down. Memories of the past enshrouded him, and his tongue was loosed, as in delirium. He spoke of his capture by the ugly chief. He shuddered as he rehearsed the tale of the murder of his three companions, and his voice trembled as he mentioned his own miraculous escape, through the intervention of the merciful Ticitia. The name of the noble Muscoso brought tears of gratitude to his eyes. "We shall meet again, brave Muscoso; and thou, too, Ticitia, now Muscoso's gracious queen, and you also, Juan, so kind of you to watch thus by my side; but I cannot stay.

I hear a voice that calls. It is as gentle as a mother calling to her babe. It speaks in confidence and hope. Juan, I now have peace. The battle is over. Farewell."

They laid the useful, much loved Ortiz away in the silence of the forest, where so long he wandered. Bathing his fresh-covered mound with tears, they hastened away, so soon to forget. Memory was a faculty not much indulged by de Soto and his men. It seemed to lessen their ambition in the plans of conquest. It seemed to weaken their search for gold. Thought of home, wife, the mother and loved ones far away, were banished recollections, unwelcome because disturbing, and distressing because impossible of immediate enjoyment. So, drowning their sorrows, the army pushed on.

"We've lost a good man, Governor," remarked Juan one day as the two moved about the camp.

"I tell you, de Leon, we have. Ortiz can never be replaced. It now takes a dozen Indians to do what our old interpreter did; and when they are done I cannot understand the conversation which has just taken place. Therefore, misunderstandings arise which so often bring us into conflict with the various Indian chiefs. But, see, yonder. What! More trouble with these tribesmen? I have tried so long to preserve peace; but cannot pacify them. All I desire, now, is to reach the ocean on the South. I now see my error in not coming into touch with the ships, when I heard they waited some word from me at Pensacola. But, run, see if help is needed by our soldiers. They seem to be

in difficulty with that Indian. Two foot soldiers and three horsemen, however, should be sufficient to manage one red skin."

De Leon spurred his horse. The savage had a battle-axe, one he had found about the camp. He had sought to carry it away unnoticed; but when detected, he showed fight and stood, brandishing the terrible axe, using both hands, and striking like a maniac, yet with vigor and deadly precision. Thrice the keen edge cleaved the air, and each time a Spanish soldier's shield was broken. The brave Indian took his stand beneath a sheltering oak. Thus stationed the horsemen could not reach him; and, as the driven steed approached, the axe hurled forward, struck the horse across the shoulder and laid it open from the withers to the knee, and it fell a helpless mass behind which the savage further strove.

Then Juan came to the attack. He was just behind another knight, Gonzalo Silvestre by name. Silvestre was in no haste. "The Indian is outmatched. It is five against one," he said, as he came face to face with the desperate man. The savage by this time was much elated with his successes. Accordingly, he advanced with great boldness to receive the skillful cavalier. Repeatedly the battle-axe waved high in air, above Silvestre's head, and descended; but the Spaniard was on his guard. In its descend the weapon simply glanced across the shield and became imbedded in the ground.

It was now an unequal contest. The sword of the knight quickly smote the savage on the face.

Again it struck his arm, and severed his wrist, but the battle still went on. Seizing the axe between the stump and his other hand, with a desperate leap, the red skin made an attempt to wound the Spaniard in the face. The blow was skillfully turned aside and Silvestre's sword cut the man across the waist, passed through his naked body, and the brave warrior fell dead, cut in sunder.

This exciting conflict was but the work of a few moments; and a mere incident in the daily routine of that wonderful expedition wherein the white man's skill and ingenuity was pitted against the ignorance and childishness of the man of the American forests. De Soto listened to the story of the fray, and then forgot. He had seen too much bloodshed to remember such affairs. Moreover, his mind was now bent on reaching the great river he had recently discovered, the Mississippi. He would establish there some fortified post, build two brigantines, in which some of his most confidential followers might descend the river, carrying tidings of his safety to his wife and friends in Cuba, secure reinforcements of men and horses, together with flocks, herds, seeds and everything else necessary to colonize, and secure the possession of the vast and fertile country he had overrun.

But again the plans of the great commander were to be frustrated. The tribes were in league against the white man. Between them there could be no peace. Here and there a cacique professed amity; but it was not sincere, and often it was a scheme by which the unforgiving Indian could vent his

vengeance upon some neighboring chieftain, and settle the animosities of many years.

The mighty cacique Quigualtanqui now met them. His realm lay between the place where de Soto now rested and the ocean port he so much desired. To advance the army must pass through this Indian's province; but the chief was haughty and tenacious of his territorial sway. He sent a warlike message, couched in no uncertain terms. He swore by the sun and the moon that he would wage war interminable upon the invaders should any of them set foot within his boundaries.

"Send me with a band of men," said Tobar, "and we will show this Indian dog who he is barking at. He needs a thrashing, should be chained and muzzled."

"Tobar," counselled the Governor, "better is it for us to gain this man's friendship. Take his word that we come upon a friendly mission. We simply wish to pass peaceably through his country to reach the sea. Tell him also, for this may move his superstitious heart—tell him—that I, your leader, am the Son of the Sun; that, as such, I have received the homage of the caciques of all the provinces through which we have passed. Summon Quigualtanqui to come and pay me suitable honor; and I will grant him special favors and reward him with inestimable gifts."

The Governor awaited his messenger's return.

"Tobar comes," de Leon announced. "His coming has been delayed, I think," remarked the tired commander. "It seems, Juan, I am myself no

longer. I once believed I could do all things; and, as for falling sick and lying in bed, as you now see me, I counted such a thing impossible. But tell me, my boy, what the reply of this chieftain may be. I trust these interpreters get it right this time."

"Listen, my lord," Tobar began. "These are the words of this hot-headed tribesman. He sends reply that if the 'White Chief is really the Son of the Sun he must prove the fact. He must show his power by drying up the great river, in which case he should be ready to come over and pay me homage. If he cannot dry the river he must know that Quigualtanqui, being the greatest chieftain in the land, visits nobody, but receives visits and tributes from all. If, therefore, the white leader wishes to see his Indian master he must cross the river to the Indian's country. If he comes as a friend,' the chief then said, 'I shall receive him as a friend; if, as an enemy, he will find my men ready for battle, and resolved never to yield!"

The response of the chief angered de Soto, but his malady was grievous upon him. A persistent fever rose and the great man grew weaker. From his sick bed, however, he maintained his usual vigilance for the safety of his army. The sentinels were doubled, and a rigid watch prevailed. By night the cavalry mounted guard in the suburbs of the village, with bridle in hand, ready for action; while two troopers were constantly on patrol, alternately visiting the outposts. Detachments of cross-bowmen in canoes also kept watch along the

river. The army was thus constantly prepared for war and momentary battle seemed inevitable. With these scenes of war about de Soto was growing weaker. Day by day his strength grew less. The fever raged within him, until at last, the tired spirit could strive no more. The great commander of men and armies prepared for death with the steadfastness of a soldier.

About him he gathered the officers and soldiers who stood nearest in command and service. "I must soon depart this life," he said. "Not many hours have I to live. Before I leave the men with whom I have companioned so long, I wish to give my parting orders and say farewell, good comrades. Let Louis de Moscoso de Alvarado be successor to my titles and commands of governor and captain-general of the kingdom and provinces of Florida. I charge you officers and men in the name of the King to obey your new commander."

Then at his request the oath of allegiance was solemnly taken. When this was done, the historian says, "the dying chieftain called to him, by two and two, and three and three, the most noble of his army. Next the soldiery entered, twenty and twenty, thirty and thirty, until all who were numbered in that once proud company had passed the dying man's bedside and said their last farewell."

It was a scene of great tenderness and one of honest tears. He charged his men to advance the Faith and augment the power of the Crown of Spain. In what he had failed he urged them to press on to successful accomplishment. He regret-

ted he could not bestow upon them their merited rewards, but gave them his heartfelt expressions of gratitude; begged the forgiveness of all whom he had offended; entreated them, affectionately, to be peaceful and loving to one another. His fever raged, he "confessed his sins with much humility and contrition, and expired."

The once glorious company of knights was now left desolate, with enemies on every side, an impoverished treasury, diminished ranks and a dispirited army. They now forgot the quest of gold. Tachuco need no longer pass the word along the line of tribes: "Tell these white strangers that the gold they seek is beyond." Juan de Leon and Rodrique Gomez talked awhile outside the dead leader's hut. It was now well past midnight, for the hours had sped away unnoticed. The first light of day was soon to thrust itself above the eastern sky line. The beasts of the forest were yet in search of prey, and the song birds still rested in the darkened woodland waiting for the dawn. Throughout the camp, here and there, voices were heard, the talk of the cavaliers and soldiers reviewing the impressive scenes of their chief's last hours. Beyond, on the outskirts of the village, there passed the pickets patrolling their allotted posts and passed the word along that all was well.

