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George Bancroft



1875

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHINA PRESS

THE
LIFE, TRAVELS AND ADVENTURES
OF
FERDINAND DE SOTO,

Discoverer of the Mississippi.

BY
LAMBERT A. WILMER.

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J. EDGAR THOMSON

J. Edgar Thomson

Dedication.

TO

J. EDGAR THOMSON, ESQ.

DEAR SIR:

This biography of one of the most celebrated explorers of the American wilderness is dedicated to you, by whose exertions, and those of your co-laborers, in the great work of internal improvement, many of those hideous solitudes first visited by De Soto and his companions have been converted to scenes of commercial prosperity, and made the dwelling-places of myriads of civilized, industrious, and happy people. Though I have ventured to question the claims of some of the discoverers and conquerors of America to the esteem and gratitude of mankind, I am ready, at all times, to acknowledge the merits of those men by whose peaceful, humane, and patriotic efforts the gloomy forest and the sun-scorched prairie have been constrained to give place to the cultivated field, the thriving village, and the populous city. In my estimation, the conquest of an empire is a less glorious work than the

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construction of a great public work. If in this book, therefore, I have attempted to depreciate some objects of popular admiration, there is no inconsistency in offering to you this token of my respect,—wishing thereby to express my hearty concurrence with all that the Public has testified in your favor. If this offering were ten times more valuable and significant than it is, it would more fully and faithfully express the sentiments and feelings of

THE AUTHOR.

PHILADELPHIA, July 10th, 1858.

INTRODUCTION.

THAT strange and exciting event, the discovery of the New World, seems to have stimulated the imaginations of all the earliest writers of American history. To them America was a land of wonders, and their accounts of it were correspondingly marvelous. Several other causes, which I am about to explain, have conspired to cast a shadow of doubt and suspicion on the records of the discovery and conquest of a large portion of this continent. In all American histories, there is an obvious disposition to magnify the merits and achievements of those men who first established an intercourse between the eastern and western hemispheres, and brought one half of the world into subjection to the other.

The Spaniards claim the discovery and conquest of America as one of their national triumphs; and they have certainly endeavored to make the most of it. Like JULIUS CÆSAR, they are the chroniclers of their own exploits; and that taste for self-glorification, or rhodomontade, which is presumed to be one of their national characteristics, has, in this instance, been indulged to an unlimited extent. The Spanish historians have supplied us with copious accounts of the actions of their countrymen in Mexico, Peru, and other parts of America; but the slightest examination of this registry will convince us that much of it has been

fabricated for a particular purpose. Instead of being a simple relation of facts, the narrative often takes the form of an apologetic harangue. It is the pleading of the advocate rather than the testimony of the witness. We are indebted to the inadvertence rather than to the candor of these writers, for any fact which could injuriously affect the reputation of their favorite heroes, or tarnish the honor and credit of the Spanish nation.

The errors and faults of the Spanish historians have found apologists and imitators among some of the most popular and gifted writers of our own country. Mr. WASHINGTON IRVING uses the following language with reference to ANTONIO DE HERRERA, who flourished about the end of the sixteenth century, and whose "General History of the West Indies" is the principal source from which all later writers have drawn their accounts of the first Spanish exploration and settlement of America. "Herrera," says Mr. IRVING, "has been censured for flattering his nation, exalting the deeds of his countrymen, and softening and concealing their excesses. But there is nothing very serious in this accusation; for to illustrate the glories of his nation is one of the noblest offices of the historian."* This remark of our much-admired American author does not give us a very exalted idea of his literary ethics; but, as a writer of fiction, Mr. Irving may be excused for his misapprehension of an author's privileges. I have always entertained the opinion that the legitimate business of the historian is not to glorify any particular nation or individual, but to relate *facts* with candor and impartiality.

Mr. PRESCOTT apologizes, in a similar strain, for the numer-

* Irving's "Columbus and his Companions." Appendix. Article *Herrera*.

ous falsifications of GARCILASSO DE LA VEGA, another Spanish writer, to whom the compilers of American history are indebted for a large portion of their materials, though his want of veracity has never been a matter of doubt or dispute. The author of the "Conquest of Peru" speaks approvingly of this writer's tendency to amplify and embellish the meagre details of history; as if it were desirable to make a truthful narrative attractive by arraying it in the garb of romance. I fear that the unnatural mixture of the true and false, which has been practiced by some Spanish and American historiographers, will make it almost impossible for posterity to distinguish between the veritable records of past events and the flimsy inventions of the sentimental novelist. While engaged in collecting materials for this book, I have experienced some of the inconveniences and embarrassments which the fanciful writers just spoken of have entailed upon their successors. The most troublesome part of my task has been the separation of the facts of history from the fabrications of the historian; and in this winnowing operation I do not flatter myself that I have been always successful.

It is a melancholy fact, that some of the most valuable and authentic records of events connected with the discovery and settlement of America are still locked up in the Spanish libraries. The publication of these tell-tale manuscripts has been interdicted, as we are informed, by the government of Spain, or by the authority of the Catholic church. Among these unpublished writings there is an entire history of America, from the discovery to the year 1520, by BARTHOLOMEW LAS CASAS, Bishop of Chiapa. This truly great man was a cotemporary of the principal explorers and conquerors of America, and he derived many of his facts

from personal observation. He was unquestionably a true and faithful witness; and on that very account, as it is supposed, his writings were suppressed, as they contained much which was offensive to government and derogatory to the character of the men who took a part in the American crusade. A few extracts from the works of Las Casas have appeared in print; and to this circumstance I am indebted for some of those examples of Spanish superstition and barbarity which I have introduced into this volume. Thirty books of OVIEDO's history, and many other writings illustrative of American antiquities, are likewise included among the unpublished treasures of Spanish literature.

Several American authors, among whom were Messrs. Prescott and Irving, were permitted to examine these important records. In view of the superior opportunities of those gentlemen, I have been tempted to exclaim with the jealous Helena:

“How happy some o'er other some can be!”

But every feeling of discontent vanished when I discovered how little advantage my highly-favored countrymen gained from their inspection of those secluded manuscripts. Mr. IRVING assures us that they contain much which would elucidate some very obscure passages of American history;* but neither he nor Mr. PRESCOTT has made any important addition to this department of useful knowledge. All that is valuable in the writings of these gentlemen might have been gathered from printed books in the libraries of America. It was useless for them to gain access to the *penetralia* of

* Irving's "Columbus and his Companions." Appendix. Article *Las Casas*.

the temple, when all the truths they desired to have could have been found in the portico.

As a biography of FERDINAND DE SOTO must necessarily include a considerable portion of American history, I have sought for information at the same fountains where some of our most eminent history writers have obtained their supplies. But I have claimed the privilege of an American citizen by having opinions of my own, and daring to express them even when they appear to be at variance with the statements of the most distinguished authors of my country. If this is presumption, I hope it will be some extenuation of the fault to offer the most substantial historical evidences in support of my peculiar hypotheses. Whenever I venture to contradict the declarations of a high authority, I will endeavor to show that a still higher authority will justify and sustain me in the contradiction.

The falsification of historical records is not, strictly speaking, a *peculiarity* of Spanish writers, for others have been detected in the same practice. If, as Mr. IRVING asserts, a Spanish author is excusable for glorifying his nation, and exalting the characters and actions of his countrymen, at the expense of truth, his violent *amor patriæ*, I suppose, is the plea of justification. But this defense is certainly not available for the *American citizen* who re-echoes the extravagant panegyrics which the Castilian scribes have pronounced on the great men of their nation. The Spaniards may be adepts in the manufacture of heroes, but the ingenuity and skill of our own countrymen in that branch of business is unapproachable. Several of the Spanish heroes have been manifestly improved, or regilded as it were, by passing through the hands of our American artists. I have no inclination to try my skill in such ingenious but very cen-

surable operations; for I do not profess to be an admirer of that phase of heroism which can be associated with the lowest forms of depravity and crime. Admitting that the ability to make a shining character of the worst possible material may be an evidence of genius or superior literary tact, I am still persuaded that such unnatural perversions are eminently mischievous. It is bad enough for novel writers to display their portraitures of amiable and admirable villains, as if for the express purpose of destroying all the distinctions between good and evil; but it is absolutely horrifying to see genuine *history* so distorted as to exhibit the blackest and most fiendlike malefactors in the guise of angels or demigods.

Comparing FERDINAND DE SOTO with those of his compatriots who took a part in the subjugation of the American tribes, we may truly say of him, perhaps, that

"He was the noblest *Spaniard* of them all."

All the good and noble qualities which are claimed for him in these pages are ascribed to him by his cotemporary historians. But it has been no part of my design to represent him as a model of human perfection. I have merely endeavored to render him that justice and due appreciation which some writers, who have been too intent on the exaltation of more unworthy objects, have denied him. In the relation of DE SOTO's travels and adventures, I have endeavored to be as truthful, at least, as my authorities. In all matters of historical importance, I have made a somewhat elaborate search after the truth, when it appeared to lie far beneath the surface. With this object in view, I have examined many antique tomes, and availed myself of every other source of intelligence which was within my reach.

On the score of veracity, I think this *Life of De Soto* will compare favorably with any other book which professes to give an account of the Spanish operations in America; and there is nothing very boastful in this assumption, for much of the early history of America—even when it has all the amendments and elucidations of our latest authors—is scarcely less obscure, enigmatical, and fabulous than the most ancient records of Greece or Egypt.

Before I finish these introductory remarks, it may be proper for me to disavow any intention to disparage the literary merits of several cotemporary authors who are mentioned in different parts of this volume. My negation of some of their statements must be considered as a matter of necessity; for when any material difference appears between their narratives and mine, it is incumbent on me to explain the cause of my disagreement with such eminent authorities, otherwise my own veracity might justly be called in question. If I fail to show whereïn they are mistaken, I allow it to be supposed that the error is on my own side. It should be observed, however, that it is no imputation against the abilities or learning of an author, to charge him with a misstatement of facts. Faults of this kind are often the result of indolence, or of an excessive activity of imagination; and it is possible that the most ingenious and brilliant historians are sometimes the least reliable. In view of all the difficulties which attend this branch of literary toil, I am well prepared to excuse the faults and blemishes of my co-laborers, feeling, as I do, that my own imperfections may stand greatly in need of the same kind of merciful forbearance.

PHILADELPHIA, *July 10, 1858.*

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LIFE OF FERDINAND DE SOTO.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH OF DE SOTO—HIS PARENTAGE—HE IS PATRONIZED BY COUNT PEDRO ARIAS DE AVILA—HE FALLS IN LOVE WITH THE COUNT'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER, ISABELLA—HE DEMANDS HER IN MARRIAGE, AND IS SCORNFULLY REPULSED BY HER RELATIONS—THE COUNT MAKES A DISCOVERY WHICH LEADS TO PLANS OF VENGEANCE—DE SOTO RESOLVES TO VISIT THE NEW WORLD—HIS LIFE IS ENDANGERED BY DE AVILA'S MACHINATIONS. [A. D. 1500–1519.]

IN the early history of the famous cavalier, whose romantic and almost incredible adventures we are about to record, we must look for an explanation of much that is mysterious in his subsequent conduct. Many actions ascribed to De Soto appear to be strangely inconsistent with the general character of the man. It is hard to conceive how one who possessed so much chivalric feeling, and so many estimable qualities, could become the voluntary subordinate and coadjutor of that ignoble swineherd and merciless bandit, Francis Pizarro. We are reasonably surprised to find a brave soldier, a courteous

gentleman, and a steadfast believer in the Christian religion, (as De Soto certainly was,) associating with robbers and assassins, participating in numerous deeds of ruffianly violence and criminal atrocity, and devoting all his energies to the accomplishment of designs, the magnitude and boldness of which can offer no excuse for their cruelty and injustice.

At the commencement of this narrative, we present a remarkable example of the lasting effect which may be produced on a man's character and conduct by a single incident of his early life. From a cause apparently so inadequate may proceed those generous impulses which make one individual the benefactor of his race, or those stern resolves which conduct another into scenes of turbulence and peril, impelling him, perhaps, to the perpetration of deeds which may render his existence miserable and his memory infamous. In the case of De Soto, it will be seen that one early disappointment produced that mental bias which made him a soldier of fortune, and connected him with many transactions which the sober judgment of mankind must condemn.

Ferdinand de Soto, according to the most reliable accounts,* was born in the year 1500, at a Spanish town

* Both Herrera and Garcilasso assert that he was born at *Villanueva de Barcarrota*, but we have adopted the statement of the Portuguese narrative as more probable. We find that Mr. Bancroft, (*Hist. of United States*, Vol. I., Ch. 2,) likewise gives a preference to the Portuguese authority, by making *Xeres* the birth-place of De Soto.

called Xeres, in the province of Estramadura, forty miles south of Badajoz. Both of his parents were allied, by consanguinity, with families of the highest rank among the nobility of Spain; but like many other persons of aristocratic pretensions in that country, they endured some of the inconveniences of poverty; and it is reported that, for want of pecuniary means, they were unable to give their son a liberal education. But, at the age of seventeen, Ferdinand attracted the favorable notice of Pedro Arias de Avila,* Count of Puño en Rostro; by whose assistance the young De Soto was enabled to spend six years at one of the Spanish universities. While pursuing his literary studies, he gave due attention to those manly exercises, fencing, horsemanship, &c., which, at that period, were classed among the necessary accomplishments of a Spanish gentleman. De Soto possessed several natural advantages,—a tall and well-formed person, great muscular vigor, untiring activity, and a dauntless spirit; all of which prepared him for the acquisition of those soldierly arts which were so highly esteemed by his countrymen—for the Spaniards, at that time, were the most warlike people in Europe. The consequence was, that the youthful Ferdinand was soon regarded as one who was likely to become the mirror of contemporary knighthood. At tournaments and other military

* This Spanish nobleman is often spoken of by the historians of his times. His name is sometimes written *Pedrarius*, and sometimes *Davilla*: but its correct form is that given in the text.

displays, his chivalrous talents shone out with unrivalled lustre, exciting the envy of many cavaliers of the highest rank and the admiration of innumerable ladies. The attentions of the latter became troublesome to De Soto, who, at that time, appeared to be quite insensible to the fascinations of the sex.

On his return from the university, supposed to be that of Saragossa,* he was received, with many demonstrations of friendship, by his patron, Don Pedro de Avila, who admitted him into his own family, and for awhile treated him more like a son than a dependant. While De Soto was at Saragossa, Don Pedro, by means of his great influence at the Spanish court, had been appointed to the government of Darien. He began to exercise the duties of that office in the year 1514,—having embarked at St. Lucar, and landed in America with a retinue of more than two thousand persons,† including many noble cavaliers, a large body of common soldiers, and a considerable number of Dominican friars. After an absence of five years, during which time he acquired unenviable celebrity, as will be shown in the next chapter, he returned to Spain, in order to arrange his domestic affairs, preparatory for his longer residence in America. Thus it happened that De Soto and Don Pedro met together at the castle of the latter, near the

* Costillo, *Hidalg. Esp.*, Chap. vii.

† Oviedo., *Lib. ii.*, Cap. vii.; “Irving’s *Companions of Columbus*,” Chap. xv.

city of Badajoz. While De Avila was making preparation for his return to America, De Soto continued to reside with his patron, to whom, in various ways, he made himself extremely useful. But, after the lapse of several months, Ferdinand surprised Count de Avila, beyond measure, by proposing to marry Donna Isabella Bovadilla, the count's second daughter. This young lady was now in her sixteenth year. She had lately been presented at Court, where her extraordinary beauty, and her various accomplishments, excited universal admiration and caused her to be sought in marriage by several young noblemen of the highest grade, one of whom was nearly related to Royalty itself.

Having been accustomed to regard De Soto as one who was entirely dependent on his bounty, Don Pedro de Avila would have been little more surprised if a common beggar had aspired to an alliance with his family. The proposition of De Soto, indeed, seemed too absurd to excite the count's anger; and the manner of Don Pedro's refusal was more contemptuous than resentful. But he began to consider the matter in a very different light a few days after, when a faithful duenna, who had Isabella in charge, communicated to him the startling intelligence, that the young lady not only reciprocated De Soto's affection, but had declared her resolution to retire into a convent rather than to become the wife of any other person.

The rage of Don Pedro now became ungovernable; and, as he was a man of a fierce and pitiless dispo-

sition,* he took measures to have De Soto assassinated. But reflecting that the females of his country are often driven to acts of desperation when crossed in the affairs of love, he hesitated to carry out his murderous intentions, lest his daughter should avenge the death of her lover by sacrificing herself. This apprehension caused him to dissemble his wrath, and to preserve a show of kindness toward the object of his resentment.

In the meanwhile, De Soto, observing that all the relations of Isabella, who had been made acquainted with his presumptuous application for her hand, behaved toward him with an appearance of contemptuous pity, began to consider what constituted his unworthiness in their estimation. His lineage was, in no respect, inferior to that of the Count de Avila himself, as he was entitled, by the rules of Spanish heraldry, to admission into the noble order of Santiago. He possessed the education, the manners, and all the requisite qualifications of a gentleman, and he bore a moral character which, at that time, was without a blemish. Why then was he scornfully repulsed by this family with which he sought an alliance? The sole cause of his rejection was too evident to be mistaken. He discovered that *poverty* was the only obstacle to his happiness and respectability; and having pondered on this discovery with much bit-

* This account of De Avila is confirmed by various authorities. *Vide* Herrera, Dec. ii. Lib. ii. ; Oviedo, Hist. Ind., Chap. 8 ; Irving's "Columbus and his Companions," Chap. xvii.

terness of feeling, he determined at last—regardless of all hazards and sacrifices—to become rich. When a man forms this resolution, he is prepared for the commission of many crimes; for the restraints of honor and conscience must cease to be effective when the sordid pursuit of wealth becomes the main object of existence.

For several years prior to the date of the events just related, the whole Spanish nation, and indeed all Christendom, had been electrified by accounts of the prodigious riches of the New World. Thousands of military adventurers, bent on the acquisition of gold and silver, were flocking to the Western Continent, and many had returned laden with the spoils of transatlantic opulence. Although De Soto, who was imbued with all the martial spirit of his times and country, ardently wished for some fair opportunity to distinguish himself in the ranks of war, certain honorable scruples had hitherto restrained him from joining in the operations of the Spanish forces in America. Even in that comparatively barbarous age, when the Christian religion itself was so perverted as to sanction outrage, robbery, and murder, there were many judicious and high-minded Europeans who looked with disgust and abhorrence on the predatory operations of Cortez, Balboa, and others who followed in their footsteps. The cotemporary churchmen themselves were not unanimous in the opinion that so commendable and holy an object, as the evangelization of America, could justify those horrible misdeeds which were continually committed by organized gangs of marauders, marching

under the banner of the Cross. It is easy to believe that De Soto, who possessed a nice sense of honor and moral rectitude, as was manifested on many occasions, felt a strong repugnance for that sort of military service to which we have just referred. But, as we have intimated above, he had ascertained that the possession of wealth was necessary to his happiness; it was indeed the only means by which the dearest object of his soul could be attained. In short, the impulse of "almighty love" was more potential with him than the restraints of reason or religion, honor or humanity.

Having finally determined to embark for America, and to offer his services to one of the military leaders in that country, De Soto found his purpose still delayed by the want of funds necessary for his outfit. The insulting behavior of Don Pedro de Avila, on the memorable occasion spoken of above, had made him deeply regret his inability to discharge the pecuniary obligations which he owed to that man; and he resolved that no extremity of want and misery should ever induce him to accept of any new benefaction from the same source. His parents were now both dead; and, had they been living, they would probably have been too poor to give him the assistance which he required. Although his amiable and excellent qualities had gained for him many friends among his wealthy and titled countrymen, his proud spirit could not submit to the humiliation of soliciting a loan.

While the mind of De Soto was harassed by many

painful reflections and anticipations, Don Pedro de Avila completed all the preparations for his voyage, and was now about to return to his Isthmian domain. This artful and unprincipled man, for various reasons, wished De Soto to accompany him to the seat of his government. He was unwilling, in the first place, to leave Ferdinand in his daughter's neighborhood, fearing that the young man who had succeeded in winning her affection, might persuade her to an elopement, or to some other act of youthful indiscretion. It occurred to him, likewise, that by detaining De Soto abroad for a few years, he would allow Isabella to experience the beneficial effects of absence, which, according to his calculation, would remove all traces of her erring attachment. But, supposing that these expectations should not be fulfilled, he considered that the position in which he proposed to place De Soto would be fraught with danger, and that it would be in his own power to make that position still more perilous. He resolved to employ the unsuspecting young cavalier in the most hazardous enterprises, not doubting that his intended victim would be apt to thank him for the implied compliment which would thus be paid to his courage and prowess.

These sinister motives induced Don Pedro de Avila to offer De Soto a captain's commission and a free passage to Darien, with the promise of many opportunities to acquire wealth and distinction in the proposed invasion of Peru. As these overtures were made with

every appearance of cordiality on the part of Don Pedro, De Soto accepted them with joy and gratitude; his satisfaction being the more complete because De Avila seemed to place a high valuation on his expected services; the subtle count choosing, in this instance, to behave as though De Soto, by accepting his offers, had conferred an obligation on himself.

Notwithstanding the vigilance with which Isabella was guarded, De Soto contrived to obtain an interview with her before his departure. At their meeting, vows of mutual constancy passed between these two young people, who were soon to be so widely separated; and Isabella, who knew her father's character and suspected his intentions, reminded Ferdinand, with particular significance, that "one treacherous friend is more dangerous than a thousand avowed enemies."

CHAPTER II.

UNPARALLELED TYRANNY AND BARBARITY OF PEDRO DE AVILA—
 THE EFFECTS OF HIS CRUEL POLICY—A FAMINE AMONG
 THE COLONISTS—THEIR FRIGHTFUL SUFFERINGS—NOBLEMEN
 TURNED BEGGARS—A SPANISH GENTLEMAN STARVED TO
 DEATH—ABOMINABLE CRIMES COMMITTED BY DE AVILA'S
 CAPTAINS—AN INDIAN WOMAN HUNTED LIKE A BEAST—AN
 INFANT THROWN TO THE DOGS—DE SOTO REFUSES TO OBEY
 DE AVILA'S ORDERS—MOCK TRIAL OF VASCO NUÑEZ DE
 BALBOA—DE AVILA CAUSES HIM TO BE BEHEADED—HEROIC
 BEHAVIOR OF BALBOA ON THE SCAFFOLD. [A. D. 1519.]

As we have no particular accounts of Ferdinand de Soto's first voyage to America, we may be allowed to suppose that nothing worthy of commemoration happened to him on his passage from St. Lucar to Darien. But, soon after his arrival at the last-named place, we find him acting an important part among the Spanish soldiery employed in the subjugation of the country. At this time, he was little more than nineteen years of age, but his youth and want of military experience did not prevent Don Pedro de Avila from entrusting him with the command of a troop of horse, and sending him on several expeditions, the successful management of which required not only great heroism, but more dis-

cretion than could reasonably be expected of a youth of nineteen, and an inexperienced officer.

In the preceding chapter we have given the reader some insight into De Avila's politic designs with regard to De Soto. To afford a better understanding of this subject, and to explain several incidents which must soon be related, we will now make a further exhibition of the shady side of Don Pedro's character. His disposition, according to Herrera,* was tyrannical and perfidious in the highest degree; but the qualities here imputed to him, would not, by themselves, entitle him to much distinction among his co-laborers in America who are supposed to have plowed that field to prepare it for the dissemination of Christianity. In several particulars, De Avila differed essentially from others who were engaged in the same spurious work of Christian benevolence. He was not excessively religious, and therefore could not excuse his enormities, (as some others did theirs,) with the impious pretense that they were done for the service of God and the benefit of the Holy Catholic Church. But the most distinctive trait of Don Pedro's character was his apparent freedom from the prevailing vice of covetousness, which was a stronger motive than superstition itself with a majority of those persons who took a part in the American crusade.

Though Don Pedro de Avila may not be liable to the charge of avarice, he certainly stands accountable for as

* Herrera, Dec. i., Lib. ii., Cap. 2, 3, and 4.

great a sin—for the plundering of the Indians was carried on, under his administration, with extraordinary activity and perseverance. He encouraged his subordinate officers, among whom were some malefactors of the worst class, to commit depredations in the territories of the neighboring Caziques, with whom he waged an indiscriminate war; though several of them had rendered important services to the Spaniards, and had formed compacts of friendship and alliance with Don Pedro's predecessor, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. This last-named person, celebrated in history as the discoverer of the Pacific Ocean, had managed the affairs of the Isthmian government with no less prudence and moderation than ability. By cultivating a good understanding with the natives, he had secured an ample supply of provisions for the use of his colony; and he received from his Indian allies the first intimation of an unexplored gold region beyond the mountains. But De Avila, on assuming the reins of government, immediately began to make hostile demonstrations against his Indian neighbors. The friendly intercourse which had hitherto subsisted between the Spaniards and the natives, being thus brought to an abrupt termination, the former found their supplies of provisions cut off; and the consequence was, that the colonists soon experienced all the miseries of famine. Of all that glittering host which accompanied Don Pedro to Darien, including many noblemen and distinguished cavaliers who had sold or mortgaged large estates in Spain to equip themselves for this transatlantic expedition, only

a few hundreds were found alive at the end of six months. Some of them had fallen victims to the diseases peculiar to the climate, but by far the greater number had been literally starved to death. It was no unusual thing to see a Spanish gentleman, the representative of an illustrious family, wandering about the streets of the village, soliciting alms, or offering to perform any menial labor for a morsel of food. In many cases, were jewels of inestimable value exchanged by these opulent mendicants for pieces of mouldy bread. It is related that one noble cavalier, after spending a whole day in ineffectual applications for charity, sank down at night and expired in the presence of his countrymen, whose own miseries had prepared them to look with indifference on the distresses of others.

The sufferings of the colonists, after a long continuance, were terminated partly by the importation of provisions from Spain, and partly by foraging excursions made by some of Don Pedro's retainers among the Indian villages. The Spaniards had already robbed the neighboring Indians of their golden trinkets, which were surrendered with very little reluctance; for the natives, being as yet uncivilized and unconverted, had not learned to appreciate these metallic treasures. Regarding them, therefore, as mere baubles of no intrinsic value, they readily yielded them up, in compliance with the demands of Christian rapacity. But when Governor de Avila sent his armed ruffians to take possession of the rice, maize, and other provender which the indus-

trious "savages" had produced by their hard labor, and stored away for the maintenance of their wives and children, the spirit of resistance was aroused; and the plunderers were astonished to find that the people on whose tameness and cowardice they had made such large calculations, were, in reality, as brave as themselves. The Indians were, in fact, driven to the last stage of desperation by the ineffable barbarities of these land-pirates, acting under the authority of the Spanish government and its authorized agents. It appears to us that a recital of some of the deeds committed by these human monsters, would startle an infernal audience in the halls of Pandemonium. And it is to be observed that similar deeds were constantly committed, by the Spaniards of that day, on every part of the American continent where they were able to maintain a foothold.*

Although we feel a natural reluctance to introduce into these pages any details of the execrable cruelties to which reference has just been made, we find it necessary to cite a few instances, in order to explain the origin of that vengeful and bloodthirsty disposition which some of the native tribes of America manifested toward their European invaders. It must be remembered, however, that many of the acts which provoked this storm of vindictive feeling on the part of the Indians, are unfit for publication in any book intended for general perusal;

* See Purchas's "Pilgrims," Lib. vii., Chap. 12; Las Casas, *passim*; or any other history of the Spanish invasion of America.

and, indeed, the Spanish government itself made a virtuous attempt to expunge them from the page of history.*

We subjoin a few examples of the horrid maltreatment of the Indians on the American isthmus, during the administration of Don Pedro de Avila; all of which we have copied from works of unquestionable veracity.

Antonio de Herrera, the Spanish historian, who is suspected of being too partial to his countrymen, says† that De Avila sent Francis Bezerra to the coast of Uraba, with orders to destroy all the people thereabout, without distinction of age or sex. Tello de Guzman, another of De Avila's officers, after being hospitably entertained and feasted by a friendly cacique, ordered his host to be hanged on a tree, and then robbed his family of golden ornaments, estimated to be worth ten thousand dollars. Captain James Albitez was sent by the same governor on an expedition to the province of Chagre. Albitez, "being of a better disposition than the other Spanish commanders," (as Herrera naïvely remarks,) did not murder any of the inhabitants, but merely robbed them of a large amount of gold, and required the chief to pay him a huge sackful of the same metal, as an acknowledgment of the merciful forbearance which had been exhibited by the subjects of His Catholic Majesty on this occasion. The people who were thus dealt with by

* See the Introduction to this Volume.

† Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, Dec. ii., Lib. i., Chap. 1

this most exemplary of Spanish captains, had never—as far as we can ascertain—shown any disposition to be troublesome to the Christians; and the chief, in order to propitiate Captain Albitez, had voluntarily offered him a mass of gold supposed to be worth twelve thousand pieces-of-eight. Still another of De Avila's captains, Bartholomew Hurtado by name, made a night attack on an Indian village, whose inhabitants had never offended the Spaniards, but were suspected of having some gold in their possession. Hurtado, with his troop, stealthily approached the village, and set fire to the houses. The Indians—men, women and children—ran out of their blazing habitations; some of them were terribly scorched or burned, but all who fell into the hands of the Spaniards were put to the sword.*

Bartholomew Las Casas, Bishop of Chiapa, the truth of whose statements has never been called in question, gives a voluminous account of the iniquitous proceedings of his countrymen in America. In reference to Pedro de Avila, he says: "This man came into the country like a starved wolf among a flock of quiet and innocent sheep. He employed many evil men to commit slaughters, robberies, cruelties and oppressions without number, and laid waste many populous towns and villages, producing a devastation the like of which is not mentioned in any history, ancient or modern. He laid

* Herrera, Dec. ii., Lib. i., Cap. 2.

about forty leagues of land desert, viz., the whole space between the provinces of Darien and Nicaragua, which, at the time of his coming, was one of the most fruitful and populous regions in the new world. With this



SPANIARDS HUNTING INDIANS.

accursed wretch originated the custom of making slaves of the Indians, which custom afterward prevailed in all the provinces of America that had become subject to the Spaniards.”*

It was a practice with some of De Avila’s officers to

* Las Casas, quoted by Purchas; “Pilgrims,” Lib. viii., Cap. 4.

relieve the tedium of their life in camp, by going on hunting excursions into the adjacent country. But, instead of chasing hares or foxes, according to the European custom, they preferred the example of Nimrod, and made human beings the object of their pursuit. In this way, thousands of Indians were slaughtered in the most revolting manner by these most heartless of all miscreants. On one occasion, an Indian woman with a babe in her arms was chased by the hounds and a party of Spaniards on horseback, and finding that she could not escape, she hastily snatched up a cord which happened to lie in her way, and, having fastened her infant to her feet, she suspended herself from the branch of a tree. When the dogs and hunters arrived at the spot, the woman was dead, but unhappily the babe was still living, and as it hung within reach of the dogs, it was terribly lacerated by those ferocious brutes. But it is mentioned as a very consolatory circumstance, that before the wretched infant expired, it was properly baptized by a friar who happened to be present.*

At another time, while a party of Spaniards, with their hounds, was passing near an Indian village, one of the hunters, suspecting that his dogs might be hungry, snatched a small Indian child from the embrace of its mother, and cutting off the arms and legs with his sword, he threw them on the ground. When these palpitating morsels were devoured by the dogs, the

* Las Casas, quoted by Purchas; "Pilgrims," Lib. viii., Cap. 4.

remaining portions of the child's body were also distributed among them, in the presence of the bereaved mother, who became frantic at the sight.*

But the most concise relation of Spanish cruelties in



SPANISH CAPTAIN FEEDING HIS DOGS ON AN INDIAN BABE.

America would be sufficient, by itself, to fill many volumes; and we doubt whether the history of one half

* *Vide Las Casas, as above.*

of these atrocities will ever be written by any pen, except that of the Recording Angel.

Though the service in which Ferdinand de Soto had engaged, made him the companion-in-arms of the fiendish perpetrators of these crimes, we do not find his name associated, in a single instance, with any of the infamous actions of his countrymen on the Isthmus of Panama. Though he was frequently employed, as history proves, in the defense of the settlement against the incursions of hostile Indians, it cannot be discovered that he ever permitted himself to be made instrumental in carrying out the exterminating policy of the satanic governor, Pedro de Avila.

We have glanced at some of the effects of De Avila's barbarous treatment of the Indians, which drove these people to a distance from the settlement, and converted all the surrounding country to a desert. But the conduct of this petty tyrant toward Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, whom he had superseded in the government of the province, was still more atrocious. De Avila had begun to persecute this man almost as soon as he arrived in the country; though Balboa endeavored to propitiate his unprovoked enemy by a submissiveness of deportment that was almost abject, and by rendering him many valuable services.

A venerable bishop, who wished to make peace between the late governor and his successor, proposed that Donna Maria, the eldest daughter of Don Pedro, should be given to Vasco Nuñez in marriage. De Avila

seemed to yield his consent to this projected alliance; but it is most likely that he never intended to fulfill the engagement. He continued to use various contrivances to ensnare the object of his causeless hatred; and, at last, found a pretense for putting him to death. It is said that Don Pedro was envious of Balboa's well-earned popularity, and that he was fearful of being supplanted by him in the king's favor and in the government of the province. But whatever was the origin of De Avila's implacable enmity, the result was, that Balboa was charged, by the inexorable governor, with treasonable designs; and the accused, after undergoing a mock trial, was sentenced to the punishment of decapitation. The execution, which took place in the public square of Acla, was witnessed by the historian Oviedo, who was in the colony at that time. On his authority, it is reported that De Avila himself was a spectator of the sanguinary scene, at which he gazed, with ill-concealed exultation, through a crevice in the wall of a neighboring house. He seemed to shrink from the reproachful glance of the dying man, knowing that his execution was a murder, and that he himself had contrived and authorized the deed.

Vasco Nuñez ascended the scaffold with a firm step; and his demeanor, to the last, was manly and composed. The public crier, who stood by his side on the platform, proclaimed: "This punishment is inflicted by the king, and his lieutenant Don Pedro de Avila, on this man as a traitor to the crown of Spain." To this Balboa

indignantly replied: "It is false; never did the crime of treason enter my mind. I have always served my king with truth and loyalty; and my highest ambition was to extend his dominions." He then calmly submitted himself to the sword of the executioner.*

The execution of Vasco Nuñez took place A. D. 1517, about three years previous to De Soto's arrival at Darien. However, this event, with its attendant circumstances, is not alien from our present purpose, as it helps to illustrate the character of De Avila, whose following history, for the space of several years, will be closely connected with that of De Soto.

* Oviedo, Hist. of Ind., Cap. ix. ; Herrera, Dec. ii., Lib. i., Cap. 4.



SPANISH CRUELTIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

CHAPTER III.

DE SOTO IS COMMANDED BY DE AVILA TO DESTROY AN INDIAN VILLAGE—HE REFUSES TO OBEY THE ORDER—HIS DUEL WITH CAPTAIN ALONZO PEREZ DE LA RUA—THE GREAT INDIAN CHIEF URACCA OPPOSES THE SPANIARDS—ALARM OF THE SETTLERS AT PANAMA—DE AVILA SENDS OUT TWO PARTIES TO DESTROY THE INDIAN VILLAGES—URACCA MEETS THE SPANISH TROOPS, AND DEFEATS THEM WITH GREAT SLAUGHTER—DE SOTO RESCUES SOME OF HIS COUNTRYMEN, WHO ARE IN THE POWER OF THE INDIANS—THE SURVIVING SPANIARDS ESCAPE TO THEIR SHIPS. [A. D. 1520-1522.]

It was observed, near the close of the preceding chapter, that the name of Ferdinand de Soto is never mentioned in connection with the execrable crimes committed by De Avila's followers. We have no doubt that De Soto often refused to obey the governor's orders, when the service required was of an odious or dishonorable nature. One instance of his disobedience, in such circumstances, is on record. On some frivolous pretense, Don Pedro had devoted the inhabitants of a certain Indian village to destruction; he therefore sent Captain Alonzo Perez de la Rua, of infamous celebrity, to De Soto, with orders for the latter to muster his troop of cavalry and proceed, without delay, to the

designated village. This village he was required to burn down, and to put every living creature found therein to the sword. De Soto felt himself deeply insulted by this mandate; and his indignant refusal to obey it was expressed with a reckless disregard of all consequences. "Tell the governor," said he, "that my life and services are always at his disposal when the duty to be performed is such as may become a Christian and a gentleman. But in the present case, Captain Perez, I think that Don Pedro would have shown more discretion by entrusting *you* with this commission, instead of sending you with the order to myself." The messenger returned to De Avila with De Soto's reply, which Don Pedro heard with a grim smile, and without any appearance of angry feeling. "Well, my friend," said he to Perez, "if you, who are a vigorous young soldier, can patiently endure De Soto's insolence, I see no reason why an infirm old man like myself should not show equal forbearance." This hint was sufficient for Captain Perez, who very soon after challenged De Soto to mortal combat. The two cavaliers fought with swords, in the presence of a large concourse of spectators, comprising all the officers and soldiers of the colony. Both of the combatants were adepts in this gladiatorial exercise, and it is reported that they fought for more than two hours; within which time De Soto received several slight wounds; but Perez had the worst of the battle, being disabled in the right arm. His sword was stricken from his grasp, and while attempting to recover it with

his left hand, he fell to the ground. De Soto then, with his sword to the breast of his prostrate antagonist, required Captain Perez to ask for his life, which the latter sullenly refused to do. De Soto sheathed his sword, saying: "The life which is not worth asking for, is not worth taking." After which he gracefully bowed to the spectators, and retired from the field of battle, greeted by the acclamations of the whole assemblage.

The captain thus vanquished by De Soto, had been regarded as the most expert swordsman in the colonial army. He was remarkable, besides, for his fierce and quarrelsome temper, which had involved him in many duels, in which he had seldom failed to kill, or badly wound, his opponent. He was now about thirty years of age, and had served De Avila with unscrupulous obedience ever since the latter acquired the government of the province. Finding himself defeated by a stripling, and one who had not yet obtained much distinction in arms, Captain Alonzo Perez was so excessively mortified that he threw up his commission, and returned to Spain. The New World was thus relieved from one of its tormentors—one who, within the space of ten years, had committed more heinous offenses against God and humanity than ten ages of purgatorial torture could expiate.*

There was, at this time, (A. D. 1521,) an Indian

* Some examples of this man's villainies are given by Herrera, Dec. ii., lib. i., and in other places.

cacique, named Uracca, whose territories extended over the mountains of Veragua, situated to the south-westward of Panama. This man deeply resented the many wrongs which had been inflicted on his countrymen by the foreign intruders; and having now, as he thought, a fair opportunity to execute vengeance, he collected a force which is said to have comprised twenty thousand men. These Indians were armed, according to the usages of their country, with bows and poisoned arrows, the slightest wounds of which caused intolerable agony and almost certain death. The native warriors were also provided with swords made of compact wood, and hardened in the fire. The banners used by Uracca were the bloody shirts of Spaniards, torn from the bodies of those who had been slain in battle.

The menaced attack of this formidable host of avengers produced the wildest consternation among the inhabitants of Panama. They could not reasonably expect more merciful treatment from these idolatrous barbarians, than the latter had received from the Christian representatives of one of the most highly cultivated and polished nations of Europe. The Spanish residents of Panama were therefore alarmed, with good reason, at the prospect of falling into the hands of the Indians. What greater misfortune could they apprehend, if they imagined that the savages, in the spirit of retaliation, could so far forget themselves as to adopt those practices of civilized warfare, which they might have learned from their European invaders.

Uracca, the commander of the Indian forces, was unquestionably a valorous soldier and a good general. From the accounts given by the Spanish historians, we judge that, with equal advantages on his side, he would soon have expelled De Avila, with all his horde of ruffian banditti, from that territory. The governor sent out two expeditions to oppose the advancing enemy. One party, under the command of Espinosa, Don Pedro's chief alcalde, went by sea, along the western coast, to make a diversion by attacking several of Uracca's villages. The other party proceeded by land, and was conducted by the notorious Francisco Pizarro, whose exploits in Peru will hereafter come under our notice. De Soto, with his troop of horsemen, formed a part of Pizarro's division. Uracca's spies discerned the approach of the two ships in which Espinosa and his troops were embarked. As soon as the noble chief perceived that the Spaniards were about to assail him, he advanced to meet them with joyful alacrity. Espinosa, in the meanwhile, had disembarked his men, and was now marching toward the hilly country where the Indians were supposed to be stationed. An advanced party of the natives, consisting of about one thousand warriors, with Uracca himself at their head, encountered Espinosa's troops, and assaulted them with such determined bravery that the Spaniards, panic-stricken and thrown into great disorder, thought of nothing but the preservation of their lives. Many of them were slain by the natives, who were evidently disposed to show no quarter, and

the extermination of the whole band seemed to be inevitable.

At this juncture, the din of the battle was heard by Ferdinand de Soto, who, with his troop of thirty



DE SOTO COMING TO THE RESCUE.

horsemen, had been sent by Pizarro to make an incursion in the neighborhood.* Judging, by their cries of distress, that his countrymen were in great extremity,

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. ii., Lib. vii., Cap. 3.

De Soto hastened to the scene of action. The spot, however, was approached with much difficulty, on account of the inequality of the ground. The horses were obliged to pass over a rugged surface, interspersed with rocks and seamed with innumerable chasms; in fact, the place appeared to be so impracticable for the march of cavalry, that the bravest of De Soto's companions hesitated to follow him, when he urged his steed forward, with the customary war-cry of "St. Iago to the rescue!"

As soon as the Indians observed the approach of the horses, which to them were objects of superstitious terror, they began to retire, and all the efforts of their chief to rally them and inspire them with fresh courage, were unavailing. When De Soto had succeeded in bringing his horsemen to Espinosa's assistance, the Indians, having abandoned the work of slaughter, retreated to the neighboring cliffs, where it was impossible for the horses to reach them. From their elevated position, they now poured down a shower of poisoned arrows on the Spaniards, many of whom were killed on the spot, or fatally wounded.

Espinosa now ordered a retreat, which was conducted deliberately and in good order, the post of danger in the rear being assigned to De Soto and his cavalry. This was a judicious arrangement, for the enemy, at a convenient distance, pursued the retreating party and harassed them with volleys of arrows; but De Soto kept the Indians aloof by frequently halting and turning his

horses' heads toward them, as though he intended to charge. This expedient caused the savages to fall back, and the Spaniards were thus enabled to reach a position where the ground, being unencumbered with rocks, allowed the cavalry to act to advantage. Here the Spaniards paused and offered battle to their pursuers, but Uracca contented himself, for the present, with keeping a close watch on their movements. By this time the cacique had been joined by several reinforcements, and Pizarro had come to Espinosa's assistance, so that the numbers of the Indians and Spaniards both were considerably increased.

The approach of darkness caused a suspension of hostilities. Pizarro and Espinosa held a consultation, the result of which was a prudent but somewhat inglorious determination to steal away in the night, and leave Uracca in undisputed possession of the field.* De Soto, who appears to have had some of the leaven of ancient chivalry, or a taint of Quixotism, in his composition, treated the discreet resolution of his superior officers with undisguised contempt. He represented that the chances of victory were on the side of the Spaniards, whose arms were infinitely more effective than those of the Indians; and that the horses alone gave the former an advantage which more than counterbalanced the superiority of the latter in numerical strength. He remarked that the safety of the colony, as well as the

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, Dec. ii., Lib. vii., Cap. 3.

honor of the Spanish nation, made it necessary for them to strike a decisive blow; and that they might never have a better opportunity to do so than that which now offered. Espinosa answered these arguments merely with a sneering allusion to De Soto's youth and inexperience; and Pizarro interrupted the angry reply which De Soto was about to make, by expressing his opinion that a retreat from their present position was advisable, but that it might be expedient to make another stand against Uracca, if he continued the pursuit.

About midnight, the Spaniards again began their retreat, with as much privacy as possible, but the extraordinary vigilance of Uracca detected their movements. He followed close in their rear, annoying them very much on their march; and, at a dangerous pass in the mountains, he assailed them with such impetuosity and deadly effect that very few escaped, besides the horsemen and the principal officers, who wore defensive armor, and were thus protected from the envenomed arrows of the Indians. All of the Spaniards who remained alive continued their flight to the ships, being so closely pursued by the savages for eight and forty hours, that they could not pause to take any refreshment. They arrived at their vessels very much exhausted by fatigue and hunger; and having put to sea with all possible expedition, they duly acknowledged their obligations to Heaven and to their patron saints, "for their providential deliverance from so great a peril."*

* Herrera, as above.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FUGITIVE SPANIARDS LAND AT BORRICA—A QUARREL BETWEEN DE SOTO AND THE ALCALDE ESPINOSO—DE SOTO CARRIES AN ACCOUNT OF THE SPANIARDS' DEFEAT TO GOVERNOR DE AVILA—HERMAN PONCE IS SENT TO PIZARRO'S ASSISTANCE—THE SPANISH FORCE ON THE ISTHMUS IS INCREASED BY THE ARRIVAL OF FRESH TROOPS—THE GOVERNOR HIMSELF PROCEEDS AGAINST URACCA—THE CACIQUE OUTGENERALS DE AVILA—DE SOTO SAVES THE LIFE OF THE ITALIAN ASTROLOGER, MICER CODRO—DISASTERS OF THE SPANISH TROOPS IN VERAGUA—MISREPRESENTATIONS OF SPANISH HISTORIANS. [A. D. 1524.]

THE two ships which bore Pizarro, Espinosa, and their surviving followers, away from the scene of their disastrous defeat, sailed along the coast until they arrived at a place called Borrica, opposite to the small island of St. Mary's. Here the Spaniards landed, supposing themselves to be safe from the pursuit of the victorious Uracca. Espinosa, whose conduct in the late battle had been far more discreet than heroic, now gave unmistakable evidence of his base character by sacking the Indian village at Borrica, the men of which were all absent. The women and children were made prisoners, and the robbers obtained some inconsiderable booty. Soon after the

accomplishment of this noble enterprise, the cacique of the village and a few of his warriors returned, and finding their wives and little ones in the possession of the Spaniards, they made humble supplications for their release. Espinosa turned a deaf ear to this request; but De Soto, (who was never remarkable for deference to his superior officers,) boldly declared that the prisoners should be set at liberty. Espinosa rebuked him with asperity for his unauthorized interference, promising him that his mutinous behavior should be reported to the governor as soon as they arrived at Panama. De Soto replied by charging Espinosa with cowardice and imbecility, and asserted that the late defeat of the Spaniards might be attributed to the incompetency of their commanding officers. Although Pizarro himself was implicated in this censure, he took no notice of De Soto's remark, but advised Espinosa to liberate the Indian women and children. This counsel was promptly rejected by Espinosa, the natural malignity of whose temper had not been mitigated in the least by De Soto's accusations and reproaches.

De Soto now called on his troopers to mount and put themselves in marching order. As soon as this was done, he placed himself at the head of his troop, and addressed himself to the alcalde, who had watched his movements with wonder and apprehension: "Signor Espinosa," said De Soto, "the governor did not place me under your command, and you have no claim to my obe-

dience.* I now give you notice, that if you retain these prisoners, so cruelly and unjustly captured, you must do so at your own risk. If these Indian warriors choose to make any attempt to recover their wives and children, I swear by all that I hold sacred, they shall meet with no opposition from me. Consider, therefore, whether you have the power to defend yourself and secure your prey when I and my company have withdrawn from this spot."

While this debate was in progress, the number of Indian men at the village had been increased by new arrivals to about one hundred. With the exception of the horsemen commanded by De Soto, the forlorn remnant of the Spaniards employed in this expedition did not amount to more than fifty men, who could be serviceable in a conflict with the Indians. Espinosa saw, therefore, that the threatened withdrawal of De Soto would place him in a hazardous position, as the savages would, no doubt, fight desperately for the deliverance of their families. Moved by these considerations, the *alcalde* very ungraciously consented to the discharge of the prisoners.

Pizarro now requested De Soto and one of his troop, named Peter Miguel, both admirable horsemen,† to ride, with all possible dispatch, to Panama, and request the governor to send new supplies of men, ammunition, and

* It will be remembered that De Soto was attached to the party commanded by Pizarro.

† Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, Dec. ii., Lib. vii., Cap. 3.

provisions; as it was very evident that the late success of Uracca would encourage the savages to prosecute the war more vigorously than ever. When De Soto arrived at Panama and made Governor de Avila acquainted with the unfortunate issue of the expedition against Uracca, Don Pedro was astounded by intelligence so calamitous and unexpected. It is probable that De Soto made an unfavorable report of Espinosa's military conduct, for De Avila sent Herman Ponce to take his place, and gave orders for Espinosa to return immediately to the settlements. Only forty men could be spared from the garrison at Panama, and the departure of these left the town almost defenseless. With this small reinforcement, Ponce and De Soto hastened to Borrica, where Pizarro and Espinosa still remained, in constant expectation of another attack by Uracca. In fact, this chief had already received information of their whereabouts, and had so hemmed them in with numerous detachments of his people placed at various points, that the Spanish soldiers could not stir abroad, even to procure a few herbs and roots for their subsistence. When De Soto returned to the encampment, he scoured all the neighboring country with his cavalry, driving away the small parties of Indians stationed at different places, and thus the blockade was broken up.

While on one of these excursions, it was De Soto's good fortune to save the life of a learned and distinguished man, named Micer Codro, whose history, as related by Oivedo, and others, is somewhat marvelous.

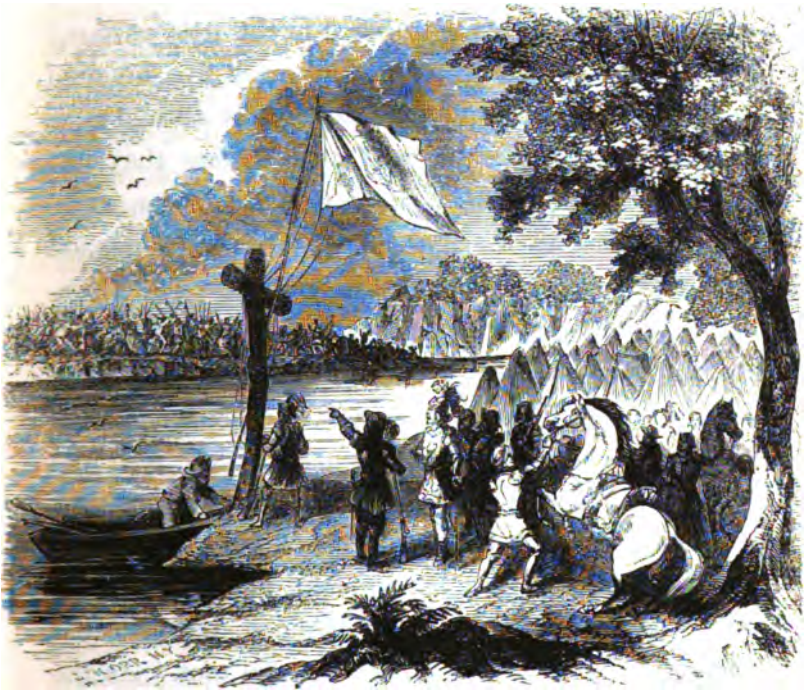
In that opaque age, when a little learning was, indeed, "a dangerous thing," this Codro obtained credit for more knowledge than could be safely possessed by any man living under the jurisdiction of the Holy Catholic Church. Finding, therefore, that his reputation as a man of science was becoming inconvenient and dangerous, he left Italy, the land of his nativity, and came to the New World, where he hoped to pursue his studies without molestation. Arriving at Panama, in the year 1513, he was patronized by Vasco Nuñez; and he is said to have predicted the time and manner of his patron's death with singular accuracy. After the execution of Nuñez, he remained with the Spaniards on the Isthmus, sometimes accompanying them on their military expeditions, his object being to collect the treasures of natural science and not to pillage an unoffending and defenseless people. Micer Codro practiced the mystic art of astrology; in the reality and lawfulness of which he may have been a sincere believer, for many learned and pious men of his day adhered to the same belief. The superstitious Spaniards, among whom he made his abode, placed much reliance on his prophetic intimations; and Governor de Avila himself, though he was less superstitious than his countrymen in general, often held consultations with the Italian seer before he engaged in any important enterprise. Micer Codro had accompanied the party of forty men, under the command of Herman Ponce, who had been sent by the governor to reinforce Pizarro. Soon after his arrival at

Borrica, the man of science began to examine the geological and botanical curiosities of the neighborhood; and, while his mind was absorbed in these studies, he wandered to a considerable distance from the camp. A party of Indians, mistaking him for one of their enemies, captured the unguarded philosopher, and they were about to put him to death, when De Soto and his horsemen, who were actively engaged (as we mentioned above) in driving the savages away from that vicinity, hastened to Codro's rescue—the Indians flying, as usual, at the sight of the horses. The deliverance of the astrologer proved, afterward, to be a very fortunate event for De Soto himself, as will be apparent in a subsequent part of this narrative.

While Governor de Avila waited with extreme anxiety for intelligence from his troops at Borrica, a Spanish ship arrived at Panama, bringing several companies of regular soldiers and a large number of adventurers, who were ready to perform military service for no other recompense than the opportunity to plunder. Meanwhile, that redoubtable mountaineer, Uracca—the William Tell of Veragua—had been reorganizing his forces, and preparing for the defense of his country with such admirable skill and excellent judgment, as proved his military talents to be of the highest order. The cacique fortified himself on the river Atra, at which point he determined to intercept the Spaniards, if they attempted to advance into the country.

As soon as the strength of the colonial army was

increased by the arrival of fresh troops, as mentioned above, the governor himself started for Borrica, with one hundred and fifty regular soldiers, and about an equal number of volunteers. He took with him also several small pieces of ordnance; and, as the Indians were not accustomed to these terrible instruments of destruction,



INDIANS DISPUTE THE PASSAGE OF THE RIVER.

he placed great reliance on their utility in battle. Having joined Pizarro, the governor endeavored to revive the martial ardor of his countrymen, by haranguing them on the ancient glories of the Spanish nation—not

forgetting to make a still more touching appeal, by reminding them that all their bravery was now required, not only to open a way for the acquisition of new spoils, but to retain those which they already possessed. He then gave notice that he was about to attack the enemy; and when the soldiers had said their prayers, and received absolution from the priests, (some of whom constantly attended the troops engaged in this holy warfare,) the whole Spanish force, numbering about five hundred men, advanced with animation, being fully assured of a glorious victory or a happy death. Before they had proceeded five miles, they encountered a detachment of Indians, consisting of about eight hundred warriors, and commanded by one of Uracca's brothers. The Spaniards charged impetuously, but were repulsed with great loss; and many of the volunteers, who had never been in battle before, fled from the scene of conflict, and were never heard of afterward. Doubtless they fell into the hands of other parties of Indians, and were all put to death. Such was the roughness of the ground, that the cavalry could not be brought into action. De Avila now had recourse to his cannon, satisfied that nothing else could save him from a total rout. As the governor had foreseen, a few discharges of the field-pieces broke the ranks of the Indians, and compelled them to retire. The Spaniards, however, did not venture to pursue the retreating enemy, being apprehensive of falling into an ambuscade. They rightly conjectured

that Uracca himself, with all his forces, was at no great distance.

For several days, the Spaniards and Indians continued in the same neighborhood; and while they were thus situated, the wily caciqué made use of a stratagem to entrap his opponents. He sent out a few Indians, who allowed themselves to be taken prisoners by the Spaniards. The latter, as Uracca expected, immediately began to inquire after gold; and their captives, having been properly instructed, directed them to a certain spot where, as these artful deceivers reported, the much-coveted metal might be found in great abundance. Although De Avila himself was an adept in the arts of deception, he allowed himself to be caught in this snare. One of his bravest captains, James de Albitez, with forty picked men, was sent to the spot designated by the Indian prisoners, to take possession of the treasure supposed to be there deposited. Here they were surrounded by the Indians, who had lain in ambush to await their arrival, and the whole party, except Albitez himself and two others, were slaughtered on the spot.* When the three survivors, whose extraordinary nimbleness enabled them to escape, returned, and gave the governor an account of their ill fortune, Don Pedro ordered the Indian captives, who gave the false intelligence, to be thrown to the dogs. They submitted to this barbarous punishment with admi-

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. ii., Lib. vii., Cap. 3.

rable fortitude, and while the beasts were tearing them to pieces, they continued, as long as they had the use of their vocal powers, to insult the Spaniards with bitter taunts and opprobrious epithets.



BLOODHOUNDS TEARING AN INDIAN TO PIECES.

After this, the Spaniards had several other skirmishes with the Indians, without any decided advantage on either side, if we may believe the reports of the Spanish writers. However, we may remark that the testimony, besides being all on one side, and coming from interested parties, is contradictory in itself and improbable. Herrera says that De Avila was unwilling to carry on the war against Uracca, because "he was afraid of incensing him the more." It is very strange, indeed, that this governor, who had been constantly employed, for more than ten years, in laying waste the country, and murder-

ing the inhabitants, should suddenly become aware that it was impolitic to excite the resentment of one Indian chief. We must consider, likewise, that Uracca's territory was almost universally believed to be more productive of gold than any other part of the continent; hence, it was supposed to be the "*Aurea Chersonesus*" of the Ancients. It was a grand object, therefore, with all of the Spaniards, to obtain possession of this portion of the country; and it was this object, no doubt, which induced De Avila to invade the Chief of Veragua's domain. With these facts in view, can we imagine that Governor de Avila retired from Uracca's country, without some cogent reasons for his withdrawal? Until we have some better explanation of the causes which led to this retrogressive movement, we must be allowed to believe that the governor was very badly beaten by Uracca, and that his longer stay in that region was impracticable.

CHAPTER V.

CONTINUED ALARM OF THE SPANISH SETTLERS AT PANAMA—
EXAMPLES OF INDIAN GENEROSITY AND SPANISH BARBARISM—
DONNA ISABELLA'S CONSTANCY—DON PEDRO BECOMES MORE
INCENSED AGAINST DE SOTO—DE SOTO'S DANGER—HE IS
VISITED BY MICEB CODRO, THE ASTROLOGER, WHO MAKES
A STARTLING DISCLOSURE—A PREDICTION AND A WARNING—
DE SOTO IS PREVENTED FROM HOLDING ANY CORRESPONDENCE
WITH ISABELLA—HIS TROUBLES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS.
[A. D. 1525-1527.]

DON PEDRO DE AVILA had removed his seat of government from Darien to Panama.

Having now abandoned all hope of a golden harvest in Veragua, the governor and his soldiers found sufficient occupation for awhile in defending their own settlement from the attacks of their Indian neighbors. It may be asked why the victorious cacique Uracca, did not follow up the advantage he had gained, by pursuing the Spaniards to their own quarters, and routing them out of Panama. Doubtless the inhabitants of this place expected such a catastrophe, for, according to Herrera, many of them were excessively alarmed. "When they looked out toward the mountains and plains," says the Spanish historian, "the boughs of trees and the very

grass which grew high in the savannahs, appeared to their excited imaginations to be armed Indians; and when they turned their eyes toward the sea, they fancied that it was covered with the canoes of their exasperated foemen.”*

All this nervous agitation, however, was superfluous, for the mountain chieftain appears to have treated the oppressors of his people with a generous forbearance. The war waged by him was strictly defensive; he contented himself with expelling the cruel spoilers from his own territory, and left the work of vengeance and punishment to be executed by Omnipotent Justice. Never did the Cacique of Veragua, as far as we can ascertain, make any aggressive movement against the Spaniards; and even while protecting his country from these depredators, he is said to have acted with singular moderation. He never murdered his prisoners or committed any other act of unnecessary severity; and, on one occasion, when a Spanish lady, Donna Clara Albitez, fell into his hands, he treated her with the greatest respect, and restored her to her friends at the first opportunity. It is humiliating to contrast this behavior of the pagan warrior with the execrable conduct of his civilized adversaries, who continually committed murders without any apparent purpose or provocation, slaughtering men, women, and helpless infants with indiscriminating ferocity; and if ever they spared the lives of their female captives, it was

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. ii., Lib. i., Cap. 1.

only to make them the victims of their licentious brutality. But the task we have undertaken will make it necessary for us to speak more at large on these subjects hereafter.

Not to lose sight of Ferdinand de Soto, let us now inquire on what terms he stood with the governor, Don Pedro de Avila. Doubtless our young cavalier supposed that his presumptuous love for Donna Isabella had been sufficiently punished by Don Pedro's disdainful repulse—the humiliation of which had put De Soto's proud spirit to the rack. But every feeling of resentment against De Avila had faded away, or was merged in the grateful remembrance of past benefits. To him Don Pedro had been a munificent patron—a circumstance which tallied well with the general conduct of that nobleman; for, in all matters of a pecuniary nature, he was generous to a degree which bordered on prodigality. His ostentatious liberality was, perhaps, the cause of many of those misdemeanors in office and moral delinquencies for which he is so generally condemned. He squandered on worthless men all the wealth of the plundered province; and he was never more bountiful than when he gave away that which he had no right to give. Like many other generous people, Don Pedro wished to have his liberality duly celebrated; and he exacted a great deal of deference and submissive obedience from those who had been the recipients of his bounty.

De Soto had greatly offended the governor by repeatedly refusing to execute his orders; but the greatest of-

fence of all was still unforgiven. Don Pedro ascribed the failure of one of his most ambitious projects to De Soto, who had surreptitiously, (as the Don pretended,) won the affections of Isabella, and thus caused her to reject an alliance with one of the most illustrious families of Spain. The expectation of Don Pedro, that a short absence would be sufficient to make his daughter sensible of her error, was not likely to be realized; for by letters just received from his family in Spain, De Avila learned that Isabella's predilection for her obscure lover was still unchanged. Don Pedro was, at all times, ready to sacrifice the lives of those who interfered with his plans, and he seldom wanted a pretense for consummating his murderous designs. He had put Vasco Nuñez to death in defiance of public opinion, and with the most daring perversion of law and justice, although Nuñez had rendered important services to his king and country, and enjoyed the favor and protection of several high dignitaries, civil and ecclesiastical. On the other hand, De Soto was at that period comparatively unknown—he had no powerful protectors, either in church or state; and by his willful disobedience he had made himself obnoxious to the military discipline of the Colonial Government. It is easy to conceive, therefore, that Don Pedro might have disposed of this object of his rancorous hatred with very little risk or trouble. He saw, however, that it was expedient for him to proceed with some caution in this matter. His sacrifice of Balboa had met with universal condemnation among the colonists; and he had some

reason to fear that the Spanish government would call him to an account for that most unjust and barbarous action. A sense of his own insecurity, therefore, restrained him, at that juncture, from any flagrant abuse of his power. Besides, as De Soto was one of the bravest men, and one of the best officers in the governor's employment, his services were almost indispensable at a time when the settlement was surrounded by danger. These various considerations may have disposed Don Pedro to give the young man an opportunity to die gloriously in the field of battle, instead of condemning him to perish ignominiously on the block.

It is not to be supposed that De Soto was fully aware of his danger; but, as he was always a man of very acute perceptions, he could not fail to discover that Don Pedro was not his friend. If there could be any doubt on that subject, he soon had satisfactory proof of the governor's secret hostility. About six months after the return of the Spaniards from their unfortunate expedition against Uracca, De Soto was surprised by a visit from the Italian sage, Micer Codro. This man had never expressed any gratitude for the service which De Soto had rendered him by saving his life, and indeed he had thus far appeared to be entirely forgetful of that occurrence. His motive for seeking this interview with De Soto appeared to be, not exactly a desire to give thanks, but to explain his reasons for not giving them. "A good action," said he, "deserves a better reward than verbal acknowledgments. While it was not in my







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power to make you a proper recompense, I did not attempt to offer you any; but the time has now arrived when I am enabled to give you some substantial evidence of my good-will. I come to inform you that your present position is scarcely less dangerous than mine was, before you rescued me from the hands of the Indians." De Soto replied: "My good friend, Micer Codro, although I do not profess to be a thorough believer in your prophetic art, I am no less thankful for your good intentions; and in this case, I am ready to confess that your information, no matter from whence it may be derived, is confirmed, in a measure, by my own observations." "Ferdinand de Soto," said the man of science with much solemnity, "I think I am able to read the page of *your* destiny, even without such light as the stars can shed upon it. Be assured that the warning I have given you does not come from an unearthly source; but if any extra-mundane confirmation of my words were necessary, even on that score you might be satisfied. While comparing your horoscope with that of my departed friend Vasco Nuñez, I have observed some resemblances in your lives and fortunes, which you, with all your incredulity, must acknowledge to be remarkable. Nuñez and you were both natives of the same town,* you were both members of noble but reduced families, both sought to ally yourselves with daughters of Pedro de Avila, and both

* Xeres, or Jeres de los Caballeros.

made yourselves liable to that man's deadly resentment." "These coincidences are indeed remarkable," answered De Soto; "but what other similarities do you find in the destinies of Balboa and myself?" "You are a brave man," replied Micer Codro, "and you are too skeptical to be much disturbed by the prognostications of evil; I may therefore venture to tell you that, according to my calculations, you will be, in one important event of your life, more happy than Vasco Nuñez, and in another more unfortunate. It seems to be indicated by the superior intelligences, that your death will not be in the ordinary course of nature; but I find likewise, that the term of your life will be equal to that of Balboa's;* and when I consider your present circumstances, this appears to me to be the most improbable part of the prediction."

"I am in the hands of God," said De Soto with manly firmness, "and I rely with humble confidence on his protection." "In that you do well," replied the philosopher; "but it is nevertheless your duty to use such human means as may be required to defend yourself against open violence or fraudulent malice." De Soto thanked the astrologer for his counsel, and promised to give it due consideration. Though he may have been too wise to concern himself much with the glimpses of futurity which the Italian had given him,

* Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, according to Oviedo, was forty-two years old at the time of his execution.

he would indeed have shown a want of sagacity if he had wholly disregarded Micer Codro's admonitions; for soothsayers of every class are apt to become conversant with strange secrets, because all who consult them must make them acquainted, more or less, with their plans and purposes, and the knowledge so obtained may enable the seers to give excellent advice. It is possible that Governor de Avila himself had held some consultations with Micer Codro, and this supposition will account for Codro's knowledge of the governor's mischievous designs.

De Soto, being now forewarned, and thus forearmed, was enabled to avoid many snares which his powerful enemy placed in his path. As time passed away, Don Pedro became more and more impatient for revenge, and gradually threw aside that dissimulation which had formerly veiled his purposes. He effectually cut off all communication between Isabella and De Soto; all their letters were intercepted; and, for the space of five years, no token of remembrance could be transmitted from one to the other.

De Soto had been bitterly disappointed in his expectation of acquiring wealth in America; for his feelings and his principles made it impossible for him to use the only means by which gold-seeking adventurers on the isthmus could be successful. Before he engaged in this enterprise, he had no conception of the shameful and criminal process by which many of his countrymen had enriched themselves on the Western Continent. Per-

haps he had listened too credulously to the fanciful stories of travelers who asserted that huge masses of the precious metals were strewn over the fields of "Castillo del Oro," and that every stream and lake of that paradisiacal region was enclosed in margins of pulverized gold, interspersed with pearls and gems of unimaginable value. Such were the extravagant tales which allured many Europeans to that land of deceitful promise, where thousands were doomed to be disappointed, and where those who were most fortunate in the gratification of their avaricious desires, seldom derived any permanent benefit from their acquisitions; for in most cases they lived miserably and died unlamented. This great moral lesson will be fully exemplified in the course of our following narrative.

CHAPTER VI.

PIZARRO, ALMAGRO, AND DE LUQUE PREPARE FOR THE INVASION OF PERU—DE SOTO REFUSES TO JOIN THEIR COMPANY—PIZARRO LEAVES PANAMA IN A SHIP WITH ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY MEN—HE MAKES UNPROVOKED ATTACKS ON THE INDIAN TOWNS—HE IS BEATEN, AND COMPELLED TO TURN BACK—ALMAGRO EMBARKS WITH MORE MEN, AND FOLLOWS AFTER PIZARRO—HE MEETS WITH UNEXPECTED DISASTERS, AND RETURNS TO CHUCAMA—GOVERNOR DE AVILA LOSES HIS OFFICE DE SOTO WRITES TO ISABELLA—HIS LETTER. [A. D. 1526.]

FRANCISCO PIZARRO, whose name has already appeared in our narrative, and who will figure to some extent on our subsequent pages, was a man of obscure birth and very defective education.* He learned the art of war in some very bad schools, having taken his first lessons from the fanatical Ojeda, and being afterward matriculated in the military college of Don Pedro de Avila. In the year 1524, he obtained permission from Don Pedro to continue the explorations which had been commenced by Balboa on the coast of the Pacific Ocean. Pizarro chose for his companions in this enterprise Diego Almagro, who is described by Herrera as "a man

* Gomara, *Hist. de las Ind.*, Cap. 144.

of courage, experience and wealth," and Ferdinand de Luque, a schoolmaster of Darien. This auspicious conjunction of learning and valor was almost the only favorable omen that attended the commencement of the undertaking. Two of the triumvirate which conducted the expedition were, at that time, men of little note, and they had never given any proof of uncommon abilities. They were, besides, very illiterate persons, base-born,* and not remarkable for the rectitude of their moral deportment. All these circumstances tended to throw some discredit or ridicule on the enterprise; and, for a long time, very few people, besides the adventurers themselves, appear to have had any expectation of success.

De Soto's courage and military talents were held in the highest estimation by Pizarro, who often solicited our captain of cavalry to become one of his party. It is probable, however, that De Soto disliked, and, in some measure, despised the commanders of the expedition; for he cavalierly refused to place himself under their direction. It may be suspected that the display of Pizarro's soldiery in Veragua, of which De Soto was an eye-witness, was less admirable, in fact, than it appears to be to our eminent historian, Mr. Prescott.† However this may be, it is a well ascertained fact, that De Soto's beha-

* Pizarro and Almagro were both illegitimate. *Vide* Gomara, *Hist. de las Ind.*, Cap. 141-144.

