

DE SOTO IN THE
LAND OF FLORIDA

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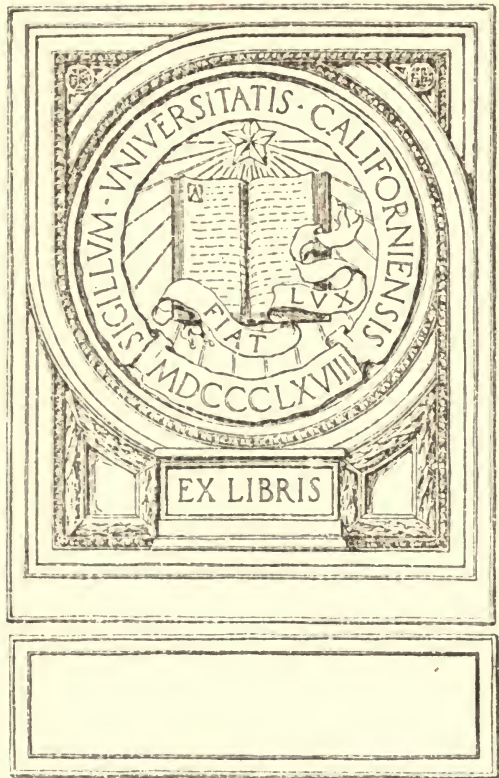


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GRACE KING

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DE SOTO AND HIS MEN IN
THE LAND OF FLORIDA

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The Lady of Cofachiqui.

De Soto and His Men in the Land of Florida

BY

GRACE KING

Author of "New Orleans: the Place and the People," "Jean
Baptiste le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville,"
"Balcony Stories," etc.

With Illustrations by George Gibbs

New York
The Macmillan Company
London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd.

1914

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Handwritten scribble or stamp in the top right corner, possibly containing the number '35' and some illegible characters.

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Set up and electrotyped September, 1898. Reprinted September,
1899.

New edition September, 1906; August, 1914.

TO THE
AUTHORS

Norwood Press

*J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.*

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MAIN

“ DEEP buried in the ooze of centuries,
 Wrapped in the mighty river’s winding-sheet,
That which the world once called De Soto lies
 So sepulchred, steel-cased from head to feet, —
Grim ruins of that puny wonder, Man,
 Poor fragments of a half-created Thought,
Dowered with struggling will for one brief span,
 Then dashed to pieces by the hand that wrought ;
But yet no part of him, no grasp for power,
 No strenuous aim, no hope, has passed away,
No wrongful act but blasts this very hour, —
 All, all his acts are seeds that sprout to-day :
And yet for him — sleep, and thro’ all the years
The endless drone of waters in deaf ears.”

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Preface

THE Inca, Garcilaso de la Vega, tells us, in the Introduction to his History of Florida, how he came to write it. He says that, in frequent and long conversations with a great friend of his, a cavalier who took part in the expedition of Hernando de Soto, he learned of the many great deeds performed in it, both by Indians and Spanish cavaliers; and as it seemed a shame and a pity that the memory of so much heroism should die out of the world which gave it birth, he induced his friend to recount the story in regular order while he himself should write it down. But, what with long voyages and wars, with incessant activities on the part of both, twenty years passed and they had not carried out their intention; and as both were then well on in years, the fear was great within them that, one or the other dying, their story would perish. Time and opportunity came, however, at last, and the Inca and his friend set themselves to the task, and accomplished it. By good fortune, just as he had finished his book, the Inca was enabled to add to his friend's memory the written testimony of two witnesses of the same events.

Alonzo de Carmona, an old soldier of De Soto's,

who after the Florida expedition went to Peru, from pure pleasure in recalling past adventures in his old age and retirement in Spain, wrote them down for circulation in his family and among his friends. The Inca was an old Peruvian acquaintance, so Carmona sent him his manuscript, knowing nothing, however, of the Inca's history of Florida. Shortly afterwards, the Inca learned that in the hands of a printer of Cordova was a collection of narratives of adventurers in the discovery and conquest of the New World, belonging to the Provincial of Santa Fé, who had been called away from the editing of them by business of his order. The Inca went to Cordova, found the collection, about a ream of rat-eaten, vermin-infested paper, and searched through it until he found the narrative concerning Florida written by Juan Coles. Like the account of Carmona, it was a soldier's story of his adventures, short and crude, written without order or precision, giving but few local names, and jumping from one date or region to another, in order to tell of notable deeds as they came, haphazard, to mind. But with the two manuscripts before him, the Inca went again over his work, carefully noting where they agreed with one another, and with his friend's memory, and entering the result of the revisions, chapter by chapter. And thus his history, completed, was published at Lisbon in 1605, under the title of, "History of the Adelantado Hernando de Soto, Governor and Captain-General of the Kingdom of Florida, and of other Heroic Cavaliers, Spanish and Indian."

So long before this as 1557, there had been published at Evora the "True Relation of the Labours of the Governor, Don Hernando de Soto, and certain Portuguese Hidalgos, in discovering the Province of Florida, by a Gentleman of Elvas." The Inca does not mention having seen this true relation, and perhaps it is on this account, that one acute historian accuses him of having drawn