Then through the night and the watchful guards there passed an Indian form.

Juan whispered to Rodrique as the figure glided forestward: "Rodrique," he said, "see, yonder moves

an Indian woman. She goes in haste from the Governor's quarters. Let us follow."

At the outposts they met the soldier on guard, gave the countersign and passed.

"An Indian has just slipped through your lines," de Leon said. "Gomez and I will follow a distance. It is one of the slave girls from de Soto's tent. We'll bring her back."

Quietly following, they tracked the woman well into the forest. By the silent meadows which fringed the wood, the slave-girl halted. Along the cover of the trees there passed a man. Juan studied him carefully as he crouched along.

"I know him, Rod," said Juan. "Look quickly, do you recognize the red skin?"

"Tachuco," responded Gomez.

"None other," echoed Juan, "and let me ask why this covert meeting?"

As the two cavaliers eyed the man and woman meet, they pushed nearer and listened to their conversation.

"Tell me, Macanoche," said the tribesman, "how fares it with our enemies in yonder camp? What plans do the sachems fashion? The White Chief, how is he?"

"Dead," whispered the woman in suppressed excitement. "He breathed his last this night," the woman further added. "The whole army passed his cot to say good-bye. They seemed to love him and obeyed him as the braves, their cacique."

"'Tis well, Machanoche. Now you will be mine,

the light of my wigwam, to share my maize and corn. . . ."

Tachuco had not finished when the crashing underbrush caused him to be silent. It was the picket, growing impatient that the two Spaniards did not return at once with the escaped slave. At his approach the Indian woman rose, and her lover stood, uncertain for the moment whether to fight or run. As he hesitated, Juan de Leon bounded forward and cried aloud: "Tachuco, this slave-girl shall not be yours. The white men have her still." Instantly the knights and picket reached the slave, seized her, as Tachuco hurried away, making sure his escape through the dark and tangled wildwood.

CHAPTER XVII.

"The Abandoned Chase."

The sun had risen above the forest, bright and glistening, dying the river its own color. There were no clouds in the sky that day—only in the hearts of the cavaliers were darkness and gloom to be found. Even the woods were lighted, as with spectral fire.

In a little straw-covered dwelling two men were talking. It would seem better to have sought the open, in the fresh air and sunshine; for the day was glorious. The night passed was stormy. Up and down the Mississippi there battled the wings of the storm, like two contending armies. The contest of the clouds and wind and rain of the night before had made the coming day more full of glory.

The reason why the two men sat indoors, while the world was bright and cheery without, was they wished to talk unheard, save by themselves, as two spies would whisper to safeguard their case. The chief speaker was the good priest Phillipe; the chief listener, his friend and brother Barbidilla.

"This expedition started wrongly," Phillipe began. "The search for gold had been our chief purpose, not exploration search for knowledge, the betterment of the natives, not conquest for the king, nor glory for the Church. The cavaliers thought of gold, and the soldiers talked of nothing

else; and even we priests of the Church were carried away in the mad rush. Now the quest is over. Muscoso feels it is, although he must first call a council of the cavaliers. Thus ends all campaigns the goal of which is merely mercenary."

"But, Phillipe," the brother priest replied, "did not de Soto tell us of his aims of forming, in some fertile place, a Christian colony and, fashioning this land after our own fair land of Spain, thus make the 'desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose?' "

"Yes, he did talk colonization at times, when baffled in that other search; yet gold, gold, gold, has been the cry, from the coast to the Mississippi, and the regions beyond. But now the search is surely ended, so far as Florida is concerned, at any rate; for the question now before us is meat and drink, shelter from the storm and the attacks of savages and some escape from this inhospitable land. How to reach Cuba, or Mexico, or Spain is the query that confronts us; but let me tell you more. . . ."

"Some gossip from the camp, I think you bring me, Phillipe. Your ear is always on the ground. You are quick to hear when others are stone-deaf."

"Misjudge me not, my brother. This time I could not help hearing. I was marching by the Governor's remains last night and held that place till early morning. Between me and the slaves' apartments stood but one frail partition, with closed but almost useless door, not a door—I should add—but simply a lightly covered opening. De Soto's women slaves were talking. My knowledge of the Indian tongue is not so great, yet these three years

I have not mingled with the Indians without learning considerable of their speech. I heard the two slaves talking, and I knew the meaning of their words. They said the Indians suspect."

"Suspect what?" Barbidilla interrupted.

"That the Governor is dead, which means the savages will be more daring, will rise against us. We shall be undone. No white man will reach the coast. But here comes Anasco."

"Come, good men," said Anasco to the priests. "You are summoned to assist in the burial service of the Governor. To-night, at midnight, we shall bury him in the broad plain, near the village. Meet with the cavaliers at de Soto's tent."

At the appointed place and time, the dead of night, his most trusted followers buried the great commander, while the sentinels kept watch, and the natives skulked about to learn if their conjectures were true. There, outside the village, in one of the great pits from which the Indians had taken earth for their dwellings, they laid him away. There in secret and in studied silence, yet with many tears of priests and cavaliers, the last fond words were said. The night stole on and with it the dawn of day. Next morning, the better to deceive the Indians, they announced to the natives that the Governor was recovering of his malady. They caused much water to be sprinkled over the plain and the grave, as if to prevent dust being raised by the horses' hoofs. Then they scoured the level space about the camp, galloping over the pits and across the grave. Thus assuming an air

of gayety that they might mislead the savages. But their precautions were all in vain. The Indians knew, not only the death of the Governor, but the place of his burial.

"De Leon, these red men know," said Anasco. "Watch them as they pass the grave. See them talk to one another and make signs with their chins and eyes toward the spot where the body is. We must take it hence or, in our neglect the Indians will, in utter desecration."

So it was decreed to lower the body of De Soto into the depths of the silent river, which flowed by, in all its grandeur. That night they opened the newly made grave, fashioned a rustic coffin, made from the plenteous evergreen, and therein they placed the mortal remains—the garments weighted with sand—and, launching the craft which de Soto's own hand had planned, they silently rowed well out into the stream, where the sullen water was nineteen fathoms deep. The hooded priests and the steel-clad cavaliers, a little company, but loving and true, sailed on that strangely freighted craft. The priests breathed a quiet prayer, heard scarcely beyond the confines of the boat. The knights gently raised the coffin, lifted it quietly and in darkness over the vessel's side, let it fall, like some sacred treasure, and watched it sink to the bottom, through scalding tears. Commending anew the soul of the great cavalier to heaven, they sadly worked their way to shore.

"This time," they whispered in confidence, "this time the Indians do not know."

"HE HAD CROSSED A LARGE PART OF THE CONTINENT IN SEARCH OF GOLD AND FOUND NOTHING SO REMARKABLE AS HIS BURIAL PLACE."

Thus the discoverer of the Mississippi slept beneath its waters. "He had crossed a large part of the continent in search of gold and found nothing so remarkable as his burial place." And when the cacique of the neighboring province came to Muscoso and said: "What has been done with my brother and lord, the Governor?" the answer was: "He has ascended into the skies for a little while and will soon be back."

But, the great man never came back. He had gone the way of all mortals, leaving little more than a memory and a name. And so the army mourned; but hid their grief. Of the neighboring tribes some believed the story of Muscoso that de Soto had ascended heavenward; but others doubted, or believed the great man dead. Among them, the cacique Guachoya, and, when for many hours the water of the river flowed above the dead leader, this cacique sent messengers to Muscoso. They led with them two handsome young Indians and said: "Our chief has sent us with these youths. We have a custom in our tribe that when a great prince dies we put to death some person to attend him, and serve him on his journey to the land of spirits. These young men are sent for this purpose."

Muscoso was perplexed and profuse in explanation. "Our prince is not dead," he said, "but gone to heaven and has already chosen several of his Christian followers to attend him there. Go tell Guachoya, therefore, to receive again these Indian youths and to renounce so barbarous a custom for

the future." Then, turning to the men, he said: "You men are free. Return to your homes."

One departed at the word; the other refused, saying: "I shall never serve a master who has condemned me to death without a cause. O white man, let me follow you who have saved my life!" and the man followed in the company. De Leon took the man to be with him, and a most faithful servant he became. He had full liberty, but loved to stay about the camp, do what work he could, and patiently serve. This man, it was, who told of Rodrique Gomez' flight.

Juan de Leon loved Rodrique. It was Rod who bore the message to Leonora on the ship when they sailed from Spain. He carried the necklace and struggled well to save it, when the Indian, Tachuco, stole up from behind the white man and grasped the treasure. He threw the wily Indian overboard, and ever since that day had kept a close watch of his movements. Gomez, therefore, knew as well as Juan that the treacherous Indian followed the army, made enemies along the way, pushed forward and stirred up strife; and often had he put these words into the red man's mouth, as he met the cavaliers: "The gold you seek is not here. It is just beyond."