† *Vide* "Conquest of Peru," Book ii., Chap. ii.

rior to Pizarro was often disrespectful in a very high degree; and this significant circumstance became still more remarkable, at the time when Pizarro commanded in Peru, and De Soto was his subordinate officer. Our inference is, that the character of Pizarro was better understood by his cotemporary De Soto, than it has been by many historians, and a majority of the public.*

The exploring expedition, commanded as aforesaid, and comprising about one hundred and thirty men, started from Panama on the fourteenth day of November, 1524.† The men were embarked in one small ship, of which Pizarro took the command. Almagro remained behind, intending to follow in another vessel, as soon as it could be made ready for service. The horrors of this voyage, and the sufferings of the adventurers, are manifestly exaggerated by the narrators; but it is likely that the explorers met with some considerable hardships, and were exposed to a variety of dangers; the latter being very often the natural consequences of their own violent and predatory habits. When they landed to seek provisions, instead of appealing to the kindness and hospitality of the Indians, they obeyed their constitutional instincts, by proceeding to acts of outrage, robbery, and bloodshed. Hence the

* We understand Herrera to express a suspicion of Pizarro's cowardice: *Hist. Gen.*, Dec. v., Lib. vii., Cap. 13.

† Report to the Emperor, by Francisco de Xeres, Pizarro's secretary.

natives failed to recognize them as the missionaries of a peaceful and beneficent religion, or the accredited agents of a mighty sovereign beyond the sea, whose earnest desire it was to improve the moral, intellectual, social and political condition of the American tribes. With a pardonable misapprehension of the grand and glorious objects which brought the Spaniards into their country, the inhabitants of the villages, who had seen their dwellings pillaged, their wives violated, and their children murdered, gathered themselves together, pursued the "gallant band of explorers," who were now on the retreat, and fell upon them with such bravery and effect, that five of the Spaniards were left dead on the field, seventeen others were badly wounded, and Captain Pizarro himself was struck down, and his comrades, when they dragged him off, supposed him to be slain. It was found, afterward, that the captain had received seven wounds, some of them dangerous; but he had reason to congratulate himself on his escape with life, which could not have happened if his men had been less expeditious in removing him from the scene of conflict. Having fled precipitately to their vessel, the Spaniards set sail, and returned with their insensible commander to a place called Chucama, a short distance west of Panama, where Pizarro remained for some time, in a very feeble condition of body, and not a little disturbed in mind, by the apprehension of a speedy death.*

* We have taken this account of Pizarro's defeat by the Indians

But contrary to general expectation, however, his wounds were soon cured.

In the meanwhile his associate, Almagro, having manned a small caravel with some of the vilest population of Panama, steered westwardly along the coast, with the expectation of overtaking Pizarro. But having no knowledge or suspicion of Pizarro's late defeat, he unconsciously passed Chucama, where the disabled commander was still lying, surrounded by his distressed and almost despairing companions. A previous understanding between the leaders of the expedition, enabled Almagro to ascertain the route which his colleague had taken, by certain marks which Pizarro had left on the trees. Thus directed, Almagro arrived at the scene of Pizarro's disaster, being still unconscious of that deplorable event.* Here Almagro landed with his "brave associates," comprising, as we have said, some of the basest rabble of Panama; and perceiving an Indian

from the official report of Ferdinand de Xeres, made to the King of Spain. This Xeres was Pizarro's own secretary; we may suppose, therefore, that he had a perfect knowledge of the facts which he relates, and his statement is unquestionably true. We find, however, that Mr. Prescott tells the story so as to make it appear that Pizarro behaved with dauntless bravery in this skirmish, and came out of it victorious and unhurt.—*Vide* "Conquest of Peru," Book ii., Chap. 2.

* The secretary Xeres says, "Almagro arrived at the place where Pizarro was *beaten*." How does Mr. Prescott reconcile this phraseology with his own glowing description of his hero's bravery, prowess, and success.

village at a short distance from the beach, the whole party went "like lambs to the slaughter," expecting to indulge themselves in their customary recreation. But instead of plunder and unprotected beauty, they found a large body of armed warriors waiting to receive them. As it was impossible to retreat without doing battle with the Indians, the Spaniards fought for awhile with the desperation of men who have no other choice than to fight or perish. During the conflict, some of Almagro's ruffians contrived to set fire to the houses of the Indians, and the town was burnt. But the natives, notwithstanding the inferiority of their weapons, quickly obtained the mastery over their assailants, and two-thirds of the latter were either killed on the spot or mortally wounded. The remainder, among whom was Almagro himself, succeeded in escaping to the caravel, being closely pursued by the Indians. In this battle, Almagro received some severe wounds in the head and lost one of his eyes. He and his party appeared to be so well satisfied with this taste of glorious war, that they set out immediately on their return to Panama. While on their way to the last-named place, they discovered the whereabouts of Pizarro; and the two afflicted leaders of the expedition met together to compare notes and devise plans for their future operations.

Such was the unpromising commencement of an enterprise, the results of which filled the whole civilized world with astonishment, and produced a lasting effect

on the destinies of mankind and the condition of human society in both hemispheres.

As some of the most important actions of Ferdinand de Soto's life are associated in history with the conquest of Peru, we consider it expedient to give some account of that great event from its inception to its consummation. We will now leave Pizarro and Almagro, the wretched instruments, who, by a strange fatality, were made to take so large a part in that stupendous work of doubtful utility, the overthrow of the Peruvian Empire. In due time we shall return and give a further account of their progress.

Soon after the departure of the exploring expedition, Governor de Avila began to consider the expediency of removing from Panama to Nicaragua. He had sundry reasons, and some very strong ones, for this change of location. That most excellent man, Bartholomew de Las Casas, had reported Don Pedro's iniquitous conduct to the Spanish government, and the king, without formally deposing De Avila, had appointed Peter de Los Rios to succeed him. Such was the mode of proceeding usually adopted when a change was to be made in the government of a province. Don Pedro knew that De Los Rios would call him to an account for his maladministration; and being unwilling to stand the trial, he considered it better to withdraw before the arrival of his successor. It was doubtless a great affliction to him to leave that important station which he had so long occupied. His regret may have been increased by the consideration that if there

were really another El Dorado on the shore of the Pacific, as Vasco Nuñez had supposed, Panama would become the gate through which that auriferous region must be approached. However, the reasons for his departure were too urgent to admit of much deliberation; and, having occasionally cast a covetous glance at the flourishing settlements of Leon and New Granada, he was not long in reconciling himself to the necessary change. With the design of making himself as secure as possible, Don Pedro resolved to send a messenger to Spain with letters to his friends, among whom were several ecclesiastics of high rank, and other persons of great influence, all of whom were requested to intercede with the king in De Avila's behalf. On looking around for a trustworthy person to convey these dispatches, Don Pedro fixed on Micer Codro as the most eligible. This choice will appear less remarkable when we consider that all of De Avila's favorites were men of the most profligate character, and not one of them could be safely employed in an affair which required the services of a discreet and faithful agent.

Micer Codro and De Soto continued to be on the most friendly terms; and the philosopher, when he had accepted Don Pedro's mission, reflected that it was now in his power to perform a kind action for the cavalier to whom he owed the preservation of his life. He had acquired a perfect knowledge of De Soto's troubles and difficulties; and he was well aware of the insurmountable obstacles which De Avila had placed in the way of all

epistolary correspondence between De Soto and Isabella. The governor had made arrangements for the conveyance of letters to and from the settlement, in such a way as to have the whole of this business under his own supervision; and the severest penalties were denounced against all persons who attempted to send or convey any writing across the sea, except by the regular mails. The consequence of this regulation was, that no written communication could take place between Spain and Panama without the governor's approbation.

Regardless of all risks, however, Micer Codro proposed to carry a letter for De Soto, and to deliver it with his own hand. When this proposition was first made, De Soto was disposed to embrace it with rapture; but when he considered the hazards which the messenger must incur, he could not easily be persuaded to accept the generous offer. However, the arguments and entreaties of Micer Codro overcame his scruples. The subjoined letter was then prepared and committed to the care of the friendly astrologer.

We hope our readers, who may feel but little interested in matters of this kind, will consider that a love epistle composed more than three centuries ago, is worthy of some attention on the score of its antiquity alone; and this is the best apology we can offer for inserting it in this volume.

DE SOTO'S LETTER TO ISABELLA BOVADILLA.

"MOST DEARLY BELOVED ISABELLA.—For the first

time within the space of five years, I write to you with some assurance that my letter will reach your hands. Many times have I written before, but how could I give expression to my thoughts when I had too much reason to fear that other eyes than yours might behold those fond utterances which your heavenly goodness and condescension alone could pardon. But what reason have I to hope that even your gracious condescension can still look with favorable regard on my unworthiness? My matured judgment teaches me that this hope of my youth, which I so long have dared to cherish, is not presumption merely, but madness. When I consider your many perfections, and compare them with my own little deserving, I feel that I ought to despair, if I could pour out the treasures of a thousand kingdoms at your feet. How then can I lift my eyes to you when I have nothing to offer but the tribute of an affection which time cannot change, and which must still live when my last hope has departed? Oh Isabella, the expectation which brought me to this land has not been fulfilled! I can gather no gold except by such means as my honor, my conscience, and you yourself must condemn. Though your nobleness may pity one on whom Fortune has disdained to smile, I feel that your relations are justified in claiming for you an alliance with exalted rank and affluence, and I love you far too well to regard my own happiness more than your welfare. If, therefore, in your extreme youth, you have made a promise which you now regret,

as far as it is in my power to absolve you from that engagement, you are released. On my side, the obligation is sacred and eternal. It is not likely that I shall ever return to my country; and while I am banished from your presence, all countries are alike to me. The person who brings you this, exposes himself to great danger in his desire to serve me; I entreat you to use such precautions as his safety may require. If your goodness should vouchsafe any message to me, he will deliver it, and you may have perfect confidence in his fidelity. Pardon my boldness in supposing it possible that I still have a place in your remembrance; and, although you may now think of me only with indifference or dislike, do not censure me too severely for calling myself unchangeably and devotedly yours,

DE SOTO.*

Supposing this missive to be genuine, we find in it some evidence to convict De Soto of that idolatry of woman which was one peculiarity of the chivalrous temperament. He was, in fact, a knight of the "Old School," and his conduct often exhibited some of the follies, as well as many of the virtues of ancient chivalry.

* We cannot vouch for the authenticity of this letter, the original manuscript copy of which is said to be in the cabinet of a Spanish gentleman, who has spent half his lifetime in collecting the literary curiosities of his country.

CHAPTER VII.

DE SOTO AND FRANCISCO HERNANDEZ ARE SENT TO EXPLORE NICARAGUA—HERNANDEZ UNDERTAKES TO CONVERT THE INDIANS—GILES GONZALEZ ENGAGES IN THE SAME DUTY—HOW THE NATIVES WERE CONVERTED—NEARLY FORTY THOUSAND INDIANS ARE BAPTIZED—HERNANDEZ AND GONZALEZ—EACH CLAIMS AN EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO CHRISTIANIZE THEM—EACH HAS A PARTICULAR WAY OF DOING IT—DE SOTO MARCHES AGAINST GONZALEZ—A BATTLE—TREACHERY OF GONZALEZ—DE SOTO'S NARROW ESCAPE—BACKSLIDING AMONG THE NEW CONVERTS. [A. D. 1527.]

It has been said that Pedro de Avila, with a prudent desire to avoid an interview with his successor, Pedro de Los Rios, resolved on transferring himself to Nicaragua. We will now explain on what grounds he claimed the government of that province, which had previously been wrested from the Indians by a fanatical adventurer called Giles Gonzalez. While this Gonzalez was wandering about in search of an imaginary strait, which was supposed to connect the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, near the southern extremity of Mexico, Governor de Avila sent Francis Hernandez de Cordova and Ferdinand de Soto to take possession of that part of Nicaragua which lies nearest to the lake of the same name.

Hernandez, being a very devout man, took several priests with him; and these holy men labored zealously for the conversion of the Indians. We are informed that they wrought several miracles, which practical arguments had such a good effect, that the people came to be baptized in such vast numbers, that the priests were scarcely able to attend to them.* Hernandez transmitted a full account of this evangelical success to Governor de Avila, who was doubtless surprised, if not delighted, to find that the Indians could be converted by such pacific measures.

Meanwhile, Giles Gonzalez, whose proselyting zeal was equal at least to that of Francisco Hernandez, returned to the province, and was chagrined to find that the exclusive right, which he claimed to the possession of the territory and the conversion of the Indians, had been usurped by others. We may suppose that the natives of this district were qualified by some natural instinct, or by some extraordinary powers of intellect, to comprehend the mysteries of the Holy Catholic faith with singular facility; for it appears that the missionary labors of Hernandez and Gonzalez both were attended with almost unparalleled success. The mode of indoctrination used by Gonzalez was sufficiently unique to deserve some particular notice. When he first visited this part of the country, having one hundred Spaniards under his command, he came to the

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iii., Lib. ii., Cap. 3.

dominions of Nicaragua, a powerful cacique, from whom the province derived its name. Gonzalez sent a messenger to inform the cacique that he was coming to be his friend, to instruct him in the only true religion, and to persuade him to submit to the greatest monarch on earth. "If you refuse to hear reason and religious instruction," said Gonzalez, "you must prepare for battle, and I challenge you to meet me in the field."

The chief Nicaragua, it appears, had listened to some terrific stories concerning the achievements of the Spaniards, the sharpness of their swords, and the ferocity of their horses—each of which, according to the common report, could swallow an Indian at a mouthful; and being much dismayed at the prospect of a collision with these formidable strangers, he replied to Gonzalez, that he was ready to embrace any creed which his Spanish brother might recommend for his adoption. As an evidence of his sincerity, he sent Gonzalez a peace-offering, consisting of a quantity of gold, equal in value to seventy-five thousand dollars of the present currency of the United States.* Gonzalez was charmed with Nicaragua's docility, and with the solid proofs he had given of his pious inclinations; and, in order to prove that Christians could be liberal as well infidels, he sent the chief a linen shirt, a loose silk coat, and some Spanish toys, which Nicaragua seemed to consider as a

* *Vide* Herrera, Hist. Ind. Dec. iii., Lib. i, Cap. 4.

fair equivalent for his barbaric treasures.* When Gonzalez arrived at Nicaragua's village, he, with the assistance of a priest who accompanied him, commenced the work of instruction, showing the cacique the unreasonableness of idolatry, exhorting him to forsake the vices of heathenism, and to imitate the virtuous examples of his European instructors! The Spanish historian says: "Nicaragua approved of the Christian religion, and so did his family and nine thousand of his subjects." After receiving the baptismal sacrament, the cacique asked many astute questions, of which the following are given as examples:—"Have the Christians any knowledge of the flood which drowned the world, and will there be another?" "What is the size of the stars, and how are they kept in their places?" "Where do the souls of men go, and what do they do when parted from their bodies?" "Will the Pope ever die? and is the King of Spain subject to diseases and death, like other men?" "Why are the Spaniards so covetous of gold, seeing that they have so many greater blessings, such as a perfect knowledge of the true God, the privilege of conversing with the departed spirits of good men, and the certainty of everlasting happiness?"

Though several of these questions might puzzle a theological college, we are told that Gonzalez answered them all "with so much wisdom and discretion," that the chief was well satisfied. Turning to one of his

* 2 Herrera, *ubi supra*.

privy councilors, he said in a theatrical whisper: "Did not these men really fall down from heaven?"

Stimulated by his success with Nicaragua, Gonzalez continued to disseminate the truths of the Gospel, (as he understood them,) with inextinguishable zeal and untiring activity. A field so well cultivated could scarcely fail to produce a luxuriant harvest. Such was the efficacy of the means made use of by Gonzalez to reclaim these Pagan outcasts, that no less than thirty-two thousand two hundred and sixty-four of them were baptized within the space of six months. And, to prove that good actions sometimes meet with their reward, even in this life, we may add that the initiation fees charged by Gonzalez for the admission of his Indian converts into the pale of the church, amounted to the gross sum of \$400,000.*

When Gonzalez returned from his expedition to the North, he resumed his efforts to improve the moral and religious condition of the natives; but he soon learned, with great dissatisfaction, that Francisco Hernandez was engaged in similar labors, in another part of the province. It must be understood, however, that the measures used by Hernandez differed widely, in some respects, from those of his competitor. Instead of enforcing his doctrines with the sword, like Gonzalez,

* A fair allowance is here made for the depreciation of the Spanish money. See the Appendix to Irving's "Columbus and his Companions:" Article xviii.

he resorted to the milder influences of moral suasion, and to the powerful, though not violent, workings of miraculous demonstrations. We are merely advised that some of the priests who attended on Hernandez performed a variety of wonderful works, sufficient to convince the Indians that they possessed supra-mundane powers; but we have no specific account of the character of these preternatural operations. It is sufficient to know that their effect on the beholders was overwhelming, compelling thousands to believe, in spite of all their preconceptions and inclinations to the contrary.

In the midst of these evangelical occupations, Hernandez heard that some other Spaniards had made a settlement in the province, and were laboring for the conversion of the Indians without any license from the proper authorities. He was no less offended at the prospect of rivalry in these duties than Gonzalez had been before; and, as he had been duly authorized by Governor de Avila to explore the country and to take possession thereof in the king's name, he considered the interference of Gonzalez as a treasonable movement, which should be immediately checked. Being absorbed, however, in his spiritual avocations, he requested his colleague, De Soto, to find out Gonzalez, and obtain a clear understanding of his purposes. De Soto, with a party of about fifty men, soon came to Torebo, near the spot where Gonzalez was stationed. Here, as he lay quartered on a very dark night, Gonzalez, with a

superior force, fell upon him, crying "Kill the traitors!" De Soto drew out his men promptly and with admirable intrepidity, keeping his party in close order and waiting for the assault. The dense obscurity of the night made it almost impossible to distinguish friends from enemies; so that the troops of Gonzalez, in their ill-managed attack, got into confusion, and many were slaughtered by the hands of their own comrades. With De Soto there were about twenty horsemen; being a part of his own cavalry troop, all of them brave young men and well disciplined. As soon as these were brought into action, many of the assailing party were cut down by the swords of the troopers, and others were trampled under the feet of the horses. Gonzalez perceiving that his opponent was a brave and skillful officer, and that he himself would certainly lose the battle, obtained a cessation of hostilities by exclaiming, "Peace, captain! I charge you in the king's name, peace!" De Soto, supposing that his adversaries were ready to surrender, called on them to lay down their arms, and promised to give them quarter. The crafty Gonzalez prolonged the parley, in order to give time for the arrival of a reinforcement which he expected. When questioned by De Soto concerning his intentions in thus taking up arms against the authority of the king and his legal representatives, Gonzalez answered, with much apparent meekness, that he had been serving the King and the Church in the most effectual manner, by giving the former about forty thousand new subjects, and the latter as many new converts.

During this conversation, the reserved corps which Gonzalez expected, and which consisted of about fifty Spaniards and two hundred Indians, silently approached the scene of the late contest. De Soto soon discovered that he was surrounded by enemies; and Gonzalez, again raising the cry of "St. Giles! Down with the traitors!" urged his men to the attack. The assailants now outnumbered De Soto's party in the ratio of six to one, and they pressed in so closely on the horsemen, that the movements of the latter were much embarrassed. Some of the opposing party seized the horses's bridles and drew down the heads of the animals, hoping thus to dismount the riders. But these hazardous attempts were generally unsuccessful, and the swords of the cavaliers soon opened a clear passage through the crowded ranks of the enemy. All of the horsemen thus made good their retreat; but all the foot soldiers who accompanied De Soto, being about thirty in number, were made prisoners. Among these men were several who had served under some of Governor de Avila's thievish captains, Juan de Ayora, Francisco Pizarro, Gaspar de Morales, and others; and these had at different times acquired a considerable amount of gold, which for safe keeping, they carried with their baggage. All this booty, valued at one hundred and thirty thousand pieces-of-eight, now fell into the hands of Gonzalez.*

De Soto remained not very far from the field of battle, and sent to Hernandez for more men; for he burned with an impatient desire to punish Gonzalez for his dishonorable and treacherous conduct in the late skirmish. But Hernandez had received intelligence that the party of Gonzalez had been strengthened by many new recruits, (deserters from the Spanish army in Mexico), and that he had organized a large body of Indians for the special purpose of driving Hernandez and De Soto out of that territory. Hernandez was apprehensive of an attack from his warlike rival, and besought De Soto to hasten to the new town called Granada, which Hernandez himself had founded, and for the defense of which he now required De Soto's assistance. Consistently with his devotional proclivities, Hernandez commenced the establishment of this town by erecting a church of respectable dimensions, surrounded by several small dwellings for the accommodation of himself and the priests and friars who belonged to his company. When De Soto arrived, he made several temporal improvements, the necessity of which had been overlooked by his spiritual-minded colleague. He erected a building to serve as barracks for the soldiers, and surrounded the village with a trench and embankment, to secure it against any sudden assault. Being very much dissatisfied with the result of his late encounter with Gonzalez, he waited with feverish impatience for the approach of that worthy apostle of the church militant. But Gonzalez, who had lost more than fifty of his best men in the

battle of Torebo, had no wish to cultivate any further acquaintance with De Soto; he therefore retired to a distant part of the province, and applied himself more assiduously than ever to the spiritual illumination of the benighted inhabitants. His astonishing success in this great work was communicated to Hernandez, whose labors in the same good cause were almost equally prosperous, though (in a pecuniary sense) much less profitable. The spirit of emulation was aroused, and it became, as it generally does, an impulse to increased activity on both sides. The comparative merits of the two opposite plans made use of by Hernandez and Gonzalez for the moral and religious reformation of the people, seemed now likely to be brought to the test of a fair experiment; and we regret to say that, in this sacred enterprise, the sword appeared to be more efficacious than the missal, though the latter was supported by miraculous demonstrations. We are assured that Gonzalez, with his coercive measures, made more proselytes than Hernandez did with his super-terrestrial evidences. But it is proper to add, that not a few of the converts of Gonzalez fell into errors of practice, which the discipline of the Church could not tolerate, and which seemed to prove that their regeneration was not quite complete. We are told, for example, that some of them carried off a fat priest and two or three other Spaniards, for the purpose of eating them;* but, after a long chase, the prisoners were re-

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iii., Lib. i., Cap. 4

covered, and the Indians who had attempted this sacrilegious abduction, were brought before Gonzalez, in whose presence they acknowledged the impropriety of their conduct, and exhibited signs of sincere penitence. The Spanish commander was generous enough to make allowances for their limited opportunities to learn all the requirements of their new faith; and having compelled them to give up all their golden ornaments to atone for their fault, he dismissed them with an admonition to be more circumspect in their future conduct.



SPANIARDS SHOOTING INDIANS.

CHAPTER VIII.

DE SOTO COMES TO AN OPEN RUPTURE WITH PEDRO DE AVILA — HE RECEIVES A LETTER FROM DONNA ISABELLA — DE AVILA DISCOVERS THE CORRESPONDENCE — DON PEDRO AND HIS RETINUE START FOR NICARAGUA—THEY ARRIVE AT LEON—DE AVILA'S INTERVIEW WITH FRANCISCO HERNANDEZ—TRAGIC INCIDENT—DE SOTO IS CONDEMNED TO LOSE HIS HEAD—HE DEFIES THE POWER OF GOVERNOR DE AVILA, AND RETIRES FROM HIS SERVICE. [A. D. 1526.]

DE SOTO remained in Nicaragua until he had placed Francisco Hernandez in secure and undisputed possession of the province. Gonzalez was no longer in a condition to urge his prior claims to the territory; for he was now a fugitive from justice, having assassinated an officer sent by Hernado Cortez to arrest him. Under the mild rule of Hernandez and his ecclesiastical advisers, the new colony of Nicaragua began to flourish, and the towns of Leon and Granada increased rapidly in population. The whole region was a paradise, compared with the sterile and pestilential district in the immediate neighborhood of the Isthmus; and many of the inhabitants of Panama, and other towns in that quarter, hastened to improve their condition, by removing to the Nicaraguan settlements. When De Soto returned to

Panama, to give the governor an account of his proceedings, he found De Avila making active preparations to leave that town; and he learned, with regret, that Nicaragua had been selected by Don Pedro as the place of his future abode. He knew that the presence of this tyrannical governor and his rapacious minions would have a blighting effect on the prospects of the new colony. He considered likewise that Francisco Hernandez, an excellent magistrate and a most estimable man, must be displaced from his office of lieutenant-governor, to make room for his unworthy principal. These reflections overshadowed De Soto's mind, and cast a corresponding gloom on his countenance, when De Avila ordered him to be in readiness for the proposed emigration. That habitual scowl which reposed on the features of De Avila, and which, for several years past, had appeared to be intensified when he held any communication with De Soto, now seemed, to the observation of our cavalier, to be relieved by a smile of mysterious import. It was indeed a smile of triumphant malignity; the same smile with which, from his place of concealment, De Avila beheld the execution of Vasco Nuñez. De Soto knew enough of Don Pedro's character and habits, to be aware that when *he* smiled, the sign was portentous, revealing not only an evil purpose, but the certainty of its accomplishment.

Observing that the countenance of De Soto wore an expression of discontent, Don Pedro said, with an air of deference—the mockery of which did not escape

De Soto's notice—"I judge, captain, that my Nicaraguan enterprise does not meet with your cordial approbation." "Governor de Avila," answered De Soto, in a tone that was scarcely respectful, "I confess that I feel but little interested in your movements or your intentions, except when they tend to encroach on the rights of others. Nicaragua is, at this time, well-governed by Francisco Hernandez; and the change you propose to make is to be deprecated, as one of the greatest misfortunes that could befall, not only the Indian inhabitants of that district, but our own countrymen likewise, who have flocked thither to escape from your jurisdiction." When De Soto had finished this somewhat audacious speech, Don Pedro's lowering aspect, for a few moments, threatened an outburst of tempestuous rage; but to these appearances soon succeeded a sedate expression of malevolence, lighted up by that ominous smile, the whole meaning of which De Soto was soon enabled to interpret. "I thank you," said De Avila, "for giving me this opportunity, which I have so long desired. Were I to permit such insolence to go unpunished, my authority in this colony would soon be at an end." "It is at an end, Count Puñez," answered De Soto, addressing Don Pedro by his hereditary title; "you must be aware that your successor, De Los Rios, is now on his way to America." "I do not choose to debate this matter with you," replied De Avila; "but I still claim the right to command you, as your superior military officer; and I now

order you to hold yourself and your company in readiness for travel. When we arrive at Leon, I promise you that full justice shall be done both to your friend Hernandez and to yourself."

This equivocal promise was more intelligible to De Soto than Don Pedro suspected. That the popularity of Hernandez and his prosperous administration of governmental affairs, had excited some feelings of jealousy and dislike in the bosom of De Avila, could not be a matter of doubt; and besides, it was known to De Soto that Hernandez had, on several occasions, given De Avila great offense, especially by punishing certain malefactors who had claims on Don Pedro's favor and protection. In view of these circumstances, De Soto resolved to write to Hernandez and advise him to be on his guard. Accordingly, a letter was written and sent by the hands of a Dominican friar; but Hernandez, relying on the integrity of his own purposes, and the many good works he had performed in the province, slighted the friendly warning of De Soto, and wrote back, in a playful mood, to inquire when the hero of Torebo first began to grow timorous.

The Spanish settlers in Nicaragua, understanding that Pedro de Avila was about to take the government into his own hands, earnestly besought Hernandez to withstand the tyrant and assert his own independent authority, promising to support him with all the means in their power. But Hernandez promptly and decisively refused these overtures, saying that his authority had

been derived from Governor de Avila, to whom he was responsible for all his official conduct, and who had an unquestionable right to be obeyed in all things connected with the government. We shall soon see how this faithful and conscientious delegate was rewarded.

A short time before De Avila and his suite started for Nicaragua, Micer Codro returned from his European mission. He bore several dispatches for the governor and one letter for De Soto, to whom it was delivered with as much circumspection as the case required. But the event proved that a philosopher, when employed in "the offices and affairs of love," may be more indiscreet than a chambermaid. With that simplicity which is often a characteristic of the highest order of intellect, Micer Codro, while he obeyed the injunctions of De Soto by delivering the letter privately to Isabella's own hands, forgot that his visit to Don Pedro's castle, and his declaration that he had a secret message for the young lady, might lead to inquiries and excite suspicion. It happened, unfortunately for the sage, that a servant who was then employed at De Avila's family mansion, had been in America, where he had often seen the Italian astrologer, whom he now recognized; and by this man an account of Micer Codro's mysterious visit was communicated to the steward who had charge of De Avila's Spanish estates. The steward mentioned this incident in a letter to Don Pedro; and it so happened that the same ship which brought Micer Codro back to Panama, brought likewise an account of his furtive interview

with Donna Isabella. Don Pedro knew that there was but one person at Panama who would be likely to send a secret message to his daughter. Convinced, therefore, that Micer Codro had clandestinely conveyed a letter from De Soto to Isabella, the wrathful governor determined to punish the messenger with a rigor proportioned to the magnitude of his offense.

In the meanwhile, De Soto, with as much anxious trepidation as the nature of the case required, had made himself acquainted with the contents of Isabella's billet, with reference to which we have no intelligence, except that it gave De Soto an assurance of the writer's constancy. This information, we are told, was "exceedingly comfortable to De Soto;" and few things asserted by the historians of the times are more probable.

About the beginning of the year 1526,* Don Pedro de Avila left Panama, and set out with a large retinue to take possession of the government of Nicaragua, to which, as yet, he had no legitimate title. He was accompanied by nearly all the soldiers who had been stationed on the Isthmus, the larger number of whom preferred his service to any other, because he gave them an unrestricted license to oppress, rob, and murder the natives of the country. With Ferdinand de Soto the case was different; some lingering feeling of gratitude still attached him to the fortunes of his early patron; and it is not unlikely that when he took into considera-

* Quintana. Life of Pizarro.

tion the close relationship of Don Pedro to Isabella, he became reconciled to a condition that was, otherwise, sufficiently irksome. Perhaps, he might have said with his namesake, who did penance on the enchanted isle of Prospero:

"This, my mean task, would be
As heavy to me as 'tis odious, but
The mistress whom I serve quickens what's dead,
And makes my labors pleasures."*

When Don Pedro drew near to the town of Leon, he sent a horseman before him to give his lieutenant, Francisco Hernandez, notice of his approach. By the same messenger De Avila sent orders for Hernandez to come into the public square of the town, attended by the municipal officers and the clergy, to give an account of his administration. All these orders were promptly obeyed by the lieutenant-governor, who still flattered himself with the expectation of having all his official acts approved by De Avila. Nevertheless, he was admonished by several of his fellow-citizens who had lived at Panama, to be prepared for some deed of capricious tyranny on the part of Don Pedro. "I have performed my duty, and more than my duty," answered Hernandez, "and I cannot believe that Governor de Avila will be able, even if he is willing, to find anything censurable in my conduct."

When the governor, with his soldiers and other

* Shakspeare. *Tempest*: Act iii.; Scene i.

attendants, entered the square, the crowd of citizens there assembled did not greet him with acclamations, or any other signals of a hearty welcome. But as De Avila had never been accustomed to such exhibitions of popular feeling, it is probable that the omission did not disturb his equanimity or even attract his notice. De Soto was directed by Don Pedro to form his horse-men in line on one side of the square, and the foot soldiers were ordered to take the opposite position. The alcalde Espinosa and the other executive officers, including Don Pedro's executioner, a man of gigantic frame and ferocious aspect, stationed themselves near the governor's person. The citizens of Leon looked with awe and apprehension on this display of power in the hands of a bad man. They gazed with many sad forebodings on the well-trained troops, regarding them as the efficient instruments of tyranny; and not more comfortable were their reflections, when their eyes wandered to the towering form and repulsive features of the headsman, who bore aloft the sharp and ponderous sword with which he performed the duties of his horrible vocation. All of these suggestive objects were well calculated to give the townsmen a gloomy preconception of the violent and sanguinary character of the government to which they were about to be subjected.

Francisco Hernandez advanced to meet De Avila, and made an obeisance, to which the latter vouchsafed no responsive courtesy. Hernandez then began to recount his

various operations in the province. He referred, with conscious satisfaction, to the prudent and peaceful measures by which he had conciliated the natives and secured their friendship. He called Don Pedro's attention to the prosperous condition of the settlement, and the unprecedented rapidity with which the colonial towns had increased in population and commercial importance; and then he spoke, with that religious enthusiasm which belonged to his character, of the many thousands of Indians who had been brought to a knowledge of the true faith by the efforts of his clerical co-operators. He was proceeding to give some account of the supernatural signs by which his ecclesiastical associates had attested the reality of their Divine mission, and thus overcome the most obstinate incredulity of the heathen; but in this part of his discourse he was hastily interrupted by De Avila. "Enough, you hypocritical impostor!" cried Don Pedro; "do not expect to hide your treasonable projects under these flimsy contrivances of your juggling priests, and your own absurd pretensions to loyalty and patriotism. I am well-acquainted with every particular of your treacherous designs, and I will now let your accomplices see how a traitor ought to be punished." He then made a signal to the executioner, and in one moment the head of Francisco Hernandez rolled upon the ground.* The

* The particulars of this execution are related, with the usual variations, by several historians; but all agree in condemning it as

headsman snatched it up by the hair—the mouth still gasping, and the blood dripping from the severed veins and arteries—and presenting it to the view of



HEADSMAN STRIKING OFF THE HEAD OF LIEUT.-GOV. HERNANDEZ.

the horror-stricken multitude, he exclaimed, in hoarse and grating accents: "This is the doom of the traitor!" The whole assemblage of citizens, and many of De Avila's soldiers, stood aghast at the sight of a catas-

one of the most unjust and barbarous actions of the tyrannical governor, Pedro de Avila.

trophe which very few could have foreseen or imagined to be possible. For a moment or two, almost every spectator seemed to mistrust the evidence of his own senses, as he gazed with stupefied wonder on the hideous death-scene before him. As soon as the fatal blow was given, De Soto drew his sword; but it was then too late to interpose. Glancing at De Avila, he discovered the eyes of that pitiless tyrant fixed upon him with an expression of deadly enmity. Forgetful, at that trying moment, of every circumstance which might dispose him to be submissive to Don Pedro, De Soto shook his sword with a menacing gesture, and returned De Avila's glance with a look of resolute defiance. In the mean time, Don Pedro's alcalde, Espinosa, accompanied by a file of soldiers, advanced to that part of the square where the cavalry was stationed, and ordered De Soto, in the king's name, to dismount. This order was disregarded, and perhaps unheard, by De Soto, whose defiant looks were still directed to De Avila. "Ferdinand de Soto," said Don Pedro, in a loud and commanding tone, "you are ordered to dismount and submit yourself to the punishment which you have just seen inflicted on your traitorous colleague. Alcalde, let your guard pull him from his horse, if he refuses to obey." The officer who commanded the file of soldiers, reached forth his hand to execute the order given him by Espinosa; but before this could be done, his head was cloven to the chin by the swiftly descending sword of the cavalier. Spurring his horse through the oppos-

ing file, and knocking down Espinosa in his passage, De Soto made his way to the spot where De Avila sat on horseback, surrounded by several of his favorite captains and some others of his attendants. The impetuosity of this movement was so surprising to those who were nearest to the governor's person, that most of them drew back, and the Goliath-like executioner himself, whose hands and clothes were stained with the blood of Hernandez, recoiled with evident signs of dismay. De Soto now confronted De Avila, who saw himself unsupported by his adherents, and wholly at the mercy of one whose death-sentence he had spoken but a few minutes before. The point of De Soto's sword almost touched the governor's person, yet not a hand was raised in De Avila's defense, and not a supplication for mercy was made in his behalf. A cry of "Kill the tyrant!" arose from among the citizens of Leon, and was echoed by many of De Avila's own soldiers. "You hear the expression of public sentiment," said De Soto; "you hear the wishes of those who are subject to your authority. It is the voice of justice speaking through the organs of these people, and in refusing to obey the call I am scarcely less guilty than yourself. But remember, Count Puñez, that in sparing your life at this moment, I discharge all the obligations I have owed you. Miserable old man, be thankful that the recollection of one who is absent can make me forget what I owe to my murdered friend. I will now sheathe my sword; but I swear by the sacred emble

which it bears, that I will never draw it again in your service.”*

If any of the governor's officers or attendants were disposed to take a part in the scene we have described, they must have discovered that the feelings of the majority were against De Avila; and this discovery kept them inactive.

* The practice of swearing by the sword, or rather by the Cross on the hilt or handle, was very common among the Christian knights and cavaliers, some three or four hundred years ago.

CHAPTER IX.

PIZARRO, THE FUTURE COMPANION IN ARMS OF DE SOTO—HIS EXPEDITION TOWARD PERU—THE TRUE CHARACTER OF THAT ENTERPRISE—HIS AFFLICTIONS—HIS HORRIBLE BARBARITIES—AN ACCOUNT OF HIS UNEXAMPLED ATROCITIES, QUOTED FROM THE WRITINGS OF BISHOP LAS CASAS—THE CORROBORATORY EVIDENCE OF A FRANCISCAN FRIAR—MILLIONS OF PEOPLE MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD BY PIZARRO AND HIS ASSOCIATES—FERDINAND DE SOTO'S UNFORTUNATE CONNECTIONS—THE EFFECTS THEREOF ON HIS CHARACTER. [A. D. 1527-1528.]

WHILE tracing out the career of Ferdinand de Soto, we find that the perspicuity of our narrative requires us to give a compendious account of several notable events with which the history of De Soto is connected. One of these events is the so-called "Conquest of Peru," the true character of which we may have the good fortune to discover, in spite of that dense nebulosity of misrepresentation and falsehood in which it has been so long enveloped. We have shown, in a preceding chapter, how Pizarro and Almagro, after sailing along the coast of the Pacific for about seventy days, landed and attempted to rob an Indian village; but were beaten by the natives, and so much disheartened that they returned to the neighborhood of Panama. The

question has been asked, why they did not return to Panama itself. This mysterious circumstance has been variously explained; but the most probable account is, that they were ashamed to be seen by their fellow-townsmen in the wretched plight to which they were now reduced. In the language of one of their own national proverbs, "they had gone after wool, and come home shorn;" and, as the commencement of their undertaking had been ridiculous in the eyes of their countrymen, they rightly judged that this apparent *termination* of the enterprise would seem still more laughable. It cannot be supposed that Pizarro and Almagro, at this time, had formed any conception of such a project as the conquest of a mighty empire. They had just failed signally in the attempt to subdue the inhabitants of an isolated Indian village, composed of a few miserable huts; if, with this experience fresh in their recollection, they had designed to invade a thickly populated country, comprising many large cities, they must really have been as idiotic or insane as they were suspected to be by their fellow-citizens of Panama. The truth is, they could have had no knowledge of the Peruvian empire, for as yet no European had approached the territory of the Incas; and the only information concerning it, that could be gleaned from the Indians, was that, far away to the south, there was a land whose inhabitants "possessed an abundance of gold, and made use of quadrupeds to carry burdens."*

* Quintana, "Life of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa."

It appears evident, therefore, that when Pizarro and Almagro first undertook the exploration of the South Sea, they were led on by no grander or more glorious purpose than the discovery of a country whose inhabitants were sufficiently weak and unwarlike to be robbed with facility and impunity. Divested of all the fantastic decorations with which historians have endeavored to conceal the natural deformity of this enterprise, it is found to be a mere piratical expedition, not a whit more honorable or more worthy of applause than the operations of the American buccaneers, near the mouths of the Mississippi. The unexpected *success* of this enterprise was the result of fortuitous circumstances; and, according to our views, it does not add any thing to the dignity and praiseworthy character of the undertaking itself.

We will not follow Pizarro and Almagro, step by step, on their subsequent route to Tumbez, which was afterward regarded as the gate of the Peruvian dominions. Indeed, we have no account of this voyage that is entitled to much credit; for the narrators are evidently bent on magnifying the achievements of these paltry adventurers, at the expense of truth, and with a total disregard of probability. The patient fortitude of this pair of Spanish freebooters is no less celebrated than their superhuman courage; but the specifications of their sufferings are sometimes calculated to provoke a smile. We find, for example, that the assaults of the mosquitoes and the insulting grimaces of the monkey tribes are conspicuously inserted in the schedule of their

calamities.* Whatever may have been the nature or the number of their afflictions, no candid investigator will deny that they deserved them all. We are taught that "the way of transgressors is hard;" and we have but little sympathy to waste on those men, whose horrid crimes and cruelties have subjected them to the visitations of Divine Justice.

One of the most marvelous incidents of this voyage, is the length of time required for its completion. The secretary Xeres reports that Pizarro expended three years in travel, before he reached any country which promised to reward his labors. Tumbez, we suppose, was situated at the mouth of the river of that name, in that division of South America which is now called Equador; and we estimate the distance from thence to Panama to be about eight hundred miles. How then, it will be asked, did Pizarro manage to consume three whole years in making a trip which, at the present time, could easily be performed in a single week? Much of the delay was owing to the sluggish and irresolute character of Pizarro; for instead of striking out boldly into the open sea, as a braver and more enterprising navigator would have done, he crept along the shore with such timorous precaution as would have been scarcely pardonable in the ancient mariner who had never learned the uses of the magnetic needle. Another cause of that

* *Vide* Prescott's "Conquest of Peru," Vol. I., Book ii., Chap. 3, page 248; Herrera, Dec. iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 13.

tardiness which marked his progress, was his excessive appetite for plunder, which would not permit him to pass a single village on the coast without making some attempt to gather booty. With the same object in view, he ascended every river, and explored many a forest, carrying devastation, suffering, and sorrow into every secluded spot which seemed to have been reserved by Nature as the sanctuary of innocence, and a suitable place of abode for people who were as yet unacquainted with the benefits of civilization, and uncontaminated by its vices.

We have said once before, with reference to the character of Pizarro's associates, that the larger number of them were gleaned from among the vilest rabble of Panama; and Panama, at that time, was the sink into which the kingdom of Spain poured the most abominable refuse of its population. Over this hopelessly depraved company, the peculiarities of Pizarro's moral constitution gave him an unquestionable right to preside. In corruption of heart and criminality of purpose, he far excelled them all; and in the consciousness of that "bad eminence," he reveled with real satanic delight. Never was any portion of the human species thrown by deplorable circumstances into the power of a more execrable and remorseless gang of miscreants than this Spanish banditti, worthily commanded by the "illustrious conqueror of Peru." As strange as this assertion may appear to be, it is well supported by abundance of unimpeachable testimony, a small part of

which will now be exhibited. From the suppressed works of Bartholomew de Las Casas, the revered Bishop of Chiapa, we make the following extracts:

“He (Francisco Pizarro) was long exercised in robberies, murders, and every other species of violence and outrage. He was a man without loyalty or truth. He laid waste many towns and cities, and whole districts, bringing them to nought, slaying the inhabitants by thousands and myriads, and producing a train of misfortunes and miseries which must afflict that country for many years to come. In the fertile and populous island of Puna, he and his people were received by the lord thereof as if they had been angels from heaven, being entertained with the most bountiful hospitality, and loaded with immense treasures of pearls and gold, bestowed on him by these generous people with the hope of securing his friendship. Here the Spaniards remained six months and consumed all the provisions which these friendly islanders had for their present use. The people of Puna then opened their magazines of corn, which were kept for the nourishment of their families in seasons of drought and scarcity. From these stores the Spaniards were freely supplied with food for themselves and their horses. The recompense which Pizarro and his fellow-robbers made for this kind treatment was to put thousands of the unoffending and unresisting inhabitants to the sword, and numbers of those who were spared were made slaves. Women with child, and those who had lately been delivered, were compelled

to carry heavy burdens, far beyond their strength. All the young and beautiful females were subjected to the lustful embraces of these monsters. Children and infants were killed by them in mere sport; and it was a common pastime to snatch the little babes from their mothers' breasts, and pitch them into the water or among the broken rocks. By these practices, the island, in a short time, was almost depopulated.

“From thence, (continues Bishop Las Casas,) he made his way to the province of Tumbez, which is on the main land; and here, by taking advantage of the consternation of the people, which made them incapable of resistance, he slaughtered them in vast numbers. Those who fled were hunted by the Spaniards with dogs, and torn to pieces. When one of the natives brought Pizarro a present of gold and sued for merciful treatment, he was ordered to bring more, with threats of death or torture; and this demand was repeated until the poor wretch had nothing more to give.

“Touching the innumerable cruelties and enormities committed by these men, who call themselves Christians, I will here rehearse the account given by a Franciscan Friar, who was an eye-witness of the misdeeds of the Spaniards; and the same account is certified by the father's name and sign manual:

“‘I, Friar Mark, of the Order of St. Francis, commissary of the other friars of the same Order in the provinces of Peru, and one of the first religious men who entered into the said provinces with the Spaniards,

do say, bearing true testimony of the things which I have seen with mine own eyes, concerning the treatment of those who are the natural inhabitants of that country. First of all, I am an eye-witness and have certain knowledge that these Indians of Peru are the most kind-hearted of all the native tribes, being courteous in conversation and friendly to the Spaniards. And I saw them give to the Spaniards abundance of gold, silver, and precious stones, and all that they had, doing them all kinds of service lawful and proper. And the Indians never showed any hostile feelings to the Spaniards, but were peaceful and submissive, until the insupportable cruelties of these so-called Christians drove them to frenzy and desperation. The Spaniards, commanded by Francisco Pizarro, were accustomed to tie the great Indian lords and apply fire to their feet, until the flesh was entirely consumed, to make them confess if they had concealed any treasures. Thus did they treat a lord call Alvis, a principal chief of Quito, making him endure the most horrible torments, though he knew of no concealed treasure. They burned to death Cosopanga, who was governor or cacique of all the provinces of Quito, and who was decoyed by the Spaniards, and induced to enter their camp, on an assurance of safety given to him by Sebastian of Bernalcazar, one of Pizarro's captains. The only offense of this man was his inability to supply as much gold as Pizarro and his officers required. They burned many other caciques and principal lords; some,

as it seemed to me, in mere wantonness, and others for revenge, because they could not pay the extravagant sums demanded for their ransom.



BURNING A PERUVIAN TO MAKE HIM TELL WHERE THE GOLD IS.

“I likewise certify that the Spaniards, only for their diversion, compelled a great number of people, men, women, and children, to enter three large houses, the doors of which were closed and fastened, and the houses were then set on fire. The screams and lamentations of the miserable people inside were enough to fill every human heart with pity and anguish; yet the governor (Pizarro) and his soldiers looked on with indifference, or made merry with the fright and sufferings of their innocent victims. A certain mother, who was among these sufferers, held up her little son, a child of five years, to a casement, as if to implore some of the Christians outside to save him, if they cared not for herself. The child stretched out its little arms, seeming to make supplication for pity. Then a certain priest called

Father Ocanno, drew the young boy out of the fire; but a Spanish soldier snatched the child from his hands, and threw him into the thickest of the flames, where he was presently burned to ashes. On the same day, that soldier, when he returned to camp, suddenly fell down dead; and my advice was that he should not have Christian burial.



SPANISH CAPTAIN THROWING AN INFANT INTO THE FIRE.

“I also affirm that I have very often seen the Spaniards cut off the hands, the noses, and the ears of the Indians, and of their women, without any cause or purpose, except for diversion. At other times, they made their dogs run at these harmless people and tear them to pieces. Also, they have often sent for the caciques, and other principal Indians, to come and see

them in peace, promising them safe-conduct; but as soon as the Spaniards had them in their power, they burned them to death; nor could I ever, with all my preaching and prayers, prevail on them to spare a single life!"

Bishop Las Casas declares, moreover, that Pizarro and his infernal band of ruffians massacred more than four millions of people in the Peruvian territories alone; to say nothing of the countless multitudes slaughtered by them in other districts. We hope these facts, so well certified, will be sufficient to prove that we have done no injustice to the character of that infamously celebrated personage, Francisco Pizarro. We may now advert to the singular unhappiness of Ferdinand de Soto in being constantly associated, for more than twenty years, with men for whose actions he must have felt the most unqualified abhorrence. We have lately seen him in the act of freeing himself from his long connection with the stern and inflexible tyrant, Pedro de Avila; and we shall hereafter behold him forced, by almost irresistible circumstances, to become the companion-in-arms of the subtle, perfidious and fiend-like despoiler of Peru. There is no virtue in man of sufficient strength to resist the fatal influences of long-continued intercourse with the most corrupt and depraved of our species. We must expect, therefore, to find in several parts of De Soto's future conduct, some evidences of a declension from that unswerving rectitude of purpose, and that impulsive and self-sacrificing generosity, which marked the commencement of his career.

CHAPTER X.

THE PUNISHMENT OF MICER CODRO, AND HIS LAST PROPHECY—
DE SOTO GOES ON AN EXPLORING EXPEDITION—HIS UNSUC-
CESSFUL SEARCH—HE RECEIVES PRESENTS OF GOLD FROM
FRIENDLY INDIANS—HE RESOLVES TO RETURN TO LEON—HE
EMBARKS IN A CARAVEL—HIS SINGULAR ADVENTURE WITH
THE CAPTAIN OF THE VESSEL—HE HEARS OF THE DEATH OF
MICER CODRO—HOW THE LAST PREDICTION OF THE ASTROLO-
GER WAS FULFILLED. [A. D. 1528.]

WHILE Francisco Pizarro is knocking at “the gate of the Peruvian Empire,” if the city of Tumbez is rightly distinguished by that title, we will return for awhile to give some account of several events which took place on the Isthmus and in Nicaragua before the final departure of De Soto from those regions. We have, in the first place, to relate a few particulars concerning that learned man, Micer Codro, in whose fate our readers may feel somewhat interested. As soon as De Avila discovered his instrumentality in carrying on the prohibited correspondence between De Soto and Isabella, he sent for Codro, and in an ironical manner complimented him on the fidelity with which he had performed the duties of his recent mission. The artless philosopher

accepted these flattering speeches in their most literal sense. Don Pedro then informed Codro that he designed to entrust him with the management of another affair of great importance, namely, the mineralogical examination of a tract of land lying near the Gulf of San Miguel. This was a task which exactly suited the peculiar tastes of the man of science, and he therefore undertook it with much cheerfulness and alacrity. Don Pedro then directed him to embark in a vessel commanded by a certain Geronimo de Valenzuela, who had been instructed, (as De Avila said), to convey him to the spot where his researches were to be carried on. This Valenzuela was one of De Avila's retainers, and withal a man of the most desperate character, who had followed the trade of piracy for many years, and who was now engaged, under Don Pedro's auspices and protection, in the less reputable business of kidnapping Indians for the purpose of making them slaves. Captain Valenzuela had indeed received instructions from De Avila, with respect to the manner in which Micer Codro should be disposed of; and as soon as the vessel was under weigh, he ordered the unsuspecting Italian to be put into irons and chained to the foremast. In that situation he was exposed to the insulting mockery of the whole ship's company; who (as base men are apt to do) rejoiced in the opportunity to afflict one whom they felt to be their superior. All day, the scorching sunbeams fell on his unsheltered head; and the unwholesome dews of night gathered, with no soothing effect, on

his fevered brow. The advanced age and feeble constitution of Micer Codro could not be expected to endure so much corporeal suffering; yet for ten days he bore it all with uncomplaining meekness. Finding that the hour of his departure was at hand, he addressed himself to the commander of the vessel, with much solemnity of manner, but without any appearance of resentment. "Captain," said he, "your ill-treatment has caused my death, and I now call on you to hear the words of a dying man. Within a year from this time, I summons you to meet me before the judgment-seat of God." To this summons, Valenzuela made a scoffing and contemptuous answer; and Micer Codro, as he lay on the naked deck, with his head resting against the mast, turned his languid eyes to the pilot, (the only man on board who had seemed to pity his misfortunes), and said: "Will you, my friend, grant the last request of one who has never, through a long life, neglected any opportunity to do an act of kindness to his fellow-man?" The pilot declared his willingness to render him any service that was possible. At this moment the vessel lay at anchor, waiting for a change of the tide, off the mouth of the gulf now called Parita, about one hundred miles southwest of Panama. The dying man looked wistfully at the distant shore, crowned with luxuriant verdure, and entreated the pilot to land him on one of those islands, where, on the bosom of the green earth, and under the shadow of the dense foliage, he might find peace and comfort in his dying hour. "Micer Codro," answered the

pilot, "these are not islands, but points of the mainland. I am not acquainted with any islands near that part of the coast." "You will find, however," replied Codro, "that there are two pleasant and well-watered islands, enclosing a large bay and harbor, near the mouth of that gulf." The humane pilot yielded to the wishes of the poor astrologer, by taking one of the boats of the caravel and conveying him to the shore. They were accompanied, however, by two of Valenzuela's men, who were ordered by their captain to take heed that the victim of De Avila's resentment did not escape. When the party came to the ground designated by Micer Codro, they found that it was really a fertile and beautiful island, as the astrologer had described it. The pilot, with the assistance of the two sailors, prepared a couch of leaves, on which they laid the sick man, and remained with him until he breathed his last. A grave was then dug near the foot of the tree in the shade of which Micer Codro had expired, and the body was interred by the humane pilot, with all the religious observances that circumstances would allow. Oviedo, the historian, declares that he visited the lonely and unadorned tomb of this unfortunate scholar, to whose learning and excellent moral qualities he offers a well-deserved eulogium, concluding with these words: "He died, like Pliny, in the discharge of his duty, traveling about the world to explore the secrets of Nature."*

* Oviedo, Hist. Gen. Lib. xxxix., Cap. 2.

The sacrifice of Micer Codro was the last act of Governor de Avila at Panama. We will now return to Nicaragua, where we left Don Pedro and Ferdinand de



GRAVE OF MICER CODRO.

Soto at the crisis of a serious disagreement, the result of which was the withdrawal of De Soto from De Avila's service. The execution of Hernandez was deeply resented by nearly all the Spanish settlers in this province; and as De Avila had never been appointed by the King to the government of Nicaragua, he was generally regarded as a usurper. In this state of affairs, his position was uncomfortable, and not quite safe, for the province was ripe for a revolt; and many of the colonists, who had highly esteemed the late lieutenant-governor, were prepared to take vengeance on

the man whom they regarded as his murderer. De Soto was often solicited to take command of a corps of citizens, organized for the purpose of resisting the assumed authority of De Avila; but to the great surprise of the people of Leon, who had witnessed the recent attempt on his own life, he steadfastly refused to co-operate with Don Pedro's enemies. Nothing could make De Soto forget that De Avila was the father of Isabella. But, being no longer under Don Pedro's command, he was now at liberty to make new engagements; and about this time he agreed, with some of the wealthy citizens of Leon, to go on an expedition northward, in search of the strait which was supposed to connect the two oceans. The geographers of that day generally believed that such a strait did exist, somewhere between the Isthmus of Darien and the southern extremity of Mexico; and the King of Spain had offered a large reward for the discovery of this desirable means of communication. The undertaking was difficult and dangerous; and the attainment of the object sought for, would be glorious and profitable. Perhaps all of these considerations were inducements for De Soto to embark in the enterprise. He made his preparations accordingly, the necessary funds being supplied by his moneyed partners; and, in a very short time, he commenced his journey with only five companions, resolute and vigorous young men, selected from the cavalry troop which he had lately commanded. His design was to examine the coasts of the districts now called Guate-



BURNING OF THE PRISONERS IN THE

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mala and Yucatan, and to trace the course of any bay, inlet or river which might present itself in the progress of his research. The country which he designed to make the field of his operations, was supposed to be inhabited by Indians of the most ferocious character; and many parts of it were reported to be barren, destitute of water, and very unhealthy; as indeed they are, at the present time. Some travelers who had attempted to penetrate this frightful wilderness, declared that it abounded with wild beasts and reptiles of the most dangerous kinds. The crocodiles, or alligators, which infested the rivers, were described as being from thirty to forty feet in length, and capable of devouring a horse at one meal. De Soto and his companions, however, commenced the work of exploration with undaunted resolution, starting from a point near Leon, on the South Sea, and proceeding north-westwardly between the shore of the Pacific and that mountain range which is supposed to be a continuation of the Andes. As they advanced, the aspect of the country became more repulsive. The ground over which they passed was sufficiently rugged to make traveling on horseback difficult, and the rocky surface appeared to have undergone the action of fire. This phenomenon was fully explained by the appearance of the mountain peaks on their right, many of which were of a volcanic character, some sending up dense volumes of pitchy smoke, and others pouring out torrents of boiling water. The explorers continued their route, probably, as far as the

seventeenth degree of North latitude, surmounting many obstacles and overcoming many perils. Some of the Indian tribes who inhabited those regions were disposed to be quarrelsome, having heard of the Spaniards, perhaps, or witnessed some of their operations. Others, who had no information or melancholy experience of that kind, treated the wayfarers with much kindness and hospitality. These Indians possessed gold in considerable quantities, but they appeared to esteem it as an article of little value; and when they were inclined to be friendly, they made very liberal donations of the precious metal to De Soto and his companions. By these means, his expedition, though unsuccessful with respect to its main object, was not a "losing speculation," but proved to be, in some measure, profitable. Within the space of eleven months, De Soto made an accurate examination of the coast to the extent of seven hundred miles, and satisfied himself that the strait which he had been searching for did not exist. This fact being ascertained, he considered that his undertaking was finished; and he now determined to return to Leon, and make a fair division of the gold he had collected among the settlers who had invested their capital in this enterprise.

On his homeward route, De Soto discovered a caravel anchored at a point near the present site of St. Salvador; and having ascertained that her destination was to the south, he resolved to engage a passage for himself and his comrades, all of whom, as well as their horses, were much fatigued by their long and toilsome travel by land.

The captain of the vessel readily agreed, for a fair compensation, to take the cavaliers and their quadrupeds on board. When they were embarked, De Soto found that the caravel was thronged with Spanish soldiers, who had served under Cortez in Mexico, and Indian prisoners who had been captured on the coast by the commander of the vessel and his crew, for the purpose of supplying the colonies with slaves. The whole ship's company appeared to be composed of men of a brutal and desperate character; but the manners of the captain were pre-eminently repulsive.

“There was a laughing demon in his sneer
That raised emotions both of hate and fear.”

He was one of those men who delight in recounting their deeds of villainy, and who feel flattered and gratified in proportion as their auditors are shocked and disgusted. For the entertainment of his passengers he described many scenes of horror and bloodshed, in which he had taken a part; and the fiendish exultation with which he detailed his sanguinary and pitiless actions, almost excited the indignation of the veterans of Cortez, familiarized as they were with every phase of inhuman criminality.

After many other narrations with which the captain endeavored to make an impression on the minds of his hearers, he began to relate how he had been employed by the Governor of Panama to torture and put to death an old wizzard, who had committed some act of treachery

while on a mission to Spain. To the preceding stories of the captain, De Soto had listened with almost irrepressible emotions, but he now began to take a deeper interest in the wretched man's discourse, and pressed through the circle of eager listeners by which the speaker was surrounded. The captain proceeded to declare that he had chained the old man on deck, where his sailors often amused themselves by drenching him with buckets of sea-water until he was almost drowned. "After several days," continued the narrator, "he became sick, and we saw that the sport he had given us would soon be at an end. After remaining speechless for two days he suddenly found the use of his voice, and attempted to frighten me by prophesying that I should die before the expiration of a year." Here the captain indulged in a laugh, in which many of the auditors joined. Pleased with the attention and seeming approbation of his hearers, the boastful malefactor said: "Cavaliers, we will have out a hamper of wine and drink to the good repose of Micer Codro's soul." "Hold!" said De Soto, who had been standing before the speaker with his drawn sword in his hand; "you say the astrologer prophesied that you should die within a year. When will that year expire?" "In about two weeks," answered the captain; "but fear not that the prophet will prove to be a liar." "He shall not, by heaven!" cried De Soto; and at the same moment he dealt the vaunting criminal a blow which separated his head from his body.

Perceiving that the spectators were astonished, not so much perhaps at the fulfillment of a prediction as at the strange method which had been used to verify it, De Soto, with stern composure, addressed himself to the crowd. "Gentlemen," said he, "if any of you are disposed to hold me accountable for what I have just done, I am ready to answer you according to your desires. But I consider myself bound in reason and courtesy to inform you that Micer Codro, the man whom this villain murdered, was my friend, and I doubt not that he was condemned to death for doing me an important service."

This explanation seemed to give general satisfaction. In fact, a deed of sanguinary vengeance was not an occurrence of sufficient rarity in those times, to excite any very strong feeling of disapprobation; and perhaps the singular dexterity which De Soto had displayed in the use of his sword, was no inducement for any friend or admirer of the deceased captain to become the avenger of his death.

CHAPTER XI.

DE SOTO'S EXPLORING EXPEDITION TO GUATEMALA—THE HORRID ACTS OF MARTIN ESTETE—INDIANS ENSLAVED AND BRANDED WITH A RED-HOT IRON—THE NATIVES ARE ROBBED OF THEIR CHILDREN—CACIQUES BURNED TO DEATH AND DEVoured BY DOGS—SIXTY THOUSAND PEOPLE MURDERED—PIZARRO ENTREATS DE SOTO TO COME TO PERU—HE GOES WITH A REINFORCEMENT OF MEN AND HORSES—PIZARRO SWINDLES HIS CONFEDERATES, AND BEGINS TO MAKE A HAVOC AMONG HIS PERUVIAN FRIENDS—DE SOTO ARRIVES AT THE ISLAND OF PUNA, AND JOINS PIZARRO. [A. D. 1532.]

FOR about three years after the return of Ferdinand de Soto from his exploring expedition to Guatemala, he was engaged, during a considerable part of the time, in making similar explorations in Yucatan. In conformity with the obligations of his oath, he did not draw his sword in the service of Don Pedro; but his military talents were not wholly unemployed, for many of the Indians who had been converted by the compulsory measures of Giles Gonzalez had apostatized from the true faith, and now began to make themselves troublesome to the Spanish settlers. The aid of De Soto was often required therefore to repel their incursions. The inhabitants of Leon had elected him to the command

of a corps of citizen-soldiers, the ostensible purpose of which was the defense of the town against the hostile savages; but an object of no less importance was to hold in check the haughty and reckless usurper, Pedro de Avila. This unprincipled man saw, with jealous apprehension, the growing power and influence of De Soto, and finding himself unpopular with all sorts



SPANIARDS BRANDING INDIANS WITH HOT IRONS.

of people, except those of the most abandoned character, he sought to strengthen his position by gathering around him some of the vilest men whom the nauseated stomach of old Spain had ejected upon this continent. He liberated two notorious criminals, Diego Lopez and Gabriel de Rojas, who had been imprisoned at Leon by Hernandez; and these men, with many others of the

same stamp, were licensed to commit robberies and many other kinds of outrage on the persons and property of the friendly Indians, no exception being made in favor of those who had embraced Christianity. A certain Martin Estete, who now acted as De Avila's lieutenant, was authorized by this pseudo-governor to go on excursions into the adjacent country, for the purpose of bringing away as many Indians as he could capture, and making them slaves. The mode of slave-making used by the Spaniards was to hunt the natives with horses and dogs; and, when the chase was successful, they branded the captive with a red-hot iron, made for that purpose. All the Indians thus marked became the property of their captors. This infamous practice, it seems, had been prohibited by the King of Spain, who ordered the branding-iron, (which probably bore the initials of his Catholic Majesty, with a cross, or some other suitable device,) to be enclosed in a chest, "fastened with three locks."* This most considerate act of royal clemency proved ineffectual, however; for De Avila's lieutenant, Estete, had the ingenuity and audacity to obtain possession of the instrument in spite of the triple fastenings and of the regal prohibition. Perhaps he suspected that if the king had really wished to put an end to this slave-making process, he would have ordered the branding-iron to be destroyed, instead of having it locked up in a trunk. Lieutenant Estete,

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iii., Lib. iv., Cap. 2

having provided himself with the necessary tools, including chains, fetters, and the marking-iron just spoken of, went to work with such order and diligence, that he was soon enabled to supply all the neighboring settlements with slaves, "at short notice and on the most accommodating terms." He brought them to Leon in large flocks or droves, comprising hundreds of men, women and children chained together. Estete and his companions, being mounted on horseback, urged them onward by goading them with their lances, and when any of them became too much fatigued to travel with the required speed, they were disengaged from the chain, and slaughtered on the spot.* A large majority of the Indians, inhabitants of this province, had been christianized and partly civilized by the exertions of Francisco Hernandez; but, as we have said before, their adoption of the Catholic religion did not save them from the persecutions of Estete. All the Christian caciques were required by him to pay a tribute of slaves, at the rate of fifty per month for each cacique; and, unless they complied with this demand, (says Bishop Las Casas), the caciques themselves were condemned to be burned to death, or to be torn to pieces by dogs. To save their own lives, the Indian chiefs gave up all the orphans to be slaves to the Spaniards; and, when the supply failed, every parent who had several chil-

* Herrera, *ubi supra*; Las Casas, quoted by Purchas; *vide* Purchas' "Pilgrims;" Book viii., Chap. 4: Article "Nicaragua."

dren was compelled to contribute one or more of his offspring to make up the required number of victims. This exaction was more distressing to the Indians—as we are told—than any other infliction of Spanish barbarity, “for they are a people,” (says the good Las Casas), “that tenderly love their offspring.”*

The man who is contented in slavery deserves to be a slave, and is fit for nothing else; but the moral or physical constitution of the American Indian never adapted him to a life of servitude. We are not aware that the aborigines of this continent ever enslaved each other, not even their captives taken in war; for when these latter were preserved alive, they lived with their conquerors on terms of perfect equality. It is a well ascertained fact, that all the efforts of the Spaniards to make willing slaves of the Indians proved abortive. When the oppressed people could not recover their freedom, they died in captivity; for life with them was no longer endurable.

The effects of De Avila's misrule in Nicaragua were soon visible. We are told by Las Casas that “his tyranny prevented the Indians from carrying on their agricultural labors, and the Spaniards robbed them of all the corn which they had stored away for their subsistence. A famine ensued, and more than twenty thousands of the natives perished by starvation. Some of them, made frantic by hunger, devoured their

* Las Casas, as above.

own children. The bishop declares that the various oppressions and barbarities of the Spaniards, within the space of ten years, caused the destruction of more than sixty thousand human beings in Nicaragua, and almost depopulated the whole province. And yet, although a full account of these transactions was transmitted to the Spanish government, the man who had permitted so many horrid crimes to be perpetrated under his administration, was afterward regularly commissioned by the King of Spain, and was thus duly authorized by him to retain that office, the powers of which he had so grossly abused. It is believed that De Avila was indebted for this singular act of Royal favor to the intercessions of certain ecclesiastics of high rank, his sympathizing friends, by whom he was strongly recommended as a proper object of governmental patronage!

In the year 1532, Pizarro, who was then in the neighborhood of Tumbez, dispatched a message to Pedro de Avila, whom he urgently entreated to send as many men and horses as could be spared to assist in the military operations then going on near the border of Peru. He particularly desired to have the aid of De Soto, to whose valor and prowess he paid a well deserved compliment; and he requested De Avila to promise in his name that De Soto, if he consented to serve in Peru, should have the second place in the command of the forces there employed. Between De Soto and Don Pedro there had been no communication of any kind for several years; and the governor was not

disposed to make any advances toward a resumption of intercourse with one who had so highly offended him. He desired, nevertheless, that Pizarro's offer should be accepted, for the presence of De Soto in Nicaragua was to Don Pedro a source of constant annoyance. He disliked to look on the man who dared to set his power at defiance. In this state of affairs, he communicated his wishes to his alcalde and confidential friend, Espinosa, who was instructed by him to prevail on De Soto, if possible, to start immediately for Peru. "And I pray to heaven," piously ejaculated De Avila, "that we may never hear of him again." Don Pedro had, for a long time, considered the Peruvian enterprise as a desperate undertaking. Doubtless his expectation was, that all who were engaged in that enterprise were on the straight road to destruction; and, for several reasons, which the reader may understand, he rejoiced in the opportunity to place De Soto on the same fatal track.

When De Soto learned from Espinosa the subject of the message sent by Pizarro, he promptly consented to assist the last-named commander with his counsels and his sword. All the Spanish authorities in America had, in the mean time, been ordered by their King to assist the Peruvian enterprise and to make a liberal use of the public funds for that purpose. De Avila, therefore, being no less anxious to expedite the departure of De Soto, than to obey the Royal mandate, fitted out two caravels at a convenient port on the Pacific, and

in these vessels embarked about fifty men and thirty horses, all being placed under the control of De Soto. While this reinforcement is on its way to Tumbez, we will make the reader acquainted with several important events which have taken place since we accompanied Pizarro to the confines of Peru.

Jerome Benzos, the author of a work called "Three Books of the New World," who appears to have been an impartial and conscientious scribe, declares that when Pizarro and his gang of cut-throats first approached Tumbez, not one of the Spaniards had courage enough to go on shore; but, among the crew of Pizarro's vessel, there happened to be a Greek, called Peter de Candia, who volunteered to carry Pizarro's greetings to the governor of the place.* In this suggestive incident, and in many other facts, inadvertently stated by the Spanish chroniclers of this enterprise, we find a confirmation of an opinion we have expressed in relation to the nature of the undertaking, and the character and purposes of the men with whom it originated. Before the arrival of De Soto, the conduct of the "invaders" was characterized by a spirit no less dastardly than ferocious. They never made an attack except when the hope of plunder was the obvious inducement, and when there could scarcely be any expectation of resistance. The inference is, that they were mere robbers and not soldiers; a mob of pilfering ruffians and not an army of heroic conquerors.

* Benzos: Lib. iii., Cap. 1.

As Tumbez was a town of considerable size, with a numerous population, the Spaniards made no attempt, at that time, to plunder it. They looked, however, with gloating delight, on the evidences of its wealth, and promised themselves a rich harvest of booty, to be reaped at a more favorable season. In the meanwhile the unsuspecting inhabitants of this devoted city treated their faithless guests with exuberant kindness and hospitality. Pizarro's messenger, Peter de Candia, returned to his commander and gave such an encouraging account of the friendly disposition of the natives, that the most conscience-stricken and cowardly of his companions, and even Pizarro himself, no longer hesitated to enter the city.