Rodrique Gomez was a deserter. The liberated tribesman saw him and the Indian girl steal forth from camp and brought the news to de Leon. De Leon then roused Muscoso. "How well I remember, when he joined the ranks of knights from Spain," mused de Leon. "He comes from a noble

family, is rich, and when he first lined up with our men, no cavalier was more splendidly equipped than he."

"Never mind the young man's past," quickly said Muscoso. "What we want now is to find him and bring him back. This rescued prisoner says he saw the white man and the Indian maid escape together. Perhaps he did. Perhaps not. We will send a searching party among the natives and get our lost Gomez."

"But, Muscoso," persisted de Leon, "I know whereof I speak. Gomez of late has been addicted to gambling. No one in all the camp played so much. In the borrowed wigwams, along the river banks as we journeyed, or, anywhere a man could rest, there would Gomez seek, by skillful game, to while the idle hours away. Of late he has not been so skillful. Misfortune after misfortune was his lot. But two days ago a run of ill luck struck him, and stripped him of all he had brought with him to the army, with everything he had captured on the march. Thus in this recent playing, he lost his clothes, his arms, a horse and the female slave which followed him so long and faithfully. All of his losses he has honorably paid; but separation from that captive girl was too much for him. I saw him making the struggle between pride and affection and love has triumphed. The girl was but eighteen and beautiful. He had conceived a passion for her and would not part with her, so he has left us and gone never to return. This Indian captive is right. He saw the two depart camp last night."

"Send the man with the searching party," commanded Muscoso; and the man was sent. The party went forth, but soon returned without the man they sought.

"Go tell the tribes," shouted Muscoso, "that I will hold that they have murdered this man, if by to-morrow at this time he is not returned."

That night, if Muscoso could have looked far enough through the forest, several leagues beyond the camp, he would have seen his old comrade in arms. He and the Indian girl were alone, a mile distant from the Indian settlement whither they were both traveling. They were seated on the dry sand of the river bank, in a sheltered, cave-like, romantic nook.

"Tell me, truly now, Ulia, are you a princess, that is, is your father the king of his tribe? I know you are of queenly form and beauty."

The maiden drank eagerly his words.

"But tell me all. I have not questioned you before. In the presence of my white comrades whom I leave for you, I could not treat you as a queen; but I have loved you longer than you know. I have wearied of this wandering life and shall now plant my wigwam among your father's people. It is my pleasure to be called his son-in-law, and be numbered with your tribe. Muscoso or the cavaliers of Spain cannot find me if you and your kinsmen shelter me. Come rest here upon my shoulder, my Indian girl. We must not hurry on. Those of the camp will not seek me. Nor know they yet of our departure."

Gomez drew the maiden form closer to his breast and listened as she said: "Will the white man never fail me, or does he mock me with his fragrant words? Will he keep me in his wigwam to work and suffer and to rear him children? Then, like the sun behind the brow of the forest, will he quietly vanish in the woods and seek the white men, sailing down the river and far away?"

"Ulia, you know me now. I have made the choice. I shall forget the white man and his land. I cannot change my skin, but the welcome sun shall give me color and, arrayed as your father's sons, I shall take my place among his warriors."

Thus, seated together in that cave of the earth, the white man of the old world and the copper-colored girl of the new, pledged to each other their future fortunes and their lives. He held her yet in his grasp like a man who has taken one step and will now go to the journey's end.

"Yes, Ulia, only death shall part us," and across the woman's round face there passed a smile of contentment and peace.

So they rested in blissful and unexpected satisfaction, secure, they thought, in all the many calls of love.

"I will make a true Indian of you, my white man," the Indian damsel said. "The royal plumes I shall bring you and the paint the warriors wear will my own hands rub upon your body. The richest moccasins will I fashion for you and I shall adorn our wigwam as none of the people of my tribe can do."

She had not finished speaking when the ground above their heads seemed to tremble.

"Some one moves above us," whispered the maid, raising herself. "He seems in search of some one. Can it be he seeks us? It must be one of your white warriors who has found our trail."

"I doubt it, Ulia," said Gomez. "Although I do not understand this stranger's coming. Be quiet. I feel he will soon leave the spot. Here let us press well back into the cave. He must presently depart. But rest well back a moment, while I reconnoiter."

Moving forward Gomez peered upward from their resting place. As he did so a stone was rolled over the edge. It just missed his head.

"It is a mere accident," he persisted. So, self-deceived, he ventured further. This time a huge stone fell full upon his back. Seizing his weapons he bounded forward. Through the opening, round the rock, to his left and up the bank, he sprang, never stopping till he stood upon the level, where he could face defiantly that one man, woman or beast, who came to spoil his honeymoon. The alert Ulia followed close behind him, although, at the time, he knew it not.

His knife was in his belt. The sun was high in the heavens and the air was still. Some pebbles fell. They rolled downward as the woman burst upon the scene. She was not as startled as the man. Upon her face had formed a look of great relief. She saw only what was to be expected, a straying Indian; not so her white man. His face bore the

marks of recognition and, as the glance became more knowing, it turned into fiercest rage.

The newcomer, the third party, who turned pleasant company into a fighting crowd, was—in truth—an Indian, in full war attire. The warrior spoke. "You come to steal the finest of the Indian women," he said. "You, white man, have I caught, having just robbed some wigwam of its finest flower. Perhaps now some brave mourns his wife and seeks her while the thieving, roaming, homeless white man carries her away."

"Your heart means well, but your tongue speaks not the truth, this time," the Indian woman cried. "The white man is my friend. Nay, more, I am his, forever. He goes with me and leaves his people to choose mine."

"Maiden, you speak as you have been taught," the Indian warrior snapped. "Say it not. I know this man and he knows me. Let him speak."

Rod was not slow in speaking. He had waited in his new position, perplexed whether to play foe or friend; but the Indian with his words decided him. Then he not only spoke, but followed word by ready action.

"Yes, Tachuco," cried Rodrique Gomez, "I do know you and you know me. You have reason for such knowledge, from that time when first you met me on the Spanish vessel and I hurled you overboard, then helped to rescue you; but now no one shall save you. Come nearer and I will treat you as you treated Estivanico at the coast."

The men sprang forward. The struggle was

long. They rolled along the bank, toward the edge and, over, both of them, as Tachuco had been cast from the ship's deck, three years before. On the sand below they fought. Each striving to use the weapon that was nearest and most effective. Meanwhile the maiden hovered about, as one beside herself. "What does all this mean?" she asked herself. "Which of the men shall I help? This strange Indian?" His black hair and red face said "yes." Should she assist the white man? Her heart answered in the affirmative. Almost unconsciously she seized the Indian's bow which had fallen from his hand and was about to beat him on the head.

The men had now risen; but only for a moment. They met again. They fell apart a moment. A tomahawk was raised in midair; but before it could descend a knife thrust from the white man settled the duel. Tachuco stood still a moment, tottered, then fell—dead. Thus he died as had the faithful Estivanico whom he miserably slew without a word of warning. Thus he died in the height of what he counted success. The white men had turned toward the sea-coast, away from the Indian's land, away from the quest of gold; but this triumph Tachuco would never enjoy. Rodrique Gomez' knife had found his heart. They left him where he fell and went upon their way, the man and the woman together. An hour later they had come in sight of the Indian camp, Ulia's home. There the chief and father welcomed them, the daughter joyously returned, and the knight she brought, most cordially received.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The Building of the Ships."

Rodrique Gomez had been won to the wild. He was no longer a white man, except in color; and even that, the artful Ulia with her tinted ointment had skillfully concealed. The slave had enslaved the master and carried him home with her. Yet, the Spaniards were loath to give him up; and their search was of no avail. The threatenings of the Governor had failed. The charge that he had been murdered by the savages was at once refuted. The denials of Muscoso that Gomez remained by force, not by choice, among the people of Ulia, were not well grounded.

"The man has been murdered by some of your tribesmen, or you detain him against his will," persisted Muscoso to the assembled chieftains.

Instantly a proud chief replied: "We are not men who tell falsehoods. If you doubt the truth of what we say, send one of us to bring you testimony of the fact; and if the Spaniard is not brought back, or some satisfactory proof that he is alive and well, all of us chieftains remaining in your hands will answer for his loss with our lives."

The proposition pleased the Governor. He would send a message. A friend of Gomez, Baltazar, by name, was chosen to write to Rodrique an appealing letter. The letter read:

"Dear Rodrique:

"Your friends in the Spanish camp exhort you to return to us who are your own people. The past will be forgotten. Your horse and arms will be restored to you, and all you need, you can have for the asking. We want you, Rodrique. Remember your duty as a cavalier. The step you have taken is a bad one. Some day you will regret it, unless you now return. The Governor sends his love. We wait for you." Signed "Baltazar."

The message was carried to the tribe where Rodrique now lived. The following day the messenger returned, bringing back the letter of Baltazar. Written upon it in charcoal, was the name "Rodrique Gomez," a proof he was still alive. He sent, however, no answer in reply. The messenger said: "The white man will not return. His heart is no longer in the Spanish army."

"We must leave him then," the Governor said, "go back home to Spain and tell his people. What will they say? How greatly has the youth fallen!"

"No, not so, my good Governor," said the chieftain whose home harbored Gomez. "The youth will be greatly honored in my land. He has restored my daughter. I receive him as a son-in-law, and welcome him to my home with all its honors which I hold among my tribe."

Then the army moved still further Westward. Again, it moved Southward, seeking Mexico. Misled by poor guides and deceived by others, they faced hunger, sickness, insubordination and confusion, well-nigh bordering on despair. In a vast un-

inhabited region, where they wandered for many days, their provisions became exhausted. Like beasts they lived on herbs and roots. An old Indian warrior led them. The man had been furnished by a cacique as a guide. The eyes of the Spaniards were slowly opened, when in great dismay, they perceived, for days, they had been wandering in a circle.

"Bring hither the guide," the Governor said.

The man was brought, expecting to be questioned about the route. Muscoso was angry, and before him the Indian stood in evident fear.

"A lying guide, you are," the Governor said. "For three days I have watched the course you planned for us, and each day you have made my army encircle this great wilderness. First northward, then to the west, then southward, eastward and again north, you have led us."

Giving peremptory orders, the Governor called to his men: "Tie this fellow to a tree and let loose the dogs on him, and we will see what answer he can give us for his treachery."

The loosened beasts sprang upon him and began to shake him. In terror for his life the Indian said: "The white chief is right. Obedience to my chieftain has made me give the white man a false path. I have been commanded to mislead you and bewilder you in this uninhabited desert. I confess it; but now, oh white man, pardon me, and in three days I will bring you to a populous country to the west."

The confession did not save the old warrior. Indignant at the piece of treachery, Muscoso set the dogs again upon the man, and, ravenous with hunger, they tore the old Indian to pieces. But, now, the Spaniards found themselves in a sorry plight. They had no guides and knew not which way to turn. In their dilemma, however, they followed the directions of their victim by marching directly westward, "thus giving credit, after his death, to what they disbelieved while he was living." For days they traveled, foot-sore and hungry. Now they pushed through the unfriendly forest, again they hastened in the open. Westward they went, seeking human habitation and found it not for many days. At length the signs of living man appeared, and the cavaliers took courage. They found a village different from any they had met before. The houses also differed, resembling hovels they had seen in Spain. In these habitations they found abundance of buffalo meat which appeased their hunger. They also found warriors of great daring.

At length, one afternoon, the Spaniards encamped in an open plain. They stretched themselves on the fresh green sward, and called to their Indian attendants to prepare them a meal, and there they lay and talked. The Governor and Juan de Leon sat side by side among the company of knights.

"Tell me, Juan," said the Governor, "how long has Rodrique contemplated this elopement of his. Rather an unusual affair this is. Usually the woman elopes with the man; but this time the man seems to have eloped with the woman. But, we shall miss

Gomez. I liked the man. His trouble was his love for the game of chance."

"His departure, Governor, I think, was sudden," replied Juan. "These Indian maidens are crafty beings."

"Yes, but good servants; are they not?" retorted Muscoso. "See that company, yonder, at their work, preparing our dinner. They do it well, without complaint. No, not exactly without complaint; but they do it, anyway; and none of us have been poisoned. It has taken our stomachs some time to grow accustomed to their style of cooking; but none of us, yet, have lost our lives because of the cooking of these housemaids."

"No," answered Juan; "but," he added, "give me my Spanish girl."

He spoke quickly, and in a general way; but Muscoso caught up his words. "Yes, Juan, I would like to give you back your Spanish girl, if I could. Let's see, what was her name? Leonora? Ah, yes, Leonora. We had two, at first, did we not, after we left Gomera, and, for awhile at Santiago and Havana?"

Juan blushed. His years of roughing in the wilderness, with such temptations as befell an able-bodied man, far from the restraints of home, had not crushed the blush which sprang quickly to his cheeks. So the color rose on the lover's honest face. His life was pure, and his heart was true; while the crimson mark upon him revealed the love he so dearly cherished; yet it told of purity

which some of those cavaliers did not understand, as they gazed at the slave women of the camp.

Juan changed the subject. "See, Muscoso!" he said, quickly rising. "See. Scatter men! Scatter! An arrow comes our way."

As the Spaniards rolled from side to side, thus avoiding the unexpected attack, a single Indian stood forth to view. Gayly painted, with bow in hand and a quiver of arrows over his right shoulder, with waving plumes upon his head, he stood in the entrance of the enclosure, where the knights rested awaiting their dinner.

"Whizz," the arrow sped upon its way. "Whizz," another arrow quickly followed. Juan's warning had been well timed. The darts flew wide of their intended mark and, passing through their vacant pathway, fell fatally among the Indian women. Two of these useful camp workers fell dead, one wounded through the shoulder, the other in her breast. The daring savage prepared to do more damage; but Baltazar, the knight, boyhood friend of Gomez, chanced to be on horseback near the archer. Hearing the shout, raised by the cavaliers, and seeing the savage now about to flee, he gave chase. Close to the wood he overtook the intruder, drove his steed upon him and transfixed him with his spear, and thus avenged the wanton assault upon the Spanish camp.

Just here the army changed its course. They had traveled westward, and to the south; but now their plans were changed again. Thus far they had gone from place to place, lured by false hopes

and led on by idle tales. They had traversed the wild waste of country which the Spaniards called the province of Los Vaqueros, across the river they called Datcao, a favorite Indian hunting ground, where they beheld great quantities of deer feeding along its banks. They had come in sight of the lofty western mountain, uninhabitated and uninviting. Their hearts began to fail them. It was now October, and Muscoso, the commander, was weary in soul and body. He and his men longed for some place where the Indian ceased to trouble by day and where at night their sleep would not be broken by continual alarms.

A council of the officers was called, and it was proposed to make their way back to the Mississippi, build vessels there and descend the river to the ocean. Some with a lingering hope of finding some country, rich with gold, to reward them for their toils, dissented for a time. Others affirmed they would rather perish in the wilderness than return beggared and miserable to Europe, "from an expedition undertaken with such high and vaunting anticipation"; but at length wise counsels prevailed. The army retraced its footsteps to the Mississippi, through many hardships and frequent battles.

At Aminoya, with abundance of provisions, gathered round about the country, with a stockaded town and trees near by to strengthen the defenses, with much timber for constructing ships, the cavaliers settled in winter quarters and began to build seven brigantines. The work commenced with animation and was continued with joy. Francisco, the

Genoese, the same who had before built their bridges, rafts and boats, directed the workmen. Five carpenters of Biscay, who were among the company, were his lieutenants, and under their instruction, the whole camp was soon at work like a crowd of boys building a log-cabin or a cat-boat. They felled the trees from the adjacent forests and prepared their lumber. The chains were struck from the ankles of the slaves; and the cavalier's stirrups were taken, together with whatever else of iron could be found, and forged into nails and spikes. The bark of the mulberry tree was twisted into cordage, and the hemp-like Enequen was used as oakum. The Indian mantles which were firm and whole were fashioned into sails; and every man among the three hundred or more in the camp worked with a will.

Guachoya and Anilvo, neighboring chiefs, assisted, bringing fish and other provisions for the workmen, together with various materials for the ships and much cordage of different sizes, made of grass and fibrous plants, and mantles made of an herb resembling mallows, containing a fibre like flax, which the Indians wrought into thread and dyed with various colors. Thus fully equipped with materials and men and with provisions while they toiled, they labored through the winter, building four large frame structures, to shelter their workmanship in time of storms and inundation.

But as the joyous work proceeded, their old enemies were at their doors. Across the river from Aminoya, where the Spaniards wrought, lay the

fertile province of Quigualtanqui. This cacique was young and warlike, "beloved throughout his extensive dominions, and feared by his neighbors on account of his great power." Anilco, the Spaniards' Indian friend, brought to Muscoso the rumor of the hostile plot against them.

"Quigualtanqui fears for his sovereignty of this territory," said the friendly Anilco. "He has heard of the great barges you white men are building. These boats, he thinks, will give you command of the river, or enable you to leave the country and return in greater force to conquer it. He accordingly has sent envoys to the neighboring caciques, on both sides of the river, and these chieftains have formed a league, to combine their forces at a certain time, for a general assault, to drive the Spaniards on to their destruction. Let one of your men go with me this night, and he will see that what the Indian says is true. Dress your white man like an Indian. Come, I will make an Indian warrior of this cavalier before sunset.