Having now satisfied himself that the country was well worth plundering, Pizarro determined to return to Panama. Quintana, one of his Spanish biographers, says: "Doubtless, in recompense of the hospitality he had received, he lamented that his diminutive force did not allow him to seize the town, to entrench himself in the fortress, and to pillage the inhabitants and their temple of the so-much coveted gold."* For the purpose, as it seems, of obtaining sufficient powers to carry out these magnanimous and honorable intentions, he hastened back to the Isthmus, where he electrified his partners, Almagro and the schoolmaster, with an

* Mannel Josef Quintana's Spanish Biography: "Life of Pizarro;" Mrs. Hodson's English translation; page 122.

account of his prospective success. The three confederates agreed that Pizarro should go to Spain, to relate what had been done, and to petition the king for something like corporation privileges, enabling them to carry on the discoveries in their own name, and for their own exclusive benefit. But Pizarro, who possessed some of the characteristics of a Jewish peddler, never overlooked any opportunity to commit a fraud. He first cheated his partners by obtaining all the grants for himself alone, and then he cheated his King by not complying with the conditions on which those grants had been made.* Very well satisfied with the manner in which he had accomplished the objects of his mission, he returned to America, accompanied by his four brothers, three of whom, like himself, were illegitimate. On his arrival at Panama, he endeavored to satisfy his ill-used associates by making many false protestations and fallacious promises. Luque, the schoolmaster, who was likewise a priest, exhibited much Christian forbearance on this occasion; but Almagro was not inclined to submit with the same equanimity to Pizarro's swindling operation. He was reduced to submission, however, by the hectoring deportment of Hernando Pizarro, Francisco's

* He was required by the king to raise a force of two hundred and fifty men, well equipped for the service, one hundred and fifty of whom were to be enlisted in Spain; but he embarked at St. Lucar with a much smaller number, and made use of a paltry trick to escape from the examination of the king's officers.—*Vide* Prescott's "Conquest of Peru:" Book iii., Chap. 1.

elder and legitimate brother, who was by far the boldest villain in the family group, though Francisco was distinguished by a more subtle intellect and more plausible manners.

The schoolmaster Luque, (says Benzos,) was afterward surnamed "The Fool," because he had invested all his money in the Peruvian enterprise, and was cruelly victimized by his fraudulent partner, Pizarro. He and Almagro, however, saw that it was necessary for them to succumb and to seem to be satisfied, until they had a fair opportunity to do themselves justice.

Some appearance of a good understanding among the associates being now restored, Pizarro embarked his forces, which amounted, according to the best authorities, to one hundred and eighty men and twenty-seven horses.* Proceeding now with more confidence than formerly, he soon reached the Island of Puna, the natives of which welcomed his return with many demonstrations of joy. Here he was well entertained, until the murders, rapes and robberies committed by the Spaniards, compelled the inhabitants to take up arms in their own defense.† Though these people were not of a warlike character, their resentment, when once aroused, threatened to exterminate their enemies; but, most unfortunately for the cause of justice and humanity, Ferdinand de Soto, with his reinforcements, happened to arrive at this juncture.

* Xeres : Conq. del Peru, ap. Barira ; Tom. iii., p. 182.

† Benzos : Lib. iii., Cap. 1.

We shall be able to prove, in the following pages, that this arrival made a complete change in the complexion of Pizarro's enterprise, and afforded him, for the first time, a reasonable prospect of success. Hitherto his "army," as it is pompously called by some of the historians, was nothing more than an undisciplined company of vagabonds, without any of the feelings or habits of soldiers who are fighting in a great and glorious cause. And this company was without a leader who deserved the name; for it is evident that Pizarro himself was wholly incompetent to exercise the duties which belonged to his station. De Soto brought a corps of well-trained cavalry, (the most efficient troops that could be used against the Indians), to Pizarro's aid, and he himself was the bravest and most accomplished officer that Spain ever sent to the Western Continent.

With these accessions, the invasion of Peru began to look like a reality; and the faithful relation of facts, which we are about to give, will abundantly prove that, without De Soto's assistance, the conquest of Peru would never have been achieved by Francisco Pizarro and his fellow-adventurers.

CHAPTER XII.

THE REAL CONDITION OF PERU BEFORE THE SPANISH INVASION—
ITS ADMIRABLE INSTITUTIONS—PROSPERITY AND HAPPINESS
OF THE PEOPLE—THEIR ARTS AND MANUFACTURES—THE
GRAND TEMPLE OF CUZCO—THE INEXHAUSTIBLE RICHES OF
PERU—THE METALS USED BY THE PERUVIANS—THEIR ME-
CHANICAL SKILL—THEIR GREAT PUBLIC WORKS—SLANDERS
OF THE SPANISH CONQUEBORS—THE PERUVIANS NOT IDOLA-
TERS—A TRUE ACCOUNT OF THEIR RELIGION—FALSEHOODS OF
THE SPANISH HISTORIANS REFUTED.

BEFORE we detail the particulars of that deplorable event, the overthrow of the Peruvian Empire by the Spaniards, it will be expedient to show, as clearly as circumstances will permit, what was the real condition of the country prior to its subjugation by a foreign power. The difficulties of the task are explained in the introduction to this volume. We have no knowledge of the ancient Peruvians, except that which is derived from the reports of their enemies, and in such a case, the information should be cautiously received. However, some facts connected with the history of these people, and their condition just before the Spanish invasion, will admit of no dispute; and these facts,

though not very numerous indeed, will be quite sufficient for our present purpose.

“The territory of Peru (says Mr. Prescott) when it was first visited by the Spaniards, extended from the second degree North to the thirty-seventh degree South latitude. According to Herrera, its length was above six hundred leagues, and its average breadth was about fifty leagues, between the Andes and the Pacific Ocean. This ocean, was, of course, its western boundary, but its eastern limits cannot be so readily determined. The whole country consisted of three strips of land; the first of which comprised the plains along the sea-coast; the second was the hilly region between those plains and the mountain-range called the Andes; and the third consisted of the Andes themselves. The grounds near the sea-shore were barren and unhealthy; but these natural defects were corrected, in some measure, by the elaborate improvements planned by the wise government of the Incas, and executed by the untiring and cheerful industry of the people. The metropolis of the empire was the great city of Cuzco, situated in a pleasant and salubrious valley, nearly twelve thousand feet above the level of the sea.”

The government of ancient Peru was, in form, a despotism, but in effect the mildest and most beneficent of patriarchal institutions. With no better information concerning it than the illiberal and prejudiced accounts of the Spanish conquerors, we are prepared to believe that, in many particulars, it was the most perfect politi-

cal system ever contrived by the wisdom of man. Its most objectionable feature was the absolute power of the chief magistrate; but that monstrous fault was so modified by the generous concessions of the sovereign, and by the numerous provisions made for the welfare and security of the people, that all the purposes for which rational governments are instituted were attained, for the first and last time, under this South American dynasty. With all our enthusiastic devotion for popular rule and republican principles, we are compelled to admit that Peru, when Pizarro first landed on its shores, was better governed than any nation of the earth now is. But, let it be understood, that this happy state of affairs did not proceed from the despotic constitution of the government, but from the peculiar moral proclivities and the social habits and condition of the people. Owing to these causes, the powers of the government were exercised with justice and moderation, and the obedience of the subject was voluntary and complete.

Under the regency of the Incas, the humblest individual of the nation could not be oppressed; justice was promptly executed in all cases; official corruption was impossible; the frauds of speculation and the distressing effects of financial panics were unheard of and unimaginable afflictions; labor was sure of its reward, and there was never-failing employment for all who were able to work. The whole population of Peru was like one family; there was no antagonism of interests; no man was obliged to *struggle* for existence;

the comforts and conveniences of life were guaranteed to all; and none were required, nor even *permitted*, to wear themselves out by excessive toil.* In the judgment of a high Spanish authority, it was impossible to improve on that systematic equity with which labor was distributed among the people.† The interests of the working classes were protected, not by taxing one part for the benefit of another, but by an impartial arrangement which secured equal advantages to all. The manner in which all these great public blessings were attained, will not admit of explanation in a few words. The reader who may desire to investigate the subject farther, is referred to the introductory chapters of Prescott's "Conquest of Peru," "Garcilasso's Commentaries," Herrera's "General History of the West Indies," and other works which treat on American Antiquities.

The true principles of industrial association were understood, and reduced to practice beneath the fostering care of the Peruvian monarchy. That great problem, which has lately puzzled all the political philosophers of Christendom, was solved more than three hundred years ago, by a people dwelling in the defiles of the Andes, whose claims to civilization have been questioned. They succeeded in uniting a whole nation in a bond of brotherhood, the integrity of which was proof against

* Ondegardo : Rel. Prim., Cap. 15; Garcilasso : Com. Real. Parte i., Lib. v., Cap. 5.

† Ondegardo : Rel. Prim., Cap. 15.

the antagonistic operations of individual selfishness. They contrived to make millions of people contented, happy and prosperous, without commerce, or the credit system, or even a circulating medium.

If this was not civilization, it was something infinitely better.

All the useful arts which the Peruvians believed to be necessary for their happiness, and the prosperity of their nation, were well cultivated among them. Their architectural works, in general, were strictly adapted to their requirements. As "no man could be rich and no man could be poor in Peru," we may suppose that the dwellings of the inhabitants presented an aspect of singular uniformity, in which the appearance of squalid misery, on the one hand, and the ostentatious display of wealth on the other, were not to be discovered. There the palatial abodes of supercilious opulence did not lift their heads above the clay-built habitations of industrious penury. It was only in the construction of their temples, and other public buildings, that the Peruvians made any display of architectural magnificence. These edifices were composed of blocks of stone, of a very large size, fitted together with such nicety that the line of union was almost indiscernible. Humboldt says that he found, in the walls of edifices among the ruins of Peru, blocks of hewn stone, some of which were each thirty-six feet long, nine feet wide, and six feet in thickness. What must have been the mechanical skill and the excellence of the machinery used

in the transportation and adjustment of these huge masses of building material, which were taken from the side of a mountain thirteen thousand feet high, and removed by land-conveyance more than ten miles! The stonemasons of ancient Peru surpassed all their fellow-craftsmen of modern times in the exquisite skill with which they smoothed the surfaces of the stones, and united them in the walls of their buildings without the help of any kind of cement. And all this was accomplished by a people, who had not become acquainted with the uses of iron. The only metals which were used by them for the construction of their implements of trade, and their weapons of war, were copper and tin.

The great Temple of the Sun at Cuzco may be supposed to have afforded a fair sample of the skill in architecture to which the Peruvians had attained; but the stupidity of the "conquerors" has left us without any accurate description of this edifice. The golden decorations of the interior seem to have been the principal objects that deserved their attention. We have never met with any precise account of the dimensions of the building; but as the walls are said to have contained many stones, each of which comprised about two thousand cubic feet, we must believe that the proportions of the entire edifice were of a stupendous character. It consisted of a principal building and several wings or attachments, all of which were surrounded by a wall, composed of the same material that was used in the

construction of the temple itself. A Spaniard, who saw this magnificent structure before it was despoiled by his countrymen, declares that only two edifices in Spain could be compared with it, with respect to the size of the building and the excellence of the workmanship.* Our countryman, Prescott, seems to have become infected with the prevailing tastes of his favorite heroes, when he exclaims: "But the *interior* of the temple was the most worthy of admiration; it was literally a mine of gold!" A sculptured representation of the sun, executed in solid gold, appeared in dazzling effulgence on the western wall. The elaborately carved cornices, and all the other ornamental appendages of the temple, were composed of the same precious material.

The only metals used by the Peruvians, in any of their arts, were gold, silver, tin and copper. It has been said above, that the tools of their artisans, and the arms of their warriors, were always composed of the last-named minerals. Many of their domestic utensils, and all the metallic adornments of their public buildings, were of pure gold or silver. These metals were used with a profusion that would scarcely be credible, if we were not acquainted with the exhaustless mineral resources of the country. The whole mountain range of the Andes may almost be regarded as a single mine—a vast treasure-house of Nature—

* Sarmiento: *Relacion.*, Cap. 24.

where, for incomputable ages, the avarice of man may revel without restraint.

The Peruvian government, with that parental care for the welfare of the people, which was one of its principal characteristics, would not permit the mines to be exten-



ANDES MOUNTAINS.

sively worked, because this employment was supposed to be injurious to the health of the operator.* When was any Christian or civilized monarch ever restrained by such a consideration? The cultivation of the land constituted the principal occupation of the people. Their agricultural labors were so equitably apportioned among them, that toil never became oppressive, but was

* Garcilasso : Com. Real., Parte i., Lib. vi., Cap. 18.

a recreation rather than a task; and yet the supplies of agricultural products were always more than sufficient for the wants of the community. It is said that the people went to their work rejoicing, as if they were about to celebrate a jubilee.*

The manufactures of the Peruvians were intended merely to supply their own needs, as they had no foreign commerce. They made several kinds of cloth, the finest of which was composed of the wool of the lama, or Peruvian sheep. Some of these fabrics were of such exquisite delicacy, that the noblest ladies of Spain preferred them as articles of dress before the richest silver tissues of Asiatic production. The manufacture of cotton cloth, likewise, was extensively carried on by these people. We are told that their skill in all the mechanic arts which they practiced, excited the admiration and envy of European workmen.

Some of the public works of the Peruvians—their great highways, for example—were on the most magnificent scale; but the limits of this book will not permit us to describe them. The benevolent institutions of the country were numerous, and they were so constituted that the recipients of public bounty were conscious of no degradation. They were not called by any opprobrious name, equivalent to “paupers.” The invalids among them were not subjected to the rash experi-

* Garcilasso, *Com. Real.*, Parte i., Lib. v., Cap. 1-3; Ondegardo, *Rel. Prim.*; Prescott's “*Conquest of Peru*,” Book i., Chap. ii.

ments of unfledged physicians; and their dead bodies were not made the objects of mercenary speculations by the "Guardians of the Poor."*

We will conclude this explanatory chapter by referring to a topic which becomes important when it is considered in connection with "the main object" of the Spanish invasion, which, according to Francisco Pizarro himself, and other authorities equally reliable, was "to bring this heathen nation to a knowledge of the true God." What was the religion of the Peruvians before they were converted by the Spaniards? The "honest chroniclers" of these missionary heroes tell us that the people of Peru were idolaters; that they worshiped the sun and the devil, thunder and lightning, and the rainbow; besides certain wooden divinities, which were seldom seen except by the priests who attended at their altars. We have examined the evidence in this case with patient attention, and we incline to the belief that the foregoing account of the Peruvian worship is all false. The principal object of adoration with these people is supposed to have been the Sun, the most glorious object in nature, which diffuses light and warmth through the universe, and is therefore the best visible representative of Divine wisdom and goodness. The Catholics, when they bow themselves down before the image of the Redeemer, do not (as they tell us) worship

* This seems to be an allusion to recent occurrences in Philadelphia.—*Publisher.*

a piece of wood, but the Majesty of Heaven, whom that image is intended to represent. In like manner, the Peruvians disclaimed the worship of the material representative to which they were supposed to offer their homage.* Garcilasso, who was born of an Indian mother, and who spent all the early part of his life in Peru, expressly declares that the heavenly bodies were objects of reverence as holy things, but not of worship.† This historian adds, that some of the Peruvian converts to Christianity endeavored to gain favor and credit with their new teachers by slandering the religion of their fathers. As Garcilasso himself was a Christian convert, we have no reason to doubt the accuracy of this statement, the intrinsic probability of which will recommend it to our acceptance. In short, it is easy to believe that the Spaniards either misunderstood the Peruvian religion, or that they purposely gave a false account of it to the world.

All authorities admit that the natives of Peru acknowledged one supreme and invisible deity, whom they called Pachacamac—a name which, in their language, signifies “He who sustains and gives life to the universe.” This title is applicable to the God of the Christians; it is, in fact, only another name for the same deity; and a more suitable name could not be selected from

* Garcilasso: Com. Real. Parte i., Lib. ii., Cap. 5, 6; Lib. 3. Cap. 21.

† Garcilasso, *ubi supra*.

the vocabulary of any language. But, as the Spaniards did not know the signification of that title, and had never heard it applied to the Supreme Being, they rashly concluded that the Pachacamac worshiped by the Peruvians must be the devil!

We suspect, however, that it was the *policy* of the conquerors to represent the religion of the country in the worst possible colors, in order to make a more obvious necessity for the correction of its errors. But if they had succeeded in proving that the Peruvians were worshipers of the Sun, it might still be asked if there could not be a still more objectionable form of idolatry. That object to which a man is chiefly devoted is his God. The Spanish invaders of Peru, as some of their own countrymen testify, were entirely devoted to the pursuit of riches. They worshiped the golden sun of the temple no less than the Peruvians themselves; the only difference was, that the European idolaters chose to melt down this divinity and reduce it to the form of ducats.

The Castilian heroes subjected this unfortunate country to a much worse form of despotism than the government of the Incas. This was the grand political result of the conquest. They compelled the people of Peru to discontinue the worship of Pachacamac, and taught them to adore the Virgin Mary. This was the great religious achievement of the conquerors.

Before the downfall of their empire, the Peruvians were the most moral people in the world, and, (with

due allowance for the unavoidable errors of their faith), the most religious. Peru, before its subjugation, was the happiest country in the world; no land better deserved to be called the terrestrial paradise. But the serpent had crept into its hallowed precincts, and the hour of sorrow and desolation was at hand.



CHAPTER XIII.

DE SOTO IS BASELY DECEIVED BY PIZARRO—AN ATTACK ON THE CITY OF TUMBEZ—THE SPANIARDS ARE DISAPPOINTED—A BOLD ADVENTURE TRIED BY DE SOTO—HIS CONDUCT CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF PIZARRO—DE SOTO'S BATTLE WITH THE MOUNTAINEERS—HIS VICTORY—THE SPOILS OF THE ENEMY—HE DISOBEYS PIZARRO'S ORDERS AND ADVANCES INTO THE COUNTRY—HE DISCOVERS THE GREAT NATIONAL ROAD LEADING TO CUZCO—HE IS SUSPECTED OF AN INTENTION TO REVOLT—HIS CONTEMPTUOUS TREATMENT OF PIZARRO. [A. D. 1533.]

DE SOTO was well acquainted with the faithless and dishonorable character of Francisco Pizarro; he was not surprised, therefore, on his arrival at the island of Puna, to find that he had been allured thither by promises which Pizarro had never intended to fulfill. Hernando Pizarro, (who is called "the legitimate," to distinguish him from the other members of the fraternal league,) already filled that place which had been promised to De Soto. The latter must have felt himself insulted, as well as wronged, by the base and infamous artifice which had been used to entrap him; and it is said that he expostulated, in very plain terms, with Pizarro on this subject. Quintana, the Spanish biog-

rapher of Francisco Pizarro, makes the following remarks in relation to De Soto's arrival:—

“Captain Ferdinand de Soto was considered, from that period, as the second person in the army, although Hernando Pizarro already occupied the post of Lieutenant-General, which had been offered to De Soto in the conferences formerly held in Panama. De Soto dissembled his sense of this indignity with that temperance and presence of mind which characterized him; and his address, capacity and valor, conspicuous on every occasion of importance, quickly won for him the distinguished place which he ever held in the esteem of both Indians and Spaniards. The succors which he brought with him seemed to Pizarro to be sufficient for greater undertakings; with the more reason, because the Spaniards were heartily tired with their fruitless war. These considerations determined Pizarro to quit the island and pass over to the main land.”*

Being thus strengthened and encouraged by the presence of De Soto and his party, Pizarro resolved forthwith to make a descent on the Tumbezines, the people who had formerly succored him in his distresses and treated him with bounteous hospitality. On his first visit to Tumbez, when he was too weak to attempt any act of violence in such a populous town, Pizarro had behaved himself with strict propriety, and all his fol-

* Quintana's Life of Pizarro. *Vide* Mrs. Hodson's English translation, (Blackwood's Edinburgh edition, 1832,) page 151.

lowers were enjoined by their deceitful commander to conduct themselves with equal decorum. At that time, he forbade them to receive any presents of gold, lest it should be suspected that the pursuit of that commodity had brought them into the country.* But while the unsuspecting people were receiving the Spaniards into their houses, and feasting them at their tables, these honored guests were using all their powers of observation to ascertain where the wealth of their generous hosts was deposited, and which of them had the most beautiful wives and daughters. In the hour of festivity, sacred to the rites and offices of friendship, these most unpardonable of all traitors were contriving means for the gratification of their lust and avarice, at the expense of their benefactors.

The time had now come when these worse than fiendish plots could be put into execution. When Pizarro found himself at the head of a force which enabled him to punish his kind friends for their credulous simplicity, he threw off the "livery of heaven," and prepared to serve the devil in his own undisguised and appropriate character. But the people of Tumbez, in the mean time, had heard of the awful villainies which had been perpetrated by the Spaniards on the island of Puna; and, having thus ascertained the true character of their former visitors, they were, in some measure,

* This hypocritical trick of Pizarro is mentioned by all the historians, who cite it as an example of his foresight and sagacity!

prepared to receive them in a proper manner. It was characteristic of Pizarro to manage every thing by fraud and stratagem, when that course was practicable; he did not, therefore, make any open demonstrations of war against the Tumbezines, but sought to approach them once more under the mask of friendship. One part of the island of Puna is separated from the mainland only by a narrow arm of the sea; at this place, Captain Ferdinand de Soto was directed by the commander to cross over on a raft, or balsa, and effect a landing in the immediate neighborhood of Tumbez. It will be observed that, after the arrival of De Soto, all the most dangerous duties were assigned to him; and such was the case in this instance. Hernando Pizarro was ordered to cross on another balsa, and land at some distance from the city. Besides the cavalier who had it in charge, each raft contained two or three common soldiers; and several other rafts, each laden with as many soldiers as it could carry, were sent from the island, to support De Soto and "the legitimate," if the Tumbezines should offer any opposition to their landing. All the Spaniards on the rafts were instructed by the commander to behave peaceably, until a sufficient number of men could be put on shore to take possession of the town. Francis Pizarro was aware that the natives had taken the alarm, and he apprehended, with some reason, that they would repel the advances of his soldiers. He supposed, naturally enough, that if any opposition should be offered by the people of Tumbez, the demonstration

would be made near their city, where De Soto was directed to land. When this captain reached the shore, some of the natives came on to his raft and officiously assisted the Spaniards in mooring it, after which they offered to escort De Soto and his companions to the dwelling of the cacique. But the captain discerned something in their conduct which appeared to be suspicious; wherefore he politely declined their offer of service, and chose to remain on his balsa, to await the arrival of more of his countrymen.* Meanwhile, another raft, carrying Captain Hurtado and three or four Spanish soldiers, had touched another part of the shore. Hurtado and his comrades being less sagacious than De Soto, accepted the proffered civilities of the natives, who conducted them to the woods, and there put them all to death. Francisco Martin, Pedro Pizarro, (one of the commander's bastard brothers,) and Alonzo de Mesa, came on another float to a small island. Here they were assaulted by a party of Indians, but their cries brought some Spaniards, on another raft, to their assistance; they escaped with their lives, but the natives secured their baggage, among which (says Herrera) was "the best part of Francis Pizarro's equipage."

After some skirmishing, all the Spaniards landed; and last of all came the commander himself, with the caravels and the main body of his "soldiers." Soldiers indeed! We call them so, in compliance with the

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iii., Lib. v., Cap. 2.

example of our historiographical predecessors; but it is impossible to have a clear understanding of our narrative, without remembering that the greater number of those men who accompanied Pizarro to Peru, were vagabonds of the lowest degree. As these wretches approached the devoted city, where they hoped to indulge their inclinations for plunder and rapine, without any restriction, their diabolical delight was expressed in shouts and yells of hideously discordant and almost unearthly intonation. But a chilling disappointment awaited them. The place had been abandoned by its inhabitants; and all the riches of the city—the vases, salvers, and other domestic utensils of silver and gold, on which the Spaniards had gazed with rapturous anticipation when they first visited the place, together with all the massive golden decorations of the temples, had been carried away. There was, in fact, no “beauty or booty” on the spot to reward the Christian heroes for their protracted sufferings and toils.

Our gravity is almost disturbed by the artless observations made by Mr. Prescott, in reference to these incidents. “This conduct of the natives of Tumbez, (says he), is not easy to be explained, considering the friendly relations maintained with the Spaniards on their preceding visit.”* If Mr. Prescott is really puzzled by this change in the conduct of the Tumbezines, his extensive researches in the libraries of Spain, (to which, in his

* Prescott's “Conquest of Peru,” Book iii., Chap. 3.

preface, he refers with evident pride and satisfaction,) must have been made to very little purpose. Without crossing the Atlantic in search of information, he might have found a sufficient explanation of the mystery, in the behavior of the Spaniards on the island of Puna, which was separated from Tumbez only by a strait not wider than the river Delaware at Philadelphia. "On this island," according to Jerome Benzos, "the Spaniards were well-entertained, until the murders, rapes and robberies committed by them, compelled the natives to act in their own defense." Among these islanders, there were probably not more than a thousand men able to bear arms; the Spaniards, it is true, were much inferior in numbers, but in other respects, the advantages were all on their side. Their fire-arms and their cavalry, to which the Indians had never been accustomed, soon turned the tide of victory against the natives, and the latter were almost exterminated. A few escaped on their balsas, and sought refuge at Tumbez, to the inhabitants of which place they made known Pizarro's treachery and barbarity, which had driven them from their homes, and massacred their countrymen. Here we have a full explanation of that change in the feelings and conduct of the people of Tumbez, which, in the narratives of Mr. Prescott and some other writers, may indeed appear to be mysterious, for all the facts which could elucidate the story are suppressed.

Greatly disappointed in the main object of his attack

on the Tumbezines, Pizarro now turned his attention toward several towns which, as he had heard, were situated among the mountains, and from which some excellent pillage might be expected. But, considering the bad reputation he had lately earned among the natives of the country, this expedition promised to be somewhat hazardous; and, as his ambition was not of that kind which courts danger, he considered it most prudent to remain where he was, and to send some other person to explore those highlands of Peru. There was but one man among the Spaniards who would be likely to undertake this perilous task; and that, of course, was Ferdinand de Soto. To him Pizarro applied. De Soto cheerfully agreed to try the adventure, and for that purpose placed himself at the head of sixty horsemen and a small number of targeteers.* The mode of warfare or exploration adopted by De Soto was strikingly different from that which had always been practiced by Pizarro. The former, while on his march, did not allow his men to commit any act of unprovoked violence; and, had not the fame of Pizarro's cruelties preceded him, he would have met with nothing but kind and hospitable attentions in his progress through the country. But some of the ill-used Tumbezines had taken refuge among the mountaineers, and they had made them acquainted, no doubt, with the recent behavior of the Spaniards. The consequence was that

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iii., Lib. v., Cap. 2.

a large body of native warriors soon appeared in the field, evidently for the purpose of checking De Soto's advance. The number of the Indians, it is said, was not less than two thousand. De Soto's party did not comprise more than eighty men, sixty of whom were mounted. The Indians derided the small number of their enemies, and doubtless expected to obtain an easy victory. As soon as they gave unmistakable proof of their hostile intentions, by discharging a flight of arrows at the Spaniards, De Soto ordered his cavalry to charge, the ground happening to be very favorable for that purpose. The horsemen, well armed with swords and lances, and protected by their suits of mail, were soon among the natives, cutting them down and spearing them with very little risk or trouble; for the Indians wore no defensive armor, and their only weapons were bows, arrows and slings, which were almost useless in this kind of combat. The natives fought bravely, however; many of them were slain, and a considerable number were taken prisoners. The rest were dispersed; and the Spaniards, finding no more opposition, penetrated through a pass of the mountains, and discovered the great national road which led to the metropolis of the Peruvian empire.* De Soto looked with admiration on this stupendous work of human industry, compared with which all the modern achievements of mechanical skill shrink into utter insignificance. There

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iii., Lib. v., Cap. 2.

were two principal highways in Peru, one of which passed along the low grounds near the coast, and the other extended over the grand plateau, at an elevation of thousands of feet above the level of the sea ; its whole



DE SOTO DISCOVERING THE GREAT NATIONAL ROAD TO PERU.

length being, perhaps, not less than fifteen hundred miles. It connected the capital of Peru with the tributary kingdom of Quito. In its course, it surmounted the most formidable obstacles that Nature could present ; passing over many a mountain torrent and many a chasm of unfathomable depth, along the rugged steeps of the

sierra, and through defiles into which the light of day could scarcely penetrate. This road was not more than twenty feet in breadth, being intended for foot-passengers only. Throughout the whole length it was paved with heavy flags of freestone, united by an asphaltic cement, which, by exposure in the air, became as hard as the stone itself.

While De Soto's attention was engaged with this grand and interesting object, one of his party, named Juan de la Torre, deserted and went back to Pizarro, to whom he declared that De Soto intended to revolt and march into Quito. The truth was, that De Soto had gone much further into the country than Pizarro had directed; and it is a notable circumstance that he never obeyed the orders of that unworthy commander, when his own judgment pointed out a different course. It is another significant fact, that Pizarro never attempted to hold him accountable for his disobedience. With reference to the act of insubordination just mentioned, Herrera says, "no notice of it was taken by Pizarro."

Having discovered the road to the Peruvian metropolis, and obtained from his Indian prisoners much valuable information concerning the country and the government, De Soto now returned to the camp, bringing with him a considerable quantity of golden ornaments, taken from the natives whom he had subdued. To these spoils, we suppose, he considered himself justly entitled by the laws of arms; as the model heroes of ancient chivalry never scrupled to despoil their con-

quered enemies. But if De Soto had learned his morality in a better school, he might have discovered that the usages of civilized warfare are often widely at variance with the plainest dictates of justice, humanity, and common sense.



BLOODHOUNDS CATCHING AN INDIAN GUIDE.

CHAPTER XIV.

DE SOTO RETURNS VICTORIOUS—HE GIVES GOOD COUNSEL TO PIZZARO—THE SPANIARDS DESIRE TO MOVE FORWARD—PIZZARO RESOLVES TO BUILD A CITY—ACCOUNT OF A WONDERFUL “SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION”—THE TOWN OF SAN MIGUEL FOUNDED—ONE OF MR. PRESCOTT’S ERRORS CORRECTED—PIZARRO MAKES DECEITFUL PROFESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP TO THE INCA—HE BECOMES ALARMED, AND IS HALF INCLINED TO TURN BACK—DE SOTO OFFERS TO GO TO THE PERUVIAN COURT—HIS OFFER IS ACCEPTED BY PIZARRO, WHO SENDS A PARTY OF HORSEMEN TO ACCOMPANY HIM—AN INDIAN IS BARBAROUSLY PUT TO THE TORTURE. [A. D. 1529.]

DE SOTO’S successful fight with the mountaineers was really the first act of good soldiery which the Spaniards had performed since they embarked in the Peruvian enterprise. The previous operations of Pizarro and his gang, (as we have remarked before,) scarcely deserved to be called warfare; being nothing more, in fact, than a series of robberies and wholesale assassinations. Pizarro himself began to see the impolicy of his former course, which had surrounded him with enemies, and would make it impossible for him to escape from the country, if fortune should compel him to attempt a retreat. He was inclined therefore to listen to the pru-

dent advice of De Soto, who recommended him to conciliate the natives, if that were possible after all the provocations they had received. De Soto likewise urged Pizarro to advance toward the city of Cuzco, the residence of the Peruvian court, where the Spaniards might reasonably expect to meet with kind treatment, if their conduct deserved it. But it required some time for Pizarro to determine on that mode of proceeding.

The moral effect of De Soto's recent victory was to infuse something like a genuine military spirit into a majority of Pizarro's troops; or, to take the more probable account given by Quintana: "The spoils which De Soto's companions had acquired in their late encounter with the Indians, and the traces of gold and silver which they had discovered, excited the eagerness and the hopes of their companions when they returned to camp, and produced a general desire to press forward."*

The mind of the commander, however, was occupied with another project. He resolved to found a Spanish city in that neighborhood, to commemorate a very singular event which had taken place a few months prior to De Soto's arrival, at the time Pizarro and his companions were engaged in murdering the defenseless inhabitants of Puna. These wretched islanders, it seems, made a faint resistance. Pizarro's men, who scarcely expected any demonstration of that kind, began to be disheartened and were half inclined to retire from the

* Quintana: "Life of Pizarro."

work of slaughter. But, at this critical moment, a company of angels appeared over the heads of the Spaniards, whom they urged, with the most expressive gestures, to persevere in their glorious task. At the same time, a darker figure, supposed to be the arch-enemy of mankind, was seen hovering over the Indians, as if desirous of protecting them from the zealous fury of the Castilians. Among the spiritual champions who, (very unaccountably to us,) appeared on the behalf of the Spaniards in this contest, was one whom Pizarro judged to be St. Michael. As an acknowledgment of his just appreciation of the good service rendered to him on the occasion just spoken of, the grateful hero resolved to build a town, for the express purpose of dignifying it with the name of his archangelic patron and protector.*

This story is told with extreme sobriety by several writers of good credit, and Mr. Prescott himself gives it a place in his history of the "Conquest," though he seems to have some doubt respecting the reality of the miracle. We freely admit that the narrative, as marvelous as it is, does not appear much more incredible to us than many other stories which have found a place in the histories of the Spanish invasion of America.

It is certain that Pizarro had the sacrilegious audacity to make use of this pretended miracle to confirm his followers in the belief that they were under the special protection of the Divine Being and his ministerial

* Montezinus, *Annales*, a. 1530.

spirits. The truth is, this man could do nothing without a trick; and his artifices seldom had any of that daring character which belongs to the stratagems of war, or any of that knavish drollery which is so much admired in the professional peccadillos of our traveling Yankee merchants.

Of course it will be suspected that Pizarro had some other reasons for building a town in that neighborhood, besides his earnest desire to pay a deserved compliment to "San Miguel." "He wished," says one of the historians, "to seek out some commodious place for a settlement, which might afford him the means of regular communication with the colonies, and be a place of strength to which he himself might retreat in case of disaster."

Three or four weeks were consumed in fixing on a proper location for the contemplated town. At last he found an eligible site in the rich valley of Tangerala, thirty leagues south of Tumbez; and here the foundations of the city of San Miguel were forthwith commenced. There was no scarcity of building materials; for the neighboring woods afforded a good supply of timber, and quarries of granite were found in the adjacent fields. The first buildings erected were a church and a hall of justice, to attest the pious inclinations and equitable purposes of the founder. At a short distance from the house of worship, and directly opposite to the seat of justice was a large magazine, intended to contain the plunder, and the arms and ammunition to be used

in collecting it. A municipal government was organized, the members of which, with respect to their moral qualifications, might bear a comparison, we dare say, with many of the official dignitaries of our own republican cities.

All these arrangements being finished to Pizarro's satisfaction, that discreet commander had no further pretense for delaying his march into the country. De Soto, and some others of the more chivalric sort among Pizarro's company, really had an impatient desire to go forward; but the slightest examination of the record, will convince any man that Pizarro himself was not disposed to be precipitate in this movement. His prudence, indeed, was not only excessive, but ill-timed; for, as matters then stood, it was much safer to advance than to retreat or to stand still. His villainies had stirred up the whole country behind him, and produced an angry excitement among the natives which would, most probably, have caused the destruction of his whole party, if he had attempted to turn back.

Mr. Prescott seems to think that Pizarro's advance toward the Peruvian metropolis was almost too daring to be credible; he therefore considers it necessary to apologize for his hero's temerity. Truly the act would have been rash enough, if Pizarro had approached the capital in a threatening attitude; or if he had given the Inca any intimation of a hostile purpose. But such an insane exhibition of bravery was far enough from Pizarro's character. Charles of Sweden himself, the most daunt-

less of all heroes, would have scouted the idea of overturning the Peruvian empire with such a force as Pizarro then possessed. The whole number of Spaniards in Peru at that time did not exceed two hundred and fifty, and nearly one-fourth of them had been left to garrison the town of San Miguel. Who can imagine that Francisco Pizarro designed to oppose the whole army of the Inca, comprising at least fifty thousand men, with a force of less than two hundred Spaniards? The thought is preposterous; and the whole tenor of the story proves that Pizarro approached the Inca Atahuallapa, not with the defiant manifestations of a warlike intent, but with every demonstration of abject and servile submission. He sent a native interpreter with a message to the Indian monarch, signifying that the commander of the Spaniards was coming to kiss the Inca's hands, and to deliver an embassy from the King of Spain.* He thus claimed the protection which every sovereign is bound to extend to the ambassador of a foreign power; and, in doing so deceitfully, he compromised the honor of his "royal master," while he gave another proof of his own unscrupulous rascality. He directed the messenger to inform Atahuallapa, that the Spaniards had been sent by their king to assist him in the war in which he was then engaged.† In due time the messenger returned, accompanied by one

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, Dec. iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 2.

† Quintana: "Life of Pizarro."

of the Inca's officers, who brought Pizarro a present, consisting of two stoneware drinking-cups, curiously carved, and a small parcel of perfumery. Such meager gifts from so great a monarch excited Pizarro's suspicions, but, with his customary dissimulation, he professed to be delighted with these dubious tokens of Royal favor. He charged the government officer to assure the Inca, that the Spaniards were his most sincere friends, and his most humble servants; repeating that they had come over the seas to bring a message of peace and good-will from the King of Castile to his brother monarch, the mighty Emperor of Peru.

But, although any man, who was conscious of no crime and of no evil intentions, would have presented himself boldly to the Peruvian sovereign, Pizarro began to have fresh apprehensions concerning the reception he was likely to meet with at Cuzco. He therefore ordered another halt, and held a consultation with his officers, with reference to the course of conduct which was best suited to their present circumstances. The prevailing opinion was, that the Inca meditated some treachery, and that he would certainly put them all to death as soon as they placed themselves in his power. Pizarro himself must have inclined to this belief, as he expressed his unwillingness to proceed any further, without first sending an Indian spy to ascertain the Inca's intentions.* De Soto alone was confident that the Inca's

* Quintana : " Life of Pizarro," *vide* English translation, published by William Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1832, page 170.

designs were fair and honorable. "It is not necessary for him to use treachery with us," said De Soto, "for he could easily overpower us with numbers, were he so disposed. Besides, we have heard from some of his subjects that he is a just and merciful prince, and the courtesy he has already shown to us is some proof of his good-will. But why should we deliberate, since we have no choice but to go forward? If you attempt to retreat now, the Inca will see in that movement a proof of your false professions; and when his suspicions are once aroused, you will find it impossible to escape from his country."

Hernando Pizarro, the legitimate brother of Francisco, and a man of ruffianly manners and brutal character,* hastily interrupted De Soto by demanding if he was ready to give proof of his reliance on the Inca's good faith, by appearing before him as the envoy of the Spaniards. De Soto regarded the elder Pizarro with stern composure, as he replied: "At a convenient time, Don Hernando, I may convince you that it is neither civil nor safe to call my sincerity in question. I wish to assure you that I have as much confidence in the Inca's honor as I have in the integrity of any man in this company, not excepting the commander or yourself. I perceive that your inclinations would carry you backward. You may all return when and how you please, or remain where you are; but, before you proposed the question,

* Oviedo, *Hist. de Las Indias* : Parte iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 1.

I had made up my mind to present myself to Atahualpa; and I shall certainly do so, without asking for the assistance or the permission of any of your party."

Hernando Pizarro answered this speech only with a scowl of bitter malignity; but the commander, with that hollow smile which was habitual with him, commended De Soto's design, and assured him that he should not go unattended or without the proper credentials. He directed twenty-four chosen horsemen and an Indian interpreter, called Filipillo, or Little Philip, to accompany the brave cavalier on his voluntary mission.* As this Filipillo will play an important part in some of the scenes which will hereafter be presented to our readers, it may be advisable to give some account of him in this place. On Pizarro's first visit to Tumbez, this Indian youth, who was then about eighteen years of age, attached himself to the Spaniards, and willingly returned with them to Panama, where he embraced the Catholic faith, and was baptized by the name which has been mentioned above. He continued with his Spanish friends for several years, during which time he received suitable intellectual culture from Father Luque, surnamed "The Fool"; and his moral training, as we suppose, was managed by Francisco Pizarro himself. Thus happily accomplished, Filipillo returned with Pizarro to Peru, where he made himself extremely useful to his patron by insinuating himself among his unsuspecting

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 3.

countrymen, and serving the Spaniards in the capacity of spy and informer. Perceiving that he gained favor, and was rewarded in proportion to the amount of information he was able to give, he never failed to have a good supply of this marketable commodity, much of which was undoubtedly of his own manufacture. Besides, when Pizarro wished to have any pretense for executing any deed of sanguinary cruelty, it was merely necessary to let Filipillo understand what was *suspected*, and the strongest confirmations were presently forthcoming. Such was the process used in finding the required occasion for the massacre of the people of Puna; and Filipillo's agency will be discoverable in some other transactions which will soon come under our notice.

When De Soto had departed on his mission to Atahuallapa, the Pizarros began to act with more freedom in the indulgence of their peculiar tastes. The commander had appeared to be convinced by De Soto's representations that it would be impossible to pass through the country, or even to remain in it, if the dishonest and outrageous practices of the Spaniards were not restrained. Francisco Pizarro acknowledged the truth of this suggestion, and he strictly charged his men, in De Soto's presence, to abstain from all acts of aggression against the people of the country.* But De Soto and his company were scarcely out of sight, when a plundering party, commanded by Hernando Pizarro, crossed the

* Oviedo, Hist. de Las Indias : Parte iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 2.

river, on the bank of which the Spaniards were now encamped. They passed this stream by swimming their horses; and the inhabitants of the villages on the opposite shore were so much affrighted at the approach of these strange people, that they fled and left their houses to be despoiled by the robbers. One of the retreating Indians was pursued by some horsemen, who captured him and brought him to Hernando Pizarro. The "Legitimate" asked the captive many questions concerning the intentions of Atahuallapa; but the Indian professed to have no knowledge of the Inca's designs, and this afterward proved to be the truth. Nevertheless, Hernando Pizarro ordered the prisoner to be put to the torture, which was done in the customary manner, by



A PERUVIAN PUT TO THE TORTURE.

enveloping the feet in cotton saturated with oil, and setting fire to this highly combustible preparation. In his agony, the wretched sufferer confessed whatever his

barbarous tormentors required; admitting, among other matters, that Atahuallapa had devoted all the Spaniards to destruction, and that he was marching forward to execute that design. Two days after (says Quintana) the entire falsity of this statement was made evident; "and so the torture inflicted on the Indian proved to be a superfluous act of cruelty."^{*}

From what has just been related, it will appear that the Pizarros and their gang were so confirmed in their predatory habits, that no considerations of prudence, and no circumstances of danger, could restrain them when an opportunity to obtain booty was presented. The untimely plundering excursion of Hernando Pizarro, to which we have just referred, made the mission of De Soto more perilous; as it was probable that some intelligence of the Spanish robberies would be communicated to the Inca.

* Quintana: "Life of Pizarro," Edinburgh Translation, p. 169.

CHAPTER XV.

DE SOTO'S JOURNEY IN SEARCH OF THE INCA—HE ATTRACTS CROWDS OF ADMIRERS—HIS WONDERFUL FEATS OF HORSEMANSHIP—THE HOUSES OF THE PERUVIANS DESCRIBED—THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE PEOPLE—THEIR DRESS—FEMALE EXTRAVAGANCE NOT POSSIBLE AMONG THEM—PERUVIAN CIVILIZATION—MAGNIFICENT PUBLIC WORKS—PERUVIAN JUSTICE—PIZARRO AND SOME OF HIS CONFEDERATES ARE DISMAYED—SPANISH AND AMERICAN HISTORIOGRAPHERS CHARGED WITH FALSEHOOD—DE SOTO'S REASONS FOR SERVING UNDER THE VILLAINOUS PIZARRO—DE SOTO'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH ISABELLA—HER CONSTANCY—DE SOTO'S GUILT. [A. D. 1537-38.]

WE left Ferdinand de Soto and his companions on their way to the Peruvian camp; which, according to the information they had received, was now situated at a place called Caxamalca.* As the cavaliers proceeded through the country, their appearance attracted crowds of admiring spectators to the sides of the road. The horses were no less objects of curiosity than the Spaniards themselves; as these quadrupeds never existed on the American Continent until they were carried thither

* This town is now called Caxamarca; its location is about 72 miles N. E. of Truxillo.

by the European discoverers. De Soto rode in front of his troop; he was mounted on a white charger of extraordinary size; and his glittering armor, of which he wore a complete suit, dazzled the eyes of the Peruvians as they gazed on him with feelings of awe and astonishment. The feats of superior horsemanship, which he occasionally exhibited, were not lost on this artless multitude. At one place, his path was intercepted by a brook which, with its oozy margins, presented a breadth of about twenty feet; but De Soto's steed cleared the



DE SOTO'S CHARGER JUMPING A BROOK TWENTY FEET WIDE.

obstacle with a single bound.* As the noble cavalier passed the throng of his Peruvian admirers, he bowed gracefully on either side; and the people, who appeared

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, Dec. iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 3. Balboa says that De Soto's charger could take a leap of twenty feet, and that with a knight in armor on his back: *Hist. du Peru*, Cap. 22.

to understand his courteous gestures, answered, with intelligible murmurs of applause.

After a ride of five or six hours, the traveling party reached a town called Caxas, at the entrance of which some hundreds of Indians were drawn up in hostile array. But De Soto having, through his interpreter, explained his pacific intentions, the Peruvians laid down their arms, and gave the Spaniards a cordial reception. After being supplied with refreshments by the people of this town, the travelers proceeded to a much larger and more populous place called Guanacabama, which was situated on the great highway of the Incas. The principal houses of this district were substantially built of hewn stones, joined together in the most artificial manner. Several of the buildings were of large size; each house containing a number of rooms, and all exhibiting the signs of cleanliness, good order, and domestic comfort. No symptoms of extreme poverty, idleness, and dissipation were visible in that pagan city. "All the men (says Herrera,) appeared to be cleanly and rational, and all the women, modest."* In those streets, there was no display of reeling inebriety or flaunting prostitution. No crowds of unoccupied vagabonds gathered at the corners to stare virtue and decency out of countenance. We are told by the author just quoted that the people of both sexes were diligently employed in their houses;

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 3.

some were engaged in manufacturing the cloth of which their garments were composed, others busied themselves in a variety of handicraft operations, and the females appeared to be absorbed in their domestic duties. All enjoyed the blessings of competence; for, as we have shown in a preceding chapter, privation and destitution were unfelt and unimaginable evils under the government of the Peruvian Incas. A moral and virtuous people, subjected to the worst form of government, must be incomparably happier than a vicious and corrupt population under the most faultless political institutions that human wisdom ever devised.

Extravagance in *dress*, which, in other countries, is not only a serious inconvenience to private families, but a great public affliction likewise, was a vice in which the ancient Peruvians could not easily indulge; for all their woven fabrics were of home manufacture, and these textures were not of sufficient variety to stimulate the fantastic tastes of youthful inconsideration and female vanity.

The form of the Peruvian dress was somewhat various in different districts. The men generally wore garments which bore some resemblance in shape to the kilts and trews of the Scotch highlanders. A kind of frock coat, or tunic, made of cotton or woollen cloth, according to the season, covered the upper parts of the person, and the lower extremities were protected by long hose or leggings composed of the same materials. The gowns of the women descended almost to their ankles; and, in

form, much resembled those worn by the female peasants of Spain.* It appears that both sexes occasionally wore cloaks or mantels, which must have been similar in construction to those of the ancient Jews and modern Arabs. These garments were nothing more than square or oblong pieces of cloth, each two or three yards wide, with an aperture in the middle for the reception of the head. Both men and women wore ornaments of gold and silver on their heads and breasts; and people of all classes bound narrow woolen fillets, comprising a variety of colors, around their brows. By the form of these bandages, and the arrangement of the colors, the lineage of the wearer and the place of his nativity could be distinguished.†

At the town of Guancabama, De Soto discovered the most satisfactory evidences of Peruvian civilization. The great public road which passed through this place far surpassed in magnitude and utility any public work which the enterprise of his own countrymen had ever attempted. Besides being paved with slabs of granite throughout the whole length—that is to say, for fifteen hundred miles—it was shaded with trees planted expressly for that purpose, and small houses were placed at convenient distances for the repose and refreshment of travelers. All these arrangements were made at the expense of the Government; for the greater portion

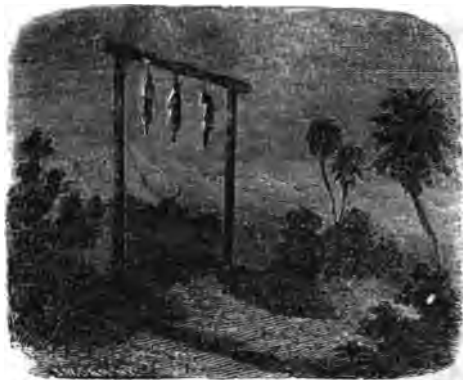
* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 1.

† Herrera, as above.

of the Inca's revenue was appropriated to such objects as were calculated to promote the comfort and welfare of the people.*

Among other signs of the Incas's good and efficient government, De Soto saw three malefactors hanging near the entrance of the town. They had been executed for committing outrages upon several women, and unquestionably met with the just reward of their crimes.†

While he remained at this place, De Soto learned from one of the Royal officers that the Inca, with his



PERUVIANS HANGING AT GUANCABAMA.

army, was then quartered at Caxamalca, on the farther side of the Cordilleras. The Spanish cavalier was about to proceed thither, when he was met by an envoy from

* Dec. de la Aud. Real.

† Xeres., "Conq. l'eru," ap. Barcia, Tom. iii., p. 188.

the Peruvian monarch, who was charged with a message for the Spaniards. This ambassador was a man of high rank; he was attended by several servants laden with presents for the strangers, among which were two stone fountains, in the form of fortresses, and several pieces of fine cloth embroidered with gold and silver. The Inca's messenger earnestly entreated De Soto to return with him to the Spanish camp; and, as it seemed likely that this message would satisfy the doubts and remove the fears of Pizarro, he determined to comply with the envoy's request.

Accordingly, De Soto, with his troop of horsemen, escorted the Inca's officer to Pizarro's encampment, where, as Mr. Prescott says, the Spanish commander had been waiting, "in great uneasiness of mind," for De Soto's return.* The information which De Soto had collected during his journey did not remove Pizarro's "uneasiness," or afford unmingled pleasure to his company. Of course, they were delighted to hear of the appearances of wealth which the traveler had seen in the Peruvian towns; but the evidences of the Inca's power which De Soto had observed, did not excite any feeling of gratification among his auditors. Still less agreeable to them was De Soto's account of the monarch's inflexible justice, exhibited in the punishment of the three malefactors near the gate of Guancabama. A chilling sense of insecurity was experienced by many

* Prescott's "Conquest of Peru," Book iii., Chap. 3.

of the Spanish heroes, when they ascertained that the gallows was one of the institutions of Peru. Perhaps their discomposure would have been still greater, if they could have suspected that some of their misdoings on the outskirts of the Inca's dominions had come to the knowledge of the Peruvian sovereign. But, without being aware of that fact, Pizarro and some of his companions were so much dismayed by the intelligence they had received concerning Atahualpa's power and the vast resources of his kingdom, that the Inca's friendly greetings, brought by his messenger, failed to reassure them.

Indeed, the conduct of Atahualpa here requires some explanation. He had really heard that the Spaniards had robbed and murdered some of his subjects, and he certainly intended to call them to an account for these actions; but, in accordance with the true principles of justice, he determined not to condemn them until he should hear what they had to say in their own defense. It might be that his subjects had given the first provocation, or that the facts might have been otherwise misrepresented in the uncertain rumors which had reached him. For the purpose of having a full explanation of the alleged misconduct of the Spaniards, he now requested them to meet him at Caxamalca. The several accounts of our historical authorities in this part of the story are so completely at variance, and so evidently false in many particulars, that we are compelled to deal with probabilities instead of facts. Something

may be gained in our search after truth, by freeing the narratives of the Spanish writers and their American copyists, from the obviously false coloring which they have laid upon the record with most inartistic clumsiness. The pretense made by Herrera, Quintana, Prescott, and some others, that Pizarro's advance toward the camp of Atahualpa was a hostile or military movement, is an evident misrepresentation. It was not hostile, or at least not openly so, because, according to the admission of all authorities, the Spaniards approached the Inca with professions of friendship and offers of alliance. It was not a military movement, because there was no declaration of war, and because Pizarro represented himself as a pacific ambassador of the King of Spain. In these circumstances, if the Spaniards intended war, they were not soldiers, but spies, and were liable to the punishment which martial law awards to traitors of that character.

Again, it is something worse than a historical white lie to pretend that Pizarro's expedition into Peru was either a brave or a well-conducted enterprise. If it had really been a warlike demonstration, it would have been an act of madness; and maniacal rashness is not courage. But the truth is, that no valor or good soldiership was required to enable Pizarro to pass through the whole country. The uniform kindness and hospitality of the people made him perfectly safe until his own reckless villainies stirred up opposition, and exposed him to some danger. All his perils were of his own manufacture.

With respect to the good management of his enterprise, we may have something more to say hereafter.

If we wish to have a clear understanding of this branch of history, we must forget that Pizarro was a great hero, a mighty conqueror, a zealous Christian, a good general, or any thing else, in fact, that mankind ought to love, admire, or respect. If ever we have entertained such opinions of the man, we have been egregiously deceived, as the reader who follows us but a little further through these pages may be convinced, if his doubts on this subject are not quite removed already.

But the question may now arise, how Ferdinand de Soto, whom we have represented as a knight of the "Old School," and a man of honorable proclivities, could consent to be the colleague or accessory of such a person as Francisco Pizarro. We have given a partial explanation of this mystery in a former part of our narrative. It must be remembered that De Soto received all his military education in a school where violence and wrong were inculcated as moral duties. For the space of sixteen years, his evil destiny had constantly associated him with men whose trade was rapine and butchery. For sixteen years he had been striving after military distinction, and whatever else was necessary to place him in a position where he might claim the hand of Isabella de Bovadilla with any chance of success. Recently, his epistolary correspondence with that lady

had been subjected to no restrictions, except those difficulties and delays which, at that time, were incidental to all communications between Europe and America. De Soto had received from Isabella reiterated assurances of her constancy. In view of all the circumstances, this was more than he had any right or reason to expect; but it was painfully evident to him that the prospect of his union with De Avila's daughter was still remote and doubtful. All seemed to depend on the success of his present undertaking; but it is no easy matter to determine what he really expected or intended to accomplish by co-operating with Pizarro in Peru. We have the clearest evidence in history that some of the most villainous designs of that black-hearted commander were carefully concealed from De Soto. It is nevertheless true, that Pizarro's execrable projects could never have been accomplished without De Soto's assistance. The Machiavellian bastard was deficient in that courage, and indeed in that sagacious policy, which were requisite to carry out his plans. He was often indebted, in cases of the greatest emergency, to the valor and good counsels of De Soto, which sustained him in circumstances of extreme peril and extricated him from his most distressing embarrassments.

We are now about to relate some of the blackest transactions that the records of human turpitude can exhibit. That Ferdinand de Soto was more or less implicated in these transactions is not to be disputed,

and we have no wish to conceal any part of the truth. In the absence of all certain information on the subject, the extent of De Soto's guilt is merely a matter of conjecture; but not one atom of the light which our researches can throw on this dark page of history shall be intercepted by that partiality which a biographer may be supposed to feel for the subject of his narration.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GUILTY FEARS OF PIZARRO—HIS INFAMOUS DUPLICITY—
 PROOFS OF THE INCA'S FRIENDLY DISPOSITION TO THE SPAN-
 IARDS—HE SENDS THEM PROVISIONS—MR. PRESCOTT'S ERRONE-
 OUS STATEMENTS—THE SPANIARDS ENTER CAXAMALCA—DE
 SOTO VISITS THE INCA—HIS KIND RECEPTION—ATAHUALLAPA
 PROMISES TO RETURN THE VISIT—DE SOTO SHOWS THE INCA
 SOME SPECIMENS OF HIS HORSEMANSHIP—PIZARRO'S DIABOLI-
 CAL PLOT—HAD DE SOTO A PART IN IT? [A. D. 1532.]

THE Inca Atahualpa, we must remember, had sent a messenger to inform the Spaniards that he would give them an audience at the town of Caxamalca, where he was then stationed. We are told that Pizarro heroically determined to accept the Inca's invitation; notwithstanding, (as all the narrators confess,) the Spanish commander was much disturbed by the prospect of meeting with a warmer reception than he desired from the chief magistrate of Peru. In Pizarro's circumstances, any man who was conscious of no crime and of no evil intentions, would have moved forward without any hesitation or any dread of the Inca's displeasure. It appears then that Pizarro's apprehensions were precisely such as any criminal may be supposed to feel, when approaching

the tribunal of retributive justice. That his fears were groundless, however, will be manifest to every one who examines the histories with a disposition to discover the truth. So far was Atahualpa from any intention to molest the Spaniards, or to treat them with unmerited severity, that he signally failed in the duty which he owed to his subjects and himself, by neglecting to punish the intruders as their culpability deserved.

Mr. Robertson says, "Pizarro's declaration of his pacific intentions so far removed all the Inca's fears, that he determined to give him a friendly reception. In consequence of this resolution, the Spaniards were allowed to march in tranquillity across the sandy desert between St. Michael and Motupè, where the most feeble effort of an enemy, added to the unavoidable distresses which they had suffered in passing through that comfortless region, might have proved fatal to them."^{*}

The historian might have added, that Atahualpa by his omission to meet the Spaniards in the passes of the Sierra, gave a still stronger proof of the reliance which he placed on their deceitful promises of peace. "When they came to the foot of the mountain," says Herrera, "the horsemen led their horses up; and, about noon, they came to a fortress, seated on a high summit, on so difficult and dangerous a pass that it looked like going

* Robertson, Hist. Am., Vol. ii., Book vi., page 170.

up-stairs, and yet they met with no opposition; which was very pleasing to the Spaniards. That fort had an enclosure of hewn stone, and the rock on all sides, except only the pass, was upright.”*



DE SOTO PASSING THROUGH THE DEFILES OF THE SIERRA.

To this account Quintana adds: “They marveled much that Atahuallapa had left this point forsaken, since a hundred resolute men might from thence have routed an army, by merely hurling stones upon them. But it

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 2.

was not extraordinary that the Inca, who, according to all appearance, expected them in peace, should not have guarded that precipice, nor obstructed their road.”*

These quotations will convince us that Pizarro's horrifying apprehensions of danger were nothing more than the phantasmal creations of a guilty conscience.

When the Spaniards reached the summit of the Sierra, messengers came to them from the Inca, bringing ten head of cattle, or lamas, for their subsistence. At the same time, the Inca's servants promised Pizarro, in the name of their master, that he should be well supplied with provisions during the remainder of his route; and this promise was strictly fulfilled. But all this was insufficient to tranquillize the perturbed spirit of the gallant commander, who even now (as we may judge from the unwary admissions of his panegyrists) had some thoughts of retracing his steps! Though he had started with the avowed purpose of proceeding expeditiously to the Inca's camp, he halted four days at Motupè, without being able to assign any reason for the delay.† Mr. Prescott himself acknowledges that this dilatory behavior of the brave soldier is almost “unaccountable;” and such indeed would have been the case, if Mr. Prescott's portraiture of this man had been a genuine photograph. But if Truth, with her sunbeam pencil, were to give us a picture of Mr. Pres-

* Quintana, “Life of Pizarro,” Hodson's Eng. Trans., p. 172.

† Prescott's “Conquest of Peru,” Vol. I., Book iii., Chap. 3, p. 375.

cott's hero, we should be at no loss to account for any of his faltering, irresolute or pusillanimous conduct.

Our eminent American historian represents the journey of the Spaniards to Caxamalca as dangerous and troublesome in a very high degree. Possibly they met with some difficulties while crossing the mountains; but Quintana tells us that, "in the other parts of their route, the traveling was easy and unimpeded."* As Pizarro was prudent enough, at this time, to commit no offenses against the inhabitants, he was well received in every village; the people supplying him with every thing that his comfort required.† In view of these facts, the reader will perceive how unnecessary and absurd is the following speech, which Mr. Prescott imagines that Pizarro made to his followers:

"Let every one of you," said the bold cavalier, "take heart and go forward, like a good soldier, nothing daunted by the smallness of your numbers. For, in the greatest extremity, God ever fights for his own; and doubt not that he will humble the pride of the heathen, and bring him to the knowledge of the true faith, the great end and object of the Conquest."‡

This morsel of military eloquence was originally reported and *invented*, no doubt, by Oviedo, whose gossiping peculiarities are sufficiently notorious. Herrera

* Quintana: "Life of Pizarro," Eng. Trans., p. 170.

† Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 2.

‡ Prescott's "Conquest of Peru," Book iii., Chap. 3.

copies the speech, omitting some of its most shocking profanity; but Mr. Prescott not only gives us a full transcript from the original draft, but adds some important improvements of his own. After a careful examination of the records, we are convinced that Pizarro was so far from delivering such an animating address to his associates, that he himself was almost literally dragged forward by his brother Hernando and De Soto.

But, as all agonies must have an end, the journey was finished at last; the travelers left the misty mountain tops behind them, and descended into the delicious valley of Caxamalca. As they approached the central point of Peruvian civilization, the Spaniards observed the most decisive signs of improvement, both in the face of the country and in the appearance of the people. Here the land was in the highest state of cultivation, the architecture was of a superior order, and in the appearance and manners of the inhabitants was exhibited a high degree of polish and refinement.

Mr. Prescott says, "It was late in the afternoon of the fifteenth of November, 1532, when the conquerors entered Caxamalca." Conquerors! In the name of Heaven, what had these men done to deserve such a title? We have seen that Pizarro approached Atahualpa with the deprecatory fawning of a spaniel which expects to be castigated for some fault. Sometimes he represents himself to the Inca as an ambassador, sometimes as a Christian missionary. On these false pretenses, he obtains the Inca's protection and his per-



THE BEACH AT PEARL AND HERMES BAY, 1842

寫於一八四二年，即美法兩國在珍珠港與海軍團交戰。

THE BEACH AT PEARL AND HERMES BAY, 1842

mission to enter a certain town. And yet, as soon as he places a foot in that town, Mr. Prescott crowns him with the wreath of victory, and calls on the historic Muse to celebrate his triumph!

When they entered Caxamalca, the Spaniards were conducted to a large public building, which the Inca had caused to be prepared for their accommodation. This building was situated on one side of the public square; a fact which the reader should bear in mind, in order to have a clear understanding of what follows. The place assigned to Pizarro and his company for their temporary abode was part of a strong fortress, where they could have easily defended themselves against far superior numbers. This fact alone will prove that Atahualpa did not intend to attack and massacre them in their quarters, as the Spaniards afterward, with equal folly and falsehood, asserted. The greater probability is, that he placed them in that strong fort, to give them a better assurance of security, as the Inca had heard of the apprehensions of Pizarro; for that brave and discreet commander was unable to conceal his fears from Atahualpa's messengers.

The Inca, as we have stated before, had lately been engaged in a war, and he had not yet disbanded his troops. The larger part of his army, however, was stationed in a distant quarter of the kingdom. He was now encamped, with a few of his soldiers, about a league from the town to which the Spaniards had been invited. Pizarro, whose mind was still harassed by doubts

and fears, requested De Soto to visit the Inca at his camp, and inform him that the Spaniards had arrived. Accordingly, De Soto, attended by a party of fifteen horsemen and the interpreter Filipillo, galloped toward Atahuallapa's camp, the location of which had been pointed out to him by some of the citizens of Caxamalca. As he approached the Inca's quarters, De Soto saw a considerable space of ground covered with tents, among which the splendidly decorated pavilion of the monarch was conspicuous. As the cavalier drew nearer to the encampment, the Peruvian soldiers beheld with admiration the mixture of fierceness and docility displayed by the steed on which he rode. He informed the guard that he came on an embassy to the Inca, from "his friend and servant, the governor of the Christians." Such was the message with which De Soto had been charged by Pizarro. Soon after, Atahuallapa came forth from his tent, and seated himself on a gorgeous throne which had been placed for him by his attendants. De Soto alighted from his horse, and having respectfully saluted the Inca, he proceeded to deliver his message as follows:—

"I am sent by my commander, Don Francisco Pizarro, who desires to be admitted to your presence, and to give you an account of the causes which brought him to this country, and other matters which it may behoove your Majesty to know. He humbly entreats you to visit him this night or to-morrow at Caxamalca, as he wishes to make you an offer of his services, and to de-

liver the message which has been committed to him by his sovereign, the King of Castile.”

When this speech was repeated to the Inca by the interpreter, Atahuallapa replied through the same medium that he accepted the friendly offers of the Christians, and would grant them the desired interview on the following morning. He then directed his servants to present refreshments to De Soto and his company. The favorite liquor of the country—a distillation of Indian corn, called *chica*—was offered to the Spaniards in golden goblets. The appearance and manners of De Soto seemed to make a favorable impression on Atahuallapa; and the Spanish cavalier was no less pleased with the kindness and condescension of the Indian monarch. Atahuallapa was then about thirty years of age. In person, he was above the middle height, and very well formed. His countenance was handsome; but the expression was one of sadness, as if he had known affliction. There was nothing austere or forbidding in his demeanor; and when he addressed the strangers, the gentleness and courtesy of his manners were calculated to gain the confidence of every heart, the accesses of which were not guarded by cruelty and deceit. Never was a man more vilely calumniated than this unfortunate prince; but happily his slanderers stand self-convicted before the world. The glaring inconsistency of their fabrications proves that their ingenuity was not equal to their malice.

De Soto observed that his noble charger, which stood

pawing the ground at a short distance from the Inca's tent, was an object of particular interest to the sovereign, who had never seen such an animal before. As an acknowledgment of the courtesy with which he had been treated, the cavalier mounted his steed, gave him the rein, and exhibited to the Inca a specimen of the quadruped's speed, by coursing around the large level plain on which the camp was situated. Atahuallopa seemed to be delighted with the swift and graceful movements



DE SOTO'S HORSEMANSHIP BEFORE THE INCA.

of the horse, as the rider wheeled him about and displayed all his capabilities to the best advantage. De Soto then advanced toward the Inca at full speed, and when within a few feet of the throne, stopped the horse so suddenly as almost to throw him back on his haunches.

Some of the Peruvian officers who stood around Atahualpa, started back, as if alarmed at the rapid approach of that strange creature, whose appearance and movements had filled them with admiration. The Inca reproved his courtiers for exhibiting such signs of timidity before the strangers; and it is said that he himself was not discomposed in the least, although the flying charger advanced so near to his person that the warm breath of the animal moved the fringe of the *borla* or fillet, the badge of Peruvian royalty which the monarch wore on his brow.*

When De Soto was about to leave the Royal presence, Atahualpa said: "Tell your companions that I am keeping a fast to-day, and cannot accept their invitation immediately; but I will certainly come to them to-morrow. Possibly I may be attended by a large retinue, and some of my people may be armed, but let not that give you any uneasiness. It is my desire to cultivate your friendship and that of the King who sent you; and I think that I have already given sufficient proof that no harm is intended to you, though your captain, as I am informed, is inclined to mistrust me. If you think that it will please him better, I will come to meet him with but a few attendants, and these unarmed." De Soto, with all the warmth of sincerity, assured the Inca that no man could justly suspect the integrity of

* This incident is related, with little variation, by all the historians.

his purposes ; “and as for your Majesty’s proposal to come unarmed,” said he, “I offer you no advice on the subject. In this matter, you must use your best judgment.” De Soto then made his obeisance, and set out on his return to Caxamalca. When he arrived at this place, and had given an account of his mission to Pizarro, the latter, it is said, called all his officers to a consultation. It was suggested by Pizarro himself, as the report goes, that the Inca, if circumstances happened to be favorable, should be seized by the Spaniards and detained as a hostage, to enforce the submission of the Peruvian people. The success of this plan depended altogether on the strength of that filial attachment for their sovereign, which was supposed to be a national characteristic of the Peruvians. Their apprehensions for his personal safety, it was thought, would make them yield, without resistance, to the proposed usurpation of the Spaniards.

The contrivance was a bold one, undoubtedly ; and, on that account, it is hard to believe that Francisco Pizarro was its originator. His brother Hernando was a more resolute villain, and he was sufficiently guileful to contrive such a plot, and ruffian-like enough to put it into execution.* But supposing that Francisco was really entitled to all the credit and applause which he receives from Spanish and American writers, for this

* His character is portrayed by his countryman, Oviedo : *Hist. de Las Indies*, Parte iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 1.

nefarious scheme, the explanation of the mystery may be comprised in the fact that his cowardly apprehensions had now reached their climax, and taken the form of desperation. He had all along been haunted with the idea that Atahualpa intended to punish him, as he deserved, for his crimes committed on the borders of Peru. His valorous resolution may have been the boldness of a rat in a closet; for if the Inca had really been disposed to do his duty, by bringing the offender to justice, Pizarro's escape, except by a *coup-de-main*, would have been impossible.

We are willing that all the glory of this contrivance to entrap the kind and credulous Inca, should be awarded to Mr. Prescott's hero rather than to *ours*; and we would gladly believe, if we could, that the affair was planned, begun, and concluded without De Soto's concurrence. But the facts must speak for themselves; and our chief cause of regret is, that they cannot be made to speak more distinctly. Most unluckily, however, all the evidence we have, in this case, comes from partial and interested witnesses, whose desire to *conceal* the truth is detected in almost every sentence of their testimony.

CHAPTER XVII.