"Here is the man," Anilco said, pointing to Juan de Leon. Thus, suddenly, Juan was elected to go upon this dangerous errand. It was a dark and mournful night when the company of scouts set out all Indians except de Leon; yet, for the time de Leon, too, was a full-fledged tribeman. Down the rolling Mississippi, and across its waters, they passed. Along the way were signs of preparation for the coming assault. The shacks of the warriors were dimly outlined, as they stretched northward and southward by the river banks. The spies

were now by the side of a little stream, which finally made its way to the greater waters. Juan had leaped from the bank to the sandy shore below. Anilco followed.

"There has been a battle of some kind here," the Indian said. "Even in the dark I see the signs. Three men struggled here. No, look. That footmark is that of a woman; and that is not an Indian's track. One of the three, de Leon, was a white man. Who, tell me, who could it be?" Juan exclaimed.

"Some of your roving, reckless, soldiers, I suppose," Anilco answered.

The chief was yet speaking when Juan looked about him as though some of the combatants still loitered there. He beheld a cave, and below the cave the body of a man, lying as though it had been thrown from the bank above.

"An Indian," whispered Juan. "He was worsted in this fight."

Just then the wind arose, and with it the moon glanced through a rift in the clouds from the vaulted sky overhead.

Turning slowly to Anilco Juan further spoke. He said: "I know the brave. His name is Tachuco. I will tell you more of him when we get back to camp. This Indian has been the evil genius of our expedition. He sailed with us from Spain and, after a treacherous murder on the coast of the new land, he pursued our army, stirring strife along the way. How he met his death, I do not know."

Gomez in his wigwam could have told him; but

Gomez now was a full-fledged warrior and avoided the habitation of the white man.

Retracing their steps to the bank above, the scouting party turned toward their village. At this point they met a company of four savages. Anilco talked with them.

"We go," they said, "to Aminoya to seek redress for the slaying of one of our men, a cacique's son, slain at the white man's camp."

"Yes," said Anilco; "but was he not on forbidden ground?"

"All ground within this land is the Indian's ground," the leader reasoned. "The white men are intruders. They hold our village at their will; but wait, Anilco; ere long the blow will be struck, and you will regret you have not joined our league to rid us of these white men forever. We will show them that the white man who comes to our province never returns home."

The speaker then eyed de Leon. The masquerading Indian turned.

"This warrior I have never met before," he said.

"You know not all my men," Anilco replied.

The face of Juan was now well hidden in the darkness of the night and the shadows of his Indian friends.

"No," said the aggressive leader of the group of four. "I do not know all your men; but . . ."

Both parties, those of Anilco and the four spies of the enemy, suddenly turned. In the dark and distance there came a troop of two hundred warriors of the tribe of Quigualtanqui. Anilco turned.

to Juan, whispered something, then said to the Indians who had accosted them: "We must hurry on. My men await me at the bend of the river above."

The four braves paused a moment, then hastened back to meet the company of braves who followed them. Juan and his comrades hurried forward. Suddenly the forest seemed alive with savages. Their yells were heard. A shower of arrows fell at de Leon's feet; but it was too dark for fighting at long range; and then pursuers could not overtake them, so fast they traveled. Once, however, was Juan in danger. A savage, by chance in advance of the others, met him in the way. Hearing the whoops of his brethren to the rear, he rushed at Juan in the darkness, from his form and step, judging him to be a white man; but when he drew near, Juan's Indian rig appeared, and the warrior vanished in the woods and darkness of the night, soon to rejoin his tribe below. Anilco wished to know more of the slain Tachuco. Juan would have talked, but his attention was called to the rising river along which he passed.

"The river rises," he said. "Some moons ago an Indian woman warned us that every fourteen years the fields about are flooded, and the natives find shelter in the elevated villages. Surely the time has come for the waters to rise and cover the country round about.

Higher and yet higher the waters rose. Next day a stretch of water lay before them, miles and miles in area. The threatening savages were thus foiled in their attack on the boat builders at Am-

inoya. Nature had favored the white men. The prediction of the woman was verified. As the cavaliers looked forth upon the green fields now transformed into a broad sea once more, "they thanked God and took courage."

CHAPTER XIX.

"The Crimson Garment."

The launching of the boats was an easy task. The flooded river had come to the Spaniards' aid. It approached the entrance of the camp and called to the ships to try their skill at sailing. So in the month of June, after a favoring winter and a pleasant spring, the seven brigantines were launched with surprising ease and with shouts of joy. In great hope the army, now one-quarter its former size, steered a southern course, down the Mississippi. The start was thus propitious. It was further made amid kind farewells and hostile demonstrations. The blessings of Anilco and Guachoya were blended with the curses of the league of tribes under the domination of Quigualtanqui.

Most of the multitude of slaves they had captured along the way were freed. Only a mere handful of them continued with the expedition, down the river to the sea. Among those released was the beautiful Indian woman, Macanoche. It was she who had brought to Juan, through the lamented Ortiz, the report of the blood-stained garments of a white woman, not far from Pensacola, where the white woman, presumably Leonora, had implored the leaders of the waiting fleet to march inland, taking her to find the army of de Soto, and one of the cavaliers in particular. Her last words

at parting with the Spanish army were with Juan de Leon.

"Don't forget the wandering white girl," said the Indian woman. "It may be she yet lives, dragged about a captive, as I have been these many moons. I wish you well, white warrior, also her, and may you find her somewhere along the river to the south."

Juan de Leon knew the Indian slave girl spoke from sad experience. She had seen a score of Indian captives perish from cold and insufficient food, and often ill-treated from the men, which the condition of such servitude engendered. So she wished Juan well, also, the hapless Leonora could she be found alive.

"The woman has laid afresh upon my heart the burden I have carried so long," de Leon said, as he talked with Barbidilla, the priest. "There haunts me, day and night, the figure of that Spanish girl, led about, the slave of some skulking red skin. That bit of dress, blood-stained and soiled, which Macanoche showed to Ortiz and myself, is flaunted in my face."

"You may find her yet, Juan. Who knows, but she is more safe and prosperous than you?"

"So I thought at first, when in Cuba, I heard of her strange departure; but the word of the Indian woman pursues me and makes me think she suffers somewhere, sad and alone, save for the cruel hand that holds her down."

The priest sought to cheer the man; but only partly succeeded. Then the conversation turned to

the ships in which they sailed. They praised their workmanship, and especially remarked upon the courageous manner in which the ship builders overcame all obstacles and had launched the boats when all nature smiled upon them and the river was at its height.

Presently the vessels sought the shore. The army found a spacious wood, on the left bank of the river, where the soldiers rested; but when the night closed down upon them, they re-embarked and continued their course. The following day again they landed. Their stopping place was an abandoned village. An Indian woman, the sole occupant of the place, was taken prisoner.

"I was left behind," she said, "when the warriors and the stronger women fled to join the forces of Quigualtanqui, further down the river. There they wait to attack the white strangers."

The woman told the truth, for as they sailed away, canoes approached, hovering about with hostile menace. Prepared for action, the army studied them. The boats of the cacique and the chief men were things of beauty, brilliantly painted, both within and without, with paddles, rowers, and even the warriors themselves, gorgeously colored from foot to scalping tuft. Some were blue, others yellow or white, red, green, violet or black, according to the device or taste of the owner. For days this rainbow-life fleet menaced the flying Spaniards, keeping time in rowing by chanting wild songs of different cadences, short or long, slow or fast, according to the speed with which they desired to

move and, closing each chant with a terrific and deafening yell, shouting the name of Quigualtanqui. Again the peaceful Father Barbidilla sailed near Juan de Leon and talked, for since Ortiz had been taken and Gomez had decamped and the great de Soto had been laid away in the river he discovered, Barbidilla was Juan's chief confidant.

The mad yell of the defiant savages struck terror to Barbidilla. The final ending of the wild song raised him from his seat and sent him sprawling on the floor of the boat below. Recovering himself, he questioned Juan.

"What is the meaning of this song these natives sing? Tell me, Juan," he asked.

Juan passed the question along to an Indian captive by his side.

"I cannot understand all," the red servant said; "but this much I know, they praise in song the brave deeds of their ancestors and the daring exploits of their chieftain, by recalling the memory of which they rouse themselves to battle. Still further, they glorify their own fearlessness and call the white men cowards in flying from their arms. They will overthrow our boats, they say, and make us food for fishes."

"I wish we had our guns and powder," remarked the Governor. "Then we would teach these natives something."

Muscoso thought of Mauvilla, where in that frightful conflagration the cavaliers' supply of gunpowder had been destroyed. Their guns were later

sacrificed for nails and spikes in the building of the ships.

"I wish we had that cannon we left with the cacique at Ocali, and sufficient ammunition to have a dozen shots at some of the leading canoes," said Juan.