PIZARRO'S ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CAPTURE OF THE INCA—
THE COMPOSITION OF PIZARRO'S "ARMY"—ATAHUALLAPA PRE-
PARES TO VISIT THE SPANIARDS—GRAND PROCESSION OF THE
PERUVIANS—SPLENDID APPEARANCE OF THE INCA AND HIS
NOBLES—ATAHUALLAPA HEARS THAT THE SPANIARDS ARE
ALARMED—HE TRIES TO QUIET THEIR APPREHENSIONS—HE
ENTERS THE SQUARE—FRIAR VINCENT COUNSELS HIM TO SUB-
MIT TO THE KING OF SPAIN—HIS ANSWER—THE FRIAR CALLS
ON THE SPANIARDS TO BEGIN THE ATTACK—HORRID MASSACRE
OF THE PERUVIANS—THE INCA IS TAKEN PRISONER. [A. D.
1532.]

THE Spaniards having made all the preparations which were necessary to carry out their evil design against Atahuallapa, awaited the Inca's coming with tremulous anxiety. We have mentioned before that the building in which Pizarro and his companions were quartered, was on one side of the *plaza*, or public square. Two other sides of the quadrangle were occupied by magazines of grain, the doors of which were all closed; and on the fourth side, there was a stone wall, in which were two gates, the only means of communication between the square and other parts of the city. The place was singularly well adapted to the

villainous use which Pizarro now intended to make of it. In the two large halls of the public building which the Inca had assigned to the Spaniards for a lodging place, Pizarro stationed his cavalry in two divisions, one commanded by his brother Hernando, and the other by De Soto. The "infantry," which was commanded by Peter de Candia, the Greek, who has already been mentioned in our narrative, was concealed in another part of the building. The "artillery" was also stationed under cover, at a point where it could soon be brought to bear on the Peruvians when they should enter the square.

In this account, we imitate the grandiloquent phraseology of our authorities, who are constantly making ridiculous efforts to array Pizarro's actions in "all the pomp and circumstance of glorious war." But we must not forget that the Spanish "cavalry" consisted of about sixty horsemen, and that the "infantry" comprised one hundred and twenty men, few of whom, with any propriety of speech, could be called soldiers; for, (as the best authorities state,) a majority of them had been collected from among the vilest population of Panama. They were, in fact, mere vagabonds, or common thieves and other criminals. Pizarro's "artillery" consisted of two small field-pieces, otherwise called falconets.

From among his "infantry" the commander selected twenty men of approved courage and prowess to surround his own person in the hour of danger. The

plan of operation was for all the troops to lie concealed until Atahuallapa and his attendants had entered the square; then, as soon as the commander should give the signal of attack by raising a white cloth, all were to rush forth and secure the Inca, killing such of his people as might attempt to offer resistance. There were some other arrangements, which will be developed in the course of the narrative.

In the meanwhile, Atahuallapa made preparations to visit the Spaniards, according to the promise given to De Soto on the preceding day. Doubtless he wished to make a display of his power and grandeur to his foreign guests, the representatives of a mighty nation beyond the sea, who had come to him, (as he was made to believe,) with overtures of peace and alliance from their sovereign. In order to make the desired impression on the minds of the Spaniards, Atahuallapa arranged a really magnificent pageant to accompany him on his friendly visit to these strangers. A great part of the morning was consumed in preparations for the brilliant show; and, a little before noon, the procession began its march. First came a large body of servants, whose duty appeared to be to sweep the path before the monarch and his retinue. Conspicuously above the crowd appeared the Inca himself, in the glittering embellishments of Peruvian royalty. He was carried in an open palanquin on the shoulders of some of his principal nobles. The display of gold and jewels around the royal person is said to have dazzled the

eyes of the Spaniards as they watched the approaching party from their places of concealment.* The exhibition would not have been complete without some military display, and it is reported that a considerable body of soldiers formed a part of the parade. With respect to the *number* of the troops which accompanied the Inca, the accounts are so widely at variance that there can be no certainty on the subject. It is probable that Atahuallapa's military attendants were merely those who usually escorted him as a life-guard. Some of these Peruvian warriors were armed with bows and arrows, some with slings, and some with copper maces or clubs with sharp projecting points.

When the procession was less than a mile from the town, Atahuallapa ordered a halt, and sent a messenger to inform Pizarro that he was coming. This envoy returned to the Inca with the information that the Spaniards were huddled together in their quarters, and that they were very much alarmed; "and this, (says one of the chroniclers, with most unexpected candor), was not far from the truth!"† The Inca seems to have entertained a feeling of compassion for the discomposure of the Spaniards, for he immediately dispatched another messenger to Pizarro, with the intimation that he should leave his soldiers encamped where they then were, and

* Pedro Pizarro, *Descub. y Conq.*

† Pedro Pizarro: "Relaciones del Descubrimiento y Conquista de Los Reynos del Peru."

that he would come to his Spanish friends with no attendants except his nobles, priests, and servants, who were all unarmed. To this Pizarro made answer:—"Come as you will, you shall be received by me as a friend and a brother!"* The messenger came back once more to Pizarro, with the welcome information that the Inca and his people would all come unarmed. "Nothing," says Mr. Prescott, "could have been more grateful to the Spaniards than these tidings. It seemed that the Indian monarch was eager to rush into the snare that had been spread for him!"

The procession moved so slowly, that it was five o'clock in the afternoon before it entered the square. If the spectacle, when seen at a distance, dazzled the eyes of the Spaniards, how much more brilliant did it now appear when the Inca and all his nobles, arrayed in more than Eastern splendor, stood in the wide area, waiting for the Christians to make their appearance. The Inca was dressed in a flowing robe of scarlet cloth, composed of the finest wool of the vicufia, and decorated with a profusion of golden stars, pearls, and precious stones. He wore on his head a cap or turban of variegated colors, from which depended the scarlet fringe or tassel, which, (as we have mentioned elsewhere), was the badge of regal authority. The throne

* Oviedo: "Hist. de Las Indias:" Parte iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 7; Xeres: "Conq. del Peru," ap. Barcia., Tom. iii., p. 197; Carta de Hern. Pizarro; Prescott's "Conquest of Peru," Book iii., Ch. 5

on which he was carried was plated with gold, and the cushion was adorned with gems of incalculable value.* The appearance of the nobles and officers of the court was scarcely less gorgeous than that of the monarch himself. The number of Peruvians in the square is variously estimated: probably there were not less than two thousand persons in attendance on the Inca; and besides these, were many of the inhabitants of Caxamalca, men, women, and children, whom curiosity had attracted to the spot.

As the procession entered the gates, and for several minutes after the Inca was inside of the square, the Indian priests were engaged in singing one of their national hymns. When this religious exercise was finished, the Inca asked: "Where are the strangers?" A Spanish priest or friar, called Father Vincent, then made his appearance, with a crucifix in one hand and a breviary in the other. This man was Pizarro's spiritual adviser, and the grand chaplain, we suppose, of the so-called "Christian army." A short time before the arrival of the Peruvians, he had performed mass "with great solemnity," and invoked the God of Zebaoth to extend his shield over the soldiers of the Cross. This horrid act of desecration was concluded by singing a psalm, which calls on the Divine Being to arise and come to judgment!† The blasphemous defiance as-

* Quintana: "Life of Pizarro."

† "Exsurge Domine, et judica causam tuam!"

cended to the throne of Omnipotence, and met, in due time, with a suitable response.

Friar Vincent had consented to play an important part in the bloody scene which was about to be enacted by his countrymen. He now approached Atahuallapa, and declared that the commander of the Christians had sent him to expound the doctrines of the true faith to the Inca, "because for that purpose, and no other, the Spaniards had come to his country." When this was interpreted to the Inca by Filipillo, who was in attendance for that purpose, Atahuallapa directed the priest to proceed with his discourse. Vincent then began to explain the cardinal doctrines of the Catholic Church, but hastened on to those points which seemed to be of the most pressing importance at that juncture. He endeavored to make Atahuallapa understand that the Pope had an unquestionable right to dispose of all the kingdoms of the earth, and that in virtue of this high prerogative, he had made a donation of the Peruvian empire to the King of Castile, whom Atahuallapa was now bound to acknowledge as his sovereign!

We are willing to believe that "this doctrine astonished Atahuallapa," who was not prepared by education to understand the force and profundity of Father Vincent's logic. It appears, however, that the Inca preserved his equanimity quite as well as any Christian monarch could have done in similar circumstances. With real or assumed composure, he made answer to the friar's argument in the following words:

“I acknowledge that there is but one God, the Maker of all things, and the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; but as for the Pope, I know him not and never heard of him before. I judge that he must either be a fool or a madman to give away that which does not belong to him. The King of Spain is doubtless a great monarch, and I wish to make him my friend; but, on no terms, can I consent to become his tributary, or his vassal. I am informed that some of your people have robbed and murdered my subjects. Supposing this to have been done without the knowledge of your commander, I hope that, when the facts become known to him, he will punish the offenders as they deserve.”

Friar Vincent replied by making the false assertion, that the Peruvians who had been put to death had given the Spaniards the first provocation. He then exhorted the Inca to submit to the King of Spain and to “his authorized representative, Don Francisco Pizarro.” It is said that Atahuallapa now began to show some signs of anger. “You presume too much on my friendly disposition,” said he, “and your present discourse does not at all agree with the amicable messages which your commander has been sending to me ever since he came to my country. But where have you learned all these extraordinary things which you have been telling me?”

The friar replied that he learned them from the book which he held in his hand. “This,” continued he, holding up the Breviary, “is the word of our God and his

commandments, which must be obeyed." The Inca answered: "If your God commands you to rob and murder, I cannot respect him, and will not obey his law." He then requested the friar to allow him to examine the book. Vincent placed the book in Atahualpa's hand; the Inca opened it, glanced at the pages, and then held the book to his ear. "This tells me nothing," said he, and he contemptuously threw the Breviary on the ground.

The friar then cried in a loud voice, "Come forth, Christians! this impious king has insulted the book of your law. Fall on him and his people at once! Spare them not! Kill these dogs which so stubbornly despise the law of God!"* At this moment Pizarro gave the preconcerted signal; the two pieces of artillery were discharged on the crowd of Peruvians, the doors of the building were thrown open, and the Spaniards, horse and foot, rushed forth. A volley of musketry was fired on the defenseless people, the horsemen endeavored to open a passage through the crowd to the Inca's throne, while the infantry made a terrible slaughter with their pikes, cross-bows, and swords. The Peruvians were wholly unprepared for the attack; "they must have felt," says Quintana, "as if the sky were falling on them." They were not only unarmed, but wanted sufficient presence of mind to use any means of escape. But, indeed, to escape was impossible; the two gates

* Jerome Benzos, Lib. iii., Cap. 3.



BATTLE WITH THE PERUVIANS.

W. J. L. COOPER, N.Y.

of the square had been closed and fastened by Pizarro's orders, and whoever attempted to fly found himself impeded by the dead bodies of his countrymen, which thickly covered the ground. Hundreds of people were trampled to death under the feet of the horses, but the number killed by the swords and pikes of the Spaniards must be reckoned by thousands. Distracted and amazed, the Peruvians either received their death in motionless terror, or were cut down while making ineffectual efforts to escape. "It is impossible," says the Spanish biographer of Pizarro, "to give the name of *battle* to this carnage; flocks butchered in their fold would have made more resistance than these unhappy creatures opposed to their bloodthirsty enemies." In the attempt to escape through the gates, a dense throng of the affrighted Peruvians pressed against the high stone wall which formed one side of the enclosure. Such was the agony and force of the struggle that the wall at last gave way under the pressure of the living mass, and through the passage thus opened, some, but a comparatively small number, escaped with life. Quintana says they were pursued beyond the enclosure by the Spaniards, who continued to kill them, without mercy, until night and a heavy rain stopped the work of slaughter.

But the principal destruction of human life was in the immediate neighborhood of the Inca's throne. The officers and servants of the unhappy prince appeared to be totally regardless of their own safety

They closed around their beloved sovereign, and endeavored to shield him from the bullets and swords of the Spaniards with their own unprotected bodies. Their naked arms were interposed between the object of their chief solicitude and the weapons of the cruel assassins. None thought of flight—not one deserted his post. Many were wounded, many were killed; but as soon as one dropped another filled his place with an intrepidity and contempt of danger which surprised and even fatigued the Spaniards. It is strange indeed, as one of the Spanish writers remarks, that people who could die so bravely should not think of making any resistance. Possibly some of them might have wrenched the weapons from the hands of their cowardly assailants, and something might then have been done for the cause of justice, before the triumph of flagitious villainy was complete.

Pizarro, knowing that his own safety depended on saving the Inca alive, pressed through his countrymen, and seizing Atahuallapa by the robe, dragged him to the ground. He was then surrounded by the Spaniards, who tore off his regal decorations, and secured their prisoner. This terminated the action; for when the Peruvians had lost the object of their respect and duty, they dispersed and fled. The number of them who had been killed in this awful massacre is variously estimated. Pizarro's secretary, Xeres, reports that the slain amounted to two thousand; another authority,

equally reliable, makes the number of the victims to be ten thousand at least.*

Atahualpa had so faithfully redeemed his promise to come unarmed, that not a single warlike weapon was found among his countrymen. It is not surprising, therefore, that none of the Spaniards were killed and none were wounded, except Francisco Pizarro, who accidentally received a slight hurt in the hand from one of the Spanish pikes, while he was eagerly endeavoring to seize the Inca's person.

And thus the principal act of the "Conquest of Peru" was finished. Concerning the real character of that event, we shall have a few remarks to make in the next chapter.

* Instruc. del Inga Titicussi.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DE SOTO'S PARTICIPATION IN THE MASSACRE—WHAT SORT OF A "CONQUEST" WAS THAT OF PERU?—IMMENSE BOOTY—THE SPANIARDS SACK CAXAMALCA—HORRID MURDER OF A YOUNG GIRL—HOW THE INCA WAS TREATED—DE SOTO'S FRIENDSHIP FOR ATAHUALLAPA—THE INCA WISHES TO PURCHASE HIS LIBERTY—THE PRICE AGREED ON—PIZARRO'S INSATIABLE AVARICE—ATAHUALLAPA'S SIMPLICITY—HE COLLECTS GOLD TO SATISFY PIZARRO'S DEMANDS—INFAMOUS CONDUCT OF THE SPANIARDS—PIZARRO SENDS SPIES TO CUZCO—HOW THEY BEHAVED IN THAT CITY. [A. D. 1533.]

WHAT share had Ferdinand de Soto in the horrid transactions related in the last chapter? It is impossible for us to answer that question with any degree of precision, as our judgment, in the premises, must be founded altogether on a few circumstantial facts which have come to our knowledge. From the best testimony we have, it appears that the Inca was induced to place himself in the power of the Spaniards by an invitation which was conveyed to him by De Soto. And it is very probable that De Soto's prepossessing manners, and the candor and good faith which appeared in his conversation and conduct, inclined Atahualpa to place more confidence in his Spanish

guests than was consistent with his own security. In this way alone can we account for his great indiscretion in trusting his person, without any assurance of safety, in the power of these suspicious strangers. It does not appear from any of our historical data that De Soto, when he carried Pizarro's invitation to the Inca, was aware that any treachery to the Indian Prince was intended. On the contrary, it is expressly declared by several historians, that the plot for the seizure of Atahualpa was concocted after De Soto's return to Caxamalca; and, of course, after the invitation had been delivered. We are not informed that De Soto took any active part in the massacre, though it is said that some of the horsemen were engaged in that infernal piece of work. Pizarro's cavalry consisted of two troops, one of which was commanded by Hernando Pizarro and the other by De Soto. There were thirty horsemen in each troop, and one troop would have been quite sufficient for the principal duty which, on this occasion, was assigned to the cavalry; namely, to open a passage through the crowd to the Inca's palanquin. It is most likely that Hernando Pizarro's troop performed this task; for the "Legitimate" was always ready to undertake any duty in the performance of which his ruffian-like qualities could be exhibited to the best advantage. All the knowledge we have of De Soto's character disposes us to believe that he would have shrunk from any participation in an adventure which was no less cowardly than inhuman.

The plan arranged for the capture of the Inca did not require so much slaughter. It was decided, in the council of officers, that all of the Peruvians who offered any resistance should be put to death. But Quintana, the Spanish author of Pizarro's biography, declares that they made *no* resistance at all; and the butchery, therefore, was altogether unnecessary. There can be no doubt that De Soto consented to the seizure of the Inca, but he could not have foreseen all the terrific circumstances which attended the execution of that design. The principal carnage appears to have been made, not by the regular soldiers, but by that pernicious gang of villains, the original associates of Pizarro, who had accompanied him from Panama, and assisted him in all his atrocious operations on the frontier of Peru. Possibly, when the massacre in the square of Caxamalca was in progress, De Soto was an inactive and horrified spectator of the scene; but the certain fact that he was *present* at that time has affixed a stain to his character which the lapse of ages cannot efface.

In our description of the "principal act of the conquest of Peru," we have followed the most credible authorities. If the capture of Atahuallapa, as we have described it, put an end to the dynasty of the Incas, and thus overturned the Peruvian empire, we may ask if the term "conquest," which has been generally applied to this event, is not a misnomer. In such a connection as this, we use the word conquest to signify a triumph in warfare; but at the time of Atahuallapa's cap-

ture, there was no war between the Spaniards and Peruvians. No declaration of war had ever been made by the former; they had approached the Inca under the guise of friendship; and, as Quintana truly remarks, their capture of the monarch was not effected by a *battle*. It was a mere butchery of unarmed people, without any warning of a hostile purpose. This was not a military achievement; and the men who performed the deed were not soldiers, but traitors and assassins. Peru was revolutionized by a foreign *Mob!*

When the Inca was taken prisoner and his attendants slaughtered, the Spaniards, with their customary alacrity, betook themselves to the work of pillage. The spoils must have been of immense value. All the Inca's traveling equipage, all the Royal wardrobe, comprising many costly fabrics, adorned profusely with gems and gold, fell into the hands of the captors. Many hours were consumed in stripping the dead bodies in the square of their rich ornaments; and, when this task was finished, the robbers proceeded to commit their depredations in the town. All the houses were ransacked, and a vast amount of golden vases and other valuable booty, was obtained. The Peruvian women were subjected to every species of outrage and indignity. One of the Spaniards had seized on a young maiden, when the girl's mother attempted to rescue her from the ruffian's grasp. Finding that he could not succeed in his purpose, the villain drew his sword, cut off the

mother's hand, and then hacked the girl to pieces.* Many of the citizens of Caxamalca were murdered by the Spaniards, and others were put to the torture, when suspected of having concealed any treasures.



SPANISH CAPTAIN KILLING A PERUVIAN WOMAN.

Pizarro, in the mean time, treated his Royal prisoner with some appearance of respect, and took care to let it be known among the Peruvians that the Inca was still alive. When this information was spread abroad, some of Atahuallapa's officers and servants, who had escaped from the massacre, came to Pizarro and implored him for permission to wait on the Inca in his captivity. The commander granted their request, because it was his policy to make his prisoner as com-

* Las Casas ; Purchas' Pilgrims, Book viii., Chap. 4.

fortable and as contented as possible, in his present situation. It is said that Atahualpa bore his misfortune with manly firmness, and preserved a dignity of deportment worthy of one who felt that, in spite of all the injustice he had met with, he was still "every inch a king." He was shrewd enough to discover that the Spaniards, with all their professed anxiety to Christianize his country, were actuated by no higher or holier motive than the gratification of their own avarice. Hence he conceived a hope that he would be able to recover his liberty by offering Pizarro such a ransom as would satisfy the most inordinate cupidity. With Pizarro himself the captive Inca would hold but little communication. He evidently did not respect the man, and he was too sincere, or too little civilized, to conceal his real feelings under the mask of dissimulation. With De Soto, on the contrary, his intercourse was cordial and unreserved; and we have no proof that the reliance which he placed on De Soto's honor and humanity was ever abused.

One day, when the royal prisoner was engaged in a conversation with his Spanish friend, he introduced the subject of the ransom, and inquired on what terms Pizarro would consent to release him. De Soto well knew that Pizarro's timidity would prompt him to keep the Inca in custody, as it was supposed that nothing but the fears of the Peruvians for their monarch's safety prevented them from taking up arms against the Spaniards. Convinced, therefore, that the Inca could not

be restored to freedom on any terms whatever, he frankly advised Atahualpa to abandon a hope which was so unlikely to be fulfilled. This answer seemed to be very distressing to the captive, who remained silent for some minutes, apparently in the deepest dejection. At length, he again addressed De Soto, with these words: "My friend, do not deprive me of the only hope that can make life supportable. I must be free, or I must die. Your commander loves gold above all things; surely I can purchase my liberty from him at some price; and, however unreasonable it may be, I am willing to satisfy his demand. Tell me, I entreat you, what sum you think will be sufficient?"

De Soto hesitated. He was unwilling to shock the Inca by declaring his belief that no imaginable sum would prevail on Pizarro to relinquish the advantage he had gained by possessing himself of Atahualpa's person; but, at the same time, De Soto did not wish to encourage expectations which he thought would never be realized. In this dilemma, he had recourse to an evasion. "If," said he, "you could fill this room with gold as high as I can reach with my sword, Pizarro might accept it for your ransom." "It shall be done," promptly answered the Inca; "and I beg you to let Pizarro know that, within a month from this day, my part of the contract shall be fulfilled." De Soto was not only surprised, but disconcerted by this answer; for he supposed, doubtless, that all the gold mines of Peru could not supply a tenth part of the specified amount.

However, as matters had proceeded so far, he considered himself bound to make the Inca's proposition known to Pizarro; not doubting that the offer would be rejected, as the release of Atahualpa seemed to be an impossible matter. But another surprise awaited De Soto. Pizarro eagerly embraced the Inca's offer; and requested De Soto to give the prisoner an assurance that his prison-doors should be thrown open as soon as the stipulated quantity of gold should be produced.

The offer, indeed, was a very tempting one, and it might have been so considered by many a less worldly-minded person than Francisco Pizarro. Our authorities report that the room which the Inca had engaged to fill with the precious metal was twenty-two feet long and seventeen broad.* According to the terms of the agreement, the gold was to be heaped up as high as De Soto could reach with his sword. But in this case, De Soto's arm seems to have been under some of the restraints of conscience, as the mark traced on the wall by the point of the weapon was only nine feet from the floor. It appears then that the Inca agreed to pay for his ransom, three thousand, three hundred and sixty-six cubic feet of gold! No wonder that many of the Spaniards believed that it would be impossible for him to fulfill this contract; but Pizarro's covetousness was still

* So says Pizarro's secretary, Xeres. Another account extends the length of the room to thirty-five feet.

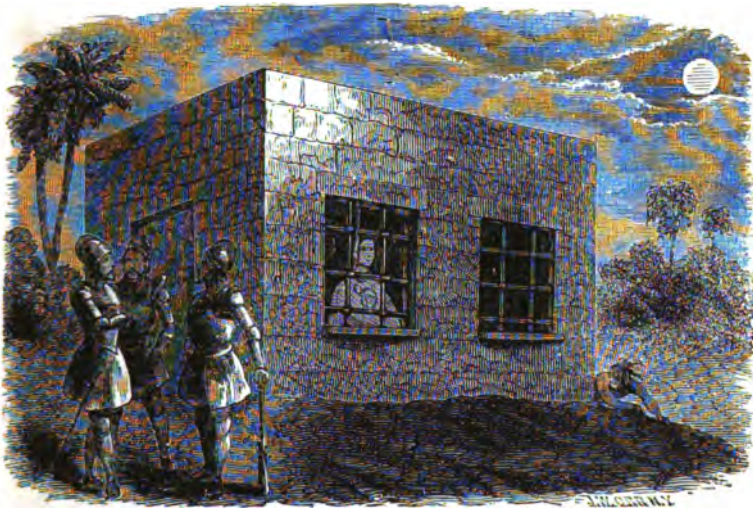
more extravagant than the Inca's liberality. Using the same argument which Brennus employed on a similar occasion, the Spanish commander, after the terms of contract had been settled, insisted on making a new condition, and required Atahuallapa to fill another room with silver.* Atahuallapa submitted to this monstrous extortion without a murmur; but it was easy to see that Pizarro's remorseless brokerage was contemned, as it deserved to be, by the high-minded Indian.

When Pizarro consented to accept this ransom, De Soto, with his customary plain dealing, said to the commander: "I hope you will remember, Don Francisco, that *my* honor is pledged for the strict fulfillment of this contract on the part of the Spaniards. Observe, therefore, that as soon as the gold and silver are produced, Atahuallapa must have his liberty." In answer to this significant speech, Pizarro made a solemn declaration of his intention to release the Inca, at all hazards, as soon as the ransom should be paid. It is remarkable that the Inca himself never contemplated the possibility of any fraudulent dealing in this transaction. This circumstance has given some writers a pretense for charging him with weakness and credulity. Such is the misconstruction to which the noblest and best of our species must always be liable when they are judged by the base and profligate.

The undeserved misfortunes of Atahuallapa, and the

* These facts are related by all the historians.

magnanimity with which he sustained them, seem to have made a successful appeal to De Soto's sympathies; for in spite of all his disadvantages of position and association, De Soto still preserved some of those characteristic traits which promised, at one time, to make him



PERUVIAN INCA IN PRISON.

a hero of the right pattern. By frequent intercourse with the Inca, De Soto soon became able to hold a conversation with him in his own language, without the help of an interpreter. As the confiding and affectionate disposition of the Inca became more apparent every day, De Soto became so much the more interested in his behalf. Stimulated by his desire to befriend Atahualpa, he used his influence with Pizarro to make the conditions of the Inca's ransom less onerous to the prisoner. By De Soto's intercession, Pizarro was induced

to receive the gold in such forms as Atahuallapa could most conveniently obtain it. By this arrangement, the Inca was permitted to place the golden vases and other manufactured articles in the room which was to be filled, without having them previously melted and reduced to the form of ingots; consequently the prisoner had the advantages which would arise from this incompact mode of measurement.

All the conditions of this strange compact being now understood, the Inca ordered several of his officers, who had been permitted to visit him, to attend to the collection of the ransom. These agents, by Atahuallapa's request, were accompanied by three Spaniards, and the latter were secretly instructed by Pizarro to observe where the treasures of the kingdom were deposited. The caitiff's thoughts were still intent on plunder, though the heaps of gold which Atahuallapa had offered to place at his disposal appeared too magnificent for belief.

Atahuallapa directed his officers to proceed with their Spanish associates to Cuzco, the capital of the empire, and possess themselves of all the precious metal contained in the royal treasuries. If this supply should be found insufficient, they were ordered to strip the temples of their golden adornments, and to call on the nobility for contributions. All the subjects of the Inca at Cuzco, and on the road to that metropolis, were enjoined to show the three Spanish messengers all the attention and respect which were due to the Inca himself. These

orders were strictly obeyed. The three Spaniards, (particular favorites of Pizarro, and scoundrels, of course), when they arrived at Cuzco, soon became intoxicated with the honors which were shown them in obedience to the Inca's commands. They repaid the kind and reverential attentions of the Peruvian nobles with mockery and insult. They committed the most beastly and sacrilegious offenses in the temples dedicated to the "unknown God," whom the Peruvians "ignorantly worshiped" under the name of Pachacamac, "the life and soul of the universe." These vile emissaries of Pizarro, as one of their own countrymen acknowledges, perpetrated every species of outrage on the persons and property of the inhabitants; and the latter were restrained from putting them to death only by that reverence which the Peruvians always yielded to the mandates of their chief magistrate.*

* Vide Quintana's "Life of Pizarro," Eng. Trans. p. 190.

CHAPTER XIX.

IMMENSE QUANTITIES OF TREASURE HIDDEN BY THE PERUVIANS—THE INCA'S RANSOM—THE GREATEST BOOTY ON RECORD—DE SOTO REQUIRES PIZARRO TO LIBERATE THE INCA—PIZARRO'S BASE AND DISHONORABLE CONDUCT—DE SOTO BECOMES WEALTHY — PROBABILITY OF HIS UNION WITH ISABELLA—HE INSISTS ON HAVING JUSTICE DONE TO THE INCA—THE VILLAINY OF FILIPILLO—PIZARRO'S PREVARICATION — HIS TRICK TO GET DE SOTO OUT OF THE WAY—THE INCA IS TRIED AND CONDEMNED TO BE BURNED — HIS EXECUTION — PIZARRO'S DISAPPOINTMENT.
[A. D. 1533.]

To show how greedy rascality may sometimes overreach itself, we have an example in the conduct of Pizarro, when he sent his three spies to Cuzco to ascertain where the riches of the city were deposited. In the preceding chapter we have glanced at the behavior of these emissaries. They were so confirmed in their felonious habits, that no considerations of policy, no sense of decency, and no apprehensions of danger could prevent them from indulging their criminal propensities. The consequence was that the people of Cuzco soon discovered that their country had fallen into the power of foreign banditti, and they imme-

diately began to conceal their treasures to preserve them from the rapacity of these detestable usurpers. Immense quantities of gold were thrown into the rivers and lakes, or buried deeply in the ground, and so effectually secreted, that much of it was never recovered. The Peruvians wisely and laudably threw away their



PERUVIANS RANSOMING THEIR EMPEROR.

property, rather than permit it to come into the possession of their odious invaders.

But, in the meantime, the obedient subjects of the Inca complied with the orders he had sent them, by tearing off the gorgeous decorations of the temples, the cornices and entablatures of solid gold, and the

massive golden plates with which the façades and the interior walls of the sacred buildings were incrustated. The metal thus obtained was dispatched, by the swiftest mode of conveyance which these people possessed, to Caxamalca, where the Inca was imprisoned. Thousands of golden vases, salvers, and other utensils of admirable workmanship, were brought from the Royal treasuries, to complete the Inca's ransom. For several weeks the glittering tide rolled in, and the Spaniards were soon convinced that their captive had not promised more than he was able to accomplish. Within the specified time, all the gold and silver which Atahualpa had engaged to deliver, was produced; and the obligations of the contract now rested on Pizarro alone. The Inca, having paid his ransom, demanded to be released, and De Soto, observing that Pizarro hesitated, peremptorily required him to fulfill his engagement.

Meanwhile, the Spanish "soldiers" were impatient to have the extorted treasures of the Inca distributed among them, and Pizarro found a pretense for postponing the liberation of Atahualpa, by alleging that the division of the spoils was a matter which required his first attention. "The ceremony of distribution, (says Quintana), was performed with the most imposing solemnity." Another authority avers that the Spanish commander, with the fear of God before his eyes, invoked the assistance of Heaven to do the work before him conscientiously and justly! And yet all this display of piety and equitable intentions, did not pre-

vent Pizarro from defrauding some of his companions-in-arms, while he was so "solemnly and ceremoniously" engaged in partitioning out these treasures, which must necessarily be considered as the spoils of robbery.

The gold and silver to be distributed were first melted and recast in the form of ingots. When this preparatory work was finished, it was found that the aggregate amount of the gold was one million, three hundred and twenty-six thousand, five hundred and thirty-nine *pesos-de-oro*, which, making due allowance for the changes in the value of money, since the sixteenth century, would be nearly equivalent to *fifteen millions five hundred thousand dollars* of the present currency of the United States. The quantity of silver was estimated at fifty-one thousand six hundred and ten marks. One of Pizarro's admirers triumphantly exclaims: "History affords no parallel for such a booty!"* Nevertheless it may appear that, under any system of laws, national, civil, or military, Don Francisco Pizarro, and his whole band of "brave associates," might have been hanged as felons or traitors, with unquestionable propriety. Their unparalleled success cannot make their conduct less criminal, and ought not to make it less infamous.

A fifth part of the plunder, according to previous stipulations, was allotted to the King of Spain, otherwise called the Emperor Charles V. This assignment,

* Prescott's "Conquest of Peru," Book iii., Chap. 7.

made by freebooters, and accepted by Royalty, proves the existence of a leveling confederacy or copartnership, which can neither dignify the actions of Pizarro, nor elevate the moral reputation of Charles.

After deducting the "king's fifth," the balance of the Inca's ransom was divided among the Spanish officers and soldiers; not *fairly* divided, as some writers erroneously assert, but with manifest partiality.* The "lion's share," of course, was reserved by Pizarro for himself. The devout commander's portion amounted to fifty-seven thousand two hundred and twenty-two pesos of gold, and two thousand three hundred and fifty marks of silver; besides the golden throne of the Inca, which was valued at twenty-five thousand *pesos-de-oro*. One of Pizarro's comrades, who wrote an account of the Spanish invasion of Peru, asserts that a large number of golden vases and other articles remained undivided, and these were probably added to Pizarro's part of the plunder. Hernando Pizarro received thirty-one thousand and eighty *pesos-de-oro*, and two thousand three hundred and fifty marks of silver. And although De Soto was considered, (as Quintana admits,) the second man in the army, he obtained, in the division, only seventeen thousand seven hundred and forty pesos of gold and seven hundred and twenty-four marks of silver. The commander excused himself for making his brother Hernando's share so much larger than that

* Quintana : "Life of Pizarro," Eng. Trans., p. 201.

of De Soto, by representing that this was a politic expedient, the object of which was to make Hernando satisfied with his emoluments and induce him to return to Spain. After his departure, De Soto would be invested with the title of second in command, which Hernando Pizarro now claimed, but which properly belonged to the subject of our narrative. It was not difficult, perhaps, to make De Soto satisfied with his share of the treasure; which, notwithstanding the injustice shown in the distribution, was really a splendid acquisition for the cavalier who had come to Peru with no fortune except his sword.

And now the grand purpose which had brought De Soto to America was accomplished. He had acquired wealth beyond the scope of his most extravagant expectations. With respect to fortune he was placed on the plane of equality with the object of his early affection, and he had but recently received another assurance of her ever-during attachment. But there was a cause of present anxiety which almost withdrew his thoughts from the contemplation of future happiness. He considered himself charged with the fate of the still imprisoned Inca, who became, every day, more importunate in his demands for liberty. On this subject, De Soto earnestly expostulated with Pizarro. "Whatever the consequences may be," said the resolute advocate, "the Inca must be immediately released. He has your promise to that effect, and he has *mine*, which shall not be violated." Pizarro contended for a delay of three

weeks. "Not a single week, not a day," answered De Soto; "if you do not liberate the prisoner, I will take that duty on myself."—"To give him his freedom, at this time," said Pizarro, "would be certain destruction to us all."—"Possibly so," replied De Soto, "but this should have been considered before he was admitted to ransom."—"Since that was done," returned Pizarro, "I have received information which justifies me in changing my intentions. Atahualpa's officers, acting under his directions, have lately been engaged in attempts to excite an insurrection among the Peruvians, for the purpose, no doubt, of exterminating the Spaniards." "Whence have you this information?" inquired De Soto. "From Filipillo, the interpreter," answered Pizarro.

The person thus indicated has already been presented to our readers as a hopeful young Indian convert to Catholicism, under the tuition of Pizarro and Father Luque. For several years he had been taught and trained by these exemplary men; and, having a fine natural capacity, he soon became as good a Christian as either of his instructors. He had succeeded in making himself not only useful but indispensable to Pizarro; and the latter was enabled to carry out some of his most important plans by Filipillo's assistance. His services to the commander were similar to those which some persons, called "professional witnesses," are supposed to render to plaintiff or defendant in our courts of justice. Filipillo was ready, at all times, to subscribe and swear to any postulate which Pizarro wished to maintain.

The leading questions of his master were sufficient to direct the course of his testimony, and he seldom failed to improve on the suggestions of his able and experienced director.

Filipillo was now summoned by Pizarro to confirm the report of the insurrections; and the pernicious young villain confidently asserted that he had received such information from the most reliable sources. De Soto was disposed to reject this evidence, as he perfectly understood the character of the witness; and he requested that the Inca should have an opportunity to defend himself against the accusation. Pizarro yielded to this reasonable demand, and accompanied De Soto to Atahualpa's apartment. When Pizarro made his suspicions known to the incarcerated monarch, the latter treated the charge as a cruel and untimely jest. But perceiving that the commander was really in earnest, the Inca answered with all the warmth of honest indignation: "I know not how it is possible for you to believe that I, while in your power and laden with your chains, should be so devoid of sense as to order my subjects to come against you; knowing as I do that, at the moment of their appearance, you would cut off my head. And you are certainly unacquainted with my power and influence, if you suppose that my people would undertake such a movement without my consent."

De Soto was perfectly satisfied with the Inca's defense; but Pizarro still affected to believe in the con-

templated insurrection. Finally, he compromised with De Soto by proposing that the latter should go to that part of the country where the popular tumult was expected to commence. "If you find no appearance of an outbreak," said the artful commander, "I will instantly release Atahuallapa when you return." De Soto agreed to these terms, and immediately set out on his journey. But scarcely had the Inca's only friend and protector departed, when Pizarro betook himself to the execution of a plan which is universally admitted to have no precedent or parallel in the registry of human crimes. He determined to put the Inca to a death of torture; and, with that fiendish subtlety which belonged to his character, he resolved to make others responsible for a deed which, from its conception to its consummation, was altogether his own. So artfully were matters contrived, that Pizarro's treasurer, Riquelme, the priest called Father Vincent, and some others, were made to pass sentence of death on the royal prisoner, while Pizarro himself, with hypocritical reluctance, confirmed the verdict and hastened the execution. This cowardly evasion of the felon commander was so perfectly obvious to his followers, that all the infamy of the plot reverted to himself; and his most infatuated panegyrists have not been able to shield his memory from the foul reproach.

Atahuallapa was allowed the benefit of a mock trial, which, as Vattel correctly and almost unnecessarily remarks, was "a manifest outrage on the law of nations."*

* Vattel : Book ii., Chap. 4.

What could be more preposterous than for a gang of foreign thieves to claim jurisdiction over the lawful chief magistrate of the country? No argument is required to exhibit the utter absurdity of these judicial proceedings, and it is scarcely necessary to speak of the manner in which they were conducted. We are told, however, that the charges against the Inca related chiefly to matters in which the Spaniards had no interest whatever; and Mr. Prescott remarks that "the evidence of the Indian witnesses, when filtrated through the interpretation of Filipillo, received, when necessary, a very different coloring from that of the original."*

But this wretched farce was soon over, and the tragedy was about to begin. The Inca appears not to have been present at his own trial; and the first intimation he had of it, perhaps, was when Pizarro brought him an account of the sentence of the Court which had condemned him to be burned to death. The intelligence was so unexpected and so horrifying to the prisoner, that for some minutes he was unable to make any answer to Pizarro's communication. At length he said: "Is it possible that you can believe in a God, and fear him, and yet dare to commit such an act of injustice? What have I done to deserve death in any shape, and why have you condemned me to a death so unusual and painful? It is certainly not your intention to fulfill this sentence." Pizarro assured him that the decree of the

* Prescott's "Conquest of Peru," Book iii., Chap. 7

Court was unalterable. "Think of the wrongs you have already done to me," said the Inca, "and do not forget how much you are indebted to my kindness and forbearance. I could easily have intercepted you in the mountain passes, and made you all prisoners, or sacrificed you justly to the offended laws of my country. I could have overpowered you with my armed warriors at Caxamalca; but I failed in my duty to my people by receiving you as friends. You have robbed me of my kingdom, and compelled me to insult my deity by stripping his temples to satisfy your avarice. Of all my possessions, you have left me nothing but my life, and that I supposed you would be willing to spare me, since you can gain nothing by taking it away."

Perceiving that this discourse made no impression on the mind or heart of Pizarro, the Inca, whose inordinate love of life was his greatest weakness, began to plead for existence with the most earnest supplications. "Consider," said he, "how hard it is for me to die so suddenly and without any warning of my danger. I have lived but thirty years, and until very lately, I have had every reason to hope for a long and happy life. My prospects of happiness are blighted forever; but I will not complain of that, if you will permit me to live out the term which God and Nature have allotted me."

At this moment, Friar Vincent, bearing a large crucifix, entered the apartment. He exhorted the prisoner to withdraw his thoughts from earthly vanities and delusions, and fix his attention on the changeless

and substantial realities of a better life. "You are justly condemned to death," said he, "for your infidelity and other sins. I call on you to accept the free gift of salvation which I now offer you, so that you may escape the greater punishment of eternal fire." Atahualpa, without attending to this ghostly counsel, wrung his hands in agony as he exclaimed: "Oh, where is De Soto? he is a good man, and he is my friend. Surely he will not allow me to be murdered!"—"De Soto is far away," said the priest, "and no earthly help can avail you. Receive the consolations of our Church; kiss the feet of this image, and I will absolve you from your sins, and prepare you to enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

"I worship Pachacamac, the Maker of all things," answered the Inca. "As much as I desire to live, I will not forsake the faith of my fathers to prolong my life." He had discovered, no doubt, that his doom was inevitable, and he now resumed all that dignity and firmness of deportment which had distinguished him throughout the whole period of his captivity. He made no more appeals to Pizarro's merciful kindness, and he repulsed all the solicitations of Father Vincent, who still urged him to die in the faith and hope of a Catholic Christian.

"His executioners," says Quintana, "allowed the day to close before they consummated their crime." It was indeed an act to be concealed in the darkest shadows of midnight. The murder of the Inca was perpetrated in the public square of Caxamalca. From the moment at

which he had ceased to hope for mercy, he behaved with admirable fortitude; and while the flames were slowly consuming him, he uttered no cry of anguish, and betrayed no sign of human frailty while enduring the most intense torment that the barbarous ingenuity of man ever devised. They built the fire in the rear of the Inca, in order to make him abjure his faith before the flames could suffocate him; but all to no purpose. Pizarro and the priests were both disappointed, for Atahualpa died unconquered and unconverted.

CHAPTER XX.

ATTEMPT TO RESCUE THE INCA WHILE HE WAS BURNING—SPANISH SLANDERS OF ATAHUALLAPA — MANUFACTURE OF HISTORICAL FALSEHOODS—DE SOTO RETURNS—HE HEARS OF THE INCA'S MURDER—HIS BEHAVIOR ON THAT OCCASION—HE CHALLENGES PIZARRO—DENOUNCES HIM AS A COWARD—EFFECTS OF THE SPANISH INVASION—DEMORALIZATION OF THE PERUVIANS — EXAMPLES THEREOF — INSTANCES OF VICE AND DEPRAVITY—PERU PERMANENTLY RUINED BY THE SPANIARDS—PROOF THAT SHE HAS NEVER RECOVERED FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE "CONQUEST." [A. D. 1533.]

THE murder of the Inca Atahualpa was perpetrated, as we have said, in the public square of Caxamalca—the scene of that frightful massacre which was described in our fourteenth chapter. The square was separated from the town on all sides by unoccupied buildings and a high stone wall; and, as the murderers endeavored to shroud their deed in the gloom of night, the sacrifice was almost finished before the Peruvians were aware that it had begun. When the dismal glare of the sacrificial flames ascended above the walls of the enclosure, the inhabitants of Caxamalca, without knowing why the fires were kindled, suspected, with reason, that some new horror was about to be enacted. With

ghastly apprehension, some of them approached the quarters of the Spaniards, and discovered their Inca, whom they revered as a father, chained to a stake, and encircled with blazing fagots. The alarm was given, and very soon some hundreds of unarmed Peruvians attempted to force a passage into the enclosure, the entrances of which were strongly guarded by the Spanish robbers. The people, whose patience and pacific inclinations had hitherto been their most inexcusable errors, were now incited to act with a resolution which bordered on ferocity. Never is human courage more stern and unconquerable than when it acts under the influences of our gentlest affections. All the force of the Spaniards, and all the advantages which they possessed in their weapons and position, could scarcely prevent the Inca, or his half consumed body, from being rescued by his excited countrymen. During the struggle, in which many of the natives and a few of the Spaniards were killed—the victim perished, the flames subsided, and nothing but a heap of ashes and glowing embers marked the spot where an infidel monarch had won the crown of martyrdom.

The murder of Atahuallopa was one of those criminal acts which admit of no verbal reprobation. In such a case, we feel that words have no power to give a form to that condemnation which the deed deserves. When we have not the opportunity to *punish*, when we cannot prove how much we abhor the crime by the measure of retribution which we award to it, it

is worse than a mockery of justice to assail the criminal with anathemas and execrations.

Not satisfied with killing the body of Atahualpa, his assassins endeavored to murder his reputation also. They have manufactured whole pages of history to prove that he was a bastard, a usurper, a tyrant, and a fratricide. We have, by careful examination of the records, become convinced that some of the charges are false, and we have no proof that any one of them is true. Quintana, the most candid of the Spanish historians, makes these acknowledgments: "Those odious qualities which have been attributed, by some writers, to this Inca, appear to be very inconsistent with the virtues and graces which he manifested during his long imprisonment, and which gained him the friendship and affection of many Spaniards who loudly condemned the sentence which had been pronounced against him, as iniquitous and barbarous. They agree equally ill with the eulogiums bestowed on him after his death, when he is seldom named except as—*The Great Monarch, The Good King*, and other phrases of the same import. Finally, these charges have their strongest contradiction in the love and devotion impressed on the hearts of the Peruvians for his person and memory; who, considering that, more than any other of their princes, he had reflected the virtues and good gifts of his father, Huayna Capac, wept, in his deplorable death, the catastrophe of the empire."

It is easy to believe that the men who could put

the Inca to death so unjustly, and in such a barbarous manner, would not hesitate to slander him afterward, if they had any motive for such aspersion. With Pizarro and his gang it was almost a matter of necessity to calumniate the Inca after they had killed him; for they were obliged to excuse themselves for this act to the Spanish government, and the only way in which they could so acquit themselves was to show that Atahuallapa *deserved* capital punishment. As the traducers of the dead Inca were permitted to tell their own story, without fear of contradiction, it is impossible to assign any limits to their fabrications, and their testimony is probable only when it tends to criminate themselves. Perhaps the greatest injustice which these slanderers have done to Atahuallapa's memory was by pretending that he became an apostate to his own religion and a convert to Catholicism just before his death. If this story were true, how could Pizarro justify himself, or how could the Pope and the King of Spain excuse him, for putting a Christian to death on account of sins committed by an infidel? Surely the Royal penitent, when he entered the pale of the Holy Catholic Church, would be entitled to a free pardon for those errors of conduct which were incidental to his unregenerate condition. We are told that when the Inca had consented to be baptized by Father Vincent, Pizarro graciously commuted his sentence, and allowed him to be strangled before his body was reduced to ashes! These fic-

tions were doubtless contrived to illustrate Pizarro's clemency and Father Vincent's apostolic success.

Wholly unconscious of the momentous events which had taken place during his absence, De Soto, after satisfying himself that the rumor of an insurrection was wholly unfounded, hastened back to Caxamalca, rejoicing in the opportunity which he now possessed to prove the Inca's good faith and quiet Pizarro's suspicions. But the fatal secret was revealed to him before he reached his quarters. All the Peruvians in the neighborhood of Caxamalca were in mourning. Wherever the death of the Inca was known, the sorrow and despair of his people attested the worth and virtues of the deceased. Some of the inhabitants of the town came out to meet De Soto, who had always befriended and protected them when it was in his power to do so; and, with many tears and lamentations, they gave him an account of the Inca's murder. De Soto now discovered, for the first time, that he had been sent out of the way to give Pizarro an opportunity to perpetrate this heinous crime. Rage for awhile overpowered every other emotion. He threw himself from his horse, drew his sword as if to execute some sanguinary purpose, and strode across the square to seek the man whom he justly regarded as Atahuallapa's murderer. At the door of Pizarro's apartment was stationed a sentinel, who informed the incensed cavalier that the commander had given orders for no person to be admitted, as he did not wish to be disturbed. "I shall disturb him with a ven-

geance!" cried De Soto, as he pushed the soldier aside and entered the chamber. Pizarro was seated on a low stool, "with a great felt hat, by way of mourning, slouched over his eyes, and in his dress and demeanor exhibiting all the show of sorrow."* De Soto perceived that the caitiff had been advised of his approach, and that this spectacle of woe was merely another one of those deceptive artifices which have often enabled Pizarro and other villains to obtain advantages over wiser, braver, and better men than themselves. The sword of De Soto was extended over the head of the



DE SOTO UPBRAIDING PIZARRO FOR BURNING THE INCA.

trembling culprit, and it is probable that nothing but a feeling of contempt for the abject and powerless condition of the wretched felon, prevented the avenger from

* Hallaronle mostrando mucho sentimiento con un gran sombrero de fieltro puesto en la cabeza por luto é muy calado sobre los ojos. —Oviedo: Hist. de Las Indias, Parte iii., Lib. viii., Cap. 22.

executing a purpose to which he was strongly urged by all that was noble in his nature. Stamping impatiently on the floor, he commanded Pizarro to uncover his head, "Unless," said he, "you intend to hide yourself from the light of day, and are ashamed to look a human being in the face." As Pizarro hesitated to obey this order, De Soto removed the *sombrero*, not very gently, with the point of his sword.

"Is it not enough, you heartless and conscienceless villain," said De Soto, "that I have disgraced myself in the eyes of the world by becoming your companion and confederate, making myself accessory to your crimes and protecting you from the punishment you deserved? Have you not heaped infamy enough upon me, without dishonoring me by the violation of my pledges, and exposing me to the suspicion of being connected with the most cruel and causeless murder that ever set human laws and divine justice at defiance? I have ascertained what you well knew before I left Caxamalca, that the report of the insurrection was utterly false. I have met with nothing, on the road, but demonstrations of good-will. The whole country is quiet, and Atahualpa has been basely slandered. You, Francisco Pizarro, are his slanderer, and you are his murderer! To prove that I have had no participation in the deed, I will make you accountable for his death. Craven and prevaricating villain as you are, you shall not escape from this responsibility. If you refuse to meet me in honorable combat, I will denounce you to the King of Spain

as a criminal, and proclaim you to the whole world as a coward and assassin."

Instead of answering this speech, as a bolder villain would have done, with open defiance, Pizarro acknowledged that he had been too precipitate, and declared that he had been induced to put the Inca to death by the false representations and earnest persuasions of his treasurer Riquelme, and Vincent the priest. De Soto immediately summoned these two men to the apartment, and informed them what charges had been made against them by Pizarro. Both of them firmly denied the imputation, and charged the commander, to his face, with being the sole contriver of the deed. A dispute followed, during which the treasurer and Vincent repeatedly gave Pizarro the lie!* Before the controversy was finished, several of Pizarro's brothers and Captain Balcazar entered the room. In their presence, De Soto formally avowed himself the champion of Atahuellapa and repeated his charges against the commander. He then threw down his glove, and invited any man who was disposed to deny that Francisco Pizarro was a coward and a murderer, to take it up. The gage remained untouched, and De Soto left the apartment, resolved, as it afterward

* This altercation is reported by Oviedo in a supplementary chapter to his history, and the account is quoted by Prescott, with the following annotation: "As he (Oviedo) knew familiarly the leaders in these transactions, the testimony which he collected, somewhat at random, is of high authority."—*Vide* Prescott, "Conquest of Peru," Vol. i., Book iii., Chap. 7, p. 491.

appeared, to withdraw himself immediately from all connection with men whose crimes deserved to be expiated on the gibbet. His commission as Lieutenant-General, which had been so lately bestowed on him, he now offered to resign, and expressed his determination to return to Spain without delay. Pizarro made the most humiliating concessions, and even shed tears of feigned penitence, while he besought De Soto to remain with him until the authority of the Spaniards was firmly established in the country. De Soto was disposed to do nothing for the benefit or accommodation of Pizarro, but his duty to his King and his countrymen seemed to require his continuance in Peru a little while longer. This consideration alone induced him to remain until the Spaniards had obtained possession of the capital of the empire. We may suppose that the impatience of a lover, as well as other motives, urged his immediate return to his native land; but, without making himself liable to some censure, he could not abandon his countrymen in Peru while their position still appeared to be critical.

The death of Atahualpa consummated the destruction of the Peruvian monarchy. And now let us glance, for a moment, at the mighty benefit to civilization, religion, and human progress, which immediately followed this revolution. We learn from Quintana that "from the moment of the Inca's imprisonment, all fear of authority was at an end; the stores and public property were plundered, private possessions were invaded,

all was confusion and disorder, and the work of civilization, the completion of which cost ages of wisdom and perseverance, was destroyed in a moment. All religion was disregarded; all habits corrupted; even the Virgins of the Sun, once so sacred and revered, now quitted their cloisters, and abandoning themselves to libertinism, became the indiscriminate prey of their own countrymen and of the strangers, and the derision and contempt of both. Such mutation and confusion in that lately well-ordered State, and in that strict accord of laws divine and human, filled every good man's heart with grief for what he saw, and with dread for the future.”*

Jerome Benzos, speaking of affairs in Peru after the “Conquest,” says: “There are *monks* who openly, and in the light of Heaven, perpetrate such deeds as others would be ashamed to do by night. A certain Franciscan friar publicly preached that there was neither priest, nor monk, nor bishop in Peru who deserved to be called a good man; for they are all devoted to covetousness, and betake themselves to the wealthier districts, avoiding those where nothing is to be gained by extortion and plunder. I have also heard priests, when they were discoursing together, acknowledge that they came to the country for gain and nothing else.”

The same author, (who, by the way, was a Spanish Catholic), says: “A certain cacique's son who, before the arrival of the Spaniards, was remarkable for his

* Quintana : “Life of Pizarro,” Eng. Trans., p. 213.

amiable deportment and correct moral habits, afterward became very lewd; and when asked what had made this change in his character, he replied, "Since I became a Christian I have learned to swear by the name of God, by the Cross, and by the words of the Gospel, and to blaspheme by the life of God, and I deny him, nor do I believe. I have learned also to play with dice, and never to speak the truth. I have provided myself with a sword, and am always ready for a fray. And now I want nothing to make my life like that of the Christians, but a concubine, and that I mean to have as quickly as possible."

"The Indians, especially such as can write and read, (continues Benzos), confess God's commandments to be good, but wonder that we ourselves, (*i. e.*, the Spaniards), do not obey them. Some of them, showing a piece of gold, will say, 'Lo! here is the Christian's god; for this they have come hither; for this they have subdued us and done so many mischiefs; for this they are never quiet, but dice, blaspheme, curse, quarrel, steal, and commit rapes and every other villainy.'"

"I once, (says Benzos), reproved an Indian for dicing and blasphemy. His answer was: 'We have learned these things from yourselves.' The Indians who indulge in these vices are such as have been brought up by the Spaniards, who constantly practice the same iniquities." The candid Benzos concludes: "And these, for the most part, are the miracles which the Spaniards have wrought among the Indians."

Compare these accounts with the moral and social condition of Peru, previous to the Spanish invasion, which we have described in our twelfth chapter. But what is *now* the state of the country after it has experienced the benefits and precious influences of European civilization for more than three centuries ?

The Rev. C. S. Stewart, who traveled in Peru, A. D. 1829-30, says, in reference to the present metropolis of this country: "Lima is said to be the most corrupt city on the continent; so much so, that along the whole coast, as I am told, the name is a proverb of sin. The walks of the Avenue, as we drove through the gate, exhibited some specimens of the morals to be expected within. Several intoxicated officers, and three or four Dominican friars in the garb of their Order, were in very familiar conversation with women of very equivocal, or perhaps I should say, of unequivocal appearance," &c. "Instead of the splendid city which I expected, I found mud houses, of one low story, with large doors and grated windows, exhibiting many sad pictures of filth and poverty. These dens were inhabited by negroes and mulattoes, thronging in gaping and half-naked crowds about the doors."

While it remained under the Spanish despotism, Peru continued to sink lower and lower into the abyss of vice and corruption. Since the independence of the country was proclaimed in 1821, the annals of Peru are little more than a record of tumult and bloodshed. The people have become too corrupt for self-government,

and too disorderly to submit to the restraints of a limited monarchy. For many years to come, therefore, they will be in a state of vibration between anarchy and despotism.

Such are the results which must ever follow from any attempt to propagate Christianity with the sword. Had the religion of Christ been presented to the ancient Peruvians in a more engaging form, undistorted by bigot zeal, and unperturbed by fanatical violence and dissembling avarice, no people in the world perhaps would have been more apt to receive and cultivate the truth of the Gospel; and then the land might have been still happier under an enlightened and consistent Christian government than it was under the dominion of the Incas.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SPANIARDS MARCH TOWARD THE CAPITAL OF PERU—PIZARRO
MAKES A NEW INCA—EXPECTED ATTACK OF THE INDIANS—
PIZARRO HALTS AND DE SOTO GOES FORWARD TO MEET THE
ENEMY—A SKIRMISH—PIZARRO KEEPS OUT OF DANGER—
DE SOTO MEETS THE ENEMY—HE IS UNSUPPORTED BY HIS
COUNTRYMEN—HIS PERILOUS SITUATION—THE GREAT BATTLE
OF VILCACONGO—A PERUVIAN GENERAL BURNED TO DEATH—
PRIAR VINCENT ENTREATS HIM TO BE BAPTIZED—HIS ANSWER
—BRAVERY OF THE PERUVIANS—ALMAGRO'S TIMELY ARRIVAL
—DE SOTO'S GREAT VICTORY—THE CONQUEST FINISHED.
[A. D. 1533.]

THE Spaniards were now prepared for the long contemplated march to the metropolis. Their numbers had recently been increased by the arrival of Almagro, with two hundred men, from Panama. The adventurers were accompanied, likewise, by a large body of friendly Indians, who had placed themselves under the tuition of the Spaniards, and had already discovered a taste and aptitude for predatory warfare, which strongly recommended them to the "conquerors." Of course, the Indians who thus associated themselves with the Spanish troops, were among the vilest and most depraved of the Peruvian population. The recent acts of

Pizarro, (as Quintana remarks,) had won for him and his countrymen the unqualified abhorrence of all the inhabitants of the land, except those of the lowest grade and the most infamous character.* Aware that such a feeling prevailed throughout this extensive and populous country, Pizarro saw that some new expedient was required to protect himself from the just resentment of an exasperated people. After the murder of Atahuallapa, he had detained as a hostage one of that Inca's principal officers, named Chalcukima, a brave and good man, who was much beloved and venerated by the Peruvians. The commander hoped, therefore, that the people would be kept quiet by their apprehensions for this excellent man's safety, and he made Chalcukima understand that he would be put to death at the first appearance of an outbreak. The valorous chieftain listened to this terrible threat with scornful composure; and Pizarro began to suspect that some other pledge was necessary to make his advance to the capital safe, or even possible. In this emergency he had recourse to the creation of a new Inca, one who might maintain some authority over the Peruvians, and at the same time be subject to the control of the Spaniards. A son of the murdered Inca was selected for this purpose. His right to the succession was thus acknowledged by the very men who had charged the father with usurpation and sentenced him to death partly on that account.

* Quintana: "Life of Pizarro," Eng. Trans., p. 214.

The newly elected monarch, a sickly youth called Topaxpa, submitted himself implicitly to Pizarro's directions. He went with the Spaniards, more like a prisoner than a king, and called on the people to acknowledge the right of his keepers to commit their devastations unmolested. But the sun of Peruvian royalty had set forever, and this parhelion of Pizarro's manufacture was justly regarded as a delusive and evanescent meteor. In fact, the unfortunate youth *died* as soon as Pizarro discovered that his life could not be made serviceable to the Christians.

By the addition of Almagro's party and other reinforcements, the Spaniards were now enabled to muster nearly five hundred men, exclusively of the Indian renegados who had joined them with the hope of participating in their plunder. Pizarro left Caxamalca, whose ground he had saturated with guiltless blood, in September, 1533, and proceeded toward the capital, by the royal road of the Incas. The Spaniards traveled for several days through the charming valleys of Guaymachuco, meeting with no opposition from the people of this region, who, dwelling as they did in the tranquil recesses of the Sierra, were so little acquainted with the usages of war, that the appearance of the armed strangers excited no feelings but those of curiosity and admiration. In this part of their journey the troops of Pizarro were discreetly pacific; the presence of De Soto always restrained them from ruffianly violence; but without that check, their cowardice would have

prevented them from indulging their inclinations for rapine, while the chances of meeting with an active enemy were so numerous. When they reached the district of Audamarca, they received information that a large body of Indians was posted, in a well-chosen position, at no great distance ahead. The object of this array was, unquestionably, to dispute their passage. This intelligence caused Pizarro to halt; a counsel of officers was held; and De Soto, who was always allowed by the commander to take precedence in any circumstances of danger, was requested to advance with the vanguard, while Pizarro himself followed more slowly with the remainder of the army and the baggage. De Soto, with about one hundred horsemen, advanced rapidly along the level road, which, as we have mentioned elsewhere, was paved with large and substantial flagstones, strongly cemented together. The clatter of the horses' hoofs on this solid turnpike seems to have produced a feeling of consternation among the hostile Indians, who retired and left the Spaniards in undisputed possession of the road. Almagro, with two hundred footmen, followed as closely as possible in the track of De Soto's cavalry, but the speed with which the latter moved soon carried them far in advance of all their countrymen. They were alone and unsupported, therefore, when they entered the village of Xauxa, where a large Indian force was posted on the further bank of a river which runs through the midst of the valley. This river had been much swollen by the dis-

solving snow on the mountains, and, as the bridge had been carried away by the impetuous torrent, the Peruvians flattered themselves that their position was safe from the attack of the Spaniards. They began, therefore, to insult the horsemen with opprobrious and defiant language, using the terms villains, robbers, and murderers with much freedom; and, to confess the truth,



DE SOTO AND HIS CAVALRY SWIMMING THE RIVER

with no great impropriety. They were silenced and astonished, however, when De Soto ordered his troopers to plunge, man and horse, into the rushing and foaming waters, which the Peruvians had vainly supposed to be an impassable barrier. Before the cavalry could cross the dark and rapid stream, many of the people who were lately so vociferous in their threats and invectives, took to

flight. Some few remained, however, and fought with a determination which excited the admiration of their enemies, and proved that they wanted nothing but discipline and suitable weapons to make them formidable antagonists. This Spartan band soon perished under the irresistible broad-swords of the Spanish troopers. We regret to have it to say that De Soto then permitted his men to plunder the temple of Xauxa, from which a large quantity of gold and silver was obtained. Like other Spanish soldiers of the Cross, he deemed it a sin of omission, perhaps, to refrain from the pillage of a pagan shrine.

Finding his path once more unobstructed, De Soto pushed forward, evidently disposed to open the way to Cuzco, without the assistance of his tardy and irresolute commander. It is a remarkable fact, and one which admits of no denial, that every important military movement of the Spaniards in Peru, until the final subjugation of the empire by the capture of the metropolis, was conducted by De Soto. Up to the time to which our narrative now refers, Pizarro had never fought a single battle which deserved the name. The bloody tragedy of Caxamalca, it will be remembered, was only a massacre, the contrivance and execution of which required no military skill and no soldier-like courage. Pizarro may be compared with that Danish usurper of dramatic celebrity,

“Who from a shelf the precious diadem stole.”

He acquired the mastery of Peru by the act of a male-

factor; and he was in fact a thief, and not a conqueror. The *heroic* element of this conquest is represented by the actions of Ferdinand de Soto.

While this truly brave soldier was fighting his way to the capital, Pizarro relapsed into his old habits, and began to plunder the villages with as much diligence as if that were the sole object of his expedition. This most imprudent, as well as scoundrel-like conduct, exposed the whole body of Spaniards to imminent danger of annihilation. The forces, instead of advancing in compact order, as the circumstances required, were widely separated. De Soto and his party were far ahead, and they soon became entangled in the rugged passes of the mountain, where horses could scarcely travel and would be absolutely useless in battle. Instead of moving on to sustain De Soto in this hazardous position, Pizarro, with the main body of his troops, was engaged in robbing the dwelling-houses which happened to be situated near the road. At the same time, the priest Vincent, *alias* Valverde, became infected with an unseasonable fit of iconoclastic zeal. He accompanied the Spanish soldiers, or robbers, into the rural temples, and with his own apostolic hands pulled down the images of the Sun which were used by the Peruvians—not to worship—but as visible emblems or representatives of the Divine Nature.*

* See the remarks relative to the Peruvian religion in our Twelfth chapter.

While Pizarro and the priest were absorbed in these congenial and professional occupations, Almagro, who had advanced much further along the road, sent back a messenger to inform the commander that the Indians had mustered in great strength, and would probably attack De Soto at some advantageous point in the passage of the mountains. But even this urgent appeal did not make Pizarro hasten to the support of his vanguard; although, (as Quintana tells us,) "the danger of De Soto and his horsemen filled the mind of the commander with *wrath* as well as anxiety." Here was a fine opportunity to give scope to his virtuous indignation by hurrying onward and assisting De Soto to chastise the insolent enemy. But our readers must be aware, by this time, that Pizarro's "*ira furiosa*" seldom conducted him to any deed of noble daring. In the case now under consideration, his angry passion discharged itself on an unoffending and defenseless object. He affected to believe that his prisoner and hostage, the brave and virtuous Peruvian general Chalcukima, had found means of communication with his countrymen, and instigated them to defend their chief city against the Spaniards. He charged Chalcukima with this "treason," and the noble chieftain heard the accusation with his habitual tranquillity. His characteristic answer was: "If it had been possible for me to communicate with the people, I should certainly have advised them to do their duty to their country, without any regard for my personal safety. But you well know

that the vigilance with which you have guarded me has prevented me from making any communication of the kind. I am sorry that it has not been in my power to be guilty of the fact with which you charge me."

This defense, obviously truthful as it was, was sufficient of itself to bring him to the stake. Besides, it is said that Pizarro hated him, because he had won five battles for Atahuallapa; and the Peruvians believed that if he had been at Caxamalca at the time the Spaniards arrived, the capture of the Inca and the butchery of the people would have been prevented. Chalcukima was sentenced to be burned. He was accompanied to the stake by Father Vincent, "who painted in gloomy colors the dreadful doom of the unbeliever, to whom the waters of baptism alone could secure the ineffable glories of Paradise." The victim coldly answered: "I do not understand your religion, and all that I have seen of it does not prepossess me in its favor." He bore his tortures with inflexible resolution, and died invoking the name of Pachacamac.*

In the meanwhile, De Soto, though aware of the danger and almost certain destruction which would attend a conflict with the enemy in the narrow passes of the Sierra, continued to press forward. The great national road of the Peruvians, on which he was now marching, was altogether unfitted for horse-conveyance, as these people had no beasts of burden except vicuñas,

* Ped. Sancho : Rel. ap Ramusio, Tom. iii., Fol. 406.

or Peruvian sheep. The ascent of the mountain was effected by means of steps cut in the rock, which afforded a very difficult and insecure foothold for the horses, and made it necessary for the cavaliers to dismount and lead, or almost drag, their quadrupeds up this perilous staircase. Cliffs, inaccessible from the road, projected over the heads of the Spaniards, and suggested to their apprehensions the disastrous consequences of an attack from those elevated and unapproachable ramparts, which Nature herself seemed to have intended for the defense of the country. For awhile it seemed that the Indians had overlooked their best opportunity to repulse the invaders, for De Soto had been permitted to pass through a long defile without meeting with any resistance. But at a rough and difficult pass in the Sierra of Vilcacongá, several thousand Peruvians had posted themselves, laid in provisions, and fortified their position as skillfully as their knowledge of the art of war would permit. But little fortification was necessary in a place which Nature had made almost impregnable. Observing their own advantages, and the great difficulties under which the Spaniards labored, the natives considered their enemies as already conquered. Raising their war-cries, they attacked the Castilians fiercely with darts, slings, arrows and wooden ciméters and in all their actions showed a determination to conquer or die. The Spanish troopers recoiled at the sight of so great a multitude in that formidable position, which they had had the sagacity to select. De Soto,

seeing that many of his followers were discouraged by the desperate resistance and vastly superior numbers of the enemy, used every possible effort to keep them in order, and encourage them to move onward. "It suits us not," cried he, "to halt here, and if we attempt to go backward, we are certainly lost. While we hesitate, the difficulty and danger must increase every moment, for the enemy will become emboldened, and will multiply in numbers. On the contrary, by prompt action we can easily put these men to flight; for we have proved by experience that they cannot stand before our weapons and our horses. Follow me!"

Having thus addressed his men, he spurred his horse up the steep acclivity on which the Indians were stationed; his soldiers followed, and in the obstinate and sanguinary struggle which ensued, the Spaniards fought like heroic veterans, and the Indians like infuriated tigers. The Peruvians well knew that they were now fighting their last battle in defense of their domestic altars, the sepulchres of their ancestors, and the temples of their gods. They were aware that this conflict would decide the fate of their nation; that it would either free them forever from their merciless oppressors, or leave them in perpetual bondage to a race of men whom they hated and feared more than the demons of their mythology. No wonder that their resistance was obstinate and their courage invincible. Although the Spanish horsemen were protected by defensive armor,

many of them were killed by the defective weapons of the Peruvians. On the other hand, the slaughter of the natives was terrific. Hundreds were pierced by the lances, or cut down by the swords of the Castilians, and many more were trampled to death under the armed hoofs of the horses. The combatants were separated, at last, by the darkness of night, made still darker by the overhanging rocks which surrounded the scene of conflict.

At the commencement of the battle, De Soto had sent messengers to make his situation known to Pizarro and Almagro. Hours had now elapsed but no succor had arrived. During the night, the Spaniards and Peruvians were posted within musket shot of each other; and the exulting shouts of the natives, who appeared to be confident of victory, were distinctly heard through the hours of darkness by the Castilian soldiers. They did not require these depressing sounds to make their situation uncomfortable. De Soto himself experienced some painful anxiety, when he reflected on all the difficulties of his position; and in his own mind he severely censured his countrymen for leaving him thus exposed to the overwhelming force of the enemy. At the approach of daylight the Indians were under arms, and prepared to renew the attack. De Soto encouraged his men with assurances of victory which he himself could not realize; and while the Spaniards waited in momentary expectation of the assault, the sound of a Castilian trumpet was heard echoing among

the cavernous recesses of the granite cliffs, and announcing the arrival of aid and deliverance.

The day had scarcely dawned when Almagro, with two hundred foot-soldiers, whose coming had been announced by the welcome sound just mentioned, joined



DE SOTO FIGHTING HIS LAST BATTLE BEFORE REACHING THE CAPITAL.

forces with De Soto. The Indians were astonished to find that the number of their antagonists was trebled; yet they withstood the assault of the Spaniards with unabated resolution, and by far the larger number of them perished on the field of battle. The Spaniards

were wearied with the work of slaughter before the contest was finished; but De Soto, to whom Almagro yielded the command of the combined forces, finally succeeded in driving the natives from their rocky intrenchments into an open and level piece of ground, where they were all dispersed or put to the sword. This was the most important battle ever fought by the Spaniards in America. It finished the conquest of Peru; and the great city of Cuzco, the capital of the empire, was now at the mercy of the conquerors.

The scene of this battle was about twenty-five miles from the metropolis. As the mountain passes were gained by the Spaniards, no effectual resistance could now be expected from the natives. De Soto was inclined to move on and take possession of the city; but at Almagro's earnest request he consented to remain where he was and await the arrival of Pizarro.

CHAPTER XXII.

DE SOTO FIGHTS ANOTHER BATTLE—HIS WONDERFUL PROWESS—REMARKABLE FEAT OF HORSEMANSHIP—ASTONISHMENT AND SUBMISSION OF THE PERUVIAN GENERAL—THE NATIVES RETREAT TO CUZCO—THEY SET FIRE TO THE CITY—DE SOTO ENTERS THE CAPITAL—HE ENDEAVORS TO EXTINGUISH THE CONFLAGRATION—ARRIVAL OF ALMAGRO AND PIZARRO—THE COMMANDER'S DISAPPOINTMENT—INDIANS PUT TO THE TORTURE—THEIR INVINCIBLE FORTITUDE—FATE OF THE CONQUERORS—ALMAGRO STRANGLLED—HERNANDO PIZARRO IMPRISONED—FATHER VINCENT ASSASSINATED—EXECUTION OF FRANCISCO PIZARRO—DE SOTO RETURNS TO SPAIN—HIS INTERVIEW WITH ISABELLA—DEATH OF PEDRO DE AVILA. [A. D. 1584.]

THE sluggish movements of Pizarro exposed the whole army to new dangers, by giving the Peruvians time to recover from the panic occasioned by their recent defeat. Had De Soto and Almagro, after their victory at Vilcaconga, proceeded without delay to the capital, they would have met with no opposition on the route, for the hostile Indians were dispersed, and their consternation for awhile would not permit them to risk another encounter with the Spaniards. But Almagro's desire to give Pizarro an opportunity to partici-

pate in the triumphant entry of the Castilians into Cuzco, and the commander's inexcusable hesitation on the road, gave the Indians time to recollect themselves; and the consequence was, that De Soto and Almagro were beset by another large body of Peruvians in the valley of Xaquixaquama. Thus the imbecility of Pizarro exposed his countrymen to the hazards of another conflict with desperate enemies, who were more than four times as numerous as the Castilians, and who had the advantage of a battle ground which had been judiciously selected by themselves. Pizarro was a few miles behind with the main body of the Spanish troops; and De Soto, as soon as he saw that another engagement was inevitable, sent back a horseman to make the commander acquainted with the new difficulty. But instead of coming, with his whole force, to the rescue of his vanguard, Pizarro contented himself with sending a small reinforcement under the command of his brother Juan. To increase De Soto's troubles, some of his subordinate officers, and Almagro himself, were unwilling to engage this formidable body of Peruvians until Pizarro should come to their assistance; and it was even suggested to De Soto that, in proceeding so rapidly, he was acting without due authority, if not in direct opposition to the commander's orders. To this De Soto answered that it would be a great folly to cease pursuing a victory which God had put into their hands. He said that soldiers sent to perform notable actions were not tied down by the orders of their superiors, but were

allowed to use their own discretion, if thereby a greater advantage could be gained. "In this case," he continued, "the whole success of our enterprise depends on the celerity of our movements. While we are waiting for Pizarro, our best chances of victory may be lost."*

This military logic might admit of some question, but it silenced the scruples of De Soto's followers, and drew forth a unanimous declaration of their willingness to march forward. De Soto took advantage of the auspicious moment, and led the way into that obscure and intricate ravine in which the enemy was posted. By charging the Peruvians with their lances as well as the nature of the ground would permit, the Spaniards succeeded at last in clearing the passage; though the Indians fought with the same reckless determination which they had shown at Vilcaconga. Before the natives could be completely routed, however, they were reinforced by another large body of Indians under the command of a young Peruvian noble, who was said to have some pretensions to the throne of the Inca. In the meanwhile, De Soto, who was always foremost in the hour of danger, had urged his charger through the thickest ranks of the enemy. He now found himself alone and surrounded by his Indian foes, while some of the bravest of his countrymen were making ineffectual efforts to come to his aid. A heap of dead men and horses obstructed the road, presenting an insurmountable

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, Dec. iii., Lib. x., Cap. 4.

barrier to the troopers, whose quadrupeds could not be forced through this mass of carnage. De Soto's horse had cleared the mound of inanimate flesh at a single



DE SOTO FIGHTING TWENTY PERUVIANS.

leap; for, like the sea-born steed of Perseus and Bellephophon, he was scarcely less distinguished than his rider for extraordinary and prodigious achievements. In his isolated position, De Soto was opposed, single-handed, to more than twenty Indians, who assailed him on all sides with their battle-axes, javelins, arrows, and copper clubs, the latter being armed with sharp-pointed projections. To all of these weapons the defensive

armor of the Spanish knight was impervious, while at every sweep of his sharp and ponderous sword, one of his antagonists at least, and sometimes two of them, fell to the earth dead or desperately wounded.

The young Peruvian nobleman, who had led the reinforcement from Cuzco, beheld the actions of De Soto with grief and astonishment. At length, he turned to his attendants and exclaimed: "It is useless to contend with such enemies! These men are destined to be our masters." He then approached the Castilian knight, and signified by gestures that he was willing to surrender. This act of submission on the part of their leader, reduced the Peruvians to despair. The battle instantly ceased, and many of the natives fled toward the capital, calling on each other to burn the temples, as the only means of saving them from the ravages of their sacrilegious enemies. The young nobleman who had submitted to De Soto, informed him that the fugitives were about to destroy the city. With an earnest desire to prevent the destruction of that ancient and splendid metropolis, De Soto and Juan Pizarro, with some of their fleetest horsemen, hastened forward, hoping to arrive at Cuzco before any intelligence of their approach could reach the inhabitants. But before their arrival, the torch had been successfully applied in various parts of the city, the great Temple of the Sun was stripped of its brilliant garniture, and all the public treasures had been removed. All the population, except those whom age or infirmity confined to their habita-

tions, had taken to flight. De Soto, and the Spaniards who were with him, endeavored to extinguish the flames, which were now spreading in several quarters of the city with frightful rapidity—the Indians, who



CUZCO ON FIRE.

accompanied them, remaining inactive, and beholding the scene of devastation with stern composure.

While De Soto and his company were thus engaged, their countrymen arrived in several different parties, the first of which consisted of Almagro and his detach-

ment, and lastly came Francisco Pizarro, with the gang of miscreants which always remained nearest to his person. They came, like wolves or jackalls, to batten on the prey which never could have been obtained by their own courage and prowess. The disappointment of Pizarro and his congenial associates, when they found that the principal wealth of the city had been carried off by the Peruvians, vented itself in acts of diabolical cruelty. They seized on the aged and sick persons who had been unable to escape, and put many of them to the torture, to make them confess where the treasures of Cuzco were concealed. Either these unfortunate people could not give the information required, or they had sufficient firmness to endure agony and death rather than betray the consecrated treasures of their national monuments and altars into the hands of their enemies.

It was late in the month of November, 1533, when the Spaniards took possession of Cuzco in the name of the King of Castile. Though they did not obtain all the booty which they expected to find in this great city, the amount of the spoils was considerable. They searched all the palaces, private dwelling-houses, and tombs with such diligence, that their voracious avarice was in some measure satisfied. After the King's fifth was subtracted, the balance of the golden plunder was divided into four hundred and eighty shares, the average value of which was four thousand *pesos-de-oro* for each man.

It is a common remark among religious people, that apparent misfortunes are often disguised blessings. The converse of the proposition is equally true: these accidents of fortune which we regard as the happiest events of our lives, often prove to be the most disastrous. So it was with these short-sighted Spaniards. We have good reason to believe that the conquest of Peru was a source of trouble and calamity to all who were connected, in any way, with that enterprise. As soon as De Soto left the country, which he did shortly after the capture of Cuzco, the victors began to contend with each other for the spoils. Almagro, after provoking a war with the Pizarros, was taken prisoner, and subsequently strangled while in confinement. Hernando Pizarro returned to Spain, where he was thrown into prison, and remained there for many years. Gonzalo Pizarro was beheaded by his own countrymen. The priest Vincent, or Valverde, the spiritual adviser of Francisco Pizarro, who gave his counsel and consent to many of the most enormous crimes committed by that moral monster, after enjoying the sinecure of conscience-keeper to his patron for several years, was made Bishop of Cuzco. In November, 1541, he went, with a considerable number of Spaniards who had served under Pizarro, to the island of Puna, where he and all his companions were massacred by the Indians. On this very island, in 1532, Pizarro, with Vincent's connivance, had butchered the inhabitants; and here it was that the murderers slandered the Archangel Michael, by

pretending that he assisted them in their bloody performance. No angel interposed, however, when Vincent and his fellow-assassins were about to be put to death by the infidels.

Francisco Pizarro himself fell a sacrifice to the just resentment of some of Almagro's soldiers. The felon commander was assailed in his own palace, where he had just finished his dinner, when the avengers entered. All his servants and guests, except his half-brother, Martinez de Alcantara, instantly fled and abandoned him to his fate. His death-scene is minutely described by Mr. Prescott and some others; but these accounts are contradictory, and such of them as are intended to make it appear that Pizarro died like a hero are obviously fictitious. Pizarro's brother, Alcantara, perished with him. This brother was the only person who attempted to strike a blow in the criminal's defense, though the executioners made no secret of their design. They performed their work at mid-day, entering the palace with drawn weapons, and loudly proclaiming their intention to "kill the tyrant." Quintana says: "No one sallied forth to obstruct their progress; and though there were upward of a thousand persons in the plaza, not one opposed the design of the conspirators, but looked upon them and permitted them to proceed, coldly remarking one to another, 'These men are going to kill the governor.'"

Thus, unpitied and unlamented, fell Francisco Pizarro; and it is only in the *manner* of his death that we find

something to condemn. He should have died on the gibbet, where many better men, and few worse ones, have paid the just penalty of their misdeeds. And such was the final doom of the most successful and prosperous conquerors that the world ever knew! At a trivial cost they acquired the mastery of one of the greatest empires upon earth, for it is probable that not more than twenty Spaniards perished in the accomplishment of this grand object. Their spoils, so easily and quickly obtained, exceeded in magnificence the golden harvests of Sesostris and Attila, reaped in a thousand fields of slaughter and with many years of labor and suffering. Yet all that the Spaniards gained by their American victories was individual and national ruin. Few, even among the most fortunate of those who took a part in the spoliation of Peru, carried home any evidences of their success; and all who did so, are supposed to have dissipated their ill-gotten riches in riotous living, or in various unfortunate speculations.

Ferdinand de Soto returned to Spain with not less than half a million of dollars; part of which was his share of Atahuallapa's ransom; but a still larger portion was obtained from the spoils of Cuzco. When we have followed this fortunate cavalier to the end of his story, we shall be enabled to decide how far he was really blessed by the magnitude of his acquisitions. De Soto must have left Peru about the beginning of the year 1534. The last account we have of his presence in that country represents him as endeavoring to compose the

dissensions among his co-laborers. His prudent counsels kept his wolfish countrymen from rending each other while he remained among them; but soon after his departure, the factions of Almagro and Pizarro broke out into open warfare, in the course of which all who had taken the most conspicuous parts in the subjugation of the country, lost their lives as well as their property.

We have no particular account of De Soto's voyage to Spain, but the splendid appearance he made at the Spanish court, and the flattering reception he met with from the emperor, Charles V., are matters of historical celebrity. Before he sought the sunshine of Royal favor, however, he hastened to offer his devotions at the shrine of beauty; for it appears that sixteen years of banishment could not make him forget the object of his youthful adoration. Indeed, the unchanging attachment of De Soto for Isabella de Bovadilla will appear to be one of the most marvelous incidents of his history, when we consider that this passion began in his days of boyhood, and endured, in the absence of its object, to the ripe age of thirty-five years. But if we are surprised at De Soto's constancy, we must acknowledge that the stability of Isabella's affection is still more wonderful, as it is scarcely reconcilable with the proverbial fickleness of her sex.

During the long separation of these exemplary lovers, many important changes had taken place. Time and sorrow had somewhat dimmed the lustre of Isabella's beauty; but she was still "the fairest among ten thou-

sand," and De Soto was too deeply enamored and too justly appreciative to value her the less because the rose had partially faded from her cheek.

Don Pedro de Avila, Isabella's father, died while De Soto was in Peru. Toward the close of his life, while suffering under the combined tortures of bodily disease and remorse of conscience, he began to grow penitent and to seek the consolations of the Church. His sins were numerous, and the work of repentance was proportionately onerous; that is to say, *expensive*. The ecclesiastics, to whom he applied for counsel, assured him that nothing less than a very large outlay of money could afford him any prospect of a happy futurity. In accordance with this disinterested advice, he devoted a considerable part of his fortune to the endowment of a monastic institution, of which his eldest daughter Maria afterward became abbess. This lady, it will be remembered, was betrothed to Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, a short time before that unhappy adventurer was put to death by the father of his affianced bride. Whether De Avila's excessive liberality to the church was accepted as an expiatory sacrifice is a matter beyond our research; but we are informed that his compunctious generosity was ruinous to the worldly interests of his family. Isabella, moreover, had never been forgiven by her father for her pertinacious attachment to De Soto, for whom, to the last moment of his life, De Avila cherished feelings of unrelenting enmity. Owing to these various causes, the inheritance of Isabella fell far short of all

reasonable expectation; so that with respect to fortune, the relative positions of the two lovers seemed to have been reversed.

But the time had come when all obstacles to the union of De Soto and Isabella had disappeared. He had won the prize; and, as the reader may have observed, great sacrifices of feeling and principle had been required for the attainment of this object. To the observation of men, he was now one of the most prosperous and happy of human beings, though he had leagued himself with malefactors and partaken of the guilty earnings of rapacious violence. Apparently, he had escaped the retribution which had fallen so heavily on others. But man, who can discern nothing beyond the present moment, must not presume to question the impartiality of Divine justice, the purposes and decrees of which may lie concealed in the dark shadows of futurity.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DE SOTO'S FAME AND POPULARITY—HIS SPLENDID STYLE OF LIVING—HE RESOLVES TO ENGAGE IN A NEW ENTERPRISE—A NEW EL DORADO—DE SOTO PLANS AN EXPEDITION TO FLORIDA—GREAT PREPARATIONS—PUBLIC EXCITEMENT—THE EXPEDITION LEAVES SPAIN—DE SOTO BECOMES A YOUNG LADY'S GUARDIAN—THE EXPEDITION ARRIVES AT CUBA—DE SOTO ASSUMES THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ISLAND—GRAND TOURNAMENT—A STRANGE LOVE AFFAIR—DE SOTO'S WARD IS SEDUCED—HIS RESENTMENT—HE CHALLENGES THE SEDUCER—HOW THE AFFAIR WAS COMPROMISED. [A. D. 1534–1538.]

THE fame of Ferdinand de Soto's exploits in America had been wafted over the broad Atlantic long before the cavalier himself returned to the land of his nativity. At that time it was well understood in Spain that De Soto was the real hero of the Peruvian war; for the imbecile character of Pizarro was notorious among his cotemporaries. The time of his apotheosis had not yet arrived. Report said that in tournament or battle De Soto was more than a match for any ten cavaliers in the Christian army. His celebrity was of that kind which could most powerfully recommend him to the Spanish people of all classes, and he was undoubtedly

the most popular man in the kingdom. The spoils of the murdered Inca enabled him to make a splendid figure at Court, and his style of living was as ostentatious as might have been expected of one whose worldly condition had been so suddenly changed from poverty to wealth. The Portuguese narrator informs us that he kept "a steward, a gentleman-usher, several pages, a gentleman of the horse, a chamberlain, footman, and all other officers that the house of a nobleman requires."^{*} He purchased a handsome mansion in Seville, and was married soon after to Donna Isabella. As a reward for the services which he had rendered the crown, the king bestowed on him the title of marquis; and, (as a further proof of Royal favor), borrowed from him a considerable sum of money.† He and Donna Isabella were received at Court with the most flattering attentions. De Soto was "the man whom the king delighted to honor," and all the nobility of the land ambitiously sought his acquaintance and friendship. But it does not appear that prosperity and the society of the great made any improvement in his moral character. He acquired that taste for extravagance and display which, if not a vice in itself, is excessively vitiating in its tendency. The expensive style of living which De Soto had adopted could not be sustained for a very long time without replenishing his coffers. His wealth

* Portuguese Narration, Ch. 1

† Port. Narr., Loc. cit.

was ample but not inexhaustible; and some of our republican compatriots, who have no pretensions to live like noblemen, could testify that it is possible to dissipate half a million of dollars in a very short career of luxurious indulgence. We have hinted above that Isabella had been almost disinherited by her father; her marriage-portion, therefore, added but little to her husband's pecuniary resources. After a residence of two years at Seville, De Soto discovered that more than half of his princely estate had been scattered to the winds; and now that foresight, for which he was generally remarkable, taught him the necessity of making a good "investment" of the moiety of his fortune which still remained.

As a military gamester, willing to stake his life for the chance of obtaining gold, he had, in one instance, been eminently successful; and a *fortunate* gambler of any class never shrinks from the hazards of the game. De Soto resolved to embark once more on that most uncertain sea of speculative enterprise, which offers its allurements to the military adventurer.

About this time, A. D. 1536, some of the Spaniards began to entertain the belief that there was a new *El Dorado* situated in some part of that extensive region called *Florida*. This name was applied, without limitation, to the country extending northward from the Gulf of Mexico, and westward from the shores of the Atlantic. Much of the ground was, as yet, unexplored, and but imperfectly known to Europeans.

Several adventurers had undertaken to examine the country; but, owing to causes which will be explained in the next chapter, every attempt of the kind had disastrously failed. In 1528, Pamphilo de Narvaez started on an exploring expedition to Florida with three hundred men, of whom only five escaped to declare how their captain and their comrades had miserably perished. One of these survivors was Cabeça de Vaca, Pamphilo's treasurer, who returned to Spain in 1536, and published an account of the Expedition.* This unfortunate gentleman endeavored to establish the credibility of his narrative by swearing to the truth of it before a magistrate, but in spite of this powerful attestation, we are compelled to reject two-thirds of his stories as fictions very unskillfully constructed. But at that time, the means of detecting his falsehoods did not exist; and, as his accounts of the treasures of Florida were acceptable and gratifying to the Spaniards, he found many believers among them. Indeed there was nothing intrinsically improbable in his representations; for why should Florida not produce gold and silver as well as Mexico and Peru?

From all accounts received in Spain, it appeared that the exploration and conquest of Florida would be attended with much greater dangers than those which has been encountered by Cortez and Pizarro. It was the good fortune of each of these conquerors to meet

* Naufragios de Alvar Nuñez de Cabeça de Vaca.

with an artless and unwarlike people, who could be defrauded or subdued with very little trouble. But the Floridan Indians were of a different constitution; for their invaders had found that they were both subtle and ferocious; and, thus far, every effort to subdue them had been abortive.

To De Soto the subjugation of these people appeared to be an undertaking worthy of his military talents. He believed, with a majority of his countrymen, that the mineral wealth of Florida was immense; he doubted not that the land would amply remunerate its conquerors; and the very dangers which attended the invasion of the country, was an additional inducement for him to undertake the enterprise. He hoped, at last, to find "foemen worthy of his steel," and expected to add new lustre to his reputation by overcoming a people whom several able captains had failed to conquer.

De Soto applied to the King for permission to carry out this bold design, and proposed to undertake the conquest of Florida at his own expense. This part of the scheme was very agreeable to his majesty; who, with true mercantile sagacity, was willing to share the profits of the enterprise without furnishing any of the required capital. But as it is easier for kings to reward merit with honors than with money, he was very liberal in bestowing titles on the brave adventurer, whom he made "Governor of the Island of Cuba," and "Adelantado or President of Florida." As soon as it was understood that Ferdinand de Soto was about to undertake a

new expedition to America, many Spanish cavaliers were ambitious to enroll themselves among his followers. Several young gentlemen who had formerly served with him in Peru, and with whose good soldiership he was well acquainted, were selected by him as subordinate officers. One of these, named Nunar de Tobar, became his Lieutenant-General. Luis de Moscoso was Camp-Master; and Juan de Anasco was appointed Contador or Royal Accountant. The duty of the last-named officer was to keep an account of the plunder, and to take care that one fifth of it should be duly appropriated to the use of the King.

The brilliant military reputation of De Soto and the dazzling prospects of fame and booty which this enterprise promised to all who were brave and unscrupulous enough to engage in it, brought in more recruits, of all classes, than the undertaking required. Some young men of moderate fortune sold all their estate, real and personal, to equip themselves for the voyage. All the noble and ignoble vagabonds of the country were ready to enlist in an adventure which not only promised to be glorious and profitable in a worldly sense, but likewise held out an assurance of those unfading wreaths and heavenly treasures to which these soldiers of the Cross were presumed to be entitled. It is a notable circumstance that the Church was well represented in De Soto's army; for no less than twelve priests, eight clergymen of inferior rank, and four monks, were engaged to accompany the expedition.

A certain cavalier named Balthazar de Gallegos, who had proved his devotion to the cause by selling all he possessed to defray the expenses of his outfit, received from De Soto the appointment of Alguazil Mayor. This ardent soldier was obliged to take his wife with him to the New World, as he had disposed of all his property, and the poor woman had nothing left for her maintenance at home. But the general anxiety of the Spanish cavaliers to signalize themselves in America was now rivalled by the military ardor of a party of Portuguese hidalgos, who came to Seville with no other object than to enlist themselves under the banners of our renowned hero. One of these magnanimous volunteers afterward became the historian of the enterprise; and to him the world is indebted for the most reliable and complete account we have of De Soto's adventures in that territory which now constitutes several of our Southern and Western States.

Six hundred men, besides the officers and the clergy, were enlisted for this service. It was the most considerable force that Spain ever fitted out to extend her dominion in the Western Hemisphere, and it was expected that the results would be of proportionable magnitude. The bustle of preparation seemed to throw the whole kingdom off its balance. From Court to cottage, the universal topics of conversation were Florida and De Soto; the Land of Flowers and the Flower of Chivalry. The Spaniards of that day, like our own countrymen of the present time, were subject

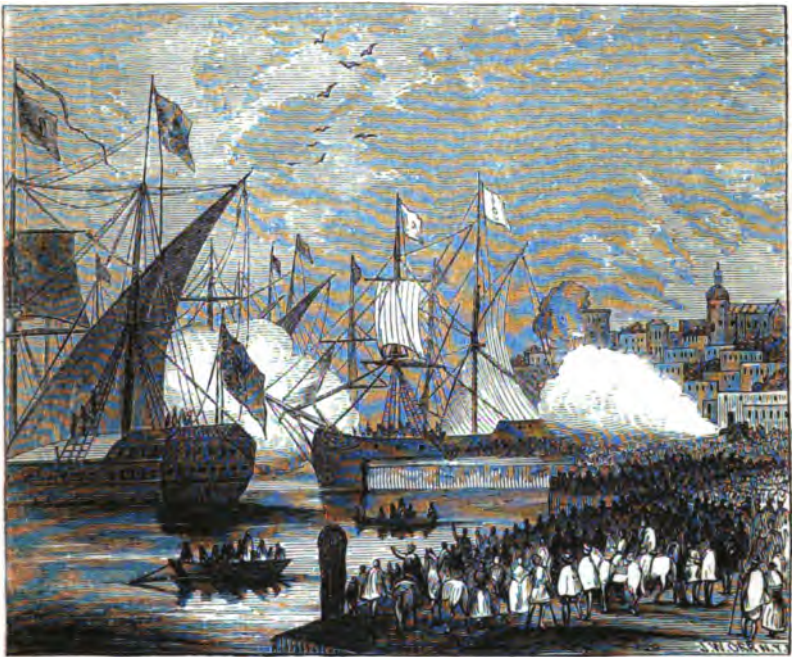
to spasms of unhealthy excitement. Their enthusiasm, in many cases, became a sort of epidemic mania or infatuation. In the instance to which we now refer, their imaginations had transformed Florida to Fairy Land, and De Soto to a faultless hero of romance!

The feverish irritation of the Spanish public in relation to this Floridan enterprise was induced, in a great measure, by the misrepresentations of that perjured bookmaker, Cabeça de Vaca, mentioned above as one of the survivors of Pamphilo's expedition. The sad effects of this man's fictitious statements should admonish some of our American authors and biblioplists, that a great moral error may be committed, and very deplorable mischiefs may be produced, by disseminating false information among the people. During the prevalence of the "Florida fever" in Spain, many people who were in comfortable circumstances sacrificed all their property and all their prospects of earthly happiness for the purpose of joining De Soto's expedition.

More than a year was consumed in making preparations for the voyage; but in the early part of April, 1538, all things were in readiness for the grand enterprise, and the whole company, consisting of twenty officers, twenty-four ecclesiastics, and six hundred common soldiers, embarked in ten ships at San Lucar.* The departure of this great armament was witnessed by many thou-

* The number of vessels, as stated by Garcilasso, is probably exaggerated.

sands of people, some of whom came from distant places to behold the glorious spectacle. The largest of the ships was occupied by the commander, with his family and attendants. Donna Isabella had determined to accompany her husband as far as Havana. De Soto



DE SOTO SETS SAIL FROM SPAIN TO CONQUER FLORIDA.

and his lady were both exemplary in their conjugal relations; and the strength of their mutual attachment would not allow them to endure the thought of another long separation.

On the 21st day of April, the fleet arrived at Gomera,

one of the Canary islands, the governor of which, Count Gomera, entertained them in the most friendly and hospitable manner. This count had several illegitimate daughters, one of whom, named Leonora, was a beautiful girl of seventeen. She was dearly beloved by her father, who designed to make her his heiress. Wishing to place this young lady under the virtuous instructions of Donna Isabella, the count proposed that she should become one of that lady's attendants. The beauty and modesty of Leonora strongly recommended her to Isabella's favor, and the proposal of Count Gomera, therefore, met with immediate acceptance. In a private conversation with De Soto, Count Gomera informed him that Leonora was the offspring of an illicit amour, and lest the mother's frailty should descend to the daughter, he wished the latter to be guarded, with the utmost care, from every corrupting influence. In reply to this confidential discourse of Gomera, De Soto gave a solemn pledge that the young lady's welfare should demand the same attention from himself and his wife as though she were their own child. "And I swear," added De Soto, "that the man who injures her in word or deed shall be accounted my deadliest foe, and I will make him responsible with his life."

The count provided some additional supplies of provisions for De Soto's ships, for which he refused to receive any recompense. On the 24th of April, the fleet again set sail, and after a voyage distinguished by no remarkable event, De Soto and his company arrived

at St. Iago de Cuba, on the 28th of May. The Spanish inhabitants of Cuba welcomed their new governor with every demonstration of joy. The citizens of St. Iago formed a grand procession, and came out to receive him with flying-colors and martial music; they escorted De Soto and his company into the city where suitable quarters had been prepared for their accommodation. For several days, nothing was thought of but feasting and rejoicing. As a suitable compliment to the governor's chivalric celebrity, a grand tournament was projected by the citizens. De Soto presided at this entertainment; but as no one could compete with him in the exercises of knighthood, he considerably refrained from entering the lists. The prizes of victory in several contests with sword and lance were borne away by Nuño de Tobar, De Soto's lieutenant-general and most confidential friend. This cavalier had distinguished himself in Peru, where he had gained the esteem of his present commander, and for many years the intimacy of De Soto and Tobar had been of the most confiding and fraternal character.

Donna Isabella, with Leonora and her other attendants, were among the spectators of the tournament. The fair daughter of Count Gomera was deeply interested in the display; but, among all the gay cavaliers who took a part in the passage-of-arms, the victorious Nuño de Tobar attracted her chief attention. This puissant knight was affected in a similar way by Leonora's beauty, and mutual admiration soon ripened into

love. Means of communication were found; Leonora eluded the vigilance of her guardians, and Tobar forgot the obligations he owed to his friend. Forgetting that the young lady had been placed under De Soto's protection, he used all his arts to seduce her. In this he succeeded at last, but little did he suspect what risks and penalties would be incurred by his transgression.

It is probable that the priest to whom Leonora confessed, violated his implied contract with the penitent, by making the governor acquainted with her fault. Certain it is that the whole truth soon came to De Soto's knowledge. The wrathful commander immediately sent for his lieutenant; and when the latter came into his presenee, he sternly demanded whether the information he had received was true. Tobar, who was not aware of the weighty offense that had been given, acknowledged his crime with little hesitation, expecting, perhaps, to receive a slight reprimand from his frowning judge. Great must have been his astonishment, however, when De Soto declared he had made a solemn engagement to protect Leonora at the hazard of his own life, and that he had pledged himself to take vengeance for any wrong that might be done to her while she remained under his protection. "Our long friendship," he continued, "cannot interfere with my obvious duty in this unhappy affair. To-morrow morning you must accompany me to a convenient place outside of the city, where I will give you an opportunity to defend the life which you have justly forfeited." To this Tobar

answered:—"I have not committed a capital crime; and if I had done so, I should not expect your Excellency to become my executioner. I know that it is impossible for me to contend with you in single combat, and I will not expose myself to certain destruction by accepting your challenge."—"Do not flatter yourself that your crime is of trivial importance," replied De Soto; "and do not imagine that you can evade the consequences by refusing to meet them like a man. To say nothing of the injury you have done to this wretched girl, your treachery to me deserves a traitor's punishment; choose, therefore, whether you will act like a soldier or suffer like a criminal."

Tobar had seen men put to death by Spanish governors for smaller faults than those which were now laid to his charge. Knowing De Soto's character too well to waste time in vain expostulations, he withdrew, therefore, with a prudent determination to repair the damage he had done, by making Leonora his lawful wife. The marriage ceremony was performed by one of the priests attached to the expedition; and, within less than an hour after he had parted from De Soto, the bridegroom returned to inform the governor that due reparation had been made. De Soto answered: "You have saved your life by this expedient, but the place you have lost in my confidence and esteem can never be regained. You are no longer my lieutenant; that office must be filled by one who has never given me any reason to doubt his honor and fidelity."

One of De Soto's peculiarities was inflexible severity in the punishment of offenders. He made no allowances for human frailty; and when he administered justice, no contrition on the part of the criminal, and no act of atonement could obtain any remission of the penalty.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HERNANDO PONCE ARRIVES AT HAVANA — HOW HE BECAME INDEBTED TO DE SOTO—HIS ATTEMPT TO DEFRAUD—HE CONCEALS HIS TREASURES—DE SOTO FINDS THEM—GENEROUS BEHAVIOR OF DE SOTO — INGRATITUDE AND BASE CONDUCT OF HERNANDO PONCE — NUNO DE TOBAR'S PROJECTS OF REVENGE—DISCOVERIES IN FLORIDA—EXPEDITION OF PONCE DE LEON—HIS SEARCH FOR THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH—EXPEDITION OF VASQUEZ DE AYLLON—HIS MISFORTUNES AND DEATH—EXPEDITIONS OF GIOVANNI DE VERAZANNO AND OF PAMPHILO DE NARVAEZ — PAMPHILO'S DEFEAT BY THE INDIANS—HE IS DRIVEN FROM THE COUNTRY, AND PERISHES BY SHIPWRECK—FEROCITY OF THE INDIANS ACCOUNTED FOR. [A. D. 1538.]

CONSIDERING that enough time had been spent in sports and festivities, Governor De Soto bade adieu to his cordial and convivial friends in St. Iago, and proceeded to Havana, from which port he intended to sail directly to Florida. While they remained at Cuba, the cavaliers of De Soto's party provided themselves with horses, as the Spanish inhabitants had stocked the island with these animals, many of which were of the finest breeds. While the governor and his company were waiting at Havana for a fair wind, a certain Hernando

Ponce arrived at that city in a vessel from Nombre de Dios, on the Isthmus of Panama. This Ponce had served under Pizarro in Peru; he never distinguished himself as a soldier, but he had made himself useful to some of the cavaliers by taking charge of their booty and supplying them with such sums of money as they required, provided they were willing to submit to his usurious exactions. In short, he was a sort of military banker or broker, and he managed his business so successfully that he gained more by his cunning than many others did by their valor. This enterprising man was deeply indebted to De Soto, who, just before he quitted Peru, had left a large quantity of gold in the custody of Hernando Ponce, and empowered him to collect certain considerable sums which De Soto had loaned to his brother officers.

Ponce was now *en route* for Spain, with the most substantial evidences of his financiering abilities, consisting of several large chests packed full of gold and silver. When his vessel touched at Havana, he learned, for the first time, that De Soto, to whom he was accountable for many thousands of dollars, not only resided in that city, but possessed power and authority enough to enforce the liquidation of his claim. When people have little inclination to pay their debts, every delay increases their reluctance. Don Hernando Ponce was more unwilling to make a settlement with De Soto because several years had elapsed since the debt was contracted. To save his treasure from any possible

result of litigation, he conveyed it away from the vessel, by night, and buried it in the sand, where he intended to leave it until he was ready to depart from Havana.



DON HERNANDO PONCE BURYING HIS TREASURE

Information of Ponce's maneuvers had reached De Soto, and the latter appointed several men to keep a watch on Ponce's ship. These spies saw the sailors carry off two or three large coffers; and, suspecting some foul play, they carefully observed the place where the supposed treasures were concealed in the ground. When these discoveries were communicated to the governor, he sent persons to dig up the boxes and bring them to his palace.

On the following morning, Governor de Soto dispatched a messenger, with a polite request for his "old friend, Don Hernando Ponce," to grant him the favor of an interview. Ponce came and was sumptuously entertained by the governor; to whom, after dinner, he gave a long account of his troubles and losses, concluding with the declaration that he was about to return to Spain, poorer, if possible, than he was before he left that country. "I find then," answered De Soto, "that I have been laboring under a misapprehension. Last night, some of my people found several heavy chests; and, as they were marked with your initials, I supposed that they might possibly belong to you. But what you have just told me, concerning your destitute condition, convinces me that you cannot be the owner of this property."

Ponce, who had indulged the hope that his treasure was safely stowed away, now became very much agitated, and earnestly requested the governor to show him the chests. They were brought into the room by De Soto's order, and Ponce, quite forgetful of his recent declaration, produced his keys, unlocked the boxes and satisfied himself that the contents had not been touched. De Soto then severely reproved him for his dishonest intentions and the disgraceful falsehood he had just uttered. In conclusion, he said: "Take away your goods, sir. If your own feelings do not prompt you to do justice to your creditor, I will not compel you to be honest, in spite of your nature and inclination."

Ponce appeared to be touched by the governor's magnanimous conduct. With some signs of compunction, he asked De Soto's permission to make Donna Isabella a present of ten thousand dollars. As this sum was less than half of Ponce's debt, the governor allowed him to make an exhibition of his generosity in the manner proposed. Accordingly the money was counted out by Ponce and graciously accepted by the lady; and, when this matter was arranged, the coffers were carried back to Ponce's ship.

But the broker's conscience soon began to harass him for parting with his dollars too easily; and while these objects of his devotion remained behind, he found it impossible to tear himself away from the island. On various pretenses, he postponed his departure; and, about a week after De Soto and his soldiers had embarked for Florida, the afflicted Ponce applied to one of the tribunals of Havana for a *mandamus* to compel Donna Isabella to restore the ten thousand dollars; alleging that they had not been paid as a just debt, but as a peace-offering to prevent the governor from stripping him of all his property. In answer to this allegation, Donna Isabella produced the proofs of Ponce's indebtedness to her husband, and called on the court of justice to detain Ponce until De Soto should return to prosecute his claim. The broker was not disposed to meet the risks of the trial; he chose rather to leave Donna Isabella in quiet possession of the money; and having no desire to come to any further

reckoning with De Soto, he availed himself of a dark night, and made his escape from Havana just in time to save himself from arrest and imprisonment, to which, as a recusant debtor, he was liable.

It was decided that all the ladies attached to De Soto's expedition should remain at Havana until the conquest of Florida should be accomplished. Donna Isabella was invested with the government of Cuba during her husband's absence. Donna Leonora, the daughter of Count Gomera and wife of Nuño de Tobar, used all her interest with Isabella and the governor to obtain the pardon of her husband, and his restoration to the office which he had forfeited on her account. But De Soto had already chosen another lieutenant, namely Vasco Porcallo de Figueroa, an old cavalier, who had "fought in Spain and Italy," and he had likewise acquired many laurels and much property by assisting Diego Velasquez in the subjugation of Cuba, A. D. 1511. Porcallo had lived more than half a century; the frosts of fifty-five years had chilled his military ardor; but another impulse, which age is supposed to strengthen, urged him to fight over again the battles of his youth. Avarice was the motive which induced this gray-haired warrior to leave a fine estate which he possessed in Cuba, for the sake of taking a part in a toilsome and dangerous enterprise, which promised to increase his wealth. It is said that Porcallo was the proprietor of several mines, and that his principal object in going to Florida was to obtain Indian slaves to perform the hard

labor which is required to make this kind of property productive.

Nuño de Tobar, though deprived of his office, and coldly treated by the governor, did not withdraw from the expedition. He went with his countrymen to Florida, smothering his resentment, or merely *concealing* it, perhaps, like another Iago, until chance should afford him an opportunity for reprisal. Subsequent events make it probable that his mind had already conceived a project of revenge, and that he waited, with enforced patience,

“For hell and night

To bring the monstrous birth to the world's light.”

As a preliminary to our account of De Soto's operations in Florida, it will be necessary to take some notice of the previous discoveries and actions of the Spaniards in that region. The honor due to the first discovery of the land which now constitutes the Southern extremity of the United States is generally awarded to that famous and eccentric old Spanish adventurer, Juan Ponce de Leon. Nevertheless the validity of his claim to that honor is liable to some dispute. Several authorities of very good credit maintain that Sebastian Cabot traced the whole line of the American coast as far southward as 36° 9' North latitude; and Peter Martyr avers that he sailed to the west of the meridian of Cuba.* From this account it does not appear that

* “Tenditque tantum ad meridiem littore sese incurvante, ut

Cabot proceeded further southward than the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, the latitude of which corresponds nearly with that of the Straits of Gibraltar, and the longitude with that of the eastern extremity of Cuba. It can scarcely be doubted that Ponce de Leon was the first European who landed on any part of that ground which is now occupied by the Southern and Western States of our Republic. The purpose for which he visited this country has exposed his memory to no little ridicule; but his childish delusion is entitled to more indulgence and respect than the sordid and hypocritical motives which induced so many of his countrymen to become explorers and crusaders in America.

Juan Ponce, the discoverer of Florida, was a native of Leon in Spain. He began his military career at a very early age, and acquired some distinction in several campaigns against the Moors of Grenada. He accompanied Columbus in his second voyage, A. D. 1493. Afterward, in requital of his military services against the Indians, he was appointed Governor of Hispaniola. Soon after his accession to this dignity, some old Indians gave him an account of a distant country, which possessed a river or fountain, whose waters could restore age and decrepitude to all the bloom and vigor of youth. Juan Ponce

Herculei freti latitudinis fere gradus equarit; ad occidentemque profectus tantum est ut Cubam insulam a læva longitudina gradum pena parum habuerit.—Peter Martyr, Dec. iii., Cap. vi.

was far advanced in years, and to him the stream or fountain described by the Indians, was a more desirable object than mines of silver or gold. In fact, the waters



SUPPOSED FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH.

of such a rejuvenating spring would have been, (as Edmund Burke observes), “the best commodity the country could yield, both for home consumption and the foreign markets, and would be a far better basis for

stocks and funds than all the mineral treasures of America.”*

Juan Ponce, for the purpose of discovering the location of this excellent fountain, set sail from Porto Rico, in three small caravels, on the 3d day of March, 1512. After a short voyage, he came to a country covered with flowers and verdure, and as the day of his discovery happened to be Palm Sunday, called by the Spaniards, *Pasqua Florida*, he bestowed the name of Florida on the country, in commemoration of this circumstance. Thus the first European discovery of Florida took place on the second day of April, 1512.

The next visit to Florida by Europeans was made in the year 1520, by the Licentiate Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon. This man, wanting slaves to work certain mines, agreed with some of his associates to kidnap a number of Caribs from the neighboring islands to fill the places of those who were rapidly disappearing under the hard treatment of the Spaniards. He started from St. Domingo with two ships, but encountering a gale, he was driven ashore on the mainland, between 32° and 33° North latitude; that is to say, at some point not far from the mouth of the Savannah River, in the State of Georgia. Ayllon, to carry out his design of kidnapping some of the natives, treated the people with great kindness, until about one hundred and thirty of them were induced to come on board of his vessels; he

* Burke's "European Settlements in America."

then weighed anchor, and sailed with his Indian captives, for San Domingo. In 1524, this villain, with six ships and five hundred men, made another voyage to the same coast, where he met with the just reward of his treachery. On this occasion, the Indians proved that they had learned the game of deceit; for the Spaniards were received by them with every appearance of kindness. Ayllon flattered himself that his old offense was forgotten. Trusting to appearances, he sent two hundred men on an exploring expedition into the country. The natives entertained and feasted them for four days, and having thus put them completely off their guard, they murdered every man of them while asleep. This slaughter was followed by an attack on those Spaniards who remained in the ships; they were compelled to put to sea without any supplies of provisions and water, and they endured indescribable sufferings before they reached St. Domingo.

Soon after this last exploit of Ayllon, he "died broken-hearted," and, (to use the language of Galvano,*) "he left nothing done worthy of memory." Considering the *quality* of his most celebrated actions, we find in the small number of them no very great cause of dissatisfaction.

In the year 1524, Giovanni da Verazzano, a Florentine sea-captain in the service of the French government, coasted from Florida as high as Cape Breton.

* Galvano, Discoveries of the World; Hakluyt., Ed. 1601, pp. 57-63.

On the 17th day of June, 1527, Pamphilo de Narvaez left Spain, with five ships and six hundred men, being authorized by the Spanish government to explore and take possession of "all the lands between Rio de las Palmas and Cape Florida. The fleet was much damaged by a hurricane, and was obliged to remain at Cuba for more than six months to be refitted. In February, 1528, Pamphilo again embarked; and, after a short and prosperous trip, landed his army at the bay of Santa Cruz, Florida. Having formally taken possession of the country, and proved that he was in earnest by pillaging some of the villages, Pamphilo began to interrogate the natives respecting the precise localities of that immense deposit of gold which he expected to find in Florida. In their answers to these inquiries, we suspect that the Indians had no other object in view, but to hasten the departure of their troublesome guests; they directed the gold-hunters, therefore, to a distant region called Apalache, assuring them that the shining metal could there be obtained in the greatest abundance. After a wearisome march, the Spaniards reached the designated place on the 26th day of June. While it was possible for the inhabitants of this district to consider them as friendly visitors, they were treated with kindness and respect; but the ungrateful and scoundrel-like behavior of the Spaniards soon provoked the hostility of the natives. Before he had time and opportunity to make any mineralogical researches, Pamphilo was compelled to retreat. While endeavoring to make his escape to

the sea-shore, he was closely pursued by the natives who killed two hundred of his men, or about a third of the whole number. The whole country being now aroused, Pamphilo found it impossible to return to his ships, and they were, probably, destroyed by the Indians. The Spaniards, therefore, took the shortest route to the coast, and came to the Bay of Aute, now called the Bay of St. Mark's. The Apalachian Indians were satisfied with driving the intruders from their country, and they abandoned the pursuit when that object was gained. Had the natives followed up their advantage, the whole gang would have been exterminated. When they arrived at the Bay of St. Mark's, the Spaniards were in a starving condition; their only food was the flesh of their horses, and they were obliged to slaughter one of these animals every third day. All their ingenuity was now employed to effect some means of escape from the country. Some kind of boats were required, but how were they to be constructed without any kind of tools suitable for such labor? They erected a forge on the beach; and, with immense toil and difficulty, converted their swords, lance-heads, stirrups, bridle-bits, &c., to nails, saws and axes. Having thus provided themselves with the proper instruments, they cut down trees, shaped the timber, and finally produced several very inelegant specimens of marine architecture. In the meanwhile, all their horses were consumed; and when they embarked in their rude batteaux their thin ghastly appearance might have reminded a spectator of

that shadowy boat-load of "magnanimous heroes," etc., which Virgil describes in the Sixth book of his Epic. All the boats were wrecked near the mouth of the Mississippi, and all on board perished, except Cabeça de



SPANISH BRIG WRECKED AT THE MOUTH OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

Vaca, the treasurer of the expedition, and four common soldiers. The five survivors were kindly received by the Indians of the neighboring country; but, during a season of famine, the Spaniards killed one of their number to afford subsistence to the others; and the natives were so horrified by this act, that they endeavored to put them all to death. Cabeça and his three companions escaped with their lives, however,

and after enduring many toils and sufferings, they reached Spain in August, 1537.

In all of these expeditions to Florida, the Spaniards treated the natives of the country with the most impolitic and unchristian-like barbarity. This fact will explain that deep-rooted hatred of the white race which made the enterprise of De Soto ten times more difficult and perilous than it would have been, if no Europeans had visited the country before his arrival. And it is highly probable that much of that ferocity which characterizes the aborigines of our Southern and Western States may be ascribed to the harsh and merciless treatment which their ancestors received from the early Spanish explorers.



REMAINS OF THE PARTY OF NARVAEZ.

CHAPTER XXV.

DE SOTO LEAVES HAVANA — UNFAVORABLE OMENS—DONNA ISABELLA'S FOREBODINGS—LEAVE-TAKING—THE VOYAGE TO FLORIDA—ARRIVAL AT TAMPA BAY—LANDING EFFECTED—HOSTILE INDIANS—A MUCH-ABUSED CHIEF—SPANISH BARBARITY—WRONGS NOT TO BE FORGIVEN—DE SOTO TAKES POSSESSION OF A VILLAGE—THE INDIANS OF FLORIDA—THEIR CIVILIZATION—THEIR MANUFACTURES—THEIR HOUSES, FURNITURE AND UTENSILS—THEIR ARCHITECTURE—THEIR RELIGION—THEIR GOVERNMENT—EFFECTS OF A SPANISH INVASION—HOW THE INDIANS OF FLORIDA FELL BACK INTO BARBARISM—HOW THEIR COMMUNICATIONS WITH EUROPEANS CORRUPTED THEIR GOOD MANNERS. [A. D. 1538—1539.]

DE SOTO sailed from Havana, on Sunday, May 18, with all his forces, embarked in five large ships, two caravels, and two brigantines. Almost a year had elapsed since the expedition left Spain; a large part of that time was expended by the governor in making a tour of the island, visiting the principal towns, purchasing horses and making other preparations for his voyage. Though the disastrous fate of all his predecessors in Florida seemed to cast an ominous shadow over the undertaking, no apprehensions of failure visited the mind of De Soto, and his assurance of success imparted an equal degree

of confidence to all who were interested in the enterprise. Many of the Spaniards believed De Soto to be invincible; he had been victorious in many battles, and he had never been defeated. His officers were all men of approved valor and of ripe experience in the practice of war. His troops were regular and well-disciplined soldiers; a majority of them had served in many campaigns, and all of them were well acquainted with the peculiarities of Indian warfare. With all these circumstances in his favor, De Soto might be excused for discarding all doubts of a triumphant career in that glorious field of adventure which was now expanded before him.

But, as "women fear too much, even as they love," the mind of Donna Isabella was greatly disquieted by the contemplation of those dangers which her husband was about to encounter, and which she was not permitted to share. She earnestly desired to accompany him to Florida; but, for the first time, De Soto resolutely opposed her wishes. This was the first separation of the fond couple since their marriage; the leave-taking was painful on both sides; but De Soto encouraged Isabella to hope that the time of reunion was not far distant. To his perceptions the conquest of Florida appeared to be an easy task, from which he could soon return with large accessions of wealth and glory; and then the happiness of their wedded life would be liable to no interruption.

The voyage from Havana to Florida was prolonged by contrary winds, which kept the squadron tossing about in the Gulf of Mexico for several days. On the 25th

of May, De Soto and his people obtained their first view of the much-desired land, and in the afternoon of the same day they came to anchor about two leagues from the shore. The shoals which extended along the coast prevented the ships from coming nearer; but it was very evident that their approach had been discerned by the natives, for many beacon-fires were kindled along the beach. These were the signals used by the Indians to collect their forces when they expected to be attacked



DE SOTO APPROACHING THE COAST OF FLORIDA.

by their enemies. The columns of black smoke which ascended from these fires were plainly visible to the Spaniards in their ships, who were thus made aware of

the hostile intentions of the natives. De Soto's vessels were anchored off the mouth of Tampa Bay, called by the Spaniards the Bay of Espiritu Santo. The Indians who inhabited the neighboring country were governed by a cacique named Ucita, whose unfriendly deportment toward the Spaniards is very satisfactorily explained. When Pamphilo de Narvaez visited this region in 1528, he was kindly received by the Cacique Ucita, who supplied him with provisions, and gave him all the assistance he required in his search after pearls and gold. A treaty of peace and amity was formed between this well-disposed Indian chief and the Spaniards; and yet, on a very slight pretense, Pamphilo caused the cacique's nose to be cut off, and his aged mother to be torn to pieces by dogs! From that time, Ucita was the irreconcilable enemy of the white men, having no good reason to doubt that they were all equally merciless and ungrateful. Keeping the facts just related in remembrance, we can easily account for that implacable resentment which Ucita displayed in his behavior to De Soto and his companions.

Perceiving that the Indians had gathered on the shore for the unmistakable purpose of opposing the disembarkation of his troops, De Soto deemed it expedient to avoid a collision with the natives at that time, and chose rather to proceed about two leagues further up the bay before he effected a landing. Leaving his ships at anchor, he conveyed his soldiers in small boats to a part of the shore where there was no appearance of opposition.

The place where he disembarked was on the Eastern shore of Hillsborough Bay, near the line which separates Manatee and Hillsborough Counties, Florida, about 27° 35' North latitude. In the meanwhile, the ships having been lightened by the landing of the troops, were enabled, by taking advantage of the tide, to pass over the shoals and approach the place where the soldiers had landed. The seamen still remained on board of the vessels.

When the soldiers were all disembarked, De Soto marched about ten miles into the country, and arrived at a deserted village, the inhabitants of which had fled in great alarm as soon as they discovered the approach of the strangers. Their consternation was very excusable, for this village had been ravaged by the infamous Pamphilo de Narvaez, and his villainies were yet fresh in the memories of these unfortunate people. Two or three of the fugitive Indians were overtaken and captured by some of De Soto's horsemen, and when the prisoners were brought into the presence of the governor, he treated them kindly, and inquired why they shunned the Spaniards as enemies. Then, for the first time, he learned the particulars of Pamphilo's tyrannical conduct; and he saw, at a glance, that the unfavorable impression which his predecessors had made on the minds of the Indians would be an unfailing source of danger and inconvenience to himself.

The captured Indians were subjects of the Cacique Ucita, mentioned above, the victim of Pamphilo's

horrid barbarity. De Soto loaded the captives with presents, and sent them to their chief with overtures of friendship. But the wrongs which Ucita had received from the white men were irreparable; the Spaniards could not restore his murdered parent to life, and the frightful mutilation of his person admitted of no redress. When De Soto's message was delivered to him, he indignantly replied: "Bring me no more speeches or promises from these men. I want their heads! Give me them and I will be satisfied!"

The intercourse between De Soto and the natives was carried on by means of several Indian interpreters whom the Spaniards had brought with them from Havana. As the Cacique Ucita was the ruler of a large and warlike tribe, inhabiting a territory which extended for many miles along the coast, De Soto considered it almost a matter of necessity to propitiate this chieftain before he marched further into the country. For, supposing that it should be necessary for the Spaniards to retreat to their ships, it would be extremely inconvenient to have such a potent enemy stationed between them and the sea. Many conciliatory messages were therefore sent to Ucita, and presents of considerable value were offered to him, but all these verbal and material offerings were disdainfully rejected.

While these abortive negotiations were in progress, De Soto quartered his troops in the village which had been abandoned by the Indians. The site of this village must have been about eight miles in a northerly direc-

tion from the landing-place of the Spaniards, which we have designated above. In daily expectation of an attack by Ucita and his warriors, De Soto prepared for war by clearing away the trees and bushes from the vicinity of his camp, in order to open a space for the action of his cavalry, on which he relied chiefly for defense. The houses of this village were built of timber, and covered with palm-leaves, and they were far superior in size and construction to the Indian wigwams of a later period. The Natchez, and other tribes inhabiting Florida, had made some considerable progress in civilization before the Spaniards invaded their territory. The effect of the Spanish invasion was a relapse into barbarism, from which these people never recovered. At the time of De Soto's arrival, the aborigines of Florida had none of those nomadic habits, for which all the North American Indians have subsequently become remarkable. The inhabitants of this region, three hundred years ago, lived in permanent habitations and cultivated the land.* Their subsistence was derived chiefly from agriculture, though hunting and fishing were practiced among them, partly as diversions and partly to increase their supplies of food. They understood many of the arts of civilized life and several of their manufactures were extremely ingenious. The formation of some of their household furniture and domestic utensils was artistical and not inelegant, and their

* Du Pratz, *Hist.*, ii., 7.

dresses, especially those of the females, were tasteful and ornate in a very high degree. Specimens of their earthenware manufactures are still preserved, and some of them are highly creditable to their skill in that branch of industry. The Portuguese narrator describes their crockery-ware as not inferior to that which was made at the cotemporary factories of Estremos and Montemor. Their other household goods consisted of mats, baskets and boxes, made of split cane and other materials, ingeniously wrought and ornamented. The wearing apparel of the Floridans was composed partly of skins handsomely dressed and colored, and partly of a sort of woven cloth, the materials of which were the fibrous bark of the mulberry-tree and a certain species of wild hemp. Their finest fabrics, which were used by the wives and daughters of the caciques, were obtained from the bark of the young mulberry shoots, beaten into small fibres and afterward bleached. This material was then twisted or spun into threads of a convenient size to prepare it for the operation of weaving, which was performed, in a very simple manner, by driving small stakes into the ground, stretching the warp across from stake to stake, and then inserting the weft by using the fingers instead of a shuttle. By this tedious process, very beautiful shawls or mantillas, with figured borders of the most exquisite patterns, were produced by the Floridan weavers.

Like the Peruvians, these people had acquired the art of working in metals. Manufactured articles of

gold, silver and copper were found among them, but the most useful metal of all had entirely escaped their notice. Some of their axes, hatchets and weapons of war were made of copper; and they, as well as the Peruvians, possessed the art of imparting a temper to this metal which made it little inferior to iron for the manufacture of edge-tools, &c. It is reported that the Peruvians used an alloy of copper and tin for such purposes; and we think it likely that a composition of that kind would be harder than brass, which is composed chiefly of copper and zinc.

In the construction of their habitations the people of Florida made some attempts at architectural elegance. According to the Portuguese narrator, the houses of the caciques were sometimes adorned with porticos, and the temples (as we learn from the same authority) had their sculptured embellishments. The writer just quoted mentions a carved bird with gilded eyes, which was placed on the roof or cupola of one of the religious edifices in the town where De Soto first established his quarters. The dwellings of the common people, though composed entirely of wood, were far more tasteful and commodious habitations than the log-huts of our Western settlers or the turf-built shanties of the Irish peasantry. Du Pratz tells us that some of the dwelling-houses of the Natchez were thirty feet square, many of them contained several apartments each, and some were provided with cellars in which the people stored their grain. The houses of the caciques were placed on

elevated mounds or terraces. The Portuguese gentleman says that the walls of some of the principal houses were hung with prepared buckskin, which resembled tapestry, and others had carpets of the same material.

The religion of the Natchez resembled that of the Peruvians; they worshiped the Sun as the source of light and heat, or the symbol of divine wisdom and goodness. They believed in the immortality of the human soul and in future rewards and punishments. The existence of a supreme and omnipotent Deity called the Great Spirit was acknowledged by these people; they also believed in an Evil Spirit of inferior power, who was supposed to govern the seasons and control the elements. It does not appear that the Natchez were image-worshippers before the Spaniards introduced that form of idolatry among them.

The government of the Florida Indians was despotic but not tyrannical. The authority of the caciques was patriarchal; and it was ecclesiastical rather than secular. In fact, these chiefs were popes or bishops, rather than princes; and, as they never abused their spiritual power, they seldom met with popular disobedience or resistance. Under any of the aboriginal dynasties of America, there was more equality and certainty in the administration of justice, more respect for the rights of man, more security for person and property, than may now be found in many parts of the United States; though we are disposed to believe that this Republic is better governed than any other nation of Christendom.

We may judge from the facts here collected, that the original inhabitants of Florida were a progressive people, and that their progress was in the right direction. They were rapidly acquiring all the graces and benefits of civilization, without those concomitant vices and corruptions which have inclined some judicious people to suspect that civilization itself is a curse and a nuisance. Such as we have described were the condition and prospects of these tribes before they were brought in contact with European influences and examples. At the time when our Southern and Western States began to be settled by emigrants from the Old World, these Indian nations, which centuries before had been far advanced in civilization, were almost in a ruined state, (as McCulloh says,) "from wars and other calamities which had begun to subject their social institutions to decay." The same author remarks: "The murderous invasion of that villain Spaniard, (meaning our hero, De Soto,) not only carried death and destruction wherever he directed his course, but in its consequences enabled the barbarous Indian tribes to take advantage of the weakness of those who were partly civilized, and the latter being subdued by their savage neighbors were reduced in all respects to a similar condition. The later European settlers completed the work of ruin by wars, the communication of diseases and the use of ardent spirits."*

* McCulloh's Researches, Chap. iv., p. 149.

To realize the truthfulness, or even the probability of this narrative, we must remember that the tribes of Florida when visited by De Soto, were widely different, in many important particulars, from those North American Indians with whose habits and peculiarities we have been made acquainted by the descriptions of travelers, or our own personal observations. By merely overlooking the fact that Florida was inhabited by a semicivilized people, three centuries ago, some persons have been led to consider the narrative of De Soto's adventures in that country as fabulous and absurd; and yet there is scarcely any portion of the early history of America which is more consistent and indisputable.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DE SOTO'S GREATEST MISFORTUNE—HIS VILLAINOUS LIEUTENANT
—HUNTING INDIANS—A DISGUISED CHRISTIAN FOUND AMONG
SAVAGES—HIS ROMANTIC AND WONDERFUL STORY—STRATA-
GEM OF AN INDIAN CHIEF—FOUR SPANIARDS MADE PRISON-
ERS—THREE OF THEM PUT TO DEATH—JUAN ORTIZ SEN-
TENCED TO BE ROASTED ALIVE—THE SENTENCE IS PARTLY
EXECUTED—INTERCESSION OF THE PRINCESS ULELEH—THE
EXECUTION IS POSTPONED—ORTIZ FALLS IN LOVE WITH THE
PRINCESS—HE IS RIGOROUSLY PUNISHED BY HER FATHER—
HIS UNPARALLELED SUFFERINGS—HIS CONSOLATION. [A. D.
1539.]

It was the great misfortune of Ferdinand De Soto to be always associated with men of the most ignominious and detestable character, the shadow of whose guilt and infamy darkened his path of life, and still rests on his reputation and memory. Several of his colaborers in Florida were villains of the most desperate class; and among these, his lieutenant, Vasco Porcallo, will deserve our especial notice. This specimen of ancient iniquity, who had lived more than fifty years to very little purpose, was a wealthy citizen of Havana, who had volunteered to take a part in De Soto's expedition, for the express purpose of obtaining Indian slaves to work

in his mines. As he was an old soldier, and had distinguished himself in former wars between the Spaniards and Indians, he was supposed to be well qualified for that important post, to which he succeeded after the dismissal of Nuno de Tobar. But De Soto soon discovered the great mistake he had made by choosing a lieutenant-general whose objects and purposes were often at variance with his own.

While the commander was endeavoring to propitiate the chieftain Ucita with presents and promises of friendship, Lieutenant Porcallo was making war on the subjects of that cacique for the purpose of obtaining captives, and sending them to his mines and plantations in Cuba. De Soto not only connived at these unwise and unjust proceedings, but permitted Balthasar de Gallegos to assist Porcallo in his slave-making operations. This circumstance proves that De Soto had become less scrupulous than he appeared to be on a former occasion, when the capture and detention of some Indian prisoners provoked him to an act of mutiny.*

Intent on this man-hunting project, Porcallo and Gallegos started from their camp with one hundred and twenty soldiers, forty of whom were horsemen. They sent Juan Rodrigues Lobilla in another direction, with fifty men, a majority of whom were swordsmen and targetiers. Porcalla's party passed through a marshy country, where it was almost impossible for horses to

* *Vide* page 50.

travel. When they were about two leagues from the camp, they discovered a party of ten or twelve Indians, who appeared to be willing to converse with the Spaniards, until the latter spurred their horses forward, and approached the natives with uplifted weapons and other indications of a hostile purpose. Then the Indians became alarmed, and all of them, except one, fled precipitately to the woods. The man who remained on the field, was dressed and equipped, in all respects like the others, yet to the great astonishment of the Spaniards, he made the sign of the cross, "and thereby proved that he was a Christian." When some of the horsemen came nearer, he exclaimed: "Cavaliers, do not kill me! I am one of your own countrymen; and I entreat you not to molest those Indians who are with me, for I am indebted to them for the preservation of my life." Having thus spoken, he made signals to his Indian friends to return from the woods. Some of them complied with this request; but as one of the party had been wounded by a musket-bullet while he was retreating, the greater number of his companions were too much affrighted to come from their place of concealment. The Spanish stranger and those Indians who had returned from the woods were accommodated with seats on horseback behind some of the cavaliers, and in this manner they were conveyed to the camp.

When introduced to De Soto, the stranger declared that his name was Juan Ortiz, and that he had been a

prisoner among the Indians for twelve years. He gave the following account of his captivity:

NARRATIVE OF JUAN ORTIZ.

“I am a native of Seville, and I came to this country with Pamphilo de Narvaez, in the year 1528. My commander had formed a treaty of peace with Ucita, the cacique of this province, which is called Hirrigua. Pamphilo sent me to Havana with a letter for his wife, who remained at that port. I went thither in one of his brigantines, which was manned with twenty sailors; and having executed my commission, I shipped ten more seamen at Havana, and returned to Florida with a crew amounting to thirty men. When our vessel came to anchor in the neighboring bay, some Indians who were on the shore, informed us that our captain had left Hirrigua, and marched into the interior of the country. They pointed to a letter which had been placed in a cleft reed, stuck in the sand. There was something in the behavior of these people which made me suspicious of an unfriendly design; before I landed my men, therefore, I wished to obtain possession of the letter, which I supposed to contain some explanation of Pamphilo’s reasons for leaving that district. The suspicious conduct of the Indians made me unwilling to send any of my men ashore, and I requested some of the natives to come to the vessel in one of their canoes, and bring the letter with them. This they refused to do, but four of the Indians came to us in a canoe, and proposed to remain

with us as hostages, while an equal number of our party should bring away the billet. To this arrangement I consented; and the four Indians immediately came into the brigantine, without exhibiting any signs of unwillingness to place themselves in our power. With three of my companions, I then entered the canoe, and paddled to the beach. As soon as we touched the land, a large number of Indians, who had been lying in ambuscade, rushed out from their hiding-place behind some bushes, surrounded us, and made us prisoners. At the same moment the Indian hostages threw themselves from the deck of the brigantine, swam ashore, and joined their countrymen. Our late comrades in the vessel drew up their anchor, set sail, and abandoned us to our fate.

Among our captors was an Indian who had formerly been employed by Pamphilo as interpreter, and who had some knowledge of our language. I learned from him that, while I was absent, my commander had quarreled with the cacique, and that Pamphilo had injured the chief in a manner which could never be forgiven. On inquiring for the particulars, I was informed that the mother of the cacique had been dragged from her bed and thrown to the dogs, because she had complained to her son of an outrage which had been committed by one of the Spaniards on the person of a young Indian female. The cacique was absent from the village at the time his mother was put to death. When he returned, and the fact was made known to him, he became frantic with grief and rage,

and made threats of terrible vengeance against the Spaniards, which so incensed Pamphilo, that he ordered the cacique to be seized and scourged, and his nose to be cut off. As soon as these things were known to the cacique's subjects, they hastened from all parts of his dominions to avenge the indignities and wrongs which he had received from the Spaniards. Pamphilo and his companions were obliged to retreat, and all the expedition they could use scarcely saved them from the resentment of the savages. The cacique had made a vow to punish with death every Spaniard who should thereafter fall into his hands, and our capture was the result of a stratagem which he had used to obtain victims to be sacrificed to his vindictive fury.

As soon as I was made acquainted with these facts, I resigned myself to the fate from which I could see no possibility of deliverance. I could not doubt that the cacique, who had suffered so much injustice, would be inexorable in his revenge. My Christian countrymen, I knew, were apt to visit the smallest offenses with the most sanguinary and pitiless retribution—what then could I expect from a man whose religion taught him that revenge was a virtue, and forgiveness of injuries a crime? My only hope was that the Indians would not put me to a protracted death of torture; the very apprehension of which was so painful to me, that if any means of self-destruction had been within my reach, I should certainly have used them to escape from the torments to which I might possibly be subjected.

While my mind was filled with the most horrible forbodings, I and my companions were hurried onward by our Indian escort, and we soon arrived at the village where the Chief of Hirrigua was waiting to receive us in the public square. We were placed under a strong guard; and one of my comrades was seized by some of the Indians, who stripped him of all his clothes, and bade him run for his life. The square was enclosed with palisades, beyond which it was impossible for the wretched man to escape, the only gateway being guarded by a large party of well-armed Indians. As soon as the naked Spaniard began to run, one of the savages shot an arrow, the barbed head of which sank deeply into the fugitive's shoulder, where it remained firmly planted in the flesh. Soon after, another arrow was shot with similar effect, and became fixed in another part of the man's body. The pain of the wounds accelerated his flight; and as he coursed around the area, seeking some opening through which he might escape, the Indians looked on with evident delight. One of them occasionally discharged an arrow at the victim, taking care to avoid those parts of the body where a wound would be immediately fatal. Their object was to prolong the man's sufferings, and their own savage recreation. When the tormented Spaniard, made frantic by mortal fear and intense bodily anguish, had continued his flight for more than an hour, his strength and power of endurance were exhausted. When he sank to the earth, not less than thirty arrows

were fixed in his flesh, and the whole surface of his body was covered with blood.

I and my two remaining companions had been horrified spectators of the scene which I have attempted to describe. Leaving their first victim on the ground in a dying condition, the Indians now selected another one of their prisoners to undergo the same tortures, and I was doomed to witness a repetition of the same appalling spectacle and the same catastrophe. As the robust appearance of my three fellow-captives promised to afford the Indians a long entertainment, they were chosen in preference to myself as the first to be sacrificed. When they were all put to death by the process described, the Indians appeared to be tired of their inhuman sport. I observed them in consultation together, and the cacique seemed to be giving them some directions. For a few moments, I ventured to hope for mercy, but when I looked at the disfigured countenance of the chief, where Pamphilo had left a perpetual record of his barbarity, I felt that it was impossible for that man to have compassion on one who had the misfortune to be the countryman and associate of his oppressor. Formerly, this very chief had appeared to be the mildest and most amiable of human beings, but the injuries and example of a Spaniard had made him an incarnation of demoniac cruelty.

The cacique had seen me in attendance on Pamphilo, and some real or imaginary resemblance which I bore to the captain made the Indians suspect that I was his

relation. It was this unhappy mistake which caused that delay in their proceedings which I had been rash enough to interpret as a circumstance in my favor. However, they had paused merely to devise some more agonizing death for one who was supposed to be connected by ties of relationship with the chief object of their resentment. Some of them were now engaged in the construction of a wooden-frame, composed of two stout pieces six or seven feet in length, placed parallel with each other and three feet asunder, to which a number of transverse bars were affixed, so as to form a kind of grate or hurdle. When this frame was finished, I was bound to it with leathern throngs, and the frame was then placed on four stakes driven into the ground. As soon as these preparations were complete, the Indians kindled a fire beneath me, choosing such combustible material as would burn but slowly and scarcely produce a blaze. I now perceived that it was their intention to roast me alive, and they had placed me at such a height above the fire that my tortures might continue for hours, before death could come to my relief.

At that time, I was little more than eighteen years of age, and it appears that my youth excited the pity of an Indian woman who happened to be present. This compassionate female hastened to the dwelling of the cacique, which was situated at the extremity of the village, where she made my situation known to the chief's daughter. By this time, the action of the fire on my naked person produced such intense suffering,

that notwithstanding my desire to die like a soldier, I was compelled to utter shrieks and supplications for mercy. These sounds of distress reached the ears of the Indian princess while she was hastening to the square with the hope of prevailing on her father to spare my life, or at least to mitigate the severity of my doom. Fearing that she would be too late, she increased her speed, and arrived almost breathless at the place of sacrifice. She then threw herself at the feet



INDIAN PRINCESS SAVING THE LIFE OF JOHN ORTIZ.

of her incensed parent, and entreated him to suspend the execution for a few minutes. The chief complied with this request, and ordered some of his people to remove the frame to which I was fastened from the fire, and to place it on the ground. The charitable princess then implored her father to consider that I had never offended him, and that it would be more to his honor to

detain me as a prisoner than to sacrifice my life without any reason or justification. The chief sternly replied that he had sentenced me to death, and that no consideration should prevent him from executing his purpose. The princess then begged him to postpone my death until the arrival of a day which was annually celebrated as a religious festival, at which time I might be offered as a sacrifice to their gods. This proposition was more favorably received. The cacique ordered his attendants to unbind me, and the preserver of my life perceiving that I had suffered severely by the fire, placed me under the care of the best physician of the tribe. During the long and painful illness which followed, I was often visited by the princess and her female attendants, who supplied me with every thing that my unhappy situation required. The cacique's daughter, Uleleh, to whom I am indebted for the preservation of my life, appeared, at that time, to be about sixteen years of age, and I doubt if our own country ever produced a female of more faultless beauty. My gratitude, or some other sentiment, made me regard her as a proper object of worship, and I had the vanity to persuade myself that something more than a general feeling of humanity or benevolence had interested her in my behalf.