Finally, the warriors in the boats did something more than row, sing and threaten. For several days and even in the night they rained arrows, and the Spaniards were worn out with fatigue and watching. When, therefore, for a season the harassing warfare ceased, in a lull of the storm, the cavaliers landed to scour the country and provision afresh the ships. Selecting a commodious harbor, situated by a prosperous-looking Indian village, the vessels made for shore. They mounted their horses, which they carried with them, safely stabled in shelters on two canoes, fashioned like catamarans. Among the knights went Juan de Leon, and others with Gonzallos in the lead. He led one hundred men. Not every man was mounted, however, for all the horses they could carry were but eight. The landing was successfully made, and the village quickly taken.

The inhabitants fled with loud yells at the Spaniard's approach, leaving behind them maize, dried fruits and martin skins which the soldiers quickly seized. The white men were strange people to the surprised and terrified natives. The eight horses, moreover, struck the people dumb with fear. So away the Indians hastened. As they disappeared in the neighboring woodlands, the eye of Juan de Leon

followed them. Something among the company of women arrested his attention. It was a crimson garment. He rubbed his eyes to clear his startled vision and looked a second time.

"Silvestre," he said, "come quickly. Tell me what you see on yonder woman?"

Silvestre looked and slowly answered: "A peculiar garment for an Indian girl! It's a red gown, such as is worn in Spain."

The woman who wore the robe was led away, not rushing like the rest. Half a league away a stalwart warrior urged her on, assisted by another woman, manifestly a sturdy squaw. Juan waited not to question more, but rushed to follow the fleeing garment and its wearer. He pushed past Silvestre, and as he passed he cried: "This is surely Leonora. At last I have found the trail I have so long sought. These red men will not escape just punishment."

Thus he forged ahead on foot, for Juan's horse was among those sacrificed at Aminoya when the ships were built. The mounted Silvestre watched the young man as he ran and wondered at his words of vengeance. He started to follow the pursuing Juan when the trumpet clamorously sounded the recall of the troops. Hurrying to the river bank the Spaniards beheld a fleet of canoes gliding toward them with all speed. They looked toward the campus of the neighboring village and there they beheld a band of full-armed Indians running to cut them off by land.

Silvestre grasped the situation. They must reach

the brigantines at once, or be cut off; but as he glanced again toward the village, he saw the ardent Juan rushing headlong, with eyes on nothing save the crimson garment and the girl who wore it. Spurring his horse, Silvestre was quickly by the young man's side.

"Come, Juan," he cried. "Come, for your life, you must reach the ships with us. The enemies are upon us, both by water and by land."

Then he seized Juan by the shoulder, took hold of him bodily and threw him unwillingly on his horse and bore him to the shore. Springing into their waiting canoes, they pulled with desperate effort toward the brigantines, leaving their horses to their fate. Once safe upon the ships they watched the slaughter of the gallant animals which had so long served them in the wilderness. As a man views the killing of a friend, the cavaliers beheld the savages assail their trusty steeds. The horses kicked and plunged and terrified the red men, who fancied them ferocious beasts. Many of the warriors rushed into the river for safety; but gradually overcoming their fear, they hunted the poor beasts, like so many deer, transfixed them with their arrows and made an end of them.

The Spaniards then sailed away. Down the river they pointed their ships. They had lost their faithful animals; but now they hoped the savages would be satisfied and abandon the chase; but not so. The attacking fleet was not yet done with them. They still harassed the brigantines, seeking to catch them off their guard, or take them in some perilous

venture. At last the fatal hour came when the Spaniards received a stunning blow. Juan de Leon sought to avert the disaster. Seeing the foolhardy Estevan Anez carry off five cavaliers of buoyant spirits and daring valor, he cried to them: "Stay, men, you imperil the safety of the army by this folly. None of you will ever come back again, if you attack yonder well-trained fleet."

Anez laughed a reply. The Governor drew near. "See, Muscoso," cried de Leon in great excitement, "can't this mad freak be stopped?"

"It will be checked, if possible," responded the Governor, as he ordered the trumpets to sound a recall.

The captains of the brigantines then took up the cry, shouted and made signs for the reckless men to return; but the louder they shouted the more obstinate and vainglorious grew Estevan Anez, as he led his followers. Then he made signs for the brigantines to follow him. The Governor amazed at this sign of daring insubordination vowed he would hang the man when he came back, and at once dispatched fifty-six men in three canoes to catch him.

But now the calamity grew. The canoes of Spaniards approached the enemies' crafts. It was an unfair battle, for the brigantines, although making strenuous efforts to retrace their course and follow their comrades, could not do so, and thus bring reinforcements. From the decks of their ships they watched the fated expedition. The

crafty natives waited the Spaniards' approach. Then feigned to flee.

"They simply seek to allure our men further away from the ships," sighed Juan.

"Let's hope the three canoes will check the mad Anez and his men or help them in their need," the Governor said, hoping against hope.

"We shall say prayers for them," said the priests, and down on bended knees with troubled hearts and voices turned heavenward, the prayers were said. But prayers do not always offset the foolishness of men. The sixty-two Spaniards and the four frail canoes moved forward. The vessels of the savages made further retrograde movement. It was not retreat; but studied stratagem, and the vain Anez knew it not. On the Spaniards sailed, like children playing war. The men pulled with redoubled might toward the foe, Anez crying: "They fly! They fly! At them! At them!"

The three canoes also increased their speed, hoping either to detain their comrades or succor them; but it was a vain pursuit. The anxious watchers on the brigantines pressed forward in all haste; yet, feeling the best they could do was useless. They came nearer, but only near enough to see the skillful and successful manoeuvers of the savage fleet.

As the attacking Spaniards advanced the natives altered the disposition of their forces. The center retreated, so as to form a half-moon and from the decks of their helpless ships the Governor and Juan, standing side by side, saw their daring comrades enter the fatal crescent. They saw some of

the noblest knights of the expedition thus sailing to their death, Carlos Enriquez, scarce twenty years of age, and Juan de Gurzman, commander of one of the brigantines, and others just as renowned.

The white men thus surrounded fought in vain. On front and flank they were assailed. Their canoes were overturned. Many were carried down by the weight of their armor and drowned. Some who kept themselves above the water were shot with arrows, or struck over the head with paddles. Others who clung to the upset canoes were cruelly beaten off. "In this manner without being able to make the least defense, forty-eight Spaniards miserably perished. Four alone escaped. One was Pedro Moron, the half-breed, an expert swimmer and exceedingly skillful in the management of a canoe. He had fallen in the river, but with great dexterity and strength recovered his bark and made his escape, bearing off with him three other soldiers." These were rescued by the nearest brigantine which reached them just in time. These four alone survived. They told of the fearful struggle of the men, how it was not a fight, but a plunge into the very jaws of death. The gallant de Guzman, they said, was borne off by the Indians in one of their canoes, but whether dead or alive they could not tell.

"This was the last assault of the savages, for they seemed satisfied with this signal blow. All the rest of the day and during the doleful night that succeeded they kept up continual shouts and yells of triumph. When the sun arose on the following

day they appeared to worship him and to return thanks for their victory, then, raising a deafening din of voices, mingled with the sound of trumpets, shells and drums, they turned their prows up the river and departed for their homes." The harassed Spaniards rejoiced to see their cruel enemies depart; but sorrowed long and deeply for the loss of such gallant soldiers who manned the four canoes and sailed forth to death. Muscoso felt the weight of added burdens. The priests still prayed for rest and safety and Juan de Leon still sought the missing Leonora. Along the banks, his eyes often fixed upon some moving figure of men or women, as he gazed he looked for the crimson garment, and shaking his head mournfully, said: "Perhaps, somewhere in yonder wilds, she wanders."

"THE SPANIARDS THEN SAILED AWAY. DOWN THE RIVER THEY POINTED THEIR SHIPS."

CHAPTER XX.

"The Passing of the Mystery."

The mighty river ran to the gulf and the gulf threw her arms open to the sea. There sailed the ships of Spain. There passed the caravels between Espiritu Santo, on the mainland, and Havana, where lived the waiting Isabel. There also cruised the fleet with reinforcements for de Soto and his men. Thrice had these well-freighted vessels left Cuba and sailed the gulf in quest of tidings from the cavaliers, who toiled somewhere in hostile Florida. First, at Pensacola, the seeking ships patiently waited under command of Moldonado and Arias, generous and loyal knights. Then it was in saddest disappointment, the trusted Arias had said: "The Governor promised to meet me here. We have brought the provisions and the reinforcements, as we said we would. Why does he not come; or, at least, send some of his host as messengers?" Then, also, the maid appeared, beseeching both the commanders of the fleet that they would forthwith proceed inland, taking her along, in search of the long-sought cavaliers.

"I have one dear to me," she said, "who travels with the company. I will follow if you lead the way; and my strength is as good as any man's and his courage is not less great than mine."

Arias smiled at her, not in derision, but in tender-

ness and pity, when he saw her great determination. As a father he warned her of the evils of the way. His warning only served to urge her on.

"I will go, if I must go alone," she finally said.

That was the last the Spanish commander saw of the fair maiden. She left him, vowing she would surely go; and her crimson gown fluttered in the breeze as she went her way with strong and settled purpose.