As soon as I became convalescent, the cacique used every necessary precaution to prevent me from making my escape. His resentful feelings toward my countrymen had not, in the least, abated, and I constantly ex-

perienced the sad effects of his wrath. He employed me in the most laborious and slavish occupations. Sometimes he would compel me to run incessantly, from the rising to the setting of the sun, in the public square where my comrades had been put to death; a number of Indians, armed with bows and arrows, standing ready to shoot me if I should halt for a moment. After spending the day in this harassing exercise, I laid exhausted and almost insensible on the hard earthen floor of a hut, the best lodging place that the rigorous chief would allow me. At such times Ulelah and her maids would come to me with food, restorative medicines, and words of consolation and encouragement which enabled me to sustain my miseries and to hope for a time of deliverance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

NARRATIVE OF JUAN ORTIZ CONTINUED—HE IS DOOMED TO BE SACRIFICED—HIS WATCH OVER THE DEAD—HIS REMARKABLE ADVENTURE WITH A WILD BEAST—A MIRACULOUS SHOT—ORTIZ IS VISITED BY THE PRINCESS—HIS DECLARATION OF LOVE—HER ANSWER—SHE ASSISTS HIM TO ESCAPE—HE TAKES REFUGE WITH THE CACIQUE MOCOSO—HE IS CLAIMED BY UCITA—MOCOSO'S NOBLE BEHAVIOR—THE NARRATIVE OF ORTIZ CONCLUDED—MOCOSO VISITS THE SPANIARDS—MUTUAL PROFESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP—THE CHIEF'S MOTHER IS SUSPICIOUS—HER APPEAL TO DE SOTO. [A. D. 1539.]

I HAD been in the power of the Indians for about nine months, (said Juan Ortiz, in continuation of his narrative,) when the princess Uleleh came to me one evening, and informed me that the great religious festival of her nation would be celebrated on the first day of the next new moon. I had heard before that the cacique intended to sacrifice me on that occasion; and, as the time drew near, I endeavored to prepare my mind for that doom which I now supposed to be inevitable. I learned from Uleleh that she had been importunate in her solicitations for my life, but, as her father had bound himself by an inviolable oath to put me to death, it could not be expected that he would relinquish that

design. Her prayer could gain but one concession from the stern and inflexible chief. He agreed to suspend my sentence for another year on a single condition; but that condition, thought the princess, might be more terrific to my apprehensions than death itself. I was required to keep guard over the cemetery of the tribe; where, according to the custom of these people, the bodies of the dead were exposed above ground until the flesh wasted away, and nothing remained but the naked skeletons. The cemetery was situated about three miles from the village, in an open space of ground surrounded by forests. The bodies were laid on biers or stages, raised several feet above the level of the earth; and it was necessary to keep a watch over them every night to protect the uncoffined remains from the beasts of prey, with which the surrounding forests were thickly inhabited. Criminals under sentence of death were generally appointed to keep this watch, and while they performed their duty with fidelity and success, they were permitted to live, provided they could escape from the dangers to which they were exposed by their horrid occupation. If the guard allowed a single corpse to be carried away by the wild animals, his term of respite was at an end, and he was infallibly put to death on the following day, when the officers of the cacique came to inspect the cemetery. It generally happened that the sepulchral watchman himself was torn to pieces by the wolves or cougars which frequented the spot; or if he miraculously escaped this fate, he soon fell a victim to

the pestilential effluvia arising from hundreds of dead bodies in every stage of putrefaction.

When Uleleh made known the condition on which I might hope for a longer respite, she failed not to explain all the perils and horrors of the task which was offered to me as the only alternative of a speedy death. I shuddered with more than superstitious terror at the prospect of dwelling in the midst of all that is most hideous in mortality; but the love of life, which is never stronger than when we are assured that our existence must be brief, did not permit me to hesitate in my choice. I requested the princess to inform her father that I accepted his terms of mercy. Uleleh wept for my misfortunes, as she recommended me to commit myself to the protection of my gods. Her sympathy almost reconciled me to my fate, appalling as it was, and I would have thrown myself at her feet to make some impassioned acknowledgment of the obligations I owed her, not only for her efforts to save my life, but for that compassion and interest in my behalf which had inspired me with fortitude to endure my sufferings, and to meet the terrible death that awaited me. But before I could find language to express my feelings, Uleleh had departed.

On the following day I was conducted to the cemetery by several of the chief's officers, who supplied me with bow and arrows, and some other weapons. Having charged me to be vigilant, and warned me against any attempt to escape, they left me alone in the silent dominions of death. My lodge, which consisted of a fragile

hut made of reeds, was situated in the midst of the cemetery. The stench of the dead bodies quickly overpowered me, and, for several hours, a sickness and stupor, such as I had never experienced before, made me incapable of thought or motion. Fortunately I recovered, in some measure, from this lethargic state before night, and I prepared, as well as my feeble condition would permit, for the duties of my nocturnal watch. As the hour of darkness approached, the howling of the wolves around the cemetery contributed to arouse my half suspended faculties; and yet my own immediate danger scarcely sufficed to prevent me from relapsing into a state of imperfect consciousness. In the early part of the night, I contrived to scare away the wolves by waving a lighted torch, which was kept ready for the purpose; but, about midnight, I became aware that there was some living creature near me, for I could distinctly hear the sound of breathing, and soon after, by the light of my torch, I saw some large animal dragging away the body of a child. Before I could recover my senses sufficiently to make use of my weapons, the beast had reached the woods, and was out of sight. Though I was extremely ill, I roused all my energies, and, fitting an arrow in my bow, I staggered, rather than walked, toward that part of the wood where the animal had disappeared. When I reached the edge of the forest, I heard a sound like that which is made by a dog in the act of gnawing a bone. Directed by that sound, and without being able to see the object at which I aimed, I

discharged the arrow, and, at the same moment, fell to the ground; the exertion I had made having quite exhausted the little strength which was left in my enfee-



JUAN ORTIZ WATCHING THE DEAD BODIES.

bled frame. I continued on the spot where I had fallen until day-break, when, with very great exertion, I crawled back to my lodge. In due time, the officers whose duty it was to make a daily examination of the cemetery, arrived, and they soon ascertained that one of the bodies was missing. They were about to punish my negligence on the spot by dashing out my brains, but

when I related the adventure of the preceding night, they went to the part of the forest which I indicated, and discovered the body of the child. Near it lay a large animal of the tiger kind,* which had been killed by my arrow, in circumstances which appeared to be almost miraculous. The shaft had struck the beast behind the shoulder, and penetrated to the heart. As the body of the child was recovered, the Indians held me blameless, and my fortunate shot excited their admiration, as its success was ascribed by them to my skill in archery.

By degrees, as I became accustomed to the tainted atmosphere of the cemetery, my bodily constitution appeared to adapt itself to external circumstances. I regained my health and strength sufficiently to repel the nightly incursions of the wolves, and to kill several of them when their extreme hunger or ferocity made it necessary for me to engage with them in close conflict. The Indian officers, who visited the cemetery daily, supplied me with provisions; and in this wretched condition I lived for about two weeks. One night I was startled by the sound of footsteps which did not resemble those of wild beasts; and I was the more alarmed because, in these sounds I discerned the approach of some of my own species. Why should they

* Probably a panther. Garcilasso calls the beast a lion, and the Portuguese narrator supposes it to have been a wolf. *In medio est veritas*. Mr. Theodore Irving thinks it must have been a panther, if any thing; and we incline to his opinion.—*Vide* Irving's "Conquest of Florida," Chap. viii.

come at that unusual hour? I doubted not that some new trouble awaited me, but I considered it almost impossible that my situation should be changed for the worse. As my visitors drew near, the light of my torch enabled me to discover three females, in one of whom, by her graceful form and her rich dress, I recognized the Princess Uleleh. The purpose of her visit was soon told. The priests of the tribe would not consent to a commutation or postponement of my sentence. The cacique had promised them that I should be sacrificed at the approaching festival, and the pious clergy of Hirrigua would not allow their Deity to be defrauded of his victim. Uleleh advised me to fly for my life. She had exposed herself to great hazards by coming to apprise me of my danger; for if it should become known to the priests that she had assisted me to escape, her own life would be the forfeit, and her father's authority could not avert the punishment. In these circumstances of peril, she was obliged to come to me by night, attended only by those two maidens, in whose fidelity she could place unlimited confidence.

I had learned enough of the language to make fervent acknowledgments of that vast debt of gratitude which I owed to Uleleh; and now, for the first time, I made an avowal of my love. I spoke of my connection with an ancient and honorable family in my own country, and informed her that I was the heir of a large estate which I desired to place at her disposal.

I entreated her to accompany me in my flight, proposing to seek an asylum with some distant tribe, and to make her my wife, according to the customs of her people.



INDIAN PRINCESS PLANNING THE ESCAPE OF JUAN ORTIZ

pledging myself to confirm our union by the rites of my own Church, if I should ever have an opportunity to return to the land of my birth.

When I ceased speaking, Uleleh remained silent for a few moments, and then answered in a tone which seemed to express some displeasure: "I regret, (said she), that any part of my conduct should have led you into so great an error. You must now understand that in all my efforts to serve you I have had no motives but those of humanity, and I would have done no less

for any other human being in the same circumstances. To make you fully sensible of your mistake, I will inform you that I am betrothed to a neighboring cacique, to whose protection I am about to recommend you. Before daybreak, I will send a faithful guide to conduct you to his village. Lose no time on the way, and when you are presented to Mocosó, give him this girdle as a token that you come from me.* He will then consider himself bound to defend you from all dangers at the hazard of his own life."

Without waiting for a reply, Uleleh withdrew, leaving me very much dissatisfied with my own conduct, for I now discovered that my vanity and presumption had given offense to my benefactress, and I charged myself with the sin of ingratitude. Before the morning dawned, the promised guide arrived at the cemetery. He conducted me through a trackless forest, in a northerly direction, urging me to walk very rapidly, as I would certainly be pursued as soon as my absence from the cemetery was discovered. We traveled, as I supposed, about eight leagues, and arrived at Mocosó's village, at the entrance of which my guide left me, as he did not wish to be recognized by any of Mocosó's subjects.

Several Indians were fishing in a stream near the edge of the village. As soon as they saw me emerge from

* The girdle here spoken of was probably something similar to the wampum belts which were in general use among the North American tribes, as a substitute for writing.

the woods they were alarmed by my outlandish appearance, and snatched up their arms with the obvious design of assailing me. But when I displayed the girdle which the princess had given me, they understood that I was the bearer of a message to their chief, and one of them came forward to give me the usual welcome. He then led me through the village, where the Spanish dress which I still wore, attracted general attention, and I was soon ushered into Mocosó's presence. This cacique is a youthful Indian of noble demeanor; he is tall and graceful in person, and possesses a handsome and intelligent countenance. I made my obeisance and presented the girdle to Mocosó. He examined it with attention, and I was surprised to find that the ornamental work on this cincture was equivalent to written language, for it made him acquainted with my situation. "Christian," said Mocosó, raising his eyes from the girdle, "I am requested to protect you, and it shall be done. You are safe in my village; but do not venture beyond it, or you may have the misfortune to be recaptured by your enemies."

From this time, Mocosó treated me with the affection of a brother. When the cacique Ucita heard where I had taken refuge, he sent ambassadors to demand that I should be given up; but this my protector refused to do, in spite of all threats and solicitations. Hence arose a misunderstanding between him and the father of his betrothed, which delayed his nuptials for several years; during which time I often

urged him to comply with the demands of Ucita, rather than sacrifice his own happiness. But my generous friend was not to be moved from his purpose. At the end of three years, by the interposition of the priests, the wedding of Mocosó and Uleleh was allowed to take place, but my friend and his father-in-law were never reconciled; and, up to the present time, there has been no communication between them.

As soon as Mocosó heard of your arrival, he requested me to come to you with an offer of his friendship; and I was on my way to your camp, in company with several of the cacique's officers, when I met with your cavaliers. I am instructed to say that Mocosó himself will visit you whenever it will suit your convenience to receive him.

When Juan Ortiz had finished his narrative, Governor De Soto, whose sympathies had been excited by this tale of suffering, promised to befriend the unfortunate gentleman, and immediately presented him with a fine horse, a handsome suit of clothes, and all the arms and equipments of a captain of cavalry. The governor then dispatched two Indians with a message for Mocosó, accepting his offers of friendship, and inviting him to visit the camp. Within three days the cacique arrived in company with some of his principal warriors. His manners and appearance greatly prepossessed the Spaniards in his favor. De Soto gave him a cordial reception, and thanked him for his kindness to the

Spaniard who had sought his protection. Mocoso answered: "I have done nothing for Ortiz which deserves your thanks. He came to me well recommended, and my honor was pledged for his safety. His own valor and other good qualities entitled him to all the respect which I and my people could show him. My acquaintance with him disposes me to be friendly to all his countrymen."

It appears, however, that Mocoso's partiality for the Spaniards was very much at variance with the feelings of his mother; for, as soon as that lady heard that her son was among the Christians, she was convinced that some terrible misfortune would befall him. In the greatest distress, she hastened to De Soto's camp, not doubting that the cacique was detained there as a prisoner, and implored the governor to restore him to liberty. She referred to the treatment which Ucita had received from Pamphilo, and begged De Soto not to subject her son to the same cruel punishment. "If he has offended you," said she, "consider that he is but young, and look on his fault as one of the common indiscretions of youth. Allow him to go back to his people, and I will remain here and undergo whatever sufferings you may choose to inflict."

De Soto endeavored to convince her that he considered himself under obligations to the cacique, and that his intentions were of the most friendly nature. These assurances did not remove the old woman's suspicions and anxieties; for she had become steadfast in

the belief that the whole Spanish nation was perfidious. Mocosó himself persuaded her, at last, that there was no restraint on his liberty, that his visit to the Spaniards was voluntary, and that his stay with them was regulated altogether by his own wishes. Even these representations were not quite satisfactory to the fond parent. Before her departure, she took Juan Ortiz aside, and entreated him to watch over the safety of his friend, and especially to take heed that the other Spaniards did not poison him.

Mocosó remained eight days in the Spanish camp, being, (as one of the historians says,) "inspired with perfect confidence in the Christians." Considering the general character of those "Christians," we may suppose that something like inspiration was required to make this well-disposed Indian chief rely on their good faith and the sincerity of their friendship.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CAOIQUE UCITA IS STILL UNPROFITIOUS TO THE SPANIARDS
—VASCO PORCALLO UNDERTAKES TO CONQUER HIM—A MUDDY
ADVENTURE—PORCALLO'S HEROISM IS CHILLED AND SMOTHERED—HE
RETIRES FROM THE SERVICE—BALTHASAR DE GALLAGOS IS SENT
FORWARD—HIS GRATEFUL BEHAVIOR TO MOCOSO'S BROTHER-IN-LAW—
HE HEARS OF A GOLD REGION—REJOICING OF THE SPANIARDS—
DE SOTO MARCHES INTO THE COUNTRY—DIFFICULT TRAVELING—
FAITHLESS INDIAN GUIDES—THEIR PUNISHMENT—DE SOTO ARRIVES
AT ACUERA—HE SENDS A FRIENDLY MESSAGE TO THE CAOIQUE—
THE INDIAN'S INSULTING ANSWER—FOURTEEN SPANIARDS KILLED
AND DECAPITATED—DE SOTO CONTINUES HIS MARCH.
[A. D. 1539.]

THE generous friendship which the Cacique Mocoso manifested for the Spaniards is mentioned in terms of the warmest commendation by all of our authorities; but while we are disposed to do full justice to the excellent moral qualities of that chieftain, we must not overlook the fact that his romantic partiality for the strangers was both injudicious and unjust. His kindness to Juan Ortiz claims our unqualified approbation; but the countrymen of his *protege* had done nothing to deserve his confidence or his friendship. On the con-

trary, they were making war on his subjects, and endeavoring to capture and enslave them at the very time when Ortiz, after being saved from a horrid death by Mocosó's interposition, was coming with an escort of that chief's officers to the Spanish camp. De Soto's troops had already done enough in that neighborhood to justify any hostile movement on the part of the inhabitants; therefore, in treating them as friends, Mocosó evidently failed in his duty to his own countrymen.

Ucita, the Chief of Hirragua, was an older man than Mocosó, and he had learned in the school of melancholy experience to distrust the honorable and virtuous pretensions of men whose ruling passion is avarice. We have said that De Soto earnestly desired to make a treaty of peace with this powerful cacique before the Spaniards advanced further into the country; as it would be highly impolitic to leave such an enemy between them and their ships. A good general, however fortunate and victorious he may be, should never forget that he may find it necessary to retreat. To appease the wrath of Ucita, De Soto sent him many presents, all of which were returned. To the governor's complimentary messages, the cacique replied: "The memory of my injuries forbids me to send a kind answer, and a harsh one your courtesy will not permit me to return."

De Soto's lieutenant, Vasco Porcallo, was greatly offended at what he was pleased to call the cacique's unreasonable obstinacy. "Instead of negotiating for peace," said Porcallo, "let us conquer the savage at

once, and so put an end to the debate." De Soto gave him permission to try the experiment, and the old slave-hunter seemed to undertake the task with a good deal of alacrity. He arrayed himself in a suit of glittering armor, mounted a very fine horse, and made other preparations in a style of magnificence which scarcely suited that kind of warfare in which he was about to engage. Having selected as many soldiers, horse and foot, as he thought the undertaking would require, he set out with the determination, (as he said), to bring home not only the insolent chief who presumed to despise the friendship of the Spaniards, but as many of his subjects as could be conveniently transported to Cuba. Besides the glory of victory, therefore, he promised himself an abundant supply of human machinery to operate in his mines.

Supposing that the enemy would fly at the first intelligence of his approach, he hastened onward with a degree of speed which produced a good deal of discontent among his less ardent followers. Nevertheless the heroic Porcalla persevered in his rapid march until he came to the edge of a bog, which some of his troopers refused to enter, alleging that the route was impracticable for cavalry. To prove that they were mistaken, Porcallo himself dashed into the morass, where his steed plunged and struggled for a few minutes, and then fell in such a position that Porcallo's leg was fastened under the quadruped's body. Though horse and rider were both in extreme danger of suffocation, the soldiers

indulged their merriment without restraint. The appearance of the old cavalier, as he floundered in the mire, was indeed somewhat ludicrous, and his character did not entitle him to much sympathy. At length he



PORCALLO IN THE MIRE.

contrived to extricate himself from his disagreeable and dangerous situation, and crawled out of the quagmire, so disguised with a thick coat of ooze that he might have been mistaken for a sea-calf. This adventure so dampened and subdued the military ardor of Lieutenant Porcallo, that he resolved to return immediately to Havana. The expenses of his outfit had been considerable, and his slave-hunting project had totally failed; but his discouragement was so complete, that no hope of retrieving his pecuniary losses, no expectation of winning new laurels, could induce him to remain in Florida.

The Portuguese narrator says that De Soto and Porcallo had quarreled, and were not on speaking terms when the lieutenant resigned his commission.* It is probable that De Soto had discovered that this man's pursuits would raise such a tempest of indignation in the country, that his own plans would infallibly be wrecked; Porcallo, therefore, found no difficulty in obtaining permission to retire from the service.

About this time, (July 1539,) De Soto came to the determination of sending back all his ships to Havana. His reasons for so doing are variously reported by different historians. The Portuguese writer says that the ships were sent home for a fresh supply of provisions. According to Herrera, the governor sent away his vessels, in order that his followers might lose all hope of leaving the country until they had conquered it, as if De Soto depended on their desperation to supply them with courage and fortitude. To us it appears that the return of the ships was merely a matter of necessity. The Spaniards could not carry them into the country, and they could not leave a sufficient force to protect them. Had they been left at anchor and unprotected in any harbor near the Florida coast, it can scarcely be doubted that the Indians would have destroyed them. This explanation may be sufficient; but it seems likely that the Portuguese gentleman is correct in his declaration that the vessels were ordered

* Portuguese Narrative, Chap. x.

to return with fresh supplies for the army, after allowing a sufficient time for the troops to march through the country and return to the coast.

After the departure of the ships, the governor sent Balthasar de Gallegos, with a small party of soldiers, to explore the country northward as far as the village of Paracossi, which was governed by a brother-in-law of the friendly cacique Mocosó. The traveling in this direction proved to be very difficult, as several deep and almost impassable morasses intersected the road. These obstacles would have been insurmountable, had not the travelers been guided by one of Mocosó's officers, who showed them the only paths which afforded a secure passage over the boggy ground. Mocosó had furnished this guide with visible reluctance. Probably his confidence in the good intentions of the Spaniards began to waver, and he was therefore unwilling to direct them to his relative's domains. Gallegos succeeded in persuading him that nothing more than a friendly visit was designed; and the amiable chief, who was too guileless to suspect treachery, was induced to betray his kinsman, while he imagined that he was doing an act of kindness.

The village of Paracossi* was seventeen leagues, due north, from the place where De Soto was encamped. It would be very difficult to indicate the location of this town by modern landmarks, but probably it was situated

* This village is called Urribarracuxi by Garcilasso; and Hurripacuxi, by Biedma.

somewhere in the neighborhood of Long Swamp, Florida, latitude 29° N., longitude 82° W. from Greenwich. Gallegos and his party arrived there on the fourth day after their departure from their camp. On their arrival they found that the people of Paracossi had deserted their dwellings; for they had heard enough of the Spaniards to make a personal acquaintance with them undesirable. Gallegos was informed that the cacique and his townsmen had taken refuge in the woods; and he was about to send a messenger to request them to come back, when a deputation from the absentees arrived, and, in the chief's name, offered the strangers any service that was in their power, but hoped that the cacique himself would be excused from coming to meet them. Gallegos "thanked them very much for their kind offers;" and, soon after, to give them a stronger proof of his gratitude, he put them all in chains, saying that he would detain them as hostages, until the cacique himself should condescend to make his appearance.* Don Balthasar Gallegos now required the captive messengers to inform him where the Spaniards could find any rich country abounding in gold and silver. The prisoners, to gratify their avaricious captors, or to *punish* them perhaps, declared that, in a northwesterly direction, there was a country which enjoyed a perpetual summer, and that the inhabitants of that blessed region wore hats, or helmets, of gold. This dubious intelligence

* Portuguese Narrative, Chapter x.

was so satisfactory to Don Balthasar, that he immediately dispatched eight horsemen to convey the glad tidings to De Soto. As the Spaniards never doubted that there was an *El Dorado* somewhere in Florida, the account which Gallegos had received from the Indian prisoners, was easily believed. Our Portuguese author says: "De Soto and all his soldiers were very much comforted by the assurance that their toils were about to be rewarded by the discovery of another Peru."

The general policy of the Indians, as we have remarked elsewhere, was to send their unwelcome guests as far away as possible. Hence, the gold region sought by the Spaniards was always supposed to be in some remote part of the country. But, granting that the information given to Gallegos was not merely illusory, it may be conjectured that the natives intended to direct him to that ground which now constitutes the northern part of Georgia, where De Soto and his fellow adventurers might have found the object of their search, though in less abundance, perhaps, than they expected. But the Indians, either intentionally or by mistake, gave the wrong direction; and the Spaniards, in consequence, marched northwestwardly somewhat further than the present site of Tallahassee. Subsequently, as we shall see hereafter, they were induced to change their route.

Governor De Soto having received the gratifying intelligence spoken of above, was convinced that Gallegos had found the most direct route to the promised land. Very much encouraged by this pleasing delusion, he de-

terminated to follow Gallegos immediately, with the main body of the army. Captain Calderon, with forty horsemen, was left at the port to protect the ships when they should return from Havana, and to take charge of the provisions. Before the governor departed, he strictly charged Captain Calderon to preserve a good understanding with the Indians, and to endure small aggressions rather than to proceed to hostilities, in which he could have no chance of success. De Soto passed by the town of Mocosó, declining the proffered hospitalities of that generous chief, as he was unwilling to burden him with so large a company. As De Soto proceeded on his route to Paracossi, he was obliged to contend with difficulties still more formidable than those which had been encountered by Gallegos. The conduct of that man had stirred up a violent opposition on the part of the natives, who now harassed the Spaniards with frequent attacks, rushing out from every thicket, discharging a flight of arrows, and returning to their ambuscade with such celerity, that they were under cover before the Christians could make use of their weapons. By these Parthian-like assaults many of De Soto's soldiers were killed or severely wounded. The passage of the swamps or morasses was another grand difficulty, as De Soto had neglected to supply himself with guides. His omission to do so may require some explanation. We conjecture that Mocosó had heard of the great consternation which the appearance of the Spaniards had produced in his brother-in-law's village; wherefore, he was more un-

willing than ever to afford traveling facilities to those strangers whose presence so greatly annoyed his countrymen. Possibly, therefore, he may have refused to send guides with De Soto; and the latter, in that case, would be compelled to travel without them, for no other Indian chief in that neighborhood was disposed to do the Spaniards a favor.

For want of guidance, the army was unable to cross a morass which is described as being more than a league in breadth.* Judging from the description of this morass



DE SOTO PREPARING TO CROSS LONG SWAMP.

given by the Portuguese writer, and from the topographical features of the country, it must have been Long Swamp. This great obstacle was encountered

* *Three Spanish leagues, according to Herrera.—Vide Dec. iv., Lib. vi., Cap. 1.*

soon after the Spaniards had passed through the village of Paracossi, at which place Gallegos and his party had been waiting for the governor's arrival. Horsemen were sent to explore the margin of the swamp; and, after a search which continued for several days, they were unable to find a path. They then built rafts, and it required two days to effect the passage. Hitherto the course of the Spaniards had been northward, slightly inclining to the east; but now, in accordance with the directions received from the Indians, they began to change their route, by diverging somewhat toward the west.

Judicious persons, mounted on fleet horses, were sent in advance of the army to select the most convenient road; or rather to find some practicable pathway in a country which had all the appearance of an untraveled wilderness. These pioneers were often killed by the Indians, who concealed themselves in the woods, and shot their arrows at the intruders without affording the Spaniards any opportunity to retaliate. Several of the natives were taken prisoners and compelled to act as guides; but, having no good reason to discharge this duty with fidelity, they led the Spaniards to places that were impassable, pretending that they had mistaken the way. For this justifiable deception, two or three of them were condemned to be torn to pieces by the dogs; but they bore this cruel punishment with martyr-like fortitude, choosing to die rather than betray their countrymen.

After a tedious march of two days the Christian army came to another morass, in the midst of which was a dark and sluggish river. Over this Lethe-like stream the natives had thrown a bridge of the most inartificial construction, being nothing more than two logs extending from bank to bank, with branches of trees placed crosswise to make the flooring. The Indians, to prevent the Spaniards from crossing, had attempted to destroy this bridge, and they succeeded so far as to make it impassable. De Soto ordered two men, who were expert swimmers, to repair it. While these persons, each with a hatchet in his hand, were swimming about and endeavoring to perform the task assigned to them, a volley of arrows was shot at them by some Indians who were concealed among the rushes on the opposite side of the stream. Both of the Spaniards who were in the water were badly wounded, and escaped with their lives only by diving under the surface and reappearing near their comrades. A discharge of musketry compelled the Indians who were hid among the rushes to retreat, and the bridge was then repaired. When the Spaniards had crossed over, they succeeded in taking some Indian prisoners, who informed them that they were in the province of Acuera, which was twenty leagues from the village of Paracossi. Acuera is described as a fertile and beautiful country. The principal town and residence of the cacique occupied a position which we suppose to be identical with that of Fort King, in Marion County, Fa.

De Soto treated the prisoners he had just taken with much kindness, and sent them with presents to the cacique of Acuera, with whom he proposed to make a treaty of peace and friendship. To this message the cacique made the somewhat ungracious, though not very inappropriate reply, that "with such vagabonds as the Spaniards he desired always to be at war, and that the only kindness they could do to him or his people would be to retire from the country."

De Soto was magnanimous enough to admire the boldness and independence of the American patriot; and instead of taking offense at his honest plainness, he sent back another messenger to inquire what the Spaniards had done to deserve such an inhospitable reception. "If any of my countrymen have injured you," said the Governor, "I am ready to make all the reparation in my power." To this conciliatory speech, the cacique again replied: "I look upon the Spaniards as a nation of robbers. I have heard of their behavior in former times, and I have reason to believe that their only employment is to plunder the poor, to betray the confiding, and to murder the defenseless. With such people I do not wish to be on terms of peace or friendship. But if you will leave my country forthwith, I have no desire to do you harm. If you go at once you may go in peace; but if you remain, you must expect to be treated as enemies; and I will use force, stratagem, and every possible means to ensure your destruction."

In spite of the cacique's prohibition, De Soto encamped on the edge of this province, where he remained twenty days, within which time the Indians killed fourteen Spaniards. Every soldier who wandered from the camp was sure to be put to death and beheaded. The heads were conveyed in triumph to the cacique, and the bodies of the slaughtered Castilians were left to be interred by their comrades. The Indians could not be drawn into an open battle, and therefore it was impossible to conquer them or to do them any serious damage. Having no leisure to carry on an ineffectual war, De Soto found it expedient to abandon the contest, and proceed on his route without any further delay.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LOCATION OF ACUERA—DE SOTO MARCHES TO OCALI—THE CACIQUE REFUSES TO SEE HIM—THE NATIVES SHOW THEIR DISLIKE FOR THE SPANIARDS—AN INDIAN CHIEF IS CAPTURED—ANOTHER SENDS A THREATENING MESSAGE TO THE SPANIARDS—DE SOTO'S MILD ANSWER—THE CACIQUE VITACUCHO VISITS THE SPANISH CAMP—HE INVITES THE CHRISTIANS TO HIS CHIEF TOWN—HIS PLOT TO DESTROY THEM—DE SOTO OUTGENERALS THE CACIQUE—DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLOT—THE BATTLE—BRAVE CONDUCT OF THE INDIANS—VITACUCHO IS TAKEN PRISONER—HE CONTRIVES ANOTHER PLOT—HE COMMITS AN ASSAULT AND BATTERY ON THE GOVERNOR—HE FIGHTS DESPERATELY, AND IS KILLED—THE INDIAN PRISONERS ATTEMPT TO KILL THE SPANIARDS—THE NATIVES DIE FOR LIBERTY. [A. D. 1539.]

DR. MONETTE conjectures that the village of Acuera, where De Soto met with the repulsive treatment described in the last chapter, was about thirty miles north of the Withlacoochy or Amaxura River, seventy-five miles from Hillsborough Bay, and twelve miles southwest from Orange Lake. Finding it inconvenient to remain any longer in this neighborhood, the inhabitants of which seemed to have such a particular fancy for the heads of the Spaniards, Governor De Soto determined

to march about forty miles further, to a town called Ocali, or Cale, the situation of which is marked down on the maps. This town was the largest they had seen in Florida, containing not less than six hundred houses. The surrounding country was free from morasses, and well-cultivated. The inhabitants of Ocali had been forewarned of their danger, and when the Spaniards arrived at the town, they found it deserted. The people had fled to the woods, and carried all their valuable property with them. No provisions were found in the village, and the Spaniards, who had consumed their whole stock of eatables, began to be sorely pressed with hunger. In this emergency, De Soto captured an Indian, and sent him to the woods to invite the cacique to a friendly conference. The sagacious chieftain civilly declined the honor of a personal interview with the Spanish commander. De Soto sent a more pressing invitation, and the cacique was persuaded to come out of the woods and converse with the Christians. He was kindly received by the governor, who walked with him, arm-in-arm, toward a river over which the Spaniards were about to build a bridge. On the opposite side of the stream suddenly appeared a large party of Indians, who greeted De Soto and his attendants with shouts of "Away, vagabond robbers!" and other reproachful expressions. They also shot several arrows at the governor, and slightly wounded one of his soldiers. De Soto then asked the cacique, who stood by his side, why he allowed his subjects to behave in

this violent manner. The chief answered that the persons who acted thus were too disorderly to submit to his authority, and that many of his people had refused to obey him because they suspected him of being too friendly to the Spaniards. The governor replied, "If that is the case, you had better return to



CROSSING ON AN INDIAN BRIDGE.

them at once." The chief gladly availed himself of this permission, but promised to come back again as soon as he should succeed in mollifying his people and convincing them that the Spaniards deserved more friendly and respectful treatment. But, as he never returned, it is presumed that his subjects were too

obstinately prejudiced against the Christians to hear any argument in their favor.

The bridge over the river was built in a style of pontine architecture, which De Soto had learned in Peru. Two cables were stretched from bank to bank, and on these were laid boards, or slabs of wood, so as to afford a very good footpath for the soldiers. The horses were obliged to swim over. After crossing this river, (which we suppose to be the Suwanee or Santa Fé branch), the Spaniards turned more toward the west, and soon observed a manifest improvement in the appearance of the country. Extensive fields of maize promised them a good supply of food for themselves and their horses, and the absence of bogs and thick forests made the traveling easy and comfortable. The valley through which they were now passing was well inhabited, but as the people depended on agriculture for subsistence, their dwellings were separated by cultivated fields. This district was governed by three brothers, each of whom had his separate domain. One of the triumvirate, who had fixed his abode in a small town called Ochila, was surprised by the Spaniards, who came upon him by night, and surrounded his dwelling. He made some resistance, however; but when the Christians threatened to burn his village, he surrendered. This cacique, at De Soto's request, sent messengers to inform his brothers that the Spaniards asked for nothing more than permission to pass through the country without molestation. These representations induced another of the

fraternal chiefs to pay De Soto a friendly visit, but the oldest brother, who was called Vitacucho, charged the other two with boyish credulity, because they had listened to the deceitful promises of these vicious foreigners. "Tell your Spanish friends," said he, in conclusion, "that if they come into my country, I will have one-half of them roasted and the other half boiled!"

When this message was communicated to Governor de Soto, he sent a gentle and courteous remonstrance to Vitacucho, telling him that he hoped to convince him that all the Spaniards were not vicious or deceitful. The haughty chief affected to be conciliated by this mild answer. He sent another messenger to tell De Soto that he and some of his warriors would visit the Spaniards at their camp. Soon after, he fulfilled this promise by coming with five hundred Indians, all gayly dressed and well armed, according to the manner of their country. Vitacucho himself was a tall and well-formed man, about thirty-five years old, and his physiognomy gave a promise of the craft and courage which were afterward exemplified in his conduct. He apologized somewhat ironically for having mistaken the Spaniards for a gang of foreign rogues, and expressed a hope that a more intimate acquaintance with them would change his opinion. That he might study their character to more advantage, he invited them to visit his principal town; where, as he promised them rather equivocally, they should meet with all the kindness which their honorable and generous behavior to the

Indians had deserved. De Soto had scarcely any doubt that the cacique intended to do him some mischief; however, he concealed his suspicions, and accepted Vitacucho's proffered hospitality.

On the following day the Spaniards accompanied the chief to his capital town, which consisted of about two hundred houses. There he entertained them for two days with every appearance of the most hearty good-will. The governor and his principal officers were quartered in the cacique's own house, which was large enough to afford them ample accommodations. In the mean time, Vitacucho was engaged in a deep plot, the purpose of which was to massacre all the Spaniards, at the very moment when he should succeed in lulling them into a dream of perfect security. The extermination of De Soto and all his companions, was prevented only by an act of indiscretion on the part of the cacique, who entrusted four of the governor's Indian interpreters with the fatal secret. These men proved more faithful to their employer than to their country, for they immediately made De Soto acquainted with his danger. Still the politic governor feigned to be well satisfied with the kind attentions and sincerity of his host, trusting to his own address to avert the menaced destruction, which, to a more timid mind, might have seemed inevitable.

When Vitacucho's plan was matured, he proposed to entertain De Soto with a display of his forces, and the manner in which the warriors of his country performed their exercises, and prepared themselves for active service

in the field. The governor, who perceived that the affair was approaching a crisis, consented to review Vitacucho's troops; at the same time, he informed the chief that it was customary with the Spaniards to march out in order of battle, when they wished to do particular honor to their friends. He therefore gave orders for his soldiers to appear in arms, and secretly instructed them to be prepared for an attack. The cacique was obviously dissatisfied with these proceedings, but he had no pretense for opposing them. With every appearance of the most cordial friendship, the two commanders walked, side by side, to the field where their respective armies were drawn up. Vitacucho had mustered several thousands of warriors, who were placed in a very good position, with an impervious thicket on one hand, and two small lakes on the other. The appearance of the native warriors was very commanding, and indeed formidable. They were all young and athletic men, each of whom, in personal strength, was probably a match for two Spaniards; though the Castilian soldiers had greatly the advantage in arms and superior military training. The Indians wore tall head-dresses, composed of the plumes of the swan, heron, or crane, which apparently added to their stature, and made their enemies feel almost like pigmies in their presence. The natives had concealed their bows and arrows in the grass before them, so that they might appear to be unarmed.

The Spanish infantry was formed on the opposite side of the plain, and the cavalry occupied a central position

between their own countrymen and the Indians. Twelve chosen men were in immediate attendance on the governor, and about an equal number of Indians waited on the cacique, as they stood on a little eminence to command a better view of the field. At a signal given by Vitacucho, the Indians snatched up their arms, and at the same moment the twelve Spaniards, who attended on De Soto, seized the cacique and made him a prisoner. Vitacucho's servants made an ineffectual effort to rescue him, and the Indian warriors bent their bows and took aim at the Spaniards. De Soto now mounted his favorite horse, Aceytuño, and spurred him on the thickest of the enemy, "with that headlong valor which always distinguished him in battle." The Indians discharged a shower of arrows, several of which pierced the body of the horse, and killed him on the spot. It was always a primary object with the natives to kill the horses, because these animals gave the Spaniards their principal advantage in battle. The governor mounted another horse, which his page had brought him; and then, at the head of his cavalry, he charged the main body of the enemy, which was soon broken up by the furious assault. Some of the Indians took refuge in the woods, and others endeavored to save themselves by plunging into the lake. Those who fled along the plain were overtaken by the horsemen, and were either killed or made prisoners.

The account we have given of the capture of Vitacucho is derived altogether from the Spanish authorities;

and, for this reason, we feel some hesitation in accepting it as a fair statement of the facts. The Portuguese narrator tells the story with a considerable difference, making



DEATH OF DE SOTO'S FAVORITE HORSE.

it very doubtful whether De Soto's seizure of the cacique was a justifiable act of self-defense. The Spanish writers themselves do not make it appear that any overt act of hostility was committed by the Indians, before the Spaniards commenced the affray by laying violent hands on the cacique. And it appears that the best evidence of Vitacucho's treacherous designs was the information given by the Indian interpreters in the service of the Spaniards. These traitors to their country were scoun-

drels, of course ; and the testimony of such witnesses is entitled to very little credit.

We know that it was a common trick of the Spanish commanders in America to kidnap the caciques and other principal Indians, who were retained as hostages to insure the submission of the people. From the account given by the Portuguese gentleman, we judge that De Soto was the aggressor in this affair. He had begun to treat the cacique like a prisoner, and Vitacucho's subjects endeavored to rescue him from the power of the Spaniards. The principal incidents of the battle may be correctly reported. All authorities admit that the Indians behaved with great bravery in this conflict. Though they were broken and dispersed by the irresistible force of the Spanish cavalry, they did not abandon the field, but continued to fight until all their arrows were exhausted. Few of them were taken prisoners, for the resistance which they made was so desperate, that the greater number of them chose to perish on the battle-field rather than solicit or accept the clemency of their enemies. Several hundreds of them took refuge in the lake, whither the Castilian horsemen could not venture to follow them. From this liquid fort, they continued to discharge their arrows at the Spaniards, from ten o'clock in the morning, (at which time the battle commenced,) until midnight.* During the night, some of these aquatic warriors con-

* Portuguese Gentleman, Ch. ii. ; Herrera, Dec. iv., Lib. vi., Cap. 1.

tinued to approach the Spaniards, and to discharge their arrows with more effect, by covering their heads with the large leaves of the water-lily. Thus concealed, they swam near the shore, and took deliberate aim at their antagonists. This ingenious expedient was detected at last, and when the Spanish cross-bowmen and musketeers saw a water-lily begin to move, they knew how



INDIANS APPROACHING UNDER THE WATER-LILIES.

to account for the phenomenon, and directed their fire to the spot. To prevent any of the Indians from escaping, the Spaniards posted themselves, in parties of

five or six men, around the lake, having their arms prepared to shoot any of the natives who should emerge from the water.

Herrera says, that while some of the Indians were swimming on the surface of the lake, others would stand on their backs while they shot their arrows at the Castilians. From the same author we learn that seven of the natives, rather than submit, remained in the water until the next day at noon; when the governor, considering that it was cruel to allow so many brave men to perish, ordered twelve Spaniards to swim to them and drag them out by force. At this time their strength was exhausted, and when placed on the shore they appeared to be in a dying condition, having been in the water more than twenty-four hours. The efforts of the Spaniards to restore them were successful; and when they were able to answer questions, De Soto inquired why they had been so obstinate? They replied that their nation had made them commanders, and they wished to prove that they were worthy of their position by dying in the defense of their country. "We should have been more obliged to you," they added "if you had permitted us to perish where we were, instead of preserving our lives for the purpose of making us slaves."

We are told that Governor de Soto pardoned Vitachucho's "rebellion," and continued to treat the cacique like a friend and brother. Both dined at the same table; and the Spaniards constantly endeavored, by

means of the most gentle and respectful behavior, to the captive chief, to reconcile him to his situation. It appears, however, that all of Vitacucho's subjects, who were made prisoners in the late battle, were reduced to a state of slavery, and compelled to perform all the drudgery of the camp. This, we suppose, was enough to excuse the cacique for making some effort to recover his freedom and to liberate his suffering people. However, he is charged with ingratitude and a perfidious disposition, because he contrived another plot for the extermination of his oppressors. It is said that he instructed his enslaved subjects to fall on the Spaniards, and destroy them all while they were at dinner. This work of righteous retribution was to have been executed on the seventh day after the battle. While the governor and Vitacucho were dining together on that day, the cacique suddenly started up, gave a loud cry, which was the signal for his countrymen to begin the slaughter; and, at the same moment, he struck the governor a blow in the face with such tremendous force, that the invincible cavalier was, for the first time, prostrated before an enemy. While De Soto lay on the ground, in a state of insensibility, several other Spaniards drew their swords and attacked the cacique; who, notwithstanding he was unarmed, stoutly defended himself, and with his naked fist struck down two or three of his assailants, before the latter, with repeated wounds, could succeed in dispatching him. As soon as Vitacucho's signal was heard, the Indian prisoners assailed the Spaniards with

the most reckless fury, although they were unprovided with any weapons except firebrands, cooking utensils and such other articles as could be made to answer the purpose. Many of the Spaniards were killed, or .everely wounded; but, in the end, all the prisoners were put to death: and their conduct proved that they preferred this doom before a life of bondage. From this account we may learn that our revolutionary fathers were not the first martyrs to liberty who poured out their blood on the American soil; and while we contemplate and admire the heroism of those noble aborigines who sacrificed their lives in the cause of freedom and the rights of man, we feel that it is no disparagement of our civilization and national glory to acknowledge them as our countrymen, though we cannot claim them as our ancestors.

CHAPTER XXX.

DE SOTO'S FOLLOWERS ARE DISCOURAGED—THEY WISH TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY—THE COMMANDER REFUSES TO TURN BACK—HE TAKES THE LEAD IN ALL DANGERS—THE SPANIARDS MARCH TOWARD APALACHE—DESPERATE RESISTANCE OF THE INDIANS—INCESSANT FIGHTING—CAPTURE OF AN EXTRAORDINARY INDIAN CHIEF—HE ORDERS HIS SUBJECTS TO SUBMIT TO THE SPANIARDS—THEY REFUSE TO DO SO—THE CHIEF'S STRATAGEM AND WONDERFUL ESCAPE—DIABOLICAL AGENCY SUSPECTED—DE SOTO COLLECTS ALL HIS FORCES—HE FIXES HIS WINTER QUARTERS—RECEIVES A LETTER FROM DONNA ISABELLA—THE CACIQUE MOCOSO REWARDED—DISCOVERY OF PENSACOLA. [A. D. 1539-1540.]

THE capital town of Vitacucho, where that unfortunate chief was slain, and so many of his subjects were massacred, is supposed by Mr. Fairbanks to have been situated about fifteen miles west of the present site of Fort Micanopy. Before De Soto had penetrated thus far into the country, a general feeling of discontent began to manifest itself among his followers. Their dreams of a golden harvest in Florida had not been realized; and the indomitable character of the natives promised to give the Spaniards more trouble than the proposed conquest, in their estimation, was worth.

Except De Soto himself, there was not a man in the army who was disposed, at that time, to pursue the adventure any further. There was a prevailing desire to return to the port where they had disembarked, and to abandon the country as soon as the ships returned from Havana.* The principal cause of the panic among the troops was the frightful accounts which the Indians gave of the defeat and sufferings of Pamphilo and his companions, when they were driven out of the territory of Apalache. De Soto and his associates were now approaching that ground where their countrymen, ten years before, had received the castigation they deserved; and, as they had no good reason to hope for a different fate, the officers and soldiers of De Soto's expedition, earnestly besought their commander to

"Leave the fatal shore
And measure back those seas he cross'd before."

But De Soto affected to discredit the story of Pamphilo's defeat. "I cannot believe," said he, "that these miserable savages could obtain so great an advantage over a Spanish army; and I must see for myself before I can have any faith in their ability to contend with us in an open battle-field. You, who are so easily discouraged, may stay behind. You have never seen me shrink from the post of danger; and I will now advance, with two hundred men, or even a smaller number, and meet all

* Portuguese Narrative, Chap. xi.

the enemies that are likely to offer any opposition to our progress."

In every dangerous march De Soto led the van; and often, with a few chosen men, he threw himself far in advance of the main body of his army. At the time of his battle with Vitacucho, a considerable part of his forces, under the command of Luys Moscoso, remained at Cale, and of course took no part in the conflict.

Finding that their general could not be persuaded to turn back, the subordinate officers and the troops were constrained by shame or fear to continue their onward march. The promised Gold Region seemed to elude them, as the coasts of "flying Italy" did the companions of Æneas. Its hypothetical situation was now in Apalache, the scene of Pamphilo's severe punishment; and, as the people of that district were supposed to be the very Spartans of America, the Castilian heroes might safely calculate on having an opportunity to distinguish themselves in many a hard-fought battle, if their other expectations from the country should be disappointed.

On their way to Apalache, the adventurers proceeded north-westerly to a village called Osachile, which Mr. Fairbanks supposes to be the old town of Suwanee. The location of this village appears to have been about thirty-five miles, in a north-easterly direction, from Alligator Point. Here the Spaniards remained several days, employing themselves in capturing Indians to serve as guides, according to Herrera; but the Portu-

guese gentleman, with greater probability, asserts that the prisoners were used as slaves.* The number taken was about one hundred, men and women; and this fact alone proves that Herrera's statement is false. The Portuguese writer says: "These Indians were led in chains, with iron collars on their necks; and they were compelled to carry the baggage, to grind the maize, and to perform other menial services for the soldiers." That they did not patiently submit to this oppressive treatment is proved by other declarations of the same writer. "Sometimes it happened," says he, "that the Indian slaves, when going for wood or maize, killed the Christians that led them and ran away with the chain. Others filed off their irons at night with pieces of stone, and so made their escape. All who were detected in any attempt to recover their liberty were put to death, or otherwise punished."

On the first day of October, 1539, the Spaniards crossed another great morass, and came to a deep river, supposed to be the Oscilla, over which they attempted to build a bridge; but the Indians, collected on the opposite bank, discharged volleys of arrows at the workmen, and compelled them to desist. The Spaniards crossed the stream, at last, by throwing in planks, which, floating on the surface, afforded a precarious footing for the infantry, but the cavalry were obliged to swim over. As soon as the Castilians began to cross

* Portuguese Narrative, Chap. xi.

the river, the Indians retired into the wood, but continued to annoy their enemies with an incessant shower of arrows. It was necessary for the Spaniards to pass through this wood, which was so dense that the pioneers



SPANIARDS CROSSING THE RIVER OSCILLA.

were obliged to cut down many trees to afford a passage for the troops. The men who were employed in felling the trees were exposed to almost certain death; when one was slain, and another took his place, he had scarcely time to strike a blow with his axe before a

well-directed arrow laid him by the side of his fallen comrade. Though the wood was only five miles broad, the Spaniards consumed two days in passing through it, and, in the mean time, many of them were killed; for the Indians, in this case, had all the advantage on their own side. But when the Christians came into the open country, and were able to use their cavalry, great numbers of the Indians were slaughtered or taken prisoners. The natives, however, continued to harass their invaders without intermission; and for several days the route of the Spaniards was marked by a continuous line of bloodshed and carnage, which they left behind them.

In the course of their march the Spaniards passed through several towns, all of which were deserted; but maize and other provisions were found in some of them. At length, after much hard fighting and very difficult traveling, De Soto arrived at the principal town of Apalache, where he resolved to pass the winter. The cacique of this place and all the inhabitants had left their dwellings, and fortified themselves, by enclosing a space with palisades, in a wood about eight leagues from the village. De Soto marched thither, and besieged the Indian fort, which he demolished, after a long and hard struggle, and the cacique was made prisoner. The name of this cacique was Capasi. In person he was somewhat of an oddity, for he was so fat that his legs could not support the weight of his body; and when he wished to move from place to place, he was either carried by his servants on a bier or litter, or crawled on his hands and

knees. Having secured this valuable prize, Governor De Soto flattered himself that he would now be enabled to control all the tribes of Apalache who acknowledged



A FAT INDIAN CACIQUE.

the authority of this obese potentate. But the event did not answer the governor's expectations, for the subjects of Capasi continued to make war on the Spaniards with a reckless disregard of the cacique's personal safety. De Soto required the chief to order his people to submit and lay down their arms, or the Spaniards would punish their recusancy by sacrificing the cacique himself. Capasi, with an eye to his own personal security, commissioned several of his fellow-prisoners to make his people aware of his danger, and to advise them to comply with the only terms on which the Christians would consent to spare his life. When this proclama-

tion was made through the district, the subordinate chiefs of Apalache held a council, and the result of their deliberations was an absolute refusal of these truly honorable representatives of the Apalachean people to compromise the rights and liberties of the public, for the purpose of securing a particular interest. They sent a messenger to make Capasi acquainted with their decision. "We are sorry for your misfortune," said they to the captive cacique, "but the life of one man is of less consequence than the liberties of a whole nation. If we were in your situation, we should prefer death to the sacrifice which you call on us to make; and we advise you to prove that you are worthy of your position as the principal ruler of these warlike tribes, by dying willingly for the good of your people."

Capasi, whose frailty, (in accordance with the theory of Sir John Falstaff,) was proportioned to the amount of his flesh, could not reconcile himself to the sweet and glorious death of a martyred patriot. The message of his countrymen and their ominous advice filled him with dismay. Some of the Spaniards, as it appears, had been amusing themselves by giving him a minute account of the *process* which the Christians generally used in the execution of unconverted Indians; and, in relation to this topic, the truth needed no coloring of romance to make it sufficiently frightful. The poor cacique was forced to believe that if his subjects did not succumb to the Spaniards, the governor would order him to be burned to death; and he was tormented with the reflec-

tion that his bodily sufferings would be more excruciating, because the material to be consumed was more abundant than usual, and more combustible. In the greatest tribulation, he applied to Governor De Soto, and entreated him to have patience for awhile, as the people of Apalache must soon relent, and return a more favorable answer. He knew that their affection for him was unbounded, as he had always treated them like his own children; and he thought that if he had an opportunity to meet his subordinate chiefs, he could persuade them to return to their duty. He therefore requested the governor to send him, properly guarded, to the place where the chiefs were assembled, promising that his appearance among them would make them entirely submissive to his orders.

De Soto complied with this request. The cacique, attended by a sufficient number of Spanish soldiers, was carried in a litter to a place designated by him, about two leagues from the camp; and from thence he sent orders for his subordinates to appear before him on the following day, as he had something to communicate which greatly concerned their welfare and that of their nation. On the arrival of night, the Spaniards who had the cacique in charge, posted a sufficient number of guards to prevent the enemy from coming on them by surprise, and then betook themselves to repose. They supposed that the helpless condition of their prisoner would make it unnecessary for them to keep any watch over him; for no one could believe that such a cumber-

some mass of mortality could escape by flight. However, as soon as the cacique's guard awoke in the morning, they discovered that he had vanished like another "delicate Ariel." He must have crawled away like a huge turtle, while his keepers were asleep; and his address in eluding the sentinels proved that he had some of the qualifications of an Indian warrior. Having recovered his liberty, Capasi was careful to avoid a recapture, and the Spaniards saw no more of him. When the soldiers who had been appointed to guard him returned to their commander, they excused themselves for allowing Capasi to escape, by protesting that the devil had carried him off through the air, as it would have been impossible for him to get away in any other manner. Herrera reports that the commander, "being a discreet man," and unwilling to punish the guards for their negligence, accepted their apology, and remarked with a smiling countenance, that as the Indians were famous sorcerers, it was quite likely that some diabolical agency had been employed in this affair.

Having resolved to pass the winter in Apalache, De Soto fortified the village where he had fixed his quarters, and sent out foraging parties in various directions to obtain a good supply of provisions. The men who were charged with this duty, robbed the corn-fields of the Indians at the hazard of their lives; and many of them were slain while in the act of committing these depredations. Indian corn and pumpkins appear to have been the principal articles of food which the Span-

iards obtained by plundering the natives; but they sometimes found in the houses of the principal Indians a kind of bread or cakes, "made of prunes," as the Spanish writers assert, though the fruit used for this purpose was undoubtedly the persimmon.

The governor now thought it expedient to collect all his forces in one place. He therefore sent a party of horsemen to the sea-coast, with orders for Captain Calderon and the soldiers under his command, to march forward and join the main body of the troops in Apalache. The town of Anaica,* where De Soto proposed to winter, was the capital of Apalache, which had been vacated by the cacique Capasi, when the Spaniards approached his territory. This town, according to our Portuguese author, was ten leagues from the nearest part of the sea-coast. Mr. Gallatin judges that Anaica was situated somewhere in the neighborhood of Ockockona River. The nearest sea-port to this town is called Aute, by the Spanish writers; this sea-port, Mr. McCulloh says, was undoubtedly at the head of the bay of St. Mark's. The Apalachy Indians, at the time the French settled in Louisiana, lived around and above the junction of Flint and Cattahouchie rivers, and, most probably, had lived there since the time of De Soto. The last-named author places the town of Anaica north of the river

* This place is called Anhayca by some, and Anhaica by others. Our mode of spelling the name is adopted from the Portuguese narrative.

Uche, and thirty leagues from the bay of St. Mark's.* Some of these conjectures seem very probable; but all the authors quoted place rather too much reliance on the statements of Garcilasso, which are entitled to very little credit. The Portuguese Gentleman is much better authority, especially in matters relating to numbers and distances; and he distinctly asserts that Anaica was only *ten* leagues from the Bay of Aute, or St. Mark's. The site of the town is probably in some part of Leon County, Florida.

The party of horsemen sent by the governor to the Bay of Espiritu Santa, after Captain Calderon, was commanded by Juan Anasca. As the winter had now commenced, the sufferings of this party on the road were very great, and one of the men was frozen to death in his saddle. When Anasco arrived at the town of Mocosó, that chief inquired after the health and welfare of his Spanish friends; and when he heard of their wars and other troubles, he expressed his regret, and wished that the caciques were all of his own mind. But when they came to the place where Calderon and his company were stationed, the first inquiries of these persons were, not after the health and welfare of their absent countrymen, but whether they had found any land abounding with gold! In obedience to Governor De Soto's orders, Captain Calderon prepared to accompany the messengers to the winter quarters of the army. The ships

* Vide "McCulloh's Researches," Appendix.

had lately returned from Havana with a large amount of provisions, clothing, arms and ammunition, much of which would have to be left behind for want of any suitable means of conveyance. Some of these superfluous articles were given to Mocosó, as a reward for the many acts of kindness which he had done for the Spaniards while they resided in his neighborhood. The good chief certainly deserved some substantial token of Christian gratitude; for he had exposed himself to the hatred and vengeance of his own countrymen, by befriending these strangers, whose claims to his kindness were, to say the least, very equivocal. All the vessels, except two brigantines, were sent back to Havana, under the command of Gomez Arias, who was likewise charged with a letter from De Soto to Donna Isabella. That lady had embraced the opportunity, when the ships left Cuba, to write to her absent husband; and Captain Calderon undertook to convey her letter to the governor at Anaica.

According to the directions which he had received from De Soto, Juan de Anasco proceeded, with the two brigantines and some of the soldiers, to the Bay of Aute, which, as previously mentioned, was the nearest seaport to the place where De Soto was now stationed. At the same time, Captain Calderon, with all the cavalry, and fifty foot-soldiers, started on his overland route to Apalache, being guided by some of the men who had traveled over the same ground with De Soto. The distance was one hundred and fifty leagues, and

Calderon was obliged to fight his way, as the governor had done before, through the whole journey. Some of Calderon's men were killed on the route, and twelve more died of their wounds after their arrival at Anaica. Juan Anasco, with the brigantines, arrived safely at the the Bay of Aute, where the vessels were left at anchor, and Anasco and his soldiers proceeded to the governor's camp. Thus, all the Spaniards in Florida were reunited; and, as their number was now considerably reduced by war and disease, the commander prudently resolved to consolidate his forces as much as possible in future. During the winter, however, he sent out several small parties for the purpose of exploration. One of these parties discovered a good sea-port and harbor, which was situated, according to their computation, about sixty leagues west of Aute, a location which may be supposed to identify it with Pensacola; or, making due allowance for probable mistakes in reckoning the distance, the place designated may have been near the entrance of Mobile Bay.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DONNA ISABELLA'S LETTER—SHE GIVES DE SOTO GOOD COUNSEL—HIS REASONS FOR NOT FOLLOWING IT—THE SPANIARDS LEAVE THEIR WINTER QUARTERS—CERTAIN INTELLIGENCE OF A GOLD REGION—THE MARCH TO COFACHIQUE—THE INDIAN GUIDE IS SEDUCED BY THE DEVIL—HIS MIRACULOUS CONVERSION—THE SPANIARDS ARRIVE AT COFACHIQUE—EL DORADO PROVES TO BE STILL AT A DISTANCE—MARCH THROUGH A DREARY WILDERNESS—SUFFERINGS OF THE SPANIARDS—THE CONVERTED INDIAN GUIDE SUSPECTED OF TREACHERY—ARRIVAL AT A FINE COUNTRY GOVERNED BY A YOUNG FEMALE CACIQUE. [A. D. 1540.]

THE letter from Donna Isabella which was brought to De Soto by Captain Calderon made a very painful impression on the mind of the hero; for it proved that his wife was unhappy; and it made him suspect, for the first time, that the enterprise in which he was engaged, did not meet with her cordial approbation. Donna Isabella was sensitively conscientious; in this particular, she strongly resembled her mother, whose excellent moral qualities have been celebrated in history.* After

* Some account of her may be found in Washington Irving's "Columbus and his Companions," p. 197.

her arrival at Havana, and during her residence in that place, Governor De Soto's lady had heard many terrible accounts of the innumerable wrongs and barbarities which had been committed by the Spanish conquerors of America. At Havana she first became acquainted with the sad and shocking history of her own father's official conduct at Panama and Nicaragua. To her this information was the cause of unimaginable distress; and, although she wished to believe that her husband was incapable of any inhuman or unjust action, she remembered with a feeling of anguish that all his military experience was acquired in that country where the best of the Spaniards ceased to act like Christians or civilized men.

On these subjects the lady pondered with increasing anxiety, until the return of the ships from Florida afforded her an opportunity to give the strongest proof of her affection for her misguided husband, by urging him to abandon that enterprise which had ceased to be glorious, or even justifiable, in her estimation. We subjoin a short extract from Donna Isabella's letter, which sufficiently explains itself:—

“I have lately had some conversation with that good man the Bishop of Chiapa,* and he has convinced me that the behavior of our people to the Indians is inexcusable in the sight of God, however it may be overlooked or permitted by men in high authority. The

* Father Bartholomew de Las Casas.

bishop has proved to me that all who have taken part in the abuse of these harmless people have been visited, in this life, with the manifest displeasure of Heaven; and God grant that they may not be punished according to the measure of their offense in the life to come. I hope, my dearest husband, that no considerations of worldly advantage will make you neglectful of the precepts of humanity and the duties of religion. Be persuaded to return to me at once, for you can gain nothing in Florida which can repay me for the sorrow and anxiety I feel in your absence. Not for all the riches of the country would I have you commit one act, the remembrance of which would be painful to you hereafter. If you have gained nothing, I shall be the better satisfied, because there may be the less cause for repentance. Whatever may have been your want of success or your losses, I implore you to come to me without delay, for any reverse of fortune is far better than the suspense and misery which I now endure."

It was De Soto's love for his wife, and his consequent desire to make her wealthy and happy, which prevailed with him, more than any other motive, to embark in his present enterprise. In view of this fact we cannot doubt that Isabella's grief and melancholy deeply affected him, but how could he consent to give up his undertaking at this time, when the rich reward of his labors was almost within his reach? How could he return to Isabella, and exhibit himself to the world as an unsuccessful and impoverished adventurer? The greater

part of his fortune, his magnificent Peruvian acquisitions, had been expended in this enterprise, and a failure therein would be irretrievable ruin. As for his lady's scruples of conscience, they could not be expected to have much weight with De Soto, for he had doubtless persuaded himself that his undertaking was both lawful and religious. As a good catholic, he could not question the right of the Pope to give away the whole world, or any part of it. The Sovereign Pontiff had bestowed the American continent, with all its appurtenances, on the King of Spain; and his Catholic Majesty had authorized De Soto and others to take possession of the property. The Indian inhabitants of the country were a part of the estate, and were recognized as such in the deed of conveyance;* the Spaniards, therefore, had an unquestionable right to treat them as slaves or rebels! With such reasoning, we suppose, De Soto satisfied his conscience, and prepared himself for many rigorous and unmerciful deeds, which he might otherwise have found it difficult or impossible to perform.

In March, 1540, the governor made preparations to leave the town of Anaica, where his troops had been

* *Vide* the Manifesto of Alonzo de Ojeda, which was first read aloud by the friars in his train, as a prelude to his attack on the people of Carthagená, and was subsequently adopted by the Spanish discoverers in general in their invasions of Indian countries. An English translation of this curious document may be found in the Appendix to Irving's "Columbus and his Companions," Article xxxix.

quartered during the winter. Before his departure, he sent one of the brigantines from the Bay of Aute, to Havana with some presents for his wife, and a letter of consolation, in which he spoke of certain success and a speedy return. He made these promises, without any intention to deceive his lady with false expectations; for his prospects, at that time, were brilliant in the highest degree. Among the Indian prisoners, or slaves, there was a youth of seventeen, whose artless demeanor gained the confidence of Governor De Soto, and disposed him to believe a marvelous story concerning a region called *Cofachiqui*, with which the lad professed to be well acquainted, and in which silver, gold, and pearls were among the most common and unvalued articles. Another Indian confirmed this report; and truly there was little reason to distrust the testimony, considering what vast quantities of the precious metals had already been found in different parts of America.

Guided by the two Indians who had given this agreeable information, the Spaniards began their march for *Cofachiqui*. They passed through several small towns, and lost six of their men in skirmishes with the Indians within the first four days of their journey. On the morning of the fifth day, they entered a large town called *Atalpaha*, which was deserted by all the inhabitants, except five chiefs, who had sent their people out of the way of danger, and remained behind to ascertain the intentions of the Spaniards. When De Soto arrived, the chiefs demanded, quite boldly, if he

was for peace or war. The governor directed his interpreter to answer that he wished to avoid war if possible, and asked for nothing more than a supply of provisions and permission to pass through the country. The principal chief replied: "If this is all you wish, there is no occasion to make us prisoners. We will supply your wants without any compulsion, and you will find that you have taken the wisest course by treating us as friends." Accordingly, the Spaniards were well entertained at this village; and, while they continued there, the truce on both sides was scrupulously maintained.

Another journey of ten days brought them to the borders of Cofachiqui, the land of golden promise, to which their guides were conducting them. The Spaniards were in a state of joyous excitement, doubting not that immense treasures were to be gathered in the country before them; but as it was now late in the evening, they chose to pass the night where they were, intending to invite the cacique of the neighboring town to a conference on the following morning. About midnight a frightful commotion was heard in the camp; officers and men started from their slumbers, supposing that the natives had fallen upon them; but it appeared that the sole cause of the disturbance was the singular illness of their youthful guide, who was writhing on the ground and foaming at the mouth, and to mere human science, he might have appeared to be in a fit of epilepsy. But the Spanish priests by their supernatural light, discovered that it was a case of demoniac possession;



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and the patient himself afterward confirmed the truth of this hypothesis. A little sprinkling of holy water, and the customary form of exorcism, soon restored the young man to the use of all his faculties. It was then discovered that the alarm was caused by the exclamations of the youth, to whom the devil had appeared in his most terrific form; and, after beating him severely, the fiend commanded him, in the most imperious manner, to lead the Christians no farther into the country. "These Spaniards," (continued the dark spirit, condescending to give the lad an explanation of his motives,) "are my worst enemies, and if they succeed in establishing themselves on this ground, my power and dominion here will be at an end." Having related the particulars of this spiritual visitation, the ingenious youth declared that the incident had removed all his doubts respecting the truth of the Catholic religion; for the appearance of the devil exactly corresponded with the pictures of him which he had seen in the Spanish books of devotion. He therefore desired to become a member of the Church with the least possible delay, being satisfied that nothing else could protect him from the future assaults of the infernal enemy."

There was something in this story which strongly recommended it to the clerical department of the army. The request of the piously-inclined youth to be admitted to church-membership was instantly complied with, and he was baptized by the name of Pedro. This whole affair is somewhat mysterious; and, among the histo-

rians, there is some diversity of opinion on the subject. Our first impressions would be that the guide was an impostor; that he had been flattering the Spaniards with expectations which he knew to be fallacious; and that, as soon as he came to the edge of the promised gold-region, he pretended to receive a supernatural communication, forbidding him to proceed any further. But what object could be gained by this artifice? Pedro must have known that the Spaniards would not regard the prohibition of the devil; and, after he himself had become a Catholic, he could not use that prohibition as a pretense for refusing to lead the Christians onward. If he was artful enough to contrive such a plot, he must have been acute enough to perceive these difficulties. It is true that he might hope to gain more favor and confidence with the Spaniards by pretending to embrace their faith, and supplying the priests with a well-attested miracle. But, rejecting all former explanations, we are disposed to believe that this lad really had some acquaintance with the gold region which is now enclosed in the State of Georgia, and which, before the discovery of the Californian mines, was our North American El Dorado. It is conjectured that the Spaniards had been conducted by their guide to a location corresponding with Washington County, Georgia; and they were now within less than one hundred and fifty miles of one of the richest gold mines in America. Mr. Gallatin supposes that Cofachiqui was situated very little to the south of the thirty-fourth degree of North latitude.

This would bring De Soto within forty or fifty miles of the principal gold regions of Georgia, which his destiny would not permit him to discover. The guide Pedro had evidently been leading him in the right direction until that unfortunate interview with the devil produced, or rather indicated, some change of purpose. That Pedro had really been in some gold-producing country may be inferred from a circumstance mentioned by the Portuguese narrator, who declares that the boy accurately described the process of taking the metal from the mine, and explained how it was melted and refined. The gentleman of Elvas adds: "He could not have told how these things were done, unless he had seen them, or the devil had taught him."*

One of the Spanish writers remarks that the boy was a *native* of that part of the country to which he had volunteered to conduct the Christians. This fact may account for his subsequent unwillingness to guide them into that district, and his efforts to lead them away on another route. He had observed that the Spaniards, wherever they went, constantly maltreated the inhabitants; and he began to reflect, perhaps, on the inexpediency of conducting these cruel and rapacious men to the home of his childhood, the dwelling-places of his neighbors and relatives. If such were his motives for misleading the Christians, we are ready to pardon him,

* Portuguese Narrative, Chap. xii.

and to believe that he was instigated by some better spirit than the arch-enemy of mankind.

On the morning after Pedro's diabolical obsession and his consequent conversion to Catholicism, Governor De Soto sent messengers to the cacique of the neighboring town, called Cofa, inviting him to visit the Spaniards at their camp. The Indian lord complied with this request, and was accompanied by many of his people handsomely dressed, with plumes of gayly colored feathers and "rich mantles of sables and other valuable furs."^{*} The cacique of Cofa feasted the Spaniards for several days, and when they wished to continue their journey, he supplied them with provisions and a numerous train of Indians to assist them in carrying their baggage. Still guided by Pedro, they turned from that north-easterly course, in which they had traveled since they left Anaica, and they now proceeded on a direct line to the north-west. This change of route carried them away from the gold region of Georgia, which they had almost reached; and, if we have correctly explained the conduct of their guide, the Spaniards were indebted to their own impolitic barbarity for that remarkable failure, as well as for many other disappointments and calamities which befell them on this expedition.

On the seventh day after their departure from Cofa, the Spaniards and their Indian allies were in much doubt respecting the way which ought to be pursued;

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iv., Lib. vii., Cap. 3

for the Indian track which they had hitherto followed was now at an end, and the ground which lay before them was all a wilderness. Pedro, the guide, when questioned on the subject, acknowledged that he had mistaken the route, and excused himself by saying that he had not traveled the road for more than five years. Notwithstanding his recent conversion, and the miraculous circumstances which attended it, the governor began to suspect him of treachery, and threatened to throw him to the dogs. When the Spaniards arrived at the borders of Cofachiqui, Pedro assured them that they would reach the land of gold within four days; but they had since traveled *nine* days, with great expedition, and the appearance of the country was more unpromising than ever.