Then for months the searching party skirted the coast, separating and sailing in opposite directions, for they said: "The Adelantado might have found a port at some other place than that agreed. We will leave signals in the trees and letters with statements of our movements for the summer which follows."

Accordingly they cruised about until winter came upon them, but all in vain. Dejected, they made their way back to Havana and the expectant Isabel. A second time their sea-going ships approached the gulf, coasting this time westward as far as Mexico. Again they failed to find the far-famed cavaliers or any trace of their wondrous expedition. Back again to Havana they pushed their way; and once more brought sad news to Isabel.

"Go yet again," the matron pleaded. "A third time, seeking, you must find. All cannot be lost of such a splendid army."

So in early summer they again set sail. For seven months the fruitless search went on, inspired by love. It was further spurred on by eagerness to solve the mystery of the fate of such gallant men

as started with de Soto; and, while these ships sailed the gulf, and while Dona Isabel watched upon the Cuban shores, and while the Spanish settlements along the coast of Florida and Mexico were ever alert to catch some tidings of their daring countrymen, then Muscoso and the remnant of that once proud army followed the channel of the Mississippi where slept the great de Soto and, after weeks of weary sailing and constant warfare, sailed out into the open stretch of sea before them.

How glad were their hearts! but they dared not yet rejoice, for the sea is mighty powerful and mysterious. Who can know it or write its history? Therefore, the way before them was yet uncertain. Still with joy they hailed the sea. Like all observers of the ocean, they drew peace from its great depths, listened with attention to its noisy shallows, and found therein rest and refreshment for their continued journey. Now they followed the shore. Again they ventured out and took the course of the mighty ships which sail the deep. Again they hugged the coast, looking for some smiling harbor, where some vestiges of Spain and Spanish life would greet their eyes. For days and nights they sailed, uncertain, unskilled and unprepared to face the storms which so often befell them. But a kind Providence led them surer than they knew.

At last, after many months of skirting the shore, through dangers of the deep and perils of the rocky coast, they saw what made their hearts rejoice. Great palm trees graced the water's edge, not many miles away. As the delighted cavaliers

drew nearer, high mountains loomed, rising heavenward, in the misty distance.

"We have passed the River of Palms," cried Anasco, the pilot of the fleet. "Last night, unconsciously, we sailed by. But sixty leagues beyond we shall find the River of Panuco and along that river lie the Spanish settlements we seek."

The seven brigantines advanced. Eagerly the men steered their crafts. They now dared think of home once more, of distant Spain and hospitable Cuba. They remembered the comrades, left behind, in leafy forest, by pool and miry swampland, or along the sullen Mississippi. With the land so near a violent gale arose.

"So near and yet so far away from those kindly shores we seek," said Juan, who still thought of one wandering, he knew not where.

"Thinking of her again?" The question was put to him by Juan Gaytan, royal treasurer and captain of the brigantine, once sailed by the brave Guzman.

"Yes, Gaytan," replied Juan, "I am thinking of her; and no better subject could be found. But, now, what are you thinking about?" continued de Leon. "See, a flaw has struck our ship."

Gaytan was a better treasurer than captain, as events proved. He did not see the squall which swooped down upon the boat. The other brigantines, taking timely warning of the coming gale, had sought shelter beneath the brow of the neighboring harbor; but the craft Gaytan commanded was exposed the whole night long to the fury of the tempest.

"Gaytan," said Juan, "let me tell you your crew is growing mutinous. The morning is now come and your prophecy is not fulfilled. I see no lull in the storm. It gathers with fresh violence. The other brigantines have entered the river and anchored in safety; but we are off shore, buffeted by the wind and storm; and who can tell now whether we will ever reach the land at all?"

De Leon ceased speaking; but his words were quickly reinforced by a mutinous band of soldiers. Among the company was a Spanish boy who had previously sailed that coast. This youth had told the knights in Gaytan's command that the shore before them was dangerous.

"Senores," he said, "I know this coast ahead. I have visited it twice before, as cabin-boy of a coasting vessel; the dark land stretching along to the left is a rough and rock-bound coast, extending to the harbor of Vera Cruz. In all that distance there is neither port nor shelter. The shore is studded with sharp-pointed rocks which, if we strike, all will be lost. The light-colored land turning off to the right is a soft sand beach. This we can attain before nightfall. Should the wind drive us upon those dark and gloomy shores, we have little chance for our lives."

The advice to Gaytan was gratuitous.

"Why drive thus on the shore and smash our ship?" he said.

"Is this vessel of more worth than our lives?" the exasperated crew cried out. "You presume upon your rank of royal treasurer. But, tell us,

Gaytan," they derisively said. "Tell us, did you cut wood or make charcoal for the forges, or beat out the iron for the nails, or calk the vessel, or do anything else? No! you excused yourself as an officer of the Emperor; pray, then," they queried, "what do you lose if the brigantine is wrecked?"

Then the soldiers trimmed the sail, seized the helm and turned the prow of the bark toward the desired shore. They struck upon the sandy beach before the sun went down that day, unloaded the vessel and hauled her well up on dry land. The other vessels also reached the land in safety; and all the seven brigantines, which they built at Aminoya in like manner, landed their cargo and human freight in good sailor fashion.

And now the scouting parties set out in search of tokens of Spanish civilization. They found it presently in the following violent manner. Silvestre led a band of men a short distance inland. Before them spread a charming lake of fresh water. On its rippling surface floated several canoes with Indians fishing therefrom. Fearing these natives might spread an alarm, the men then skirted the borders of the lake, and, keeping silently on their way a little longer, they espied two Indians beneath a huge guava-tree, gathering fruit. Crawling through the thicket, the whole band rose at the same time and rushed to seize them. One plunged into the lake and escaped by swimming, the other they took prisoner. Then they made prize of two baskets of guavas, a Mexican turkey, two Spanish

fowls and some maize and returned with their capture to their comrades on the shore.

At the camp they found their fellows full of joy. Another searching party had already brought other tokens of the Spanish settlements. When, however, they beheld the articles Silvestre had secured they leaped for joy and danced about like mad. Then they questioned the Indian they had captured. Holding before him a pair of scissors, they asked him in Spanish: "What is this?" Immediately he answered, calling it by its Spanish name. They were now convinced that they were in the territory of Mexico and indulged in further joyous demonstration. Muscoso and his ship-load found another helpful Indian. This native told them of a Christian cacique, who could read and write and had been educated by the priests.

Messengers were quickly sent and found the chief, who returned with them, accompanied by eight servants, laden with fowls, bread of maize and various fruits and fish. Again the cavaliers rejoiced. Finally, the whole company of the little fleet found their way to the Panuco river and to the town of the same name, fifteen leagues up the stream. There they repaired to the church and offered devout thanksgiving to God "for having preserved them through so many perils and hardships."

The forlorn remnant of a gallant army passed into the little town of Panuco. It was a company of blackened, haggard, shriveled and half-naked adventurers. Clad in skins of deer, buffaloes, bears and other animals, the Spanish narrator says: "they

looked more like beasts than human beings." The seventy families or more of the village turned out with one accord to welcome them. Among the people which flocked to greet the cavaliers was an old man named de Marchine. His little house stood on the street, along which the bedraggled army trailed its way. This man pushed toward the leaders of the soldiers.

"Tell me," he said, in great excitement, "tell me is the cavalier Juan de Leon still alive and now among your ranks?"

The man was told the person he sought was with Muscoco at the head of the troops. He dashed away as though his youth had been restored to him.

Then he accosted the Governor. "Are you de Leon?" he asked.

"No," Muscoso answered. Then turning to Juan the commander said: "Here, Juan, is some old friend who wants to see you."

Juan turned aside from his comrades. The old man's face was not familiar; but when the name was given, Juan started.

"De Marchine," echoed Juan. "Your name's Marchine? That name sounds sweet to me. I knew a maid who bore that name. I have sought her long and seek her yet. But, tell me, friend, why do you seek me out? Have you news of Seville, home and distant friends to bring me?"

"I have," the man replied, "but I have further information."

"Tell it quickly," Juan said. "I must not lose the company of the Governor."

"'Tis soon explained," the old man responded. "I have a niece. Her name is Leonora."

"Leonora, Leonora," breathed Juan. Then he grasped the old man by both shoulders, saying: "Your Leonora must be mine, the girl I seek."

"If your name is Juan de Leon," said the man, "my niece is surely she. Come to my house. I have her picture there. You can study it."