To increase their troubles, their stock of provisions, which had been supplied by the cacique of Cofa, was nearly consumed. The Indians whom that chief had sent with the Spaniards, went out daily in search of food, and returned at night with a scanty supply of herbs, roots, birds, fish and small land animals. This supply, however, was so inadequate, that the Spaniards and Indians both suffered much with hunger, while they made their way slowly through the trackless, and apparently interminable forest. After traveling many days, and enduring ineffable hardships, they came once more to an open country, in a fine state of cultivation. They advanced about two leagues, and an hour before night-fall they came near a town which was situated on the

further side of a river. Here they encamped, and prepared to seize some Indians for the purpose of obtaining information concerning the country and its inhabitants. However, it appears that the Christians were discovered by the Indians on the opposite bank of the stream; and several of the natives came over in a canoe to make inquiries respecting the wishes or intentions of the strangers. While they were crossing, Governor De Soto placed himself in a chair of state on the margin of the river, and prepared to receive those persons, (whom he supposed to be envoys from the cacique of the town,) with all the pomp and circumstance which befitted his position as the representative of one who claimed to be the rightful sovereign of the land.

The Indians in the canoe were men of rank and authority. They approached the governor, and after some ceremonies, which appeared to be intended for salutations, they made the usual inquiry whether the strangers were for peace or war. De Soto answered according to his custom in such cases, that he wished to be at peace with the people of that country, and hoped that they would supply him with provisions for his army. The Indians professed to be equally desirous of peace, but, as the season was one of unusual scarcity, their supplies of provisions were barely sufficient for their own wants. They informed De Soto that their land was governed by a maiden lady, to whom they would report the arrival of the strangers and the nature of their demands. Accordingly they re-embarked in their canoe, and paddled

over to the town to make their chieftainess acquainted with the advent of these extraordinary visitors. It was evident that these Indians had never seen or heard of the Spaniards before—for they were not afraid of them!



DE SOTO CROSSING THE SEWASSEE FORK.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SPANIARDS ARE ENTERTAINED BY THE PRINCESS XUALLA—HER SURPRISING BEAUTY—HER GENEROSITY TO THE CHRISTIANS—THEIR GRATITUDE—IMMENSE QUANTITIES OF PEARLS ARE FOUND—THE PRINCESS IS INTIMIDATED—SHE CONSENTS TO BETRAY HER MOTHER—SINGULAR CASE OF SUICIDE—THE DISTRESS OF THE PRINCESS XUALLA—HER SEVERE SPEECH TO DE SOTO—THE SPANIARDS RESUME THEIR MARCH—CAPTIVITY OF THE PRINCESS—HER ESCAPE—DE SOTO'S CONDUCT TO WOMEN—THE LICENTIOUSNESS OF HIS FOLLOWERS. [A. D. 1540.]

FROM the bank of the river opposite to the village, the Spaniards watched the canoe which contained the Indian envoys, who, after crossing the stream, were received by a crowd of their countrymen at the landing-place. The intelligence which they brought seemed to produce some commotion among the people of the town; but, within a short time, several canoes left the wharf, and began to move toward the bank where the Spaniards were stationed. The first canoe was fitted up in very tasteful style with a canopy and various decorations. This little vessel was filled with women all gayly dressed, but conspicuous among them was the chieftainess, the barbaric splendor of whose appearance almost dazzled the eyes

of the beholders. The other canoes, five or six in number, contained her principal officers and attendants. When the canoes touched the shore, the Indians disembarked, and placed a seat for their lady opposite to the chair of state, which was occupied by Governor De Soto. With equal grace and dignity she saluted the strangers, and after taking her seat, she waited in silence, as if expecting her visitors to begin the conference. For several minutes, the Spaniards gazed at her with feelings of admiration and reverence. Seldom had they seen a more beautiful female, or one in whom the conscious pride of elevated rank was so nicely balanced with womanly reserve and youthful modesty. The age of this princess was apparently about nineteen years; the perfect regularity of her features wanted not that intellectual irradiation, the effect of which on a fine human countenance is like that of the soft but brilliant light of sunset on a beautiful landscape. The symmetrical form of the princess was arrayed in the most ornate habiliments of her country. Her robe and mantilla were composed of the finest woven cloth of native manufacture, the material of which, as we have mentioned in another part of this work, was obtained from the mulberry-tree. In whiteness and delicacy of texture, this fabric vied with the finest linens of Europe. The garments of the princess were bordered with a rich brocade, composed of feathers and beads of various colors interwoven with the material of the cloth. Among the other superb garniture of her person, there

was a profusion of pearls and some glittering ornaments, which were supposed by the Spaniards to be gold. The name of this Indian princess was Xualla, and her rule extended over several provinces.

Juan Ortiz, whose acquaintance with various dialects of the Indian language enabled him to act as interpreter,



INDIAN PRINCESS PRESENTING A NECKLACE OF PEARLS TO DE SOTO

was directed by Governor De Soto to make the princess acquainted with the necessity which compelled the Spaniards to apply to her for assistance. In answer to this appeal, she expressed her regret, on account of the scanty harvests of the last season which had left her own people almost in a state of destitution, and less-

ened her ability to relieve the wants of the strangers. She had two magazines of corn, however, which had been kept in reserve for future exigencies, and one of these she now offered to bestow on the Spaniards. The Princess made a further display of her generosity, by inviting the Christians to fix their quarters in her principal village, while it was convenient for them to remain in that neighborhood. She then took off her necklace, which was composed of pearls of great value, and requested Juan Ortiz to present it to the governor, saying that she refrained from giving it with her own hand to avoid transgressing against modesty. Governor de Soto arose, and received the lady's present with much respect; he then took a fine ruby ring from his own finger, and presented it to the princess. "And thus," says Herrera, "the peace was ratified."

The Spanish troops were carried over the river on floats and in canoes. Four horses were drowned in the passage. The forces were quartered in the centre of the town, or public square; and the princess sent them a sufficiency of very good provisions, with poultry and other delicacies for the governor's own table. De Soto learned that the lady who now ruled over Cofachiqui and the neighboring provinces, had become the heiress of her father, a very powerful cacique, who died about two years before the arrival of the Spaniards. The mother of the princess was still alive, and lived in retirement, about twelve leagues from her daughter's capital

town. The reigning princess sent to her mother, desiring her to come and see these strange people; but the elder lady was so far from complying with this request, that she reproved her daughter for entertaining travelers, with whose character and designs she could have but little acquaintance.

There is an appearance of obscurity in this part of the story which makes us suspect that some material facts are concealed. Enough is told, however, to afford rather strong proof that the Spaniards treated this innocent and generous young princess with the basest ingratitude, and oppressed her people with inexcusable severity. Herrera says that the princess, observing that the Spaniards highly esteemed the pearls, gave them permission to take as many as they could find from the temple near the town, from the burial-place of the nobility, and from the sepulchres of her own ancestors. It is not at all probable that the princess *willingly* gave them such permission; and, considering how the Spaniards were accustomed to act in similar circumstances, we can scarcely suppose that they *asked* for the consent of the princess before they committed these sacrilegious robberies. If the princess consented to the plundering of her country's altars and the tombs of her forefathers, she must have done so to avoid some greater calamity. We can conceive how a timid girl, with no protection but Heaven and her own innocence, could make such sacrifices to propitiate a band of lawless men whose

power she could not resist, and on whose humanity she had ceased to have any reliance.

It appears that De Soto placed guards around the Princess Xualla, and thus made her aware of the humiliating and alarming fact that she was a prisoner or a slave in the centre of her own dominions. However, we are told that she was treated by the governor and his people with every mark of respect "consistent with the restraint put upon her liberty, which was a necessary measure to keep her people in subordination to the Spaniards." But not satisfied with holding the young princess as a hostage, Governor De Soto thought it necessary to entrap Xualla's mother also. Xualla was urged to direct the Spaniards to the abode of her widowed parent; and we cannot doubt that she was finally compelled by threats, or some other stringent process, to furnish a guide for this purpose. Constrained to act against her inclinations in a matter so trying to the sensibilities of a daughter, the unhappy girl addressed herself to a young Indian warrior, who appeared to occupy some high station under her government, and gave him directions which were not heard or understood by the Spaniards. The youthful chief made a sign of obedience to the princess, and then turning to the Christians, he gave them to understand that he was ready to be their conductor. Juan Anasco, with thirty horsemen, had been selected to go in search of the widow; and they now started in company with the young Indian whom Xualla had appointed to guide them

to her mother's place of residence. As they proceeded on their way, the young chief who guided them became more and more melancholy. After traveling about five miles, the party stopped to repose, and while the soldiers were taking some refreshment, this guide sat in pensive silence by the side of the road, and refused to partake of the repast. He laid aside his mantle or cloak, which was composed of the finest sable furs. He then took off his quiver, and began to draw out the arrows one by one. The curiosity of the Spaniards was excited; they approached the young man, and admired the arrows, which were made of reeds, feathered with the dark plumage of the crow or raven, and variously pointed, some with bones properly shaped, others with barbs of very hard wood, and the last arrow in the quiver was armed with a piece of flint, cut in a triangular form, and exceedingly sharp. This arrow the youth held in his hand, and while the Spaniards were examining the other weapons, he suddenly plunged the barb of flint into his throat, and fell dead on the spot.

The Indians who accompanied the party stood aghast at this spectacle, and began to fill the air with their lamentations. The Spaniards then learned that this young chief was affianced to the Princess, and that he was very much beloved and respected by the whole nation. It was discovered afterward that this poor youth had committed suicide to escape from the necessity of betraying the mother of his betrothed into the hands of the Spaniards. In obedience to the order of the Prin-

cess, he had undertaken to guide the Christians to the widow's hiding-place; but he knew well that the Princess had been compelled to give the order, and that the execution of it would be the cause of additional troubles to her and her mother both. In these circumstances, (as he had told one of the Indians who accompanied the party,) it was better for him to die than to be the means of increasing the afflictions of those whom he so dearly loved.

As they had lost their guide, Anasco and his party were obliged to turn back without having accomplished the object of their journey. The grief and despair of the princess, when she heard of the young chief's death, must have been affecting indeed; for the Spaniards themselves were moved to pity. For several days she shut herself up in her dwelling, and was not seen either by the Christians or her own people. Governor De Soto sent one of his priests to offer her the consolations of Catholic Christianity; but the mournful princess would not admit the sacred messenger to her presence.

In the meanwhile the Christians were busily engaged in ransacking the tombs and temples of the country; and although they were disappointed in obtaining gold and silver from these depositories, an amazing quantity of pearls was collected and distributed among the soldiers. It is said that the pearls found by the Spaniards in one temple or mausoleum, weighed no less than five hundred pounds. Proportionate quantities were found in other places. The great abundance of pearls

here spoken of is one of those circumstances which some commentators have regarded as improbable. But before we reject this part of the narrative, we must consider that those deposits of pearls may have been accumulating in the tombs for many years, or perhaps for ages; as it had long been the custom of the people to embel-



SPANIARDS ROBBING AN INDIAN TEMPLE.

lish their dead with these ornaments. The credibility of the account may be still further improved by the recent discovery of vast quantities of pearls in the neighborhood of Barnegat, New Jersey; as this fact affords some presumptive evidence that other parts of the country may be equally productive of the same

commodity. If we could ascertain, with any degree of precision, the spot which was formerly occupied by the principal town of Cofachiqui, it is possible that some pearl fishery of considerable value might yet be found in the neighborhood. The Portuguese narrator says that this town was within two days' journey of the sea-coast; but in this particular he was probably mistaken. Dr. Monette places this town on the peninsula at the junction of the Broad and Savannah rivers. The opinion of Mr. Gallatin on this subject was quoted in the last chapter. Colonel Pickett says, that "all Indian tradition places the town of Cofachiqui, on the east bank of the Savannah, at the modern Silver Bluff, Barnwell District, South Carolina." But several circumstances mentioned in the narrative throw some doubt on this confident statement of Colonel Pickett. However, it is not convenient for us, at present, to engage in any elaborate discussion of the subject.

The companions of De Soto found the country of Cofachiqui so much to their taste, that they desired to make a settlement therein; and they were very much chagrined when the governor expressed his determination to go further. The truth is, De Soto had resolved to find another Peru, and he was not to be satisfied with any thing else. Accident rather than inclination had, in the first place, made him a gold-seeker; but now, by long indulgence, the "*sacer fames auri*" had become a passion, which seemed to control every thought and affection of his heart. If our readers are surprised at

any change which may be observed in his character, they must consider that he had been subjected for twenty years to the influences of that most demoralizing and pernicious of all passions—avarice. He had committed himself to a current which was hurrying him onward with irresistible force to the consummation of his destiny.

The Spaniards had seen, in the possession of the natives, some spear-heads and other articles composed of an alloy of gold and copper, and they learned from the Indians that these metals were obtained in a country lying still further toward the north-west. As the district over which De Soto would travel for many miles was governed by the Princess Xualla, he desired to take either that lady or her mother with him, in order to keep the inhabitants under proper control. De Soto still possessed some of those generous feelings which distinguished him from his co-laborers, in the earlier part of his career. He was concerned for the grief of the princess, and wished to spare her the mortification and inconvenience of captivity; he would fain, therefore, have left Xualla at home, and taken the mother with him as the proposed hostage. With this purpose in view, about a week after the suicide of the young chief, Governor De Soto required the princess to send another guide with a party of Spaniards to her mother's habitation. She promptly and decisively refused to do so. "I have been justly punished once," said she, "for consenting to place my poor mother in your power, and no

fears for myself shall ever make me do so again. You have made me as miserable as I can be, and I now set you at defiance. Oh, that I had listened to the advice of my wisest counselors, and driven you away from my shores, when you first came to me with your false and deceitful promises of peace and friendship; I should then have saved myself from that sorrow and remorse which now make my life insupportable. Why do you still remain in my country? Are there no other lands to be robbed, no other people to be made miserable? Here there is nothing for you to do; you have taken all we possessed, and you can add nothing to our wretchedness. Go, cowards as you are! cease to make war on helpless women; and if you must be villains, let your conduct prove that you are men."

Governor De Soto answered the unhappy princess with his usual courtesy. He endeavored to make her understand that the King of Spain was the true sovereign and lawful proprietor of the soil over which she claimed jurisdiction; and that, in all those matters which had offended her, the Spanish army had acted under the authority of that great monarch, to whom she herself was bound to render obedience. After this preamble, he informed the princess that she must prepare herself to accompany the Spaniards on their march as far as the borders of her dominions, and that she would be expected to control her subjects, and to make them entirely submissive to the Christians. To this communication the princess answered only by raising her eyes toward

heaven, while her countenance expressed unutterable anguish. The governor proceeded to give her an assurance that she would still be treated with all the respect and delicacy due to her rank and her sex. However, in spite of all these fair promises, "the princess, (to use the candid language of the Portuguese narrator,) did not receive such usage as she deserved, for the good-will she had shown to the Spaniards and the generous entertainment she had given them."

The Spaniards left the principal town of Cofachiqui on the third day of May, 1540. In all the towns through which they passed, the princess, who had been compelled to accompany them, was required to call on her subjects to carry burdens for the Christians from one stopping-place to another. De Soto and his company passed through a delightful valley called Xaulla, which had many groves, plantations, and pasture-grounds, and was about sixty miles in breadth. On the seventh day of this journey they came to a province called Chelaque, which is supposed to have been inhabited by a tribe of Cherokees, "some of whom do not use the letter *r*, and call themselves Chelakees."*

Before the Spaniards reached this point, however, the Princess Xaulla contrived to make her escape. De Soto had ordered several female slaves to attend on her, and among these wretched women were two who were won over by her kindness and her promises of reward, to

* McCulloh's Researches. Appendix.



BATTLE OF MAUVILLA.

assist her in her flight. When her escape was made known to De Soto, he would not allow her to be pursued; and, as a further evidence that there was some chivalric feeling still existing in his heart, all the historians testify that he protected her from every insult to her womanly modesty, while he detained her as a prisoner. It is worthy of remark that De Soto, in his conduct toward women, was always scrupulously correct; though he did not, in every instance, control the licentious passions of his followers.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OPERATIONS OF THE SPANIARDS IN GEORGIA AND SOUTH CAROLINA—ROBBING THE INDIAN GRAVES—DE SOTO REFUSES A RICH GIFT—DE SOTO IS ADVISED TO BECOME A FARMER—HE COMES TO THE LAND OF TUSCALUZA—EXTRAORDINARY APPEARANCE OF THE CACIQUE—HE GIVES THE SPANIARDS A GRAND RECEPTION—HE IS ENTRAPPED BY DE SOTO—HIS REVENGEFUL SCHEMES—DOINGS OF THE SPANIARDS IN ALABAMA—THEY COME TO MAUVLILA—ANCIENT APPEARANCE OF THAT TOWN—SIGNS OF AN APPROACHING STORM—TUSCALUZA'S ESCAPE—DE SOTO'S ANXIETY FOR HIS RECOVERY—HOSTILITIES COMMENCED—FIRST SCENE OF DE SOTO'S GREATEST BATTLE IN NORTH AMERICA. [A. D. 1540.]

At a town called Choualla, the Spaniards, (still misled by their golden *ignis fatuus*,) again changed their course, and proceeded toward the south-west. The situation of Choualla is supposed to have been on the same spot which is now occupied by the village of Qualatche, at the source of Chatahoche River. A journey of two days brought them from thence to Canasagua, a name which bears a striking resemblance to that of the river Connesaugo. This river rises in the mountains, and runs nearly along the eighth degree of longitude W. from Washington, until it empties into the river Coosa.

While the army was encamped near Canasagua, the men busied themselves in ransacking the sepulchres of the Indians, hoping to find more pearls, though some of them were already overladen with this kind of booty. They took the dead from the coffins or boxes which



DE SOTO CROSSING THE CHATAHOOCHE RIVER.

contained the bodies, and stripped off the coveted ornaments, collecting, as the Portuguese narrator avers, no less than fourteen bushels of this valuable pillage. Much more could have been obtained, but De Soto forbade them to continue the search; reminding them that their principal object, at that time, was to explore the

country, and not to collect treasures. He advised them, with good reason, not to burden themselves with spoils which they might find it difficult to retain, and which would make their march more toilsome. To make the propriety of this advice more apparent, we may mention the fact that, a few days before, one of the soldiers had thrown away a bag of pearls, supposed to be worth six thousand ducats, which he was too indolent to carry.

In the neighborhood of a town called Chiaha by the Portuguese narrator, and Ychiaha by Garcilasso, there was a river from which the soldiers obtained large quantities of some kind of shell-fish, which the Spanish writers call oysters. These bivalves were boiled by the Spaniards and used for food. While attempting to swallow one of them, a soldier made a narrow escape from being choked with a pearl, "as large as a hazelnut," which had been enclosed between the shells. As this pearl was a very fine one, and of an extraordinary size, the soldier who found it offered it to the governor as a present for his lady; but De Soto, who was aware of its great value, declined the generous offer; and to give the man the full advantage of his good fortune, he paid the "king's fifth" out of his own purse. This pearl was afterward sold for four hundred ducats. Now it may be interesting to our fellow-citizens of the "sweet South," to know what particular part of their country is referred to as this pearl-producing location; for, after making allowance for the exaggerations of the

Spaniards, we may find enough probability in these accounts to justify a little research in the same neighborhood. By general agreement, the town of Chiaha is placed on the Etowee branch of the Coosa River; and Dr. Monette supposes it to have been in that part of Georgia now designated as Floyd County. The only objection to this hypothesis is, that the Spanish historians place the town of Chiaha on an island in the river; but Mr. Meek assures us that the river contains no such island. Colonel Pickett attempts to obviate this difficulty by supposing that the Spaniards mistook the peninsula at the confluence of the Oostanaula and Etowee rivers for an island; or that these two rivers were formerly united in such a manner that the piece of land which is now a peninsula was really an island in the time of De Soto.

After passing through several towns which are mentioned by the Portuguese narrator only, the adventurers came to the province of Coosa, the principal village of which they reached on the twenty-sixth day of July. This town, which now bears the name of Old Coosa, may be found on the maps. It is situated on Coosa River, in Talladega County, Alabama, and about 33° 30' N. Lat. At this place the cacique, with a retinue of one thousand Indians, wearing plumes of feathers and rich mantles of furs, came out to meet the Spaniards. The strangers were invited into the town, which consisted of about five hundred houses; and the chief not only treated them with affectionate kindness,

but exhorted them to settle themselves in the neighborhood. As some excuse for his indiscretion, we may remark that no Spaniards had ever visited his country before, and he was not acquainted with them even by reputation. This cacique advised the Christians to betake themselves to agriculture, assuring them that they would find the land productive and easily cultivated. But as De Soto's tastes were mineralogical rather than agricultural, he excused himself for the present, by remarking that it was necessary for him to take a view of the whole country, before he selected any particular spot as the place of his permanent abode. Nevertheless he expressed all the gratitude which the chief of Coosa's good opinion of the Spaniards deserved; and Herrera tells us that he remained at this place twelve days, "more to oblige the cacique than on any other account."

Five days after he left Coosa, De Soto arrived at the town of Talisse, which was situated on the frontier of the province governed by the great chief Tuscaluza. This town was placed on the bank of a very rapid stream, and it is presumed to be the Talisse of the maps, which lies at the elbow of Talapoosa River. Here he was met by a son of Tuscaluza, who, although but eighteen years of age, was so tall that no Spaniard's head reached above his breast. This extraordinary youth came to bear his father's greetings to De Soto, to whom this powerful chieftain offered his friendship and services, with an invitation for the Spaniards to

visit his capital town. De Soto gladly accepted these friendly overtures, and with the chief's son for his guide, he began his march toward Tuscaluza's place of residence. When he came within six miles of the capital, he found that the cacique had come out to meet him. Some arrangements had evidently been ordered by



CHOCTAW BLUFF.

Tuscaluza to make an impression on the minds or imaginations of the Christians. He had taken a position on the brow of a hill, which commanded an extensive view of a fertile and beautiful country. He was seated on a throne, or chair of state; for it appears that the symbolic seat of Royalty was in use among the Indian caciques of that period. One hundred warriors richly

attired, and having their head-dresses decorated with gayly-colored plumes, stood around the majestic chieftain; and on his right hand appeared his standard-bearer, who bore aloft a banner composed of dressed deerskin, stretched out to the size of a buckler, and supported on the point of a lance. This was the only military standard that the Spaniards ever saw in the country. It was square in form, and the device, (if so it may be called,) consisted of blue stripes on a bright yellow ground.

But the appearance of the chief himself soon absorbed all the attention of the Castilians. He was still taller than his son; and so perfectly formed, that the Spaniards believed it impossible for any human figure to be more symmetrical. He was about forty years of age. His countenance, although the expression was haughty and somewhat ferocious, was so exceedingly handsome as to make the beholder overlook those repulsive peculiarities. Tuscaluza took no notice of De Soto's officers, who first approached him; but when the governor himself drew near to the throne, the cacique arose, and advanced a few paces to receive him. His salutation was courteous, but sufficiently dignified, and his behavior to the Spaniards was obviously more patronizing than deferential. Such was the renowned chief whose memory is preserved in the nomenclature of one of the principal rivers, and one of the most prosperous towns, of Alabama.*

* Tuscaloosa, Ala., was formerly the capital of the State. It is

The gigantic cacique conducted the Spaniards to his village. The governor, in the meanwhile, had presented to Tuscaluza a scarlet robe embroidered with gold, which the chief continued to wear while he remained in company with the Spaniards. He was mounted on a baggage-horse of uncommon size and strength, and when he sat in the saddle, his feet were scarcely a span from the ground.*

One of the most remarkable circumstances connected with the history of the Spanish discoverers of America, is their ill-fortune or bad management in provoking the hostility of the natives in every part of the country which they visited. The Americans were always predisposed to befriend them; the unbidden guests were always well received when they first applied for the rites of hospitality; but they never failed to make themselves irksome and detestable to their hosts. The proximate cause of this disastrous effect was the mistake of the Spaniards in claiming *rights* to which they had no real pretensions. They should have known that foreigners can have *no* rights in any country except those which are conceded to them by the natives of the soil; they have no right to breathe the air or to tread on the earth, without the permission or consent of the natural inhabitants. The Spaniards came to America, believing, or

situated on the left bank of Tuscaloosa or Black Warrior River, at the head of steamboat navigation.

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iv., Lib. vii., Cap. 4.

affecting to believe, that they were the true proprietors of the ground. This ownership they did not pretend to have acquired by purchase, or even by conquest, but by inheritance: tracing their title up to St. Peter, who probably lived and died without ever suspecting that he was an extensive landed proprietor.

Our hero, Ferdinand de Soto, was undoubtedly one of the wisest, as well as one of the bravest of conquerors; yet, in his Floridan expedition, he constantly exposed himself to inconvenience and danger by adopting the common error of his countrymen. He might have explored the whole country with comparatively little risk, trouble, or delay, if he could only have forgotten that the heirs and assigns of St. Peter had legally authorized and empowered him to play the tyrant. No doubt the cacique, Tuscaluza, was greatly surprised, and not very well pleased, to find his visitors gradually assuming a control over his subjects, and finally claiming a right to direct his own movements. It is true that De Soto managed these bold acts of usurpation with some address. He gave the chief a Spanish body-guard on pretense of doing him honor; but this transparent device did not deceive the Indian warrior, who was no less crafty than the governor himself. Though well aware that he had become a prisoner in his own land, Tuscaluza vied in dissimulation with the Spaniard. The most acute observer could discover no sign of dissatisfaction in his behavior; and yet we may suppose that he was anxiously waiting for some opportunity to

recover his liberty, and to take vengeance on his treacherous guests.

While the Indians and Spaniards were living together with all the external appearance of a friendly feeling on both sides, one of the Christians went in search of a fugitive female slave, who was supposed to be concealed somewhere in the neighborhood. Whether or not this man succeeded in finding his slave is not known, as he never returned to give any information on the subject. De Soto made use of this incident as a pretense for keeping the cacique in closer custody, until the missing Spaniard should be forthcoming. Tuscaluza, when required to produce the lost soldier, answered haughtily: "The man was not left in my charge, and I am not responsible for his safety. If he has been killed by any of my people, he must have been detected in some act which deserved such punishment. At all events, I do not know where he is, and shall not trouble myself to inquire."

After reposing himself for a few days, the governor prepared for a resumption of his march. He sent forward three discreet men to examine a town called Mavilla, or Maubilla, the cacique of which was tributary to Tuscaluza. This town is hypothetically identified with Mobile, the present commercial metropolis of Alabama. The spies who had been sent by the governor returned with the information that Mavilla was a fortified town, and that it was superior in its means of defense to any other place they had seen in the country. This account

stimulated the governor's desire to obtain possession of the town, and he began his march thither without delay. The vanguard, consisting of one hundred and fifty foot-soldiers and eighty horsemen, was conducted by De Soto himself, who, as we have previously remarked, always took the lead on occasions of extraordinary danger. He was accompanied by Tuscaluza, whose tranquil deportment and affability to the Spaniards left them in no doubt of his amicable purposes. While on the way to Mavilla, the chief dispatched several of his Indian attendants with directions for the tributary cacique of that town to provide a grand entertainment for the strangers. This was his verbal message; but he sent some token by the same messengers which made the subordinate chief acquainted with his real wishes; in conformity with which the warriors were assembled, arms were collected, and all necessary preparations were made to rescue Tuscaluza from the hands of his faithless guests.

When the Spaniards came near Mavilla, the bustle of preparation which they observed excited their apprehensions of mischief, while the apparent strength of the fortifications filled them with astonishment. The place seemed to have been designed expressly for a fortress; and indeed every house in it was a separate fort. The houses were different in form and construction from any which the Spaniards had seen in America. They were much larger than the ordinary dwellings of the Indians, and were set upon posts, which made them somewhat

difficult of access. Every house was enclosed by pickets; and was large enough to contain from five hundred to a thousand persons. The town comprised about eighty of these buildings; all of which, at the time of De Soto's arrival, appeared to be well filled with Indian warriors. The whole place was surrounded by a strong wall made of a double row of large posts or piles, deeply set in the ground, and interlaced with stout vines or flexible poles. This substantial wicker-work was plastered over with clay, which had become hardened by exposure to the sun and air; and the barricade was a sufficient defense against a flight of arrows or any assault of Indian warfare. The natives, therefore, considered this fort as impregnable. The wall was perforated with a sufficient number of small port-holes, through which the besieged could discharge their arrows at an approaching enemy.

As De Soto drew near, however, no hostile purpose was manifested by the townsmen. On the contrary, he was met by a procession which appeared to be altogether pacific. The gates were thrown open, and forth came a bevy of young damsels, who welcomed the strangers with songs and dances. Next came a body of warriors fantastically plumed and painted, whose only object seemed to be to give the Spaniards a flattering reception. The governor and Tuscaluza entered the gate side by side, on horseback, and the Spanish officers and soldiers followed, the Indians all the time treating them with every appearance of respect and good-will. When the Christians were conducted to the quarters which had been

provided for them, Tuscaluza informed De Soto that he wished to retire for a short time to converse with his people, and to prepare suitable accommodations for the remainder of the army. To this request the governor could not make any reasonable objection, though he was suspicious of Tuzcaluza's designs, and was convinced, perhaps, that he had no good title to the cacique's favor or forbearance.

Tuscaluza entered a house where many of his chiefs were assembled; and in the mean time De Soto ordered breakfast to be prepared for himself and the chief, as they always took their meals at the same table. When the repast was ready, De Soto sent his principal interpreter, Juan Ortiz, to apprise the cacique that the governor desired his company. This finesse did not answer the purpose; for it seemed that the cacique was more solicitous about his liberty than his breakfast. The message was several times repeated; and at last, a Spanish officer who accompanied Juan Ortiz, imperiously ordered the cacique to come forth. An Indian warrior now sprung out of the house into which Tuscaluza had retired, and angrily exclaimed: "What would these unmannerly people have with my chief? Down with the villains! We can endure their insolence no longer."* As soon as this Indian had spoken, one of his countrymen placed a bow and arrow in his hands; and he was about to use them, as it seemed, when Balthasar de

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iv., Lib. vii., Cap. 4.

Gallegos killed him with a single blow of his cutlass. A young Indian warrior immediately attacked Gallegos, using his bow instead of a club, and with this weapon he gave Gallegos a serious wound in the head. The wounded cavalier, however, succeeded in dispatching his antagonist. This was the commencement of the great battle of Mauvilla, which will be detailed in the next chapter; and which was, undoubtedly, the most sanguinary engagement that ever took place between the Spaniards and North American Indians.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DE SOTO IN ALABAMA—THE GREAT BATTLE OF MAUVILLA—THE SPANIARDS ARE DRIVEN OUT OF THE TOWN—UNRIVALED BOWMEN—DE SOTO RALLIES HIS TROOPS—THEY ATTACK THE INDIAN ENTRENCHMENTS—DE SOTO HANDLES THE AXE—THE SPANIARDS RE-ENTER THE TOWN—HORRIBLE SLAUGHTER—A THOUSAND WOMEN BURNED TO DEATH—DE SOTO ATTACKS THE GIANT CHIEF TUSCALUZA—THE COMBAT PREVENTED—DE SOTO IS SEVERELY WOUNDED—DEATH OF TUSCALUZA—IRREPARABLE LOSSES OF THE SPANIARDS—THE TOWN DEPOPULATED—DE SOTO PROCEEDS TO CHICASAW—HIS TROUBLES ON THE WAY—HE FIXES HIS WINTER-QUARTERS—THE SPANIARDS BECOME PEACEABLE—EXPLANATION OF THAT CIRCUMSTANCE. [A. D. 1541.]

At the end of the last chapter, we gave some account of the commencement of one of the most important and disastrous battles ever fought by the Spaniards in America. Before we proceed with the relation, it is proper to remind the reader that all our knowledge of this affair is derived from the reports of the Spaniards and their Portuguese allies. If the Indians could have left *their* version of the story on record, it is possible that the facts would have been somewhat differently represented. But the *ex parte* testimony before us

clearly proves that, in this case, De Soto and his company were the aggressors—as they usually were in their disagreements with the Indians. To pass over De Soto's ungrateful and unjust treatment of his generous host, Tuscaluza, we find that the immediate cause of the rupture was the rash act of Balthasar de Gallegos, who killed one of Tuscaluza's warriors, merely because he was *suspected* of an intention to attack the Spaniards. All the accounts agree in this particular; but the Portuguese Gentleman's recital of the circumstance makes us suspect that the only provocation which the Indian warrior gave was the verbal rebuke, (and a very proper one it was,) which he administered to De Soto's messengers for their insolent behavior to his cacique.*

It is admitted, on all hands, that the Spaniards struck the first blow and drew the first blood. As soon as the blood-thirsty ruffian Gallegos had begun the affray in the manner described, the people of Mauvilla, seeing two of their countrymen slaughtered in the street, rushed forth from their habitations and commenced a general assault on the Spaniards. Governor De Soto and his men were compelled to retire with considerable expedition; but on their way to the gates, several of them were killed or badly wounded; and the governor himself was knocked down several times, either by the pressure of the crowd or the tremendous blows of the Indian clubs.† He recovered his feet, however, and after

* Portuguese Narration, Chapter xviii.

† Ibid.

fighting his way through a dense throng of infuriated Indians, he reached the gate, closely followed by his officers and soldiers. It is a remarkable circumstance that so many of them escaped; and it is scarcely possible that this could have happened if the Indians had been disposed, at that time, to wage a war of extermination. The horses had been left tied outside of the gates, and De Soto's first object now was to save these animals from destruction, as the Indians had already begun to shoot them with their arrows. Some of the Spaniards hastily untied their beasts, mounted them, and scoured away over the plain, to escape from the volleys of arrows which were shot from the perforated walls. Some merely cut the reins of their horses, and permitted the animals to escape without riders. In the meanwhile, a strong body of Indians sallied out and took possession of the baggage which was piled up on the plain. This they conveyed inside of the walls, and it was irretrievably lost. But De Soto soon rallied his men, and advanced in good order to attack the fortress. To avoid the charge of cavalry, the Indians retired behind their barricade; and, as the Spaniards drew near, they were exposed to an incessant discharge of arrows and stones, which did considerable execution.

It is a notable fact that the bows and arrows used by the warriors of Alabama, were scarcely less effective than the muskets of the Spaniards. All the vaunted achievements of European archery, including those commemorated in the annals of Sherwood Forest, shrink

from comparison with the feats of these American bowmen, whose shafts penetrated through the best workmanship of the Spanish armorer. The bows used by the Indians of Alabama must have been extremely heavy and correspondingly powerful; for, in close combat, they answered the purpose of clubs; and a blow from one of them could inflict a serious wound on a head protected by a brazen helmet.* The arrows adapted to these bows were made of reeds hardened in the fire, and pointed with flints, ground or cut into the shape of daggers. As we have said above, the armor of the Spaniards was no defense against these weapons. De Soto saw his men falling around him with a rapidity which would soon have extirpated the whole army, while the enemy remained intact in their secure position behind the wall of their town. The Spanish commander saw that if he continued this mode of conflict, certain ruin would be the result. To retreat would be inglorious, and the consequences would be fatal to the success of his expedition; for if the Indians once gained a decided advantage over the Spaniards, the *prestige* which had made the latter constantly victorious would be at an end. The natives had been made to believe that the Christians were invincible; should they once discover their mistake, their active enmity would soon drive the invaders out of the country.

It does not appear that De Soto ever thought of

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iv., Lib. vii., Cap. 4.

retreat, however superior his enemies might be in numbers or position. In the assault on Mauvilla, he saw that the only chance of success was to take the fortress by storm. The wooden wall must be cut down; but who among all his troops was bold enough to undertake this dangerous task? It was a peculiarity of De Soto to waive the prerogative of the commander, and take the most hazardous services on himself. He now dismounted from his charger, snatched up an axe, and advanced toward the barricade. His camp-master, Luis de Moscoso, and two or three other brave soldiers, perceived their general's design, and followed his example. The blows of the axes on the wood-work now sounded above the din of battle, while the Indians, from the top of the wall, poured down a torrent of stones and pieces of timber on the heads of the daring operators. Two of them were crushed to the earth; and all the rest, except De Soto and Moscoso, were too much injured to continue the labor, wherefore De Soto ordered them to retire. The two cavaliers plied their axes with redoubled activity, regardless of the ponderous objects which continually descended on their battered helmets. Sorely bruised and fatigued as they were, they persevered in their toil until a wide breach was opened for the admission of the cavalry. They then mounted their horses and prepared to enter the town. The troopers spurred their steeds over the ruins of the wall, and the bodies of many Indians who had been shot down while endeavoring to repair the breach. The

horsemen, who were always irresistible in combat with the Indians, speedily cut a passage through the enemy. The infantry followed immediately; and within a few minutes all the Spaniards were inside of the barricade. The Indians now took refuge in the houses, and from thence poured incessant showers of arrows on the Christians. These discharges killed many of the soldiers and a considerable number of horses; but, to dislodge their assailants, the Spaniards set fire to the buildings, which, being composed of reeds and other combustible material, burnt with frightful rapidity. One large house contained more than a thousand women, all of whom perished in the flames.

The village now presented an indescribable scene of horror. The heat of the burning houses scorched the combatants as they contended in the narrow streets. Some were suffocated by the smoke, and others, being surrounded by flames and unable to escape, were roasted to death. Some of the most resolute native warriors, with Tuscaluza himself at their head, were collected in the market-place, where they continued to fight desperately, while thousands of their countrymen were burning to death in the surrounding houses. Ferdinand de Soto, with a party of horsemen, charged these patriots, who firmly maintained their position, though the Indians in general were accustomed to fly at the sight of the cavalry. Tuscaluza and De Soto both pressed forward, inspired by mutual animosity and a feeling of military rivalry, for each was the most

renowned warrior of his nation. The gigantic form of the cacique was seen forcing a passage through the crowd of combatants which surrounded him; but his noble chiefs threw themselves before him as if desirous of sacrificing themselves in his defense. Several of these brave men, in rapid succession, were pierced by De Soto's lance, and the weapon was now pointed at the breast of Tuscaluza, who raised a war-club which Alcides himself might have condescended to wield, and was about to strike a blow before which, as it seemed, man and horse both must have been prostrated. But the arm of the chief was stayed, and the vengeful expression of his countenance was changed to something like a glance of pity. De Soto at that moment had been severely wounded by an arrow which pierced his side, and the cacique, supposing him to be disabled, was too chivalric to expend his almost superhuman strength on an enemy who appeared to have lost the power of resistance. De Soto soon recovered from the shock; and, though very badly hurt, he endeavored to conceal his mischance from his followers, fearful that it might discourage them. He fought for hours afterward with undiminished resolution, the native energies of his soul counteracting his bodily weakness; and only when the battle was ended did he become conscious that his wound required attention. The fight, which commenced before breakfast, continued until four o'clock in the afternoon. The Indians, all the time, fought desperately, showing a determination to perish rather than

yield. Many of them discharged their arrows at the Spaniards from the tops of the burning houses, regardless of their own doom, while intent on annoying their enemies, until the roofs gave way and carried them down among the blazing ruins.

Thus far the battle had been fought only by that moiety of the Spanish army which composed the vanguard; the remainder of the troops having not yet arrived. Of the two hundred and fifty men who were with De Soto, forty-two had been killed, and all the rest were wounded with more or less severity. Exhausted by fatigue and fainting with heat and thirst, the Spaniards were now almost at the mercy of the Indians, who being certain of victory, seemed inclined to save the remainder of their foemen alive. But at this moment the main body of the army entered the town, and turned the tide of battle against the natives. The fresh cavalry rushed among the Indians, hewing them down with their swords and piercing them with their lances, until a rampart of dead bodies checked the progress of the horses and afforded some protection to the survivors. Many Indian women now ran out of the houses and joined in the conflict, snatching up the weapons of the slain, and employing them effectively against the Christians, not a few of whom were either killed or wounded by these Amazonian combatants. The havoc among the Indians was almost incredible. The ground was covered with their dead, and an unknown number perished in the burning habitations. Among the latter

were many women and children. None of the inhabitants of Mauvilla escaped; for, like the Spartans at Thermopylæ, they had dedicated their lives to the service of their country; and when they ceased to hope for victory, they triumphed in a glorious death.

The loss of the Spaniards in this battle, according to their own admission, was eighty men and forty-two horses. The loss of the latter appeared to cause more affliction among the surviving adventurers than the death of their human companions; for, as Herrera truly says, "in the horses consisted their strength." Without these animals, the Spaniards, except by accident, would never have obtained any advantage in battle over the North American Indians; for the latter were fully their equals in courage and all other soldier-like qualities. The Indians had no means of resisting a charge of cavalry in an open field, and hence they were generally unsuccessful when their Spanish antagonists could make use of their horses.

It appears from the record that De Soto was completely victorious in the battle of Mauvilla; and yet he might have said, in the language of another celebrated commander: "Give me one more victory like this, and I am ruined!" Besides the large number of men and horses slain in the contest, many others were badly wounded and disabled. Scarcely one of the Spaniards escaped uninjured; and, to aggravate their misfortunes, their surgical instruments, medicines, &c., had been destroyed by the Indians. Nearly all the baggage had

been burned during the conflagration of the village, and the troops were therefore left without necessary clothing. This was a serious calamity, in view of the approaching winter; but many of the soldiers chiefly lamented the loss of their plunder, for all the valuable pearls, which they had accumulated during their long march from Apalache, were destroyed in the fire. Even this loss, distressing as it was, did not end the catalogue of their afflictions; for all the apparatus used in the performance of mass—the priestly vestments, chalices, candlesticks, bells, missals, and decorations of the altar—had been defaced, mutilated, or quite demolished by the sacrilegious pagans. And thus were the unhappy Spaniards left almost destitute of the means and appliances which were necessary for their corporeal and spiritual comfort; but possibly they were supported in all this adversity, by the consolatory reflection that they fought and suffered in behalf of their Holy Church, and that they had succeeded in destroying thousands of her infidel enemies.

The loss of the Indians in this battle, and in the conflagration of the town, probably did not exceed two thousand five hundred, half of whom were women and children. This is the number given by the Portuguese narrator, who appears to have been the best arithmetician in the army. Garcilasso, with his customary exaggeration, says that three thousand Indians were killed in battle, and four thousand more perished in the flames. Tuscaluza was one of the last of the survivors;

he fought to the last with all the energy of despair, forcing his way into the thickest of the battle, and sweeping all before him with his tremendous club. Several times De Soto spurred his horse toward the chief, but as often did the Indian warriors throw themselves in the way. At last, Tuscaluza found himself almost alone; perceiving that all was lost, he rushed into one of the burning buildings, and was almost instantly buried under the falling timbers. He chose this mode of dying to prevent his dead body from falling into the hands of the victors, supposing, perhaps, that the Spaniards, as well as the Indians, were accustomed to scalp their enemies. He resolved that *his* scalp should never be exhibited as a trophy. The corpse of his son was found among the other dead bodies in the market-place.

De Soto, after the battle of Mauvilla, was obliged to remain in the neighborhood of that place for almost a month before his men had sufficiently recovered from their wounds to be prepared for another march.* On the eighteenth day of November, De Soto left the ruined town, the scene of his calamitous victory, and proceeded almost due northward for five days, when he arrived at "a deep and wide river," supposed by Dr. Monette to have been the Tombigbee. This stream, however, does not cross the line which the Spaniards

* Portuguese Narrator, Chap. xx. Herrera says that the Spaniards remained at Mauvilla only two weeks.

must have traveled, if they proceeded from Mauvilla directly toward the north. They crossed the river, after much hard fighting with a large body of Indians, who disputed the passage for twelve days. The river was



DE SOTO CROSSING THE TOMBIGBEE RIVER.

crossed at last, in several large boats, which were built privately in the woods, and afterward transported on rollers to the water. This passage was effected, says Dr. Monette, in Marengo County, Alabama, not far from Chicasaw Creek. To protect his men while they were

crossing in the boats, De Soto caused trenches to be dug near the bank of the river, and in these trenches lay concealed a suitable number of crossbowmen and musketeers, who fired on the Indians when they came too near. In spite of this precaution, nearly all the Spaniards were wounded by the arrows of the enemy before they reached the opposite bank. "One of these arrows," says Herrera, "pierced both of the blade-bones of a horse, and came out several inches on the further side."* This, as the historian truly remarks, "was an astonishing shot."

After the river was crossed, a march of ten days brought the Spaniards to the village of Chickasaw, in Yalobusha Valley. In this fertile and beautiful country De Soto determined to fix his winter-quarters. His men, with the assistance of the Indian prisoners, or slaves, began to make clothes of skins; and yet they were so badly provided with winter garments that they suffered exceedingly during the cold weather. The town of Chickasaw consisted of about twenty houses. The Spaniards did not feel themselves able, at that time, to turn the natives out of their dwellings, and take possession thereof in the name of the King of Spain and by the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff. For want of better accommodations, therefore, they were obliged to encamp in a field, where they built huts in the Indian style of architecture, and thatched them with straw. Here they remained at peace with the natives for two months,

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iv., Lib. vii., Cap. 4.

which Herrera mentions as a very remarkable circumstance; but it appears to us that their recent experience in warfare was well calculated to give them some relish for the blessings of a tranquil life. Besides, we must consider that all their exertions were now necessary to preserve them from the horrors of freezing and starvation.



INDIAN CANOE.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DE SOTO IN MISSISSIPPI—HE IS IN DANGER OF ASSASSINATION—
HIS OBSTINACY AND DESPERATION—HE CAUSES FOUR
SPANIARDS TO BE EXECUTED—SEVERE PUNISHMENT OF
THEFT—THE SPANISH CAMP IS ATTACKED BY THE INDIANS—
TERRIBLE CONFLAGRATION—SPANIARDS BURNED TO DEATH—
AWFUL FATE OF A SPANISH WOMAN—WRETCHED CONDITION
OF THE CHRISTIANS—REMOVAL OF THE CAMP—MARCH TO
ALIBAMO—DUEL BETWEEN A SPANIARD AND AN INDIAN—
MARCH THROUGH A GREAT WILDERNESS—DISCOVERY OF THE
MISSISSIPPI RIVER—ITS APPEARANCE IN THE TIME OF DE
SOTO. [A. D. 1541.]

IN their winter-quarters, De Soto's troops were discontented and almost mutinous. They now regarded the expedition as a total failure, and they were angry with their leader because he would not abandon the country before the commencement of the cold weather. Before the battle of Mauvilla, De Soto had been marching southward, with the expectation of meeting his ships at the port of Achusi, which was situated on some part of Pensacola Bay. His disaster at Mauvilla changed his intentions; for, after his dearly bought victory, we find him proceeding once more toward the north. This circumstance is not very satisfactorily explained. The

battle of Mauvilla and the complete destruction of his baggage, had left his troops wounded, disheartened, and destitute of food and clothing at the commencement of winter. He expected that his ships would bring fresh supplies from Havana, and he was very near the port where, at that very time, the vessels were probably lying. But at this juncture he changes his course, and marches back into the country. This looked like an act of suicidal desperation; it was the act of a man who is conscious that he is engaged in the last struggle with his destiny. De Soto had risked his whole fortune and much of his reputation in this enterprise; to him it was worse than death to realize the total wreck of his hopes. He could not reconcile himself to poverty and disgrace, after indulging himself for so long a time in the dreams of affluence and glory.

He saw that his followers were completely discouraged by their last battle and its terrible consequences. He knew that they would desert him at the first opportunity. If he conducted them to the Bay of Pensacola, as he had lately intended, they could easily obtain a safe passage to Mexico, or to the Islands, and so leave him blasted in fortune and reputation. Hence, in defiance of their wishes and demands, he resolved to turn back, to plunge them into new difficulties, to cut off every means of escape, and to make them as desperate as himself. His own iron will was opposed to the wishes of all his companions; among whom there were many who felt themselves aggrieved and insulted when subjected

to any control; and all of them were men who were ready to shed human blood on the slightest provocation. Moreover, there were men in De Soto's company who had private and particular motives for hating their commander. Offenses of a grave nature were often punished by him with great severity, and several of his associates in this expedition had experienced the effects of his rigorous discipline. Considering all these circumstances, we cannot doubt that De Soto was in some danger of assassination, at a time when his death would have left his companions at liberty to follow their own inclinations. We are told that many of his people were disposed to be mutinous, that the feeling of dissatisfaction among them was universal, and that they ascribed all their misfortunes to the obstinacy and selfish ambition of their captain. We are informed, likewise, that De Soto himself was suspicious of secret machinations among his fellow-adventurers, as he did not scruple to use some espionage in order to make himself acquainted with their designs. To this subject it will be necessary for us to refer once more in the sequel.

We left the Spaniards encamped at Chicasaw, where, as all their tents had been destroyed, they were obliged to build themselves houses in the Indian fashion. For awhile the consciousness of their own weakness made them pacific; but, the habit of rapine and violence had been indulged too long to be easily corrected. Four of the soldiers made a stealthy excursion to a neighboring Indian village, where they committed some robberies.

The cacique made his complaint to the governor, who ordered the offenders to be arrested, and having sufficient proof of their guilt, he condemned them all to be beheaded.* It appears from this incident, that De Soto was nicely discriminative in his administration of justice. His men had often robbed the natives without being held accountable for their acts; but in such cases, we suppose, the robberies were justified by the usages of war. In this instance, the robbers had stolen away from the camp and perpetrated the deed without any official sanction. Hence the severity of their punishment. Several Indians who attempted to steal provisions from the Spaniards were caught *in flagrante delicto*. Some of these were shot, and others had their hands cut off, by De Soto's order. But while De Soto was using the sword of Themis so effectively, he occasionally allowed the bandage of the goddess to fall over his eyes. Gallegos was permitted to capture Indians to be used as slaves, and foraging parties were sent out to despoil the cornfields on which the natives depended for subsistence. These abuses soon brought on the crisis, as they never failed to do in any similar case. The forbearance of the people of Chicasaw being exhausted, they determined, at all hazards, to expel the intruders from their neighborhood. For some time, they harassed the Spaniards with feigned attacks. Frequently, in the dead of night, the yells of the savages

* Portuguese Narration : Chap. xx.

were heard around the camp, the Castilians started from their slumbers and seized their arms, expecting to come in immediate conflict with their ferocious enemies; but soon the noise died away, and nought was heard but the shriek of the night-owl in the forests. These alarms were often repeated; such being the cunning device of the enemy to put the Christians off their guard, so that they might be unprepared for defense when it should please the Indians to attack them in earnest. At length, on a cold and stormy night in February, the Indians surrounded the camp, sounded their conchs, and filled the air as usual with their hideous war-whoops. The Spaniards, though they suspected that this was only a repetition of the feint which had so often deceived them, sprung from their couches and awaited the event with very little apprehension, for they deemed it impossible for the Indians to break through their fortifications. Nevertheless, the Chicasaw militia were acquainted with some stratagems of war which astonished the Spanish regulars. Though the camp was surrounded by a strong and impenetrable barricade, which prevented any near approach to the houses, the Spaniards, on this memorable night, discovered, to their great surprise and consternation, that their dwellings were all on fire. The Indians had contrived to set the roofs in a blaze by shooting arrows charged with lighted combustibles, which quickly communicated the flames to the straw-covering of the huts. As the wind was very high, all the houses were soon

involved in the conflagration and some of the sick Spaniards were burned to death before they could be removed. De Soto was soon ready for action, and led out a party of horsemen to drive away the Indians.



BURNING OF THE SPANISH CAMP AT CHICKASAW.

The only one of the natives who fell in this battle was killed by the governor's own hand. Captain Andrew Vasconceles behaved with great intrepidity on this occasion, and had the good fortune to save his commander's life.

While De Soto was pressing forward to attack an Indian warrior who was signaling himself in the combat, the horse on which the governor was mounted stumbled in the snow, which was very deep. At the same moment the girth of the saddle broke, and De Soto was precipitated among the group of Indians, who assailed him furiously with their clubs as he lay, defenseless, on the ground. Vasconceles came to his rescue, and kept the Indians at bay until De Soto mounted another horse. Although but a small number of cavalry had sallied out of the enclosure, they succeeded in repelling the assailants, who were not very numerous. Indeed the battle itself was an affair of little importance, but the conflagration was a still greater calamity than that of Mauvilla. As the Spaniards did not believe in the reality of the attack until their houses were partly consumed, many of them were taken too much by surprise to act with that presence of mind which their preservation required. Numbers of them were naked, just as they had started out of their beds; and in that condition they escaped from their burning huts. Many of the horses, which had been brought out of the enclosure to assist in the dispersion of the Indians, took fright at the glare of the fire and ran away into the woods. Few of these were recovered; and it is probable that most of them were killed by the Indians, who, not knowing how to use these animals, always dispatched them when they fell into their hands. Fifty more horses were burned to death in the stables.

All the camp equipments and provisions, and a considerable part of the clothing, were likewise consumed. The Portuguese narrator reports that a majority of the Spaniards thought of nothing but their own individual safety. De Soto, and twenty or thirty of his bravest men, were all who acted on the defensive. The rest either remained inactive or endeavored to escape into the forest. Nearly all the fugitives perished: some, who were almost in a state of nudity, were frozen to death; others were slaughtered by the Indians. In one way or another, forty Spaniards lost their lives. Among these were ten or twelve who were still disabled by the wounds received at Mauvilla. They were burned to death in the huts, being too sick or weak to leave their beds. A Spanish woman, the only one who accompanied the army, perished in the same manner. She was the wife of a common soldier who had saved a few pearls by carrying them in his pockets; by this means he preserved his property when all the rest of the booty was destroyed at Mauvilla. This man and his wife both escaped from their burning hut; but as the pearls were left behind, the woman returned to search for them and was overwhelmed in the blazing ruins. Some of the surviving Spaniards were so badly burnt, that for several weeks they were in extreme agony and danger of death. The condition of the Christians after the conflagration was ineffably distressing. They were left without food, clothes or shelter; and, as the night was excessively cold, many of them were preserved

from freezing only by the warmth of the expiring embers, which were all that remained of their recent habitations. The Portuguese Gentleman, who was one of the sufferers, says: "We spent the whole night without sleep, for while we warmed one side we were freezing on the other." All their weapons were destroyed or made useless by the fire; and so wretched and helpless was their condition, that if the Indians had repeated their assault on the following night, the extermination of the Spaniards would have been the most probable consequence.

When day dawned on the scene of calamity, those Spaniards who happened to be clothed went to the neighboring woods in search of fuel, and large fires were constantly kept burning. The half-naked men, whose inventive genius was stimulated by necessity, contrived to weave mats of dried ivy, which they used as a substitute for clothing.* Thus, in their garniture of foliage, they bore a striking resemblance to Adam after his transgression; and, like him, they began to experience some of the inconveniences of a departure from a state of innocence.

Governor De Soto, with his distressed companions, removed, during the day which followed the awful night of the conflagration, to a deserted Indian town called Chicacolla, which was only one league from the location of their late camp. The site of this place, as well as

* Portuguese Narrative : Chap. xx.

that of Chicasaw, is presumed to be in Yallabusha County, Mississippi. We are compelled to admire the fortitude and energy exhibited by the Spaniards in that miserable condition to which they were now reduced. As soon as they had fortified themselves, as well as they could, in their new situation, they employed themselves with the greatest activity in manufacturing arms, clothes and other equipments which were necessary for their comfort and security. They erected forges, and made new weapons or retempered those which had been damaged by the fire. The neighboring forest supplied them with ash saplings, of which they formed handles or staves for their lances. Bucklers, saddles, and garments for the soldiers were made of goatskins; and thus, in a short time, the whole army of Spaniards assumed an appearance very well-suited to the wild sylvan scenery, among which they wandered like so many fauns or satyrs, disturbing the tranquillity of nature with their riotous and licentious conduct.

On the 25th day of April, 1541, De Soto broke up his winter quarters, and once more began his march toward the north-west. On the evening of the same day, the Spaniards arrived at a strongly fortified Indian town, called, by Garcilasso and Herrera, Alibamo.* From this town Alabama River took its name. It was situated on the eastern side of a deep and narrow river, with high banks, supposed by Dr. Monette to be the

* The Portuguese Gentleman calls this place Alimamu : Chap. xxi.

same stream which is now called Tallahatchee. This Indian fort was constructed with no little military skill. It was surrounded by a triple wall of pickets with embankments of earth ; the enclosure forming a quadrangle, each side of which was about four hundred yards in length. De Soto informed his men that it was necessary to take this place, in order to intimidate the Indians, and to recover the credit which the Spaniards had lost by their terrible defeat at Chickasaw. While the Spaniards approached the walls of the town, a party of Indian warriors sallied out, and discharged a flight of arrows, which killed six Christians on the spot, and wounded some others. The Spanish horsemen closed on the enemy, drove them back into the gates, and followed them into the enclosure, where great numbers of Indians fell beneath the swords and lances of the cavalry. Fifteen Spaniards were killed in this skirmish. Finding that they could not defend the town, the surviving Indians crossed the river, and lay in ambush on the opposite bank, to assail the Spaniards when they attempted to pass over.

A tall Indian warrior, who stayed without the wall, and appeared to have made up his mind to die for his country, hailed a Spaniard named Juan de Salinos, and challenged him to single combat. Salinos, though equal in size to the Indian, and having greatly the advantage of him in arms, refused the invitation, probably on the plea that he was conscientiously opposed to duelling. However, he hastily raised his musket to shoot the chal-

lenger, supposing him to be off his guard; but the Indian, whose quick eye detected the movement, sent an arrow through the neck of the Spaniard, and both fell dead at the same moment.

The Portuguese Gentleman declares that the whole army censured De Soto for his attack on this town before he knew the disposition of the people. It appears to us that the temper of De Soto had been much soured by disappointment and misfortune, and the recent advantage which the Indians had gained over him at Chicasaw had wounded his military pride, perhaps, and disposed him to be a vindictive and uncompromising enemy.

Soon after the battle of Alibamo, a pestilential fever appeared among the Spaniards. Many of them died suddenly, and putrefaction followed immediately after death, causing the bodies to become intolerably offensive. The Indian prisoners cured some of the afflicted by burning a certain herb, and giving them a decoction of the ashes; but in spite of this alkaline remedy, fifteen or twenty Spaniards were victimized by the epidemic.

From Alibamo, the Christians proceeded westwardly for seven days through a wilderness, in which were many marshes and dense forests, abounding with wild beasts and reptiles. This gloomy and comfortless route had a very depressing effect on the spirits of the soldiers, who began to imagine that they were approaching the confines of the habitable world. At length they came to a town called Chisca, which was seated on the margin of

the largest river which the Spaniards had seen since they landed in Florida. On this account, they called it the *Rio Grande*; and well it deserved the name, for it was the father of American waters, the mighty Mississippi. De Soto and his fellow-adventurers were the first Europeans who ever gazed on that dark and impetuous current to which so many of our western cities are indebted for their existence and their prosperity. Though many and great changes have taken place along its shores, the aspect of the river itself has undergone no variation since De Soto beheld it, three hundred years ago. The description of it given by its first European visitors corresponds exactly with its present appearance. It was represented by them as about a mile in width, flowing with a strong and rapid current, and carrying down large trees on its turbid and foaming waters. But, at that time, it rolled through an unbroken forest, inhabited only by the Indian hunters and the beasts which were the objects of their pursuit.



THE DISCOVERY OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DE SOTO APPROACHES ARKANSAS—HE CONTINUES TO MAKE ENEMIES—PASSAGE OF THE MISSISSIPPI—GREAT OBSTACLES SURMOUNTED—HE ENTERS THE TOWN OF CASQUIN—GRAND RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES—MIRACULOUS SHOWER—THE TRUTH OF THE STORY CONSIDERED—THE SPANIARDS PROVE TO BE BAD TEACHERS OF CHRISTIANITY—MISBEHAVIOR OF THEIR PROSELYTES—STILL ANOTHER GOLD REGION—“ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS”—THE SPANIARDS MARCH ONWARD—HEROIC TRIBE OF INDIANS—WONDERFUL EXPLOIT OF AN INDIAN WARRIOR—DEPARTURE OF THE SPANIARDS FROM TULLA—WAS IT A RETREAT? [A. D. 1541.]

THE hideous desert through which De Soto traveled during the seven days which immediately preceded his discovery of the Mississippi, is easily recognizable at the present time. The whole ground was covered with a dense forest and intersected by numerous streams; supposed to be the creeks and bayous of the Tallahatchy region. This section of the country was wholly uninhabited, probably on account of its insalubrious character. But when they came near the bank of the great river, they found a village which bore the name of Chisca, on which they made a night attack, and took some prisoners, among whom was the cacique's mother. This

judicious measure was intended to *compel* the inhabitants to be friendly to the Christians. On the following morning, De Soto sent a messenger with offers of peace and restitution to the cacique, whose mansion was situated on a precipitous rock, which was almost inaccessible. The Indian magistrate, though he was old and sick, threatened to come down from his aerial habitation, and chastise the Spaniards for their lawless behavior; but his women and servants dissuaded him, and, after some parley he consented to furnish De Soto with a large quantity of Indian corn, as his mother's ransom. After this transaction, the cacique professed to be reconciled to the Christians; but the latter soon received another lesson to convince them (if it had been possible for them to learn in the school of experience,) that they could not win the affections of an Indian chief as Theseus won the love of Hippolita, by injurious treatment.

The Spaniards consumed twenty days in reposing after the fatigues of their hard travel through the wilderness, and in searching for a suitable place to cross the Mississippi. The banks at Chisca were very steep, the current was rapid, and the river was more than half a league in breadth. These obstacles were formidable enough, *per se*; but, to increase De Soto's embarrassment, the opposite side of the river was thronged with canoes, manned with hostile Indians, supposed to be not less than six thousand in number. The Spaniards did not imagine that this aquatic spectacle was intended to

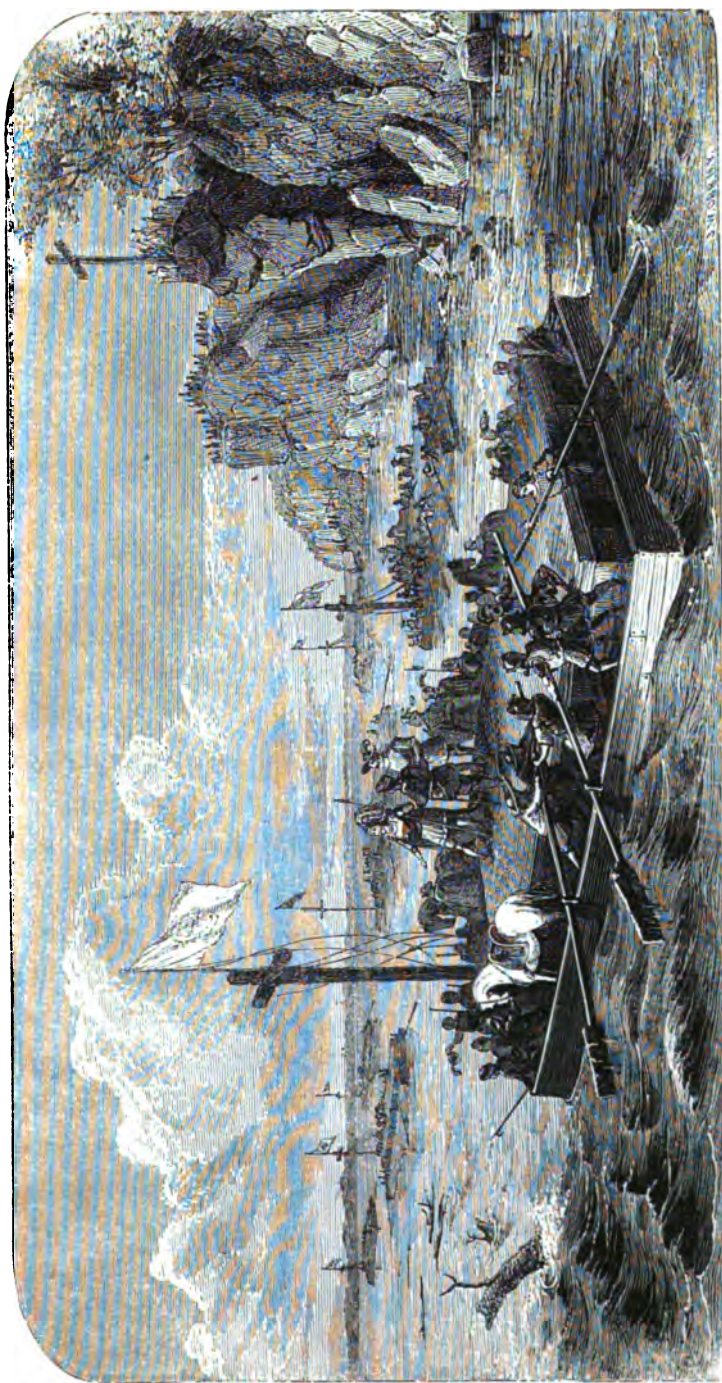
do them honor and to give them a friendly welcome. Some account of their behavior at Chisca had doubtless been transmitted across the river, and they might now safely calculate on having their passage obstinately disputed. However, De Soto, who was never discouraged by any appearance of difficulty or danger, began to make such preparations as the passage of the river required. To evade the Indians posted on the western side of the river, he marched up the eastern bank for four days, during which time he advanced but twelve leagues, his progress being much impeded by the tangled forests which skirted the shore. While he was on this march, De Soto received an amicable message from an Indian chief to whose territory the Spaniards were approaching. This chief excused himself, on account of ill health, for not coming to visit the strangers, but promised to send them provisions; and he forwarded by his messengers several handsome robes of fur for the governor's use. De Soto returned a courteous answer, graciously accepting the chief's presents and his offers of service. But it was discovered afterward that the cacique's pacific disposition originated in a desire to preserve his corn-fields from the depredations of these voracious strangers, who happened to arrive at the very time when the Indians were about to gather in their harvest.

Having found a place which afforded some facilities for crossing the river, De Soto next turned his attention to the construction of ferry-boats. He caused to

be built eight large scows, each of which would contain fifty men and ten horses. As his troops had been reduced by the wasting effects of war and disease to half of their original number, we suppose that the eight boats could carry over all his men at one time; and this was an important object, as it would require all his force to effect a landing, in spite of the opposition of the Indians, on the other side of the river. The scows or piraguas were furnished with sails and oars. When they were ready for service, the men and horses were embarked, many Indians in their canoes approaching near enough to watch the proceedings, in which they appeared to be deeply interested. Contrary to all expectation, the natives permitted the Spaniards to cross the river and to disembark without any manifestation of hostility. Dr. Monette thinks that the place where De Soto ferried his troops over the Mississippi must have been within thirty miles of Helena.* Mr. Theodore Irving believes that the crossing place was near the lowest Chicasaw Bluff, between the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth parallels of latitude.

When the army had crossed, the ferry-boats were broken to pieces, as the nails and other iron which they contained would be required for other uses. Besides, it was desirable to keep them from falling into the hands of the Indians. After a journey of five days, through

* "Hist. of the Discovery and Settlement of the Valley of the Mississippi:" Ch. iii.



DE SOTO CROSSING THE MISSISSIPPI.

a level and uninhabited country, the Spaniards descried a large Indian village, which contained more than four hundred dwellings. The name of this village was Casquin; its situation is supposed to have been on White River, about one hundred miles above the junction of that stream with the Mississippi. They were kindly supplied with provisions by the inhabitants of this place, and after resting and refreshing themselves for two days, they proceeded toward the chief town of the province and residence of the cacique, the site of which was on the same river, and about forty miles from the village of Casquin. The country through which they now passed was beautifully variegated with hill and valley, meadow and woodland, and it was less alluvial than any spot they had seen since they left the highlands, east of the Tallahatchy.

When De Soto came near to the principal town, the cacique, with a numerous retinue, came out, and gave the Christians a ceremonious welcome. He afterward conducted them into his town, and quartered them commodiously in several large houses, where they were abundantly supplied with provisions. It was now in the latter part of May; the heat of the atmosphere was excessive; and a drought of long continuance threatened great injury, if not total destruction, to the approaching harvest. Though the cacique had never heard, perhaps, that in exercising the duties of hospitality, we may sometimes entertain angels unawares, he appeared to suspect that there was something super-

human, if not celestial, in the character of his guests. He therefore applied to the commander of the Christian army, and besought him to intercede with his gods to avert the calamity which threatened to leave the people of Casquin without their usual means of maintenance. He informed De Soto that the priests and prophets of the tribe had been for several days almost constantly engaged in prayers and incantations, but all to no purpose, for no refreshing shower had descended on the parched and thirsty plantations. "I have no doubt," said the chief to De Soto, "that your God is greater and better than ours, and I entreat you to petition him for rain, that the Indians as well as the Spaniards may acknowledge his power and goodness." To this application, Governor De Soto answered, with becoming diffidence: "That the Spaniards were sinners, and, on that account, they could scarcely hope that their supplications would be heard; nevertheless, they would make intercession in behalf of their Indian brethren, placing all their reliance on the infinite mercy of God." To proceed in this matter according to the rituals of his Church, De Soto ordered his carpenters to construct a very large cross, fifty feet in height, which was shaped from one of the tallest pine-trees in the forest. This sacred emblem was set up on an elevated piece of ground, and the following morning was the appointed time for the grand ceremony to take place. As soon as the day dawned, the Indians assembled in vast numbers, preserving a profound silence, and gazing reverently on

that symbol, the import of which they could not be supposed to understand. The Spaniards, marching two abreast, and preceded by their priests, who chanted the penitential psalms, formed a long procession, in which many of the Indians took a part, and the whole line comprised more than two thousand persons. When the priests who took the lead came to the foot of the cross, they placed themselves in the attitude of prayer, the soldiers and Indians all kneeling around. The ecclesiastics then made fervent supplications to that God of Mercy, "who sendeth his rain both to the just and to the unjust," beseeching him to bestow his temporal blessings on the heathen, and to prepare them for the reception of those spiritual gifts which the Gospel of Christ dispenses to all the children of men. When the prayers were finished, the whole assembly arose, and the Spaniards advanced, two at a time, to the cross, where, on bended knees, they kissed the consecrated wood, after which the exercises of the day were concluded by singing "*Te Deum laudamus.*" According to Herrera and Garcilasso, the prayers of the Spaniards were answered, for a very heavy rain fell on the following night; and they add, that it was the first rain which had fallen for several weeks. Without presuming to question the efficacy of prayer, we feel disposed to doubt that there was any miraculous interposition of Divine Providence in this particular case. If the relation is strictly true, there is no proof of supernatural agency in the matter; for the rain would probably have

fallen if the Spaniards had not prayed. The difference between *post hoc* and *propter hoc* should be well understood by all who attempt to write history, or to account for any remarkable event. But we are compelled to spoil a good story, by showing that a considerable part of it may properly be rejected as one of Garcilasso's numerous fabrications. His account of the affair is very much at variance with that of an eye-witness, the Gentleman of Elvas, who says nothing about the rain, or the want of it, and avers that the large cross was erected for quite another purpose. From the writer just referred to, we learn that the cacique brought two blind men to De Soto, and desired the latter to restore their sight. De Soto honestly confessed that this task was far beyond his abilities, and he made use of this occasion to instruct the cacique in the mysteries of the Catholic religion. He commanded a cross to be made, and set up in the highest part of the town, "declaring that the Christians worshiped the same in memory of that on which Christ had suffered. The Spaniards kneeled before it, and the Indians followed their example. The governor advised the chief that thenceforth he should pay his adoration to the Cross, and ask whatsoever he needed of that Lord of Heaven whose sufferings and death the cross was intended to commemorate."*

It soon appeared, however, that the Cacique Casqui and his people were more apt to imitate the practices of

* Portuguese Narrative : Chap. xxiii.

the Spaniards than to profit by their instructions; for, only a few days after the event just related, while they were traveling in company with the Christians, they plundered a town belonging to a neighboring tribe, took many prisoners, grossly abused the women, tore open the sepulchres, and trampled on the bones of the dead.* The town of Capaha, where these outrages were committed, was situated on an elevated piece of land, at the distance of five days' journey from the village where De Soto had erected the cross. Mr. McCulloh places Capaha on the bank of Red River, but Dr. Monette believes that it was situated on the western shore of the Mississippi, a few miles south of the spot now occupied by Helena, Arkansas.