"But, good man," Juan said appealing. "But, where is Leonora now? For many days this question has rent my heart. At Havana I asked the gracious Dona Isabel. She simply told me the girl had gone; whither, she could not tell. Then all along the way the query has rung through my soul: 'Where is Leonora now?' Only in my dreams did I solve that problem; as I slept my restless sleep on beds of pine boughs, in the open air, or as I laid me down by the fire at night within some Indian's borrowed wigwam. When we neared the great river, a slave girl brought the message of a Spanish girl who met the ships at Pensacola. But this information only troubled me the more, for the Indian maiden described how this girl who seemed like Leonora, plunged into the forest after the captains of the vessels had refused to make an expedition inland. Then along the Mississippi, as we neared the sea, I saw a crimson robe, such as Leonora wore when last I saw her on the wharf in Cuba, when she waved her hand to me as our ships sailed away."

"The crimson robe!" exclaimed the old man, as

he laughed. "Well," he chuckled. "That will be explained to you."

"By whom?" Juan demanded. "By Leonora herself," the uncle answered.

Juan's mind was now somewhat at ease, but not fully at rest. He was anxious to see her he sought so long, take her in his arms, ask her many questions and do to her what long-lost heroes do to long-sought lovers whom they find. The two men, then, hurrying forward again, walked with the Governor. Muscoso greeted the old man pleasantly.

"We stop at the chief magistrate's house tonight," Muscoso said. "Juan will abide with me. Come and see us in the morning. Farewell"; and the aged de Marchine was gone.

The home of the chief magistrate was a simple one; yet a home of evident abundance, presided over by its head, a courteous cavalier who understood the ways of Spanish hospitality. There the officers of the army were feasted in royal fashion. A messenger was at once dispatched to Don Antonis de Mendoza, the viceroy of Mexico, which city lay some seventy leagues distant, apprising the viceroy of the return of the sad remnant of de Soto's magnificent army. Word was immediately returned that the men should be shown every kindness and honor, furnished with whatever was necessary for their journey, when sufficiently recovered from their fatigues.

The message of the gallant cavaliers' return, however, was carried further than Mexico City. The cruising fleet of Arias and Moldonado, now on

their third voyage of loving search, received the news. Hurrying back to Cuba, with the information which cleared the mystery of the absent army, they gently broke the news to Dona Isabel. "During three long years she had been racked with anxiety for the safety of her husband, and now came the news of the failure of his magnificent enterprise, the loss of his vast treasures, the ruin of his estate, the downfall of his house and his own melancholy death. It was an overwhelming blow; Dona Isabel never held up her head from this time, but died shortly of a broken heart." The solving of the mystery killed her.

That night Juan de Leon was to stop at the chief magistrate's house. It would not be strange to say the house of the magistrate, or any other house, save one in all Panuco, could not hold him that night. Excusing himself soon after the evening meal, he sallied forth to find the home of the aged de Marchine. On the principal street, where lay the shops of the town, he met the priests Barbidilla and Phillipe. They greeted one another cordially, asked the errand each pursued and, when Juan told them of his search, the men who married people were at once keenly interested. From a store nearby de Leon learned where Leonora's uncle lived. Then he paused a moment.

"But," said he to Barbidilla, "I did not inquire whether Leonora now makes her home with this uncle of hers."

"She does," the priest volunteered. "The old man, her uncle, talked with me after he parted

company with you this afternoon, and told me how to reach his house."

"This seems providential, Barbidilla. Come along with me, and you also, Phillipe," he added. "I may need you both to tie the knot at once and thus have it absolutely secure."

Further down the main street the man turned aside, walked a short distance, then Barbidilla observed: "Yonder, I should judge, is the house."

Juan pushed forward in hot haste. He knocked, heard someone coming to the door. Without waiting further, he entered. Before him, in the shadow of the doorway, stood a woman, tall, formly, of beautiful, yet sad face. The woman started back.

"Whom do you wish to see, sir?" she said, amazed that a man should thus intrude upon the quiet home. Back of the woman a man's face appeared. It was the uncle de Marchine.

"Let him in, Leonora," de Marchine called, "and you also, good fathers." The party entered. Juan and the woman, who was none other than the lost Leonora, plainly needed no introduction. An embrace and a pair of manly lips pressed against a woman's face barred the passageway a moment, as the company pushed their way into the little home.

"These are my friends, Leonora," de Leon said. "This is Father Phillipe, and this is Father Barbidilla. They belong to our expedition and have gone through the same trials as the rest of us. I met them on the way to find you; and told them, perhaps, the meeting was providential, for I will not let you slip away from me again. Barbidilla,

are you ready? and you, Phillipe? Pardon me," the ardent lover said, turning to Leonora once more and asking: "But, dear, are *you* now ready?"

Then there was a pause. The woman's head dropped; but her eyes were yet lifted to those of Juan. A happy smile suffused her face. She answered: "Yes."

The priests and the uncle, together with Juana, Leonora's cousin, shrewdly left the couple to themselves awhile.

"Come," called the uncle; "let me show you some curios I have collected. I have them in this other room. Come, this way.'

So Juan and Leonora were left alone. They talked; not all talk, of course; but yet in hurried sentences Juan told his bride-to-be of the country he had visited, its people and the wonderful experiences of de Soto's army. He told how the great commander passed away and rested beneath the waters of the Mississippi, how Rodrique Gomez disappeared with the Indian girl he loved, how the subtle Tachuco followed the expedition and wreaked his vengeance all the way from the coast to the great river on the west. He related to her his dreams which brought her vision to his mind, and how the Indian captive rehearsed the story of the white girl who met the fleet at Pensacola, looking for some one in the party of de Soto.

"It was a girl in a crimson gown," Juan said, "a dress like yours. Tell me, Leonora, was it you?"

The maiden made admission.

"I thought so," said the man; "but what troubled

me most was this, the woman said, when Captain Arias would not lead you to our party, you plunged into the forest, vowing you would go alone."

"I did say that, or something like it," Leonora answered; "but I was not all alone. My good uncle was with me, also my Cousin Juana; not with me when I talked to the captain, but with me in Pensacola. I passed through the wood by a short cut to reach their stopping place. In my haste my hand was scratched and my dress was soiled. I took off my kerchief and wiped the blood from my hands, which left the kerchief somewhat soiled, blood-marked."

"But, Leonora," Juan further questioned, "did you save the blood-stained kerchief?"

"Not long," came the reply. "I will tell you what next happened to me as I hastened home. Some Indians met me on the way. They greatly admired my crimson dress. One of them, a chief's squaw, wished to purchase it. I agreed to part with it; for, you know how long I had worn it."

"I do know," observed de Leon. "You wore it as you waved to me from the quay at Havana."

"Well," she continued, "I was not loath to part with it. So I struck a bargain with the Indians, throwing in also the blood-stained kerchief. For these things they gave me a string of pearls and a beautiful martin skin. Uncle laughed when I returned and told him of my bargain. 'You would make a great merchant,' he said with a smile."

"I understand now," Juan thoughtfully said. "It was on this wise; those Indians bought of you that

robe and kerchief and with those articles passed up the Mississippi. I tell you now what I have not yet had time to tell you: I saw that crimson gown, worn by the Indian woman. At first I thought she was my Leonora and went to your rescue—as I supposed, at peril of my life. Now I understand. I also saw the kerchief. The Indian slave, a princess she said she was, wore it about her neck, and when she told the story of the white woman at the ships, she waved the kerchief in the air. For many days has the terrible thought haunted me that you were harshly used and carried away, a slave. But, now, my Leonora, all is well."

As the cavalier held the lady in his arms, the token that "all was well," the uncle and the waiting party were returning.

"We don't want to interrupt," the uncle said. "But these priests seem restless."

"The best cure for their restlessness," rejoined de Leon, "is to keep them busy. So, my good priests, prepare for a wedding. Leonora and I are ready now."

The wedding day was bright with pleasant hopes, passed away with honest cheer and the glow still rested on the honeymoon. Along the highway to the renowned city of Mexico, there passed a little army. The people by the way saluted, cheered and praised the soldiers as they passed.

"Brave men," they said. "What hardships they have suffered! Would the great de Soto were among them!"

The troops now entered the city proper. Throngs

of citizens flocked to welcome them. They led them to their homes, feasted them and clothed them in sumptuous apparel. Among the cavaliers rode a woman, the only woman in the line of march.

The viceroy by Muscoso's side put the question to the Governor: "Who is the woman in your company?"

"A bride," came the answer. "The bride of Juan de Leon, cavalier and one of the leaders of our army."

"But, the woman," continued the viceroy, "did she pass through your campaigns?"

"Not all of them," Muscoso answered. "She sailed with our fleet from Spain, was with us in Cuba where we left her. She sought us again at Pensacola and would have followed us, if the captains of the fleet had led an expedition inland. De Leon, who had sought her as lost for many days, found her at last, at Panuco. They are now on their honeymoon. The reverend fathers by your side can tell you more. They did the deed."

"And 'twas well done," rejoined the priests.

"De Leon, I congratulate you," said the viceroy, drawing near and greeting both Juan and Lenora. "My best wishes, also to you, my good woman. The search for gold has failed; but this other search, I see, is crowned with victory."

FINIS.