From Capaha, De Soto returned to Casquin with a determination to proceed from thence to the westward, in search of a land called Colgoa, which, as they learned from the Indians, produced a yellow shining metal, supposed to be gold. A march of about one hundred miles through a fertile and populous country, brought the Spaniards to the town of Quigate, where they remained for several days. From thence they traveled for five days over marshy land, "so wet that they were obliged to sleep in the water," and reached Colgoa on the ninth day of August. This town was situated at the foot of a mountain and on the bank of a river "as large as the Coya in Estremadura." This

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iv., Lib. vii., Cap. 5.

“river” says Dr. Monette, must have been the Big Meta Creek, about fifty miles south-east of Little Rock. Here a new disappointment awaited our persevering but unfortunate adventurer. The shining metal, concerning which he had received such flattering accounts at Casquin, proved to be copper.

In answer to his inquiries, the people of Colgoa informed De Soto that the country to the north was thinly inhabited by roaming tribes of Indians, who did not cultivate the land, but maintained themselves by hunting and fishing. But the southern region was described in more favorable terms. It was represented to be a grain producing and populous country, inhabited by tribes who were not of a very fierce and warlike character. This information produced a general desire among the Spaniards to move southward. Accordingly they traveled in that direction, or rather to the south-west, for nine days, and came to a town called Tanico, supposed to be on the head-waters of Saline River. Here the Spaniards procured a quantity of rock-salt, as clear as crystal; a luxury which long privation had taught them to appreciate, for they had been entirely without salt for more than a year. As soon as they obtained this supply, the soldiers greedily swallowed it in such large quantities that ten of them died in consequence.

From Tanico they made a journey of five days to the town of Tula, inhabited by a tribe of Indians who gave the Spaniards more trouble than any other people on

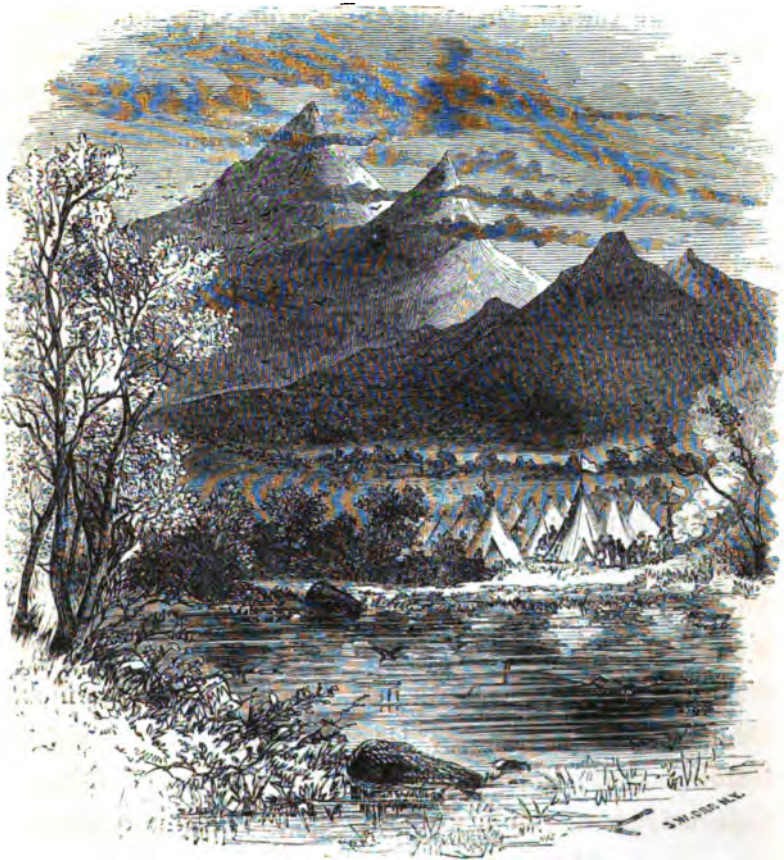
the American continent. In fact the inhabitants of Tula were unconquerable. Several of them had been seized by the Christians for the purpose of extorting information respecting the country; but no threats of torture or death could make these men traitors. Their invariable answer was, "You may kill me if you please, but I will tell you nothing."* While the Spaniards were encamped in the neighborhood, they were attacked by some of these brave people, who used clubs of a prodigious size and handled them with terrible effect. It appears that a Spanish cavalier, with all the advantage of his horse and sword, was scarcely a match for one of these native heroes, armed with nothing but his cudgel. Herrera confesses that his countrymen were severely handled by the men of Tula; and, if confirmation of this report were necessary, the evidence of the Portuguese Gentleman would be sufficient to establish the fact. According to the last-mentioned writer, the Indians of this place fenced so admirably with their clubs, that the horses and riders were both wearied out by the protracted combat. One example of heroism on the part of an Indian is worthy of commemoration. During the skirmish, one of the natives was wounded, and fell among the dead bodies of several of his compatriots. While some Christians were examining the corpses of the slain, the wounded man suddenly started up, snatched a battle-axe from the hand of a dead Spaniard, and struck

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., Dec. iv., Lib. viii., Cap. 5.

Juan de Carranza a blow which clove his target and wounded him in the arm. Diego de Godoy advanced to assist his comrade, but was disabled in the same manner. Another blow of the battle-axe knocked Francisco de Salazar from his horse, and left him insensible on the ground. Thus three representatives of Spanish chivalry were subdued by one Indian warrior, who fought with a weapon which he had not been accustomed to use, and who was wounded at the time he performed this admirable exploit. A paltry fellow named Gonzalez Silvestre, approached this noble Indian behind and cut off his arm. Being no longer able to defend himself, he was dispatched by his enemies.

A want of perspicuity in this part of the narrative makes us suspect that the story is imperfectly told; or, in other words, that some of the incidents are suppressed. The Portuguese Gentleman says that the governor determined to return toward Cayas, before the Indians could collect in greater numbers. This plan of De Soto seems to have been a prudent and necessary measure to prevent the destruction of his whole army. His loss of men and horses had been considerable while the enemy had scarcely any advantage of numbers; it was easy to see, therefore, that if the natives should gather in great force, the total destruction of the Spaniards would be inevitable. We learn from Herrera that the Spaniards departed from Tula with only two prisoners, viz., one woman and one boy. From this fact alone, we may infer that their

operations against the people of that district had not been successful; and, after considering all the circumstances which have come to our knowledge, we conclude that the departure of the Christians from this region may very safely be called a *retreat*. The Indian tribe here spoken of is supposed to have been the parent stock of the wild and ferocious Camanches.



DE SOTO ENCAMPED AT THE FOOT OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DE SOTO'S MARCH THROUGH ARKANSAS—APPALLING DIFFICULTIES—HE ENTERS THE INDIAN TERRITORY—TAKES POSSESSION OF THE TOWN OF AUTIAMQUE—FIXES HIS WINTER-QUARTERS—TERRIBLE SUFFERINGS OF THE SPANIARDS—DEATH OF JUAN ORTIZ—DARING ADVENTURE OF DE SOTO—ASSAULT ON AN INDIAN TOWN—IT IS FIRED BY THE INHABITANTS—DE SOTO'S PRESS-GANG — RETROGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS — THE SPANIARDS VISIT THE HOT-SPRINGS OF ARKANSAS—DESERTION OF DON JAMES DE GUZMAN—HE RESOLVES TO STAY WITH THE INDIANS—DE SOTO FORTIFIES HIMSELF ON THE MISSISSIPPI—HE IS INSULTED BY AN INDIAN CACIQUE—HIS FEARS FOR DONNA ISABELLA—HE BUILDS TWO BRIGANTINES, AND RESOLVES TO SEND THEM TO HAVANA—HIS SAD REFLECTIONS. [A. D. 1541-1542.]

THE land called Tula by the historians of De Soto's expedition is supposed to have been situated between the upper Ouachita River and the Little Missouri. Finding his force considerably decreased by bootless and sanguinary contests with the invincible tribes which inhabited this country, De Soto prudently refrained from carrying on a war in which nothing could be gained, and all might be lost. As soon as his wounded men were able to travel, therefore, he marched forward,



DE SOTO CROSSING THE ARKANSAS MOUNTAINS.

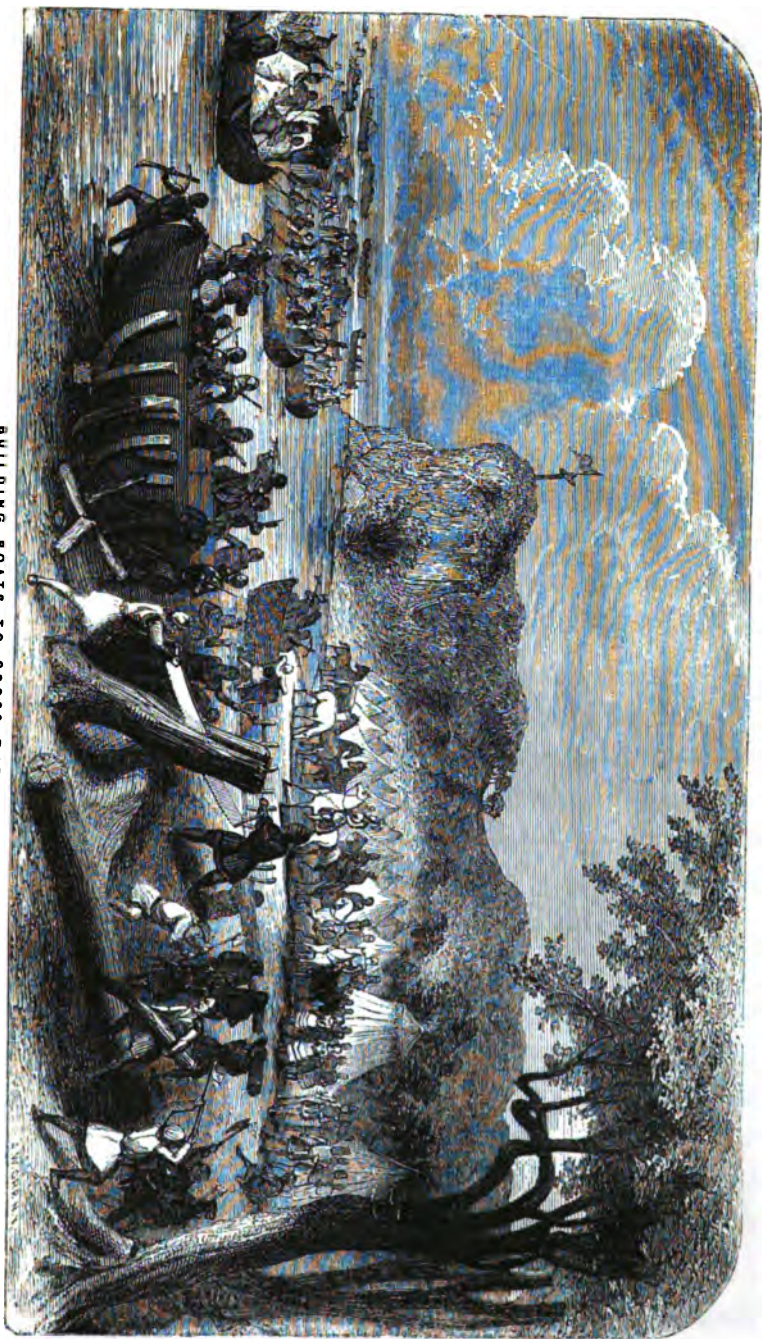
taking a north-westerly course, and passing over a rough mountainous country, interspersed with gloomy and almost impenetrable forests. Wherever the Spaniards met with any inhabitants on this route, they were sure to find enemies; and such was the reckless valor of these savage foemen, that twenty or thirty of them would often attack the whole Spanish army, seldom failing to kill several Christians before they retired to the thickets from which they had emerged. In these skirmishes many of the Indians were slain, but the losses of the Spaniards were irreparable, for not a man or horse could be replaced.

The adventurers struggled onward, setting every danger at defiance, and surmounting every obstacle which nature and savage enmity could oppose to their progress. They climbed over high mountains, and forded deep rivers, plunged into morasses which threatened to engulf both man and horse, and cut their way through tangled forests which the Indian hunter had never attempted to penetrate. And this route, which was troublesome enough in itself, could not be traveled without constant exposure to all the hazards of warfare with insidious and desperate enemies. At length, having journeyed more than two hundred and forty miles since they left Tula, the Spaniards came, once more, to cultivated lands, situated in the eastern part of that region which is now called the Indian Territory. Here De Soto found a large town, "comprising many well-built houses," and bearing the name of Autiamque. This

town was stationed on the bank of a wide and rapid river, which we identify with the Arkansas, one of the principal tributaries of the Mississippi. The martial music and flying banners of the Spanish troops had been heard and seen by the people of Autiamque, whose instinctive apprehensions of danger made them abandon their houses, and betake themselves to some place of security. The Christians, therefore, took quiet possession of all their property, real and personal, including a good stock of provisions, which was found in the houses. At this place De Soto fixed his winter-quarters, having strongly fortified the village, to defend it against the assaults of the Indians, who might reasonably be expected to make some effort for the recovery of their dwellings and other property. The winter was excessively severe, and the deep snow blockaded the Spaniards in their habitations, preventing them for some weeks from seeking fresh supplies of food and fuel. There was much suffering and sickness among them, and Juan Ortiz, whose singular history was given in a former part of this work, fell a victim to the rigor of the season, and the extraordinary privations to which he was subjected. This man had served the expedition as chief interpreter. His knowledge of several Indian dialects, and his intimate acquaintance with the habits and dispositions of the people had made him eminently useful to the Spaniards, and his death was lamented as one of the greatest misfortunes that could have befallen them in their present situation.

In the meanwhile, the Indians rejected all offers of

BUILDING BOATS TO CROSS THE MISSISSIPPI.



peace. When the Spaniards went to the woods in search of game, they were obliged to go well armed, and in sufficient numbers to resist the attacks of the natives. Not a rabbit or raccoon could be killed without exposing the lives of the soldiers to imminent hazard; and several of De Soto's men, while engaged in hunting, were shot by the Indian archers.

As the spring drew near, De Soto began to make preparations for travel. He had lost all hope of finding a gold region on the route which he lately traveled; he therefore considered it expedient to return to the Mississippi by another route, and establish a colony in the neighborhood of that river. His design now was to build two brigantines, which might descend the Mississippi to the sea, and so proceed to Havana, to give his countrymen in Cuba an account of his discoveries, and to induce some of them, if possible, to come to his assistance. The situation of De Soto, at this time (April, 1542) was deplorable enough. He was in the midst of a vast wilderness, and surrounded by people who were infuriated by galling oppression and wrongs of the most aggravated character. More than half of his army had perished by disease, accident, or the devastation of war; and nearly all who survived were dissatisfied, and anxious to withdraw from his service. The greater number of the horses had also perished, in one way or another, and many of those which remained were lame and unfit for travel.

Among other preparations for the intended journey,

it was desirable or *necessary*, (as the Spaniards thought), to procure a number of Indian slaves to carry the baggage. Several of the officers under De Soto's command were sent out, with parties of soldiers, to capture Indians for this purpose; but the intractable savages made such desperate resistance, that the Christians always returned from their slave-hunting excursions disgusted and unsuccessful. Finally, Governor De Soto himself was obliged to undertake this duty. With nearly his whole force, horse and foot, he followed the course of the river for twenty leagues, and arrived at a populous town about day-break, hoping to take the inhabitants by surprise. But, luckily for themselves, the people of this town were early risers; they descried the approaching strangers; and, being aware of their character, they hurried off their women and children to the woods, and set fire to their village. In spite of this Muscovite expedient, the Christians obtained some booty; and the governor, after an obstinate battle with the men of the place, captured about fifty of them, and *impressed* them into his service. To reconcile them to their situation, he ordered his interpreters to inform them that they should be liberated as soon as the Spaniards could dispense with their assistance.

De Soto broke up his winter-quarters at Autiamque about the beginning of April. Proceeding eastward toward the Mississippi, they traveled seven days without opposition, and arrived at a town called Nauguaten, the cacique of which sent "four men of quality," (as

Herrera says), to offer the Spaniards his friendship and services. At this place, a Spanish cavalier, whose name was James de Guzman, and who was the representative of a noble family in Seville, deserted from the army.



INDIANS SET FIRE TO THEIR VILLAGE AT THE APPROACH OF DE SOTO.

and took up his abode with the Indians. This young gentleman had been addicted to the vice of gaming, and while engaged at play with some of his companions, a few days before his desertion, he staked his arms, his

horse, and finally a beautiful female Indian slave, all of which articles were lost by the chances of the game. He easily surrendered the arms and the horse to the winner of the stakes; but, to avoid separation from the woman whom he passionately loved, he eloped with her, and took refuge with the Indians of Nauguaten. De Soto, who was much grieved and incensed by the young nobleman's base conduct, sent a letter to him, with a peremptory order to return to his duty. Guzman returned the same letter, on the back of which he had written with a fire-coal:

“Your Excellency must pardon me for preferring the society of the Indians to that which I have just left. While I was in your company, I learned many things which it may be to my advantage to forget, and I hope that my residence among the Indians may be the means of my reformation. I wish you all a safe and speedy return to your country. My resolution is to remain where I am.

JAMES DE GUZMAN.”

Highly offended at Guzman's obstinacy, the governor now sent a message to the cacique of Nauguaten, with an intimation that the four envoys would be detained as hostages until the Spanish deserter should be sent back to the army. To this requisition the cacique returned the following pithy response: “If you are disposed to act so unjustly as to punish four of my people for a fault committed by one of your own men, you must do as

you intend, for it is out of my power to resist you. I have not compelled your countryman to remain with us, and I will not be so ungenerous as to order him to depart."

De Soto was generally disposed to act justly, when he rightly understood the merits of a case. "He saw," says Herrera, "that the cacique was in the right." He therefore dismissed the four Indians with courteous words and some acceptable presents. On the following morning, the Spaniards resumed their march, leaving Don Diego de Guzman to correct his moral obliquities by a life-long association with the primitive inhabitants of Arkansas. We should be pleased to hear that this adopted citizen proved, in the end, to be a valuable acquisition to the unsophisticated community which opened its arms to receive him.

On their way back to the Mississippi, the Castilians passed the famous Hot Springs of Arkansas, the situation of which is about sixty miles south-west of Little Rock. The medicinal virtues of these springs were known to the Indians, and De Soto's guides advised the sick Spaniards, some of whom were sorely afflicted with rheumatic and catarrhal diseases, to betake themselves to the salutiferous fountains. As it was generally believed in Spain and other parts of Europe, that Florida contained that miraculous spring, whose waters restored withered age and decrepitude to the bloom and activity of youth, it is possible that some of De Soto's companions, at the first view of these fountains, flattered

themselves with the belief that they had found the very object of Ponce de Leon's long and unsuccessful search. While they quaffed the fuming liquid, perhaps the cavaliers of De Soto's party indulged the hope of pro-



SPANIARDS DRINKING AT THE HOT SPRINGS IN ARKANSAS.

longing an existence, much of which had been unprofitable to themselves and severely afflictive to a large portion of the human family. But, happily for the best interests of mankind, the power of wicked men to do

mischief endures but for a little while, and admits of no extension beyond the limits assigned to it by a merciful Providence.

From the province of Nauguaten the Spaniards proceeded to that of Guacame, inhabited by a fierce and warlike people, who would never be at peace with the Christians. Nevertheless it appears that this tribe was not altogether averse to Catholicism, for little wooden crosses were found in all the houses; and this practice was accounted for by supposing that Alver Nuñez had introduced it into the provinces which he had visited, and that, by gradually spreading, it had reached this remote region. The Spaniards should have hailed this circumstance as a gratifying proof that the people had some capacity for the reception of their faith; but how shall we explain the fact that a nation which had so much regard and affection for the Cross, could cherish the most bitter and irreconcilable hatred for the Christians?

As the hostile feelings and actions of this half-converted tribe made it impossible for the Spaniards to remain in their company, the Christian army departed with the least possible delay, and proceeding eastward by long marches, they crossed seven large provinces, without meeting with any important adventures. One of our authorities says: "They wished to avoid any collision with the natives, because their force had been so greatly diminished, and they feared that summer would

pass away before they could reach the place where the governor proposed to found his colony.”*

By pushing onward with the greatest expedition, De Soto managed to reach the banks of the Great River on the last day of May, 1542. He took possession of an Indian town called Guachoya, which occupied a commanding position not far from the western shore of the Mississippi, and very near the thirty-fourth parallel of North Latitude. This place had been strongly fortified by the Indians with palisades, and, with very little labor, the Spaniards made it impregnable. The cacique of Guachoya, who had quietly yielded up his town to the invaders, was then at war with the cacique of a neighboring province called Anilco. Finding that the Spaniards had been roughly treated while passing through the last-named province, the chief of Guachoya proposed to form an alliance with De Soto for the purpose of chastising his haughty rival. This was agreed to, and the combined forces made an attack on the principal town of Anilco, which was taken by storm, and the Indians of Guachoya began a general massacre of the inhabitants, without regard to age or sex; but De Soto quickly stopped these proceedings by sounding a retreat, and ordering his men to drive all their Indian allies out of the place. This behavior of our hero was no less politic than humane.

Governor De Soto now returned to Guachoya and

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, Dec. iv., Lib. x., Cap. 1.

immediately began to build the two brigantines which he proposed to send to Havana. Nearly two years had elapsed since any opportunity had been offered him to send intelligence of his whereabouts and welfare to Donna Isabella, and the melancholy tone of his lady's last letter to him made him apprehensive that her health and happiness had been seriously affected by that mental inquietude which had been induced by his protracted absence. His chief motive for transmitting intelligence to Cuba, now that he had an opportunity to do so, was to relieve the anxiety of his wife. He almost shrunk, however, from the painful necessity of informing her that his expedition had totally failed in its principal object, and that all he possessed in the world had been sacrificed in this fruitless enterprise. Little did De Soto suspect, while he gave way to these bitter reflections, that he had achieved more than Cortez or Pizarro, by discovering and exploring lands which were destined to become infinitely more prosperous and wealthy than Mexico and Peru. Little did he suspect that, as the first discoverer of that dark and torrent-like flood, on which his dejected gaze was now fastened, he had won a more glorious wreath than the erring judgment of mankind had awarded to the despoilers of Atahuallapa and Montezuma.

As De Soto intended to make a permanent establishment at Guachoya, it was very important to have a good understanding with the surrounding caciques. Some of them were easily propitiated, though the Spaniards

had been aggressive enough to provoke their unappeasable enmity. But one of De Soto's neighbors, the Cacique of Quiqualtangui, stubbornly resisted all of the governor's conciliatory efforts. This chief was the lord of a fruitful and populous district, having a capital town of five hundred houses. Like Hannibal, he had bound himself by a solemn oath to make no peace or composition with the enemies of his country. He denounced the Spaniards as a gang of strolling robbers, and threatened to punish them with the ignominious death of the gibbet. De Soto, being now without any forces sufficient to contend with this stern minister of justice, was obliged to have recourse to an expedient which scarcely suited his character as a Christian soldier. Having heard that the Chief of Quiqualtangui was a worshiper of the Sun, the governor sent a message to the cacique with the information that he and the other Spaniards were the children of that bright divinity; and they hoped that their Indian brother would be persuaded to pay them a fraternal visit. To this kind invitation, the wary chief answered, with undisguised contempt: "Tell him, if he is the child of the Sun, to dry up the river, and I will acknowledge his relationship to my deity."

Although this required test was impracticable, De Soto did not despair of gaining the cacique's friendship and confidence. He had always been more remarkable than any of his countrymen for treating the Indians with forbearance and courtesy, and to this cause, as well as to his superior courage, we may ascribe the long preserva-

tion of himself and his army among the warlike tribes of North America. We do not believe that any other Spaniard who figured in the conquest of the New World could have penetrated to the Mississippi River; for the conviction forces itself on our mind that the Spanish "conquerors" in general did not possess that amount of courage and military skill which would have made them successful in opposition to those truly formidable enemies which De Soto was obliged to encounter. And we are altogether convinced that the reckless barbarity which nearly all the Spanish commanders displayed in their treatment of the Indians would have been enough, by itself, to make their progress among the North American tribes exceedingly brief. This supposition is confirmed by the history of those men who preceded De Soto in the exploration of Florida; and the account which we have given of De Soto's own operations in this country will make it apparent that his principal disasters were caused by his unwise attempts to imitate the conduct of his predecessors. We have scarcely any doubt that his most censurable actions originated in an undue respect for precedent. He submitted occasionally to be guided, not by his own judgment, but by a certain military system, which his countrymen had established and recommended as the best and only means of subjugating the native tribes of America.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DE SOTO'S ILLNESS—HIS MENTAL UNEASINESS AND SELF-REPROACH—HIS FEARS OF INDIAN TREACHERY—HE PRETENDS TO UNDERSTAND MAGIC—SINGULAR USE OF A LOOKING-GLASS—HIS DISEASE BECOMES DANGEROUS—HE REMEMBERS THE PROPHECY OF MICER CODRO—WHY HE WAS UNWILLING TO DIE—HE CHOOSES A SUCCESSOR—HE TAKES LEAVE OF HIS OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS—HIS MESSAGE TO DONNA ISABELLA—THE CLOSING SCENES—MURDER SUSPECTED AFTER THREE HUNDRED YEARS' CONCEALMENT—PROOFS EXHIBITED—A MYSTERIOUS STORY ELUCIDATED—A NATIONAL PECULIARITY OF THE SPANIARDS. [A. D. 1541.]

THE two brigantines which were destined to carry to Havana an account of the present condition and future prospects of our adventurers, were scarcely half finished, when De Soto was attacked by a singular disease, or rather by a complication of disorders, the real character of which has been left enveloped in a cloud of impenetrable mystery. The common belief is that his malady was induced by mental agitation, or by a feeling of profound regret for certain errors which he had committed in the management of his expedition. It is said that he reproached himself chiefly for having neglected to fortify himself near the sea-shore, where he might have

had an easy communication with his friends in Cuba, and obtained from that island fresh supplies of men, arms, and provisions. His present position was embarrassing indeed, but not desperate. It was necessary to find some means of maintenance for his army while he was waiting for the assistance which he expected from his countrymen in Havana, and for this purpose it was requisite that he should find some Indian settlement which had not been ravaged and exhausted by his former operations. The only grain-producing country now within his reach was the territory of his irreconcilable enemy, the Cacique of Quiqualtangui. This man presided over a numerous and warlike tribe, and the Spaniards were too much reduced in strength to take forcible possession of his country. He was inaccessible to all their plausible and persuasive courtesies, and every proposition of friendship on their part was met by him with a stern or supercilious repulse. It must have required all De Soto's philosophy to bear with the insulting behavior of this cacique. Two years before, when the Spaniards were strong enough to be vindictive, these affronts would have afforded a sufficient pretext for laying waste the whole land, and murdering half the population. Now, for the first time, the haughty and unconquerable De Soto found it necessary to be patient and submissive; but doubtless he solaced himself with the hope of ample satisfaction at a more convenient time. When a proud man feels himself degraded by insults which he cannot resent, he finds that to be weak

is, indeed, the height and depth of misery. The languor of disease was now added to the other disabilities of De Soto.

“To infant weakness sunk the warrior’s arm.”

The strongest mind sinks under the paralyzing consciousness of physical debility, and De Soto in his sickness was not quite a hero. Among other causes of anxiety and apprehension which now harassed his mind, was the probable treachery of his Indian allies. The cacique and people of Guachoya, in whose land he was an uninvited and, possibly, an unwelcome guest, had thus far treated the strangers with all the external manifestations of good-will. But the many and great injuries which they had received from the Spaniards made it unsafe for the latter to build any calculations on their friendship. While De Soto possessed his usual health and strength, he exercised a controlling power over these people. Then they almost revered him as a divinity; but in his present feeble and prostrate condition, they recognized the unmistakable signs of human frailty, and began to suspect that he was no less mortal than themselves. The quick discernment of De Soto perceived the change which had taken place in the minds of his uncivilized acquaintances; and he observed, with increasing solicitude, that none of his subordinate officers had inspired the Indians with a salutary feeling of awe. In these circumstances, there was good reason to apprehend that the savages would conspire together

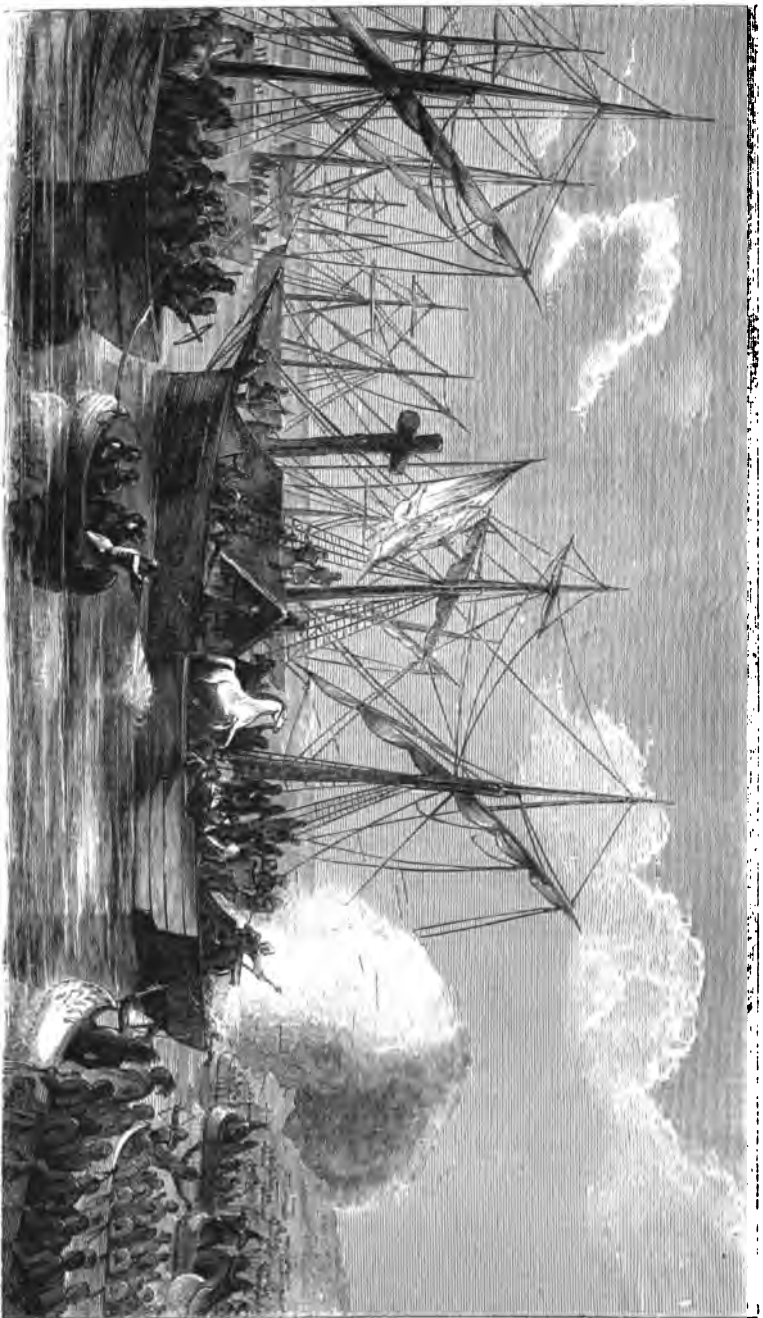
DE SOTO PRACTICING MAGIC.



and make use of some means to rid themselves of their oppressors. Certainly the opportunity was very favorable for the execution of such a design. De Soto endeavored to maintain his ascendancy over the people of Guachoya by operating on their national superstitions. Observing that they were steadfast believers in the arts of magic and necromancy, he pretended that he was able to divine their thoughts by means of a looking-glass, in which they saw their reflected lineaments, and were persuaded that this effect was produced by spiritual agency. We can scarcely believe that these people were really deceived by such a superficial artifice; it is more probable that their credulous simplicity was affected as a cloak for their own mischievous designs.

But while De Soto was thus practicing on the superstition of the Indians, he gave a proof of his own liability to the same intellectual disease. The most delightful occupation of his hours of leisure was to reperuse the letters which he had received, at various times, from Donna Isabella. While confined to his couch, this was his frequent employment; and, among the written correspondence between his lady and himself he found that letter which Isabella had sent by the hands of Micer Codro. The sight of this missive brought the astrologer to his remembrance; and, at the same time, he recollected the particulars of a conversation which he once had with that extraordinary man. He bethought himself of the parallel which Codro had drawn between his destiny and that of Vasco Nuñez de

Balboa. According to the prediction of the man of science, De Soto was to die at the same age which Balboa had attained at the time of his execution. The sick commander was somewhat startled when he reflected that the term of existence assigned to him by Codro's prediction was now complete. Though accustomed to look at death as a familiar object, and to brave it in every form, De Soto was unwilling to die at that time and in that situation. He was unwilling to bid adieu to life without having accomplished the object for which he had struggled with almost superhuman energy. He was unwilling to die unsuccessful and inglorious, when perhaps a few more years of life would enable him to outstrip all his compatriots in the race for affluence and renown. And can we doubt that Ferdinand de Soto, the most constant of lovers and the most devoted of husbands, was unwilling to die far away from the wife for whose sake, chiefly, the greater part of his life had been spent in peril, exile and laborious exertion? But we doubt whether the prediction of an astrologer could force all these gloomy contemplations on the mind of Ferdinand de Soto; for he was one of those brave mortals who are supposed to "never taste of death but once." On his bed of sickness, he continued to exercise all the duties of an able and vigilant commander; his orders were issued, and the discipline of the camp was enforced with the customary regularity. Yet, in a private conversation with his camp-master, Luis de Moscoso, he referred to the possibility of his



DE SOTO'S PARTY DESCENDING THE MISSISSIPPI AFTER HIS DEATH.

speedy dissolution; and this was before his companions-in-arms seemed to apprehend that his situation was dangerous. He also made Moscoso acquainted with Micer Codro's warning; but from the composure and seeming indifference with which De Soto referred to this subject, it might be judged that he gave little credit to the prediction. Of course, De Soto was too wise to be disturbed by such a fantastic intimation.

One of the monks who attended the expedition, and who pretended to some medical skill, soon reported that the commander was gradually sinking under his disease, all the symptoms of which now began to assume a threatening aspect. One of the priests undertook to communicate the startling intelligence to De Soto himself. It was necessary for him to be acquainted with his dangerous circumstances; for there was much to do in the way of preparation. De Soto heard the announcement of his doom with perfect tranquillity. "This is no more than I have expected," said he, "and I submit without a murmur to the will of God." The principal object which now engaged his attention was the selection of a suitable person to succeed him in the command of the army. He requested his officers to choose from among themselves a man who deserved to be entrusted with this important charge. The cavaliers unanimously agreed to refer the matter to De Soto's own choice; and, after thanking them for this last proof of their confidence, he nominated Luis de Moscoso, whom he supposed to deserve this preference. De Soto

then exhorted his officers to persevere in the faithful discharge of their duty to their king and their country, and to cultivate a friendly disposition among themselves. He advised them to prosecute the enterprise which he was obliged to leave unfinished, and he explained to them the plans which he had formed for his future operations. He recommended them to treat the Indians with lenity and forbearance; and regretted that he himself had not always adhered to that line of conduct, which he now believed to be the most expedient as well as the most humane. Finally, he entreated them to forgive him, if in the discharge of his duty he had at any time appeared to be unnecessarily harsh and severe. He professed to be satisfied with the zeal and fidelity which they had manifested in his service, and he deeply regretted that it was out of his power to reward them according to their merits.

Having bidden his officers an affectionate farewell, De Soto requested that the soldiers might be admitted to his presence, twenty at a time. Some of the men were deeply affected when they approached the bed-side of their dying commander, who had always taken a full share of their hardships, dangers and privations, and who was therefore entitled to all their sympathies. He bade them all adieu and gave them a parental blessing, with such good counsel as their circumstances required. In the next place, De Soto desired to have a private conversation with his successor, Moscoso; whom he charged with a last message for Donna Isabella, the

purport of which may be conjectured by those who can form some conception of De Soto's feelings at that moment. From the circumstance that Moscoso was "bathed in tears" when he came out of the tent we may



DE SOTO ON HIS DEATH-BED.

judge that something particularly affecting must have occurred during his interview with the expiring hero.

Having now disposed of all temporal concerns, De Soto turned his undivided attention to the affairs of eternity. It appears from the statement of one of the

historians that "he had prepared himself to die like a brave soldier and a devout Catholic," and we do not question the truth of this declaration. Many worse men than De Soto have died in the confident expectation of a happy futurity; for, on the very threshold of eternity, an erring faith may silence the accusing voice of conscience.

Ferdinand de Soto expired on the fifth day of June, 1542. The immediate causes of his death are not well explained, and the several accounts of that event which have reached us are suspiciously inconsistent with each other. Where there is much contradiction, there must be some error or falsehood. The common belief is that De Soto died of a broken heart; or that his mental disturbance and anxiety produced a slow fever, which proved fatal seven days after its commencement. We cannot easily believe that a man of De Soto's character would be likely to die of a broken heart; for a soldier, whose valor and fortitude had been tested in ten thousand severe trials could scarcely be liable to such an accident. Shakspeare, in reference to the death of Julius Cæsar, says:

"Then burst his mighty heart!"

but this catastrophe must have been brought on, in a measure, by the daggers of the conspirators. Charles of Sweden and Napoleon Bonaparte were, of all military men, the most unfortunate; but, in the lowest depths of their adversity, they were not victimized

either by grief or despair. The heart of a hero is infrangible.

There would be nothing questionable in the report that De Soto died of typhus fever, or some similar malady, if another account did not ascribe his death to the dysentery. It is possible that he may have had both of these diseases at the same time, or that the symptoms of one disease may have been mistaken for those of the other. But various circumstances make us suspect that there was a greater mistake than this. In all the accounts we have, the death of De Soto is mentioned with remarkable brevity. Biedma, for example, disposes of the momentous event in a single sentence: "The governor, being in great perplexity of mind, and matters not turning out according to his wishes, fell sick and died, having nominated Luis de Moscoso to succeed him." Herrera's account is almost equally concise; but the Portuguese Gentleman mentions several incidents which may have an important bearing on the subject: "In Governor De Soto's sickness," says the writer last mentioned, "he had but little comfort, and the danger in which all his people were placed was sufficient reason why they did not visit him, or pay him those attentions which were proper at that time."* This apology makes us acquainted with the fact that De Soto was *neglected* by his fellow-soldiers, in his last illness. The same author avers that some of Spaniards *rejoiced* at the

* Portuguese Narrative: Chap. xxx.

death of Don Ferdinand de Soto, because they believed that his successor, Moscoso, would choose to return to a land of Christians, rather than continue the labors of discovering and subduing savage countries, whereof the Castilians were weary, seeing that it was all toil and danger without profit.* Now, if some of the Spaniards "rejoiced when De Soto died," it is possible that the same persons wished for his death while he was yet alive; and there were men in De Soto's company whose hands were as ready to commit the act of murder, as their hearts were to conceive a murderous wish. There was, for example, Nuño Tobar, the seducer of Leonora, who had been severely punished by De Soto for his misbehavior at Havana. This man, who had been appointed to the position of lieutenant-general before the expedition left Spain, was dismissed from office by Governor De Soto; and, although he accompanied the expedition to Florida, he was never entrusted with any important duty, and never regained the favor or confidence of his commander. Tobar had a motive for revenge; and we know enough of his character to be convinced that he was capable of any crime which could be engendered between malice and cruelty. While De Soto was on his death-bed, Tobar assumed the command of a small party of soldiers, and made an assault on a neighboring Indian town, the inhabitants of which were indiscriminately massacred. The Portuguese writer says,

* Portuguese Narrative: Chapter xxxi.

in reference to this affair, that the "shrieks of the women and children were so great that they deafened the ears of the Spaniards who pursued them." Doubtless there were others of De Soto's followers who were as bloodthirsty and remorseless as Nuño Tobar.

We have said that the circumstances of De Soto's death, and the contradictory statements of the several authorities, require some explanation. Of course, we cannot be expected to clear up the mystery; but if we assume the hypothesis that De Soto was *poisoned* by some of his associates, the whole story immediately becomes intelligible and perspicuous. We discern several probable motives for the act, for we are told that the whole of De Soto's party wished to leave the country; and they were incensed at their commander's obstinate refusal to abandon the enterprise when all chances of success had vanished. They regarded De Soto as a tyrant, who detained them against their wishes in a region where they were constantly exposed to peril and suffering, without any prospect of advantage. They were now in a position from which it would be comparatively easy to return to Havana, if they could only extricate themselves from the power of their general. In addition to all these incentives, Nuño Tobar and several others of the company had received special provocations from the governor, and there can scarcely be a doubt that they harbored feelings of deep resentment. It may be considered likewise that De Soto's companions were men who were accustomed to blood-

shed. There was scarcely one of them, perhaps, who could be wronged by a suspicion of murder; for, excepting the priests and monks, they had all taken an active part in the perpetration of deeds at which humanity shudders. A majority of De Soto's officers and soldiers had figured in Nicaragua and Peru; many of them had assisted at the massacres of Puna and Caxamalca; they had been hunters of men in Veragua, butchers of women and children in many places, and unqualified scoundrels everywhere. It appears that on several occasions, De Soto suspected his whole troop of treacherous designs, and a disposition to revolt.* He must have seen some indications of such a purpose. His people were mutinous; and why should not mutineers be suspected of murderous intentions?

Many circumstances which attended the sickness and death of De Soto, strengthen the suspicions which we have ventured to express. The symptoms of his disease, as described by all the narrators, exactly correspond with the appearances which might be expected in a case where the patient has swallowed some deleterious mineral substance. In such a case the malady might appear to be a complication of typhus fever and dysentery. The neglectful treatment of De Soto during his illness, and the rejoicing of some of his companions after his death, (*vide* Portuguese Narrative,) are corroboratory circumstances, the bearing of which will be

* *Vide* Portuguese Narrative.

easily discerned. But the facts which would tend to establish our theory of De Soto's death, are too abundant to admit of the briefest citation in this work. All persons who may feel interested in the inquiry are referred to the books from which we have derived our information.* In connection with this subject, however, it may not be impertinent to remark that the Spaniards of De Soto's time were supposed to be very much addicted to the arts of the poisoner. This national peculiarity is referred to in several passages of Shakspeare's writings, especially in his play of Henry V., Act iii., Scene vi. Shakspeare was nearly cotemporary with De Soto. Dr. Johnson, in a note appended to the passage just referred to, says that it was a common practice among the Spaniards of that day to poison each other with figs or confectionary, drugged for the purpose.

Let it be observed that we do not pretend to offer any *positive proof* that De Soto was foully dealt with by some of his associates; we merely present a probable solution of a very enigmatical passage of history. If the suspected persons were now living, however, we think the evidence would be sufficient to demand a judicial investigation; though we think it very likely that before one of our American tribunals, with a properly selected jury, the accused parties might be "honorably and triumphantly acquitted."

* See the Introduction to this volume.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CURIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING THE BURIAL OF DE SOTO—
CONCEALMENT OF THE BODY—THE INDIANS BECOME SUSPICIOUS—THE CORPSE IS DISINTERRED—IT IS SUNK INTO THE MISSISSIPPI—THE CACIQUE'S ANXIOUS INQUIRIES—SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR OF THE SPANIARDS—CONJECTURES RESPECTING THE PLACE OF DE SOTO'S BURIAL—DE SOTO'S CHARACTER—HIS RULING PASSION—HIS HEROISM, SAGACITY, ETC.—HIS PERSONAL APPEARANCE. [A. D. 1542.]

THE incidents of Ferdinand de Soto's burial appears in the narrative, to be quite as strange and inexplicable as the manner and peculiar circumstances of his death. All of the Spanish and American writers who have attempted to give us an account of De Soto's obsequies, have drawn their information chiefly from Garcilasso de la Vega, a half-breed Indian, in whose writings ten thousand errors and misrepresentations have been detected. This man asserts that all his information respecting De Soto's expedition to Florida was obtained from one of De Soto's soldiers, whose *name*, however, is not mentioned by the historian. There are two grand imperfections, therefore, in Garcilasso's testimony: 1. It is hearsay evidence. 2. It comes from an anonymous source. Moreover, the veracity of Garcilasso has been

too often called in question to make us feel perfectly safe in the reception of his statements. Waiving these objections for the present, however, we will give the commonly-received account of De Soto's funeral; and at the conclusion of this somewhat marvellous story, we will offer a few suggestions of our own.

The Spaniards, (we are told,) were afraid to bury De Soto publicly, and with becoming ceremonials, lest the Indians should discover the place of his interment and insult his mortal remains. Besides, (say the same authorities,) De Soto had made the Indians believe that he was immortal; and, by this means, he had gained an ascendancy over their minds and made them submissive and friendly to the Spaniards. It was feared that if the natives should discover that they had been deceived in this matter, they would become ungovernable and perhaps take up arms against their invaders.

These considerations moved the Spaniards to bury the body of their late commander at dead of night. Around the spot where they intended to lay him, sentinels were posted to keep the natives at a distance. The corpse was deposited in a deep pit, at a short distance from the Spanish camp. Here De Soto was interred, in silence and in secret. While the priests and cavaliers stood around the hero's sepulchre, the stillness of night was not broken by the requiem note or the prayer for the dead; and the tear of friendship, if it dropped into the grave, was not seen in that impenetrable darkness.

To deceive the Indians more effectually, the Spaniards, on the following day, reported that the governor was recovering from his malady; and, mounting their horses, they assumed an appearance of rejoicing. They caused water to be sprinkled on the grave and over the surrounding plain, as if to prevent the dust from being raised by the movements of their horses. They then scoured the plain and made their steeds perform merry gambols on the very grave of their general; "but, (says Garcilasso,) it was difficult, under this cover of pretended gayety, to conceal the real sadness of their hearts." In spite of all these cunning artifices, the Indians suspected that something extraordinary had happened, for when passing by the pits, they would stop, look around attentively on all sides, converse together, and point significantly to the spot where the body was inhumed. This behavior of the natives caused much disturbance among the Spaniards. They feared that the Indians would search the pit and discover the body; wherefore they determined to disinter it and place it where it would be secure from outrage or *examination*. There was one place where the remains of De Soto would certainly be inaccessible; namely, in the bed of the Mississippi; and to this extraordinary sarcophagus, the corpse was now to be transferred. But, before this transfer was made, the Spaniards wished to ascertain where there was a sufficient depth of water for their purpose. On pretense of fishing, therefore, several of the officers embarked, one

evening in a canoe; and, while sounding the river at a place where it was a quarter of a mile wide, they found a depth of nineteen fathoms.* Here they determined to sink the body of their unfortunate fellow-soldier. Choosing a dark hour for the purpose, they exhumed the corpse and enclosed it in a heavy coffin, which had previously been prepared by hollowing out the trunk of an oak tree. With many precautions to avoid the observation of the vigilant natives, they embarked the coffined remains in a canoe, and conveyed them to that part of the river which had been chosen for the burial place. Here the coffin and corpse were sunk by means of a large quantity of wet sand which had been packed around the body to increase the weight.

The Indians, soon perceiving that the governor was not with the army, nor buried in the earth as they had supposed, demanded of the Spaniards where he was. The general reply prepared for the occasion was, that he had gone on a temporary visit to heaven, from whence he would soon return, in a more glorified and angelic form, to resume the command of the Spanish army. The cacique of Guachoya was not at all satisfied with this story. "I know," said he, "that my brother

* This statement is evidently false. We take the account from an English translation of Garcilasso, as the original is not within our reach. It is conjectured that a Spanish word which signifies a measure of thirty-three inches, is incorrectly rendered *fathom* by the English translator. *Vide McCulloh's Researches. Appendix.*

De Soto is dead, and in order that he may have suitable attendance in the land of spirits, I will cause several of my young men and maidens to be sacrificed on his tomb." Such sacrifices were customary among the Indians when any distinguished person departed this life. The chief, according to his promise, came to the Spanish camp with several victims, male and female, by whose immolation he proposed to do honor to the memory of his deceased friend. Among these proffered victims was the cacique's own daughter, an extremely



INDIAN CACIQUE OFFERING HIS DAUGHTER AS A SACRIFICE.

beautiful girl, whom he intended for the spiritual consort of the Spanish general. Moscoso assured the cacique that De Soto was not dead, and that the sacrifice was unnecessary. The male victims were therefore set

at liberty, and the female ones were taken under the special protection of the Spaniards.

In the account of De Soto's burial given by the Portuguese narrator, (who was an eye-witness of the transactions he describes), we find several particulars which are not unworthy of notice. This luminous writer says:—

“As soon as the governor was dead, Luis de Moscoso commanded him to be put secretly into a house, where he remained three days. Then Moscoso commanded him to be buried at night, near one of the gates of the town, within the wall. And, as the Indians had seen him sick, and now missed him, they began to suspect what had taken place. When they passed by the place, and saw where he was buried, they came to a pause, and conversed one with another. Luis de Moscoso, hearing of this, commanded him to be taken up at night, and a great deal of sand to be cast into the mantles wherein he was wound up; he was then carried in a canoe, and thrown into the midst of the river. The Cacique of Guachoya inquired for him, demanding what was become of his brother, the governor. Luis de Moscoso told him that he was gone to heaven, as he had often done before; and that he had left him (Moscoso) to govern in his place until he should be ready to come back. The cacique thought that he was dead, and told Moscoso that the custom of that country was, when any great lord died, to kill persons to wait upon him, and

that he would order some Indians to be brought to the camp for that purpose.”*

We will now glance at the probabilities of this story. It appears from all the accounts we have, that De Soto was buried in a clandestine manner, and that the Spaniards manifested a great deal of anxiety to conceal his death. These facts, standing by themselves, would make De Soto's followers liable to very grave suspicions; but certain other facts are given by way of explanation. One author says that De Soto's companions wished to hide their general's grave from the Indians, because they were afraid that the latter would commit outrages on the dead body. Another writer declares that the Spaniards concealed De Soto's death because the Indians had been persuaded that he was immortal, and it was feared that when they discovered the imposition which had been practiced on them, they would become ungovernable. Here are two very different explanations; and neither of them will bear scrutiny. Why should De Soto's remains be in more danger of insulting treatment than those of any other Spaniard who died in America? Thousands of his countrymen, of all ranks, had perished on that soil—no care had ever been taken to conceal their dead bodies—and we question if a single defunct Christian had ever been disinterred by the natives. Besides, is it not somewhat incredible that De Soto's comrades, who cruelly neglected him in his last illness, (as the

* Portuguese Narration: Chap xxx.

Portuguese Gentleman confesses), should exhibit such a tender regard for his dead body ?

As for the pretense that the Indians were made to believe in De Soto's immortality, we find it difficult to reconcile so much weak credulity on their part with the shrewdness and sound judgment which were often manifested in their discourse and conduct. They had seen Spaniards die, for several had been killed in their neighborhood: why should they suppose that De Soto was not subject to death as well as his companions? They had seen him prostrated on a bed of sickness: was not this enough to remove all doubts of his mortality ?

If the clandestine burial of De Soto, and the concealment of his death are not well accounted for, we are justified in entertaining a suspicion of murder. The instinct of the murderer prompts him to conceal the body of his victim. Such concealment is always presumptive evidence of guilt. After reading the foregoing accounts, we can scarcely doubt that the Indians of Guachoya themselves suspected that De Soto had been foully dealt with by his associates. Hence their whispering conversations among themselves, and their significant gestures when they approached the spot where he was first buried. The question of the cacique: "What has become of my brother?" may be construed as an attempt on his part to make the Spaniards account for the mysterious disappearance of their commander.

Certain we are that the circumstances of De Soto's death and burial have been very imperfectly reported.

All our information on these subjects must have come originally from the survivors of his party, and it was very easy for them to concoct a story to suit their own purpose. The shores of the Mississippi have witnessed many a deed of fearful note ; many a gory corpse has reposed in the oozy bed of that river ; and many a profound and terrific secret lies concealed under those gloomy waters. The fate of De Soto must now be added to these impenetrable mysteries.

With respect to the place of De Soto's burial, there is some controversy among our cotemporary writers. The frequent changes in the course of the river make the identification of the spot very difficult, if not impossible. He must have been submerged somewhere in the neighborhood of the town of Guachoya, and about twenty miles below the junction of the Mississippi and Arkansas rivers. All attempts to designate the spot with more precision have failed because our American writers have been misled by the fanciful descriptions of Garcilasso, who certainly had no acquaintance with the topography of the neighborhood. It has lately been conjectured that De Soto was not buried in the Mississippi itself, but in one of its tributaries ; but we have not been able to find any sufficient foundation for this opinion. The common belief, founded on the declarations of the historians, is that the Discoverer of the Mississippi was entombed in that flood to which he had given the well-merited title of *Rio Grande*, and which has been unmistakably identified with the Mississippi.

Could he have had a more magnificent and appropriate monument ?

The character of Ferdinand De Soto can scarcely be misconceived by any one who has accompanied us through this narrative. Strength of will and stability of purpose were among his most remarkable peculiarities. His resolution and perseverance gained fresh vigor from opposition and disaster. He possessed all the qualities of a great military chieftain, and wanted nothing but opportunities to make himself as much an object of popular adoration, and as great a scourge of the human race, as Alexander or Napoleon. All of De Soto's best qualities were indigenous to his moral constitution; his evil dispositions were exotic. He was virtuous by nature; for virtue is strength, and he was one of the strongest of his species. One vicious inclination, the inordinate love of riches, had casually obtained access to his heart; and this passion gradually acquired strength, and finally became the all-controlling motive of his conduct. Whether he pursued wealth for its own sake, or as the mean for the attainment of other objects, is uncertain; but the supposition is, that avarice, by long indulgence, had become the ruling desire of his heart. This sordid passion appears to have been far more influential with him than the love of conquest or the thirst of glory; for his triumph over many powerful tribes, and his discovery and subjugation of a large tract of country seem to have afforded him but little satisfaction. So long as an *El Dorado* was

not found, he considered himself unfortunate and unsuccessful.

De Soto was a strict disciplinarian, yet he was often lenient to minor offenses, while he punished grave ones with extreme severity. According to Herrera, he was affable in his manners and generous in his disposition. With respect to dauntless courage, personal prowess, and skill in all the martial exercises of the day, he had no superior; and many of his military feats have scarcely any parallel in the romances of chivalry. In battle he is reported to have been irresistible. The prodigious strength of his arm, and the impetuosity of his courage, carried him through the ranks of the enemy like a veritable "thunderbolt of war." But the prudence and sagacity of De Soto were no less admirable than his valor and efficiency in battle. He was the most politic and discreet of all the Spanish commanders in America, as well as the most humane and heroic. The personal appearance of De Soto was both commanding and prepossessing. His figure appeared to great advantage, either on foot or on horseback. He was tall, muscular, and well-proportioned. His eyes beamed with intelligence, and the general expression of his countenance was pleasant and intellectual. He was forty-two years old at the time of his death.

CHAPTER XL.

MOSCOSO AND HIS COMPANIONS RESOLVE TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY
 —THEIR OVER-LAND JOURNEY—THEY AROUSE THE INDIGNA-
 TION OF THE NATIVES—THEY ARE DRIVEN BACK TO THE
 MISSISSIPPI—THEY BUILD VESSELS AND DESCEND THE RIVER
 —THE INDIANS PURSUE THEM —MANY SPANIARDS ARE
 DROWNED—RUNNING THE GAUNTLET—MOSCOSO AND HIS
 TROOPS ARRIVE AT PAMUCO—THEY QUARREL AMONG THEM-
 SELVES—THE VICEROY ORDERS THEM TO BE ARRESTED—
 DONNA ISABELLA CAUSES SEARCH TO BE MADE FOR HER
 HUSBAND—HER MENTAL SUFFERINGS—SHE RECEIVES INTEL-
 LIGENCE OF DE SOTO'S DEATH—THE CONSEQUENCE—CONCLU-
 SION. [A. D. 1543.]

As soon as De Soto was dead, the Spaniards, forgetful of his last advice, began to make preparations for leaving the country. A counsel of war was held by Moscoso and his confederates, and, after some debate, it was agreed that they should endeavor to reach New Spain, (Mexico,) by traveling over land in a south-westerly direction. Some of the adventurers proposed to build vessels, in which they might descend the Mississippi river, and so proceed, by sea, to Havana. But this counsel was rejected, because the majority believed that

it was impossible for them to construct vessels of sufficient strength to endure the voyage; and besides they had no pilot, chart, or compass, for their guidance in the navigation of the river and sea.

Moscoso and his companions left their quarters at Guachoya on Monday, the fifth day of June, two weeks after De Soto's death. Since that event, they had been constantly engaged in preparing for their journey. Having no longer the wisdom of De Soto to guide them, they followed their own inclinations without restraint, and soon raised a storm of opposition, which never subsided during their continuance in the country. We suppose that the route pursued by Moscoso was through the northern part of Louisiana, extending, perhaps, to the north-eastern corner of Texas. We have no reliable account of the course which he took, or the distance he traveled, but it is very certain that his barbarous treatment of the natives made his progress difficult at the beginning, and finally impossible. Several of the historians have strangely confounded the incidents of this journey with those of De Soto's previous expedition to the province of Autiamque, where he passed the winter of 1542. The only indubitable facts which we have, in relation to the journey of Moscoso, are his frequent slaughters of unoffending Indians, the burning of their villages, and other acts of inexcusable violence committed by him and his associate ruffians. These proceedings, of course, armed the whole country against the Spaniards. At length the natives gathered in consider-

able force, and drove the sanguinary villains back to the Mississippi.

There was now no alternative but to remain in the country or to escape from it by water. It is surprising that Moscoso and his company did not perceive, at first, that this was their safest mode of traveling. On their return to the village of Guachoya, they began to collect materials for the construction of several brigantines, but while they were thus employed a fatal epidemic appeared among them, and more than fifty Spaniards died of this disease within a single week. The recent conduct of Moscoso and his troops had alienated the affections of all the neighboring caciques, several of whom had manifested the most cordial friendship for the Spaniards, while De Soto was alive. Even the chief of Guachoya, who always called De Soto his brother, and who exhibited a truly fraternal feeling in all his intercourse with the late commander, was now compelled by the continual aggressions of the Christians to take up arms in his own defense. Sickness and war caused much delay in the building of the brigantines, and a severe winter set in before the vessels were half finished. The sufferings of the Spaniards during the cold weather, surpassed all their former experience; for they had not had the foresight to provide themselves with clothing suitable for that inclement season; hoping, perhaps, to be supplied by their Indian neighbors. But these people were now too much incensed by the misbehavior of those foreign paupers to regard them as proper objects

of charity. Some of them perished during the winter for want of the common necessaries of life; and all of them, perhaps, would have died the same miserable death, had they not maintained themselves by robbery. It was their constant practice to plunder the granaries of those neighboring tribes which were not strong enough to resist them; and the consequence was that thousands of Indians, men, women and children, died of famine. Some of these wretched beings were reduced to the sad necessity of coming to beg from their despoilers a small portion of the food which had been produced by their own labor. Many of these beggars, (says the Portuguese narrator,) died with hunger and weakness near the Spanish camp. Some of the most merciful among the soldiers were inclined to give them a little maize, but Luis de Moscoso threatened his men with grievous punishments if they offered the Indians a morsel of food!*

On the score of tyrannous and diabolical cruelty, Luis de Moscoso will bear a comparison with some of the most distinguished of those Spanish commanders whose dazzling exploits fill so many pages of American history. On one occasion, he caused the right hands of thirty Indians to be cut off, merely because their cacique was suspected of some hostile intentions toward the Spaniards. But in such men as Moscoso, and others of the same pattern, we see nothing prodigious or preternatural;

* Portuguese Narrative: Chap. xxvi.

they are merely living examples of power without responsibility.

Early in the spring of 1543, the Spaniards recommenced their boat-building operations, and prosecuted the work with great diligence; for the necessity which compelled them to leave the country became more and more urgent every day. The infuriated natives were consolidating their forces, and preparing for an overwhelming attack on their pitiless oppressors. Fortunately for Moscoso and his companions, there was an excellent ship-carpenter, and several other skillful mechanics, among the survivors of their party. It required all the ingenuity of these artisans to make seaworthy vessels of such materials as they were obliged to use. The "brigantines" were open boats, "with bulwarks of planks and hides around the gunwales, to protect the men from the arrows of the Indians." All the iron and steel which the Spaniards possessed, even the barrels and locks of their guns, were used to make nails. Many Indian prisoners or slaves were released, merely because the material of their chains and fetters was required for the iron-work of the boats. Ropes were made of the stalks of long grass; and oakum, for caulking the vessels was prepared from the fibrous bark of the mulberry-tree, the same material which the Indians used in the manufacture of their cloth garments.

When the boats, seven in number, were finished, the Spaniards, spurred on by the harassing warfare of

the natives, hastened on board, having first embarked a stock of provisions for the voyage and a few horses. Most of these animals had been killed and eaten by the soldiers during the winter. The remnant of the Christian army could not have comprised more than two hundred and fifty men, if their losses in battle and by sickness are correctly reported. The appearance of these Christians, returning from the "conquest of Florida," must have been singular and somewhat pitiable. All their European apparel had been burned at the conflagrations of Mauvilla and Chickasaw. They were now dressed in "furred robes," not like those which Shakspeare supposes to hide the moral corruption of the wearers, but rough and uncouth garments of skins, belted around their waists after the manner of the anchorites. To complete their external resemblance to those devout men, they were nearly all barefoot; and as they moved along the shore of the Mississippi, it might have been easy to mistake them for a procession of devotees, engaged in some penitential ceremony of the Church. It is not difficult to believe the assertion of one of the narrators, that the Indians witnessed the embarkation of their enemies with shouts of mockery and derision. They celebrated the departure of the Spaniards with an extemporaneous song, the purport of which was that "these thieving vagabonds were about to be driven out of the country;" and the native minstrels invoked the deities who controlled the waves to overwhelm and destroy them.

But, not satisfied with these poetical denunciations, the warlike tribe of Quiqualtangui sallied out in a vast number of canoes to assail the brigantines on their voyage. Some of the Indian boats were painted red and some blue; and the warriors who manned them were dressed in the gayest and most fantastic style, wherefore the native armament made an extremely brilliant appearance on the river. As soon as the Spaniards set sail, the assault began; showers of arrows were poured into the brigantines, and the Christians endeavored to shelter themselves behind their bulwarks. The steersmen of the Spanish boats, having no defense against the arrows, were soon shot, and others took their places. This duty at length became so dangerous, that the helms of the brigantines were deserted and the vessels began to drift toward the shore. In this emergency, a brave but indiscreet soldier, without waiting for orders, launched one of the pirogues, (small boats carried by the brigantines,) and, being accompanied by four of his comrades, he rowed toward the Indian canoes, as if he expected to drive them away. Moscoso observed this movement, and being very much enraged with the five men for presuming to act without his directions, he sent several other pirogues, with fifty soldiers, after them; intending to hang them, (it is said,) as soon as they were brought on board. The men in the first boat mistook his intentions. Seeing the other pirogues coming after them, they supposed that their daring act had been approved by the commander, and that he had sent

the other boats to assist them; wherefore they pressed forward, with all their might, toward the Indian fleet. The wily savages pretended to retreat from the advancing Spaniards; the canoes fell back in the form of a crescent; the unwary Christians entered the semicircular space and were immediately surrounded by the enemy's boats. Finding their retreat cut off, the Spaniards



INDIANS DROWNING THE SPANIARDS.

fought desperately for their lives, but the Indians leaped into the water, upset the pirogues, and drowned every man of the party. All who attempted to swim were thrust down into the water by the savages or knocked on the head with their clubs. Fifty-five Spaniards were

killed in this aquatic skirmish, and among them were several of the principal officers of the expedition.

The attack on the brigantines was kept up, with but few intermissions, for several days. The horses, being unprotected by the bulwarks, were nearly all killed by the enemy's shafts. The Spaniards were unable to make any effectual resistance; their gunpowder was exhausted, and the iron of their guns had been used in ship-building. The only weapons with which they could reach their antagonists were cross-bows, and these were generally ineffective. The Indians of Quiqualtanguí continued the assault as far as the borders of their own territory, and then requested the next tribe which inhabited the shore of the river to carry on the war. In this way the duty of chastising the invaders was transferred from one tribe to another, the Christians being compelled to run the gauntlet, as it were, to the very mouth of the river. The persecuted Castilians were worn out by fatigue and anxiety; and in spite of the partial protection which their boats afforded them, nearly every man of them was wounded, with more or less severity, by the native archers.

Having reached the Gulf of Mexico about four weeks after their embarkation, they coasted westward for fifty days, encountered many perils and disasters, and terminated their voyage at the Mexican town of Panuco, which is now in the Department of Vera Cruz. At this place there was a Spanish settlement, and the returned soldiers of the expedition were hospitably received by

their countrymen. But before they had sojourned many days at Panuco, the chivalric adventurers began to quarrel among themselves. To prevent them from cutting each other's throats, the Viceroy of Mexico was obliged to interpose. The factions were separated, by order of this magistrate, and sent out of the country in various directions. The ultimate fate of these men is not very clearly ascertained; but we are told that most of them were reduced to a very abject condition. Some enlisted in the armies of Peru and Mexico, with the hope of retrieving their ruined fortunes; some returned to Spain; and some, disgusted with the fleeting and delusive objects of earthly ambition, dedicated themselves to the service of the Church, and passed the remainder of their days in monastic seclusion.

Such was the termination of the most brilliant and magnificent expedition that Spain ever fitted out to extend her power and dominion in the territories of the new world. The failure of this enterprise was signal and complete. In their expectations of reaping a golden harvest in Florida, the Spaniards were sadly disappointed. But this was not all. De Soto and his companions did not succeed in making any settlement in the country, because their attention was engrossed by other objects. Nothing was gained by their sanguinary conquests; not a foot of land was thereby added to the Spanish possessions in America; not a single Indian nation was made tributary to the Spanish crown, and not one pagan was converted to the Catholic faith. If

De Soto conquered Florida, his countrymen, for a long time after his death, were too cowardly to take possession of the prize. Their hesitation, in this case, is not to be ascribed to the low estimate which they placed on the value of the territory; for they had made many settlements in less desirable locations. The most warlike tribes of aboriginal Americans were generally secure from the aggressions of the Spaniards.

For nearly three years no intelligence of Ferdinand de Soto's expedition had been received in Spain or in any of the American settlements. The brilliant achievements and the great popularity of the gallant leader had deeply interested the public in his mysterious fate; but the Spanish nation had gradually reconciled itself to the belief that he had fallen in the path of duty—for this seemed to be the inevitable doom of all who attempted to explore the wilds of Florida. In those days the recovery of a lost traveler was less an object of general solicitude than we have found it to be in later times. But *all* who were interested in the fate of De Soto were not reconciled to the probability of his death. Every age affords examples of that affection which yields not to despair, and which will not be persuaded to identify the absent with the dead. There was one human being who still hoped for the return of Ferdinand de Soto; and as, with the lapse of time, that hope became fainter, and faded to a sicklier hue, so did the frame of the sorrowing wife become feebler, and her cheek grow more

pallid; as if to make it certain that hope and life must cease together.

Donna Isabella still remained at Havana, where, in spite of her failing health and her nearly exhausted fortune, she continued to prosecute the search for her husband. Several vessels were kept constantly exploring the coasts of Florida, and many attempts were made to advance into the country; but the natives were now so exasperated against the Spaniards, that the experiment of landing on their shores soon became too hazardous for repetition. At length the fatal intelligence was received at Havana that some few survivors of De Soto's company had reached Mexico, and brought an account of the death of their commander. To Isabella, this final blow was a merciful dispensation; for it speedily terminated a life which, for several years, had been one of almost insupportable misery. She expired on the third day after the intelligence of De Soto's death was received at Havana.

THE END.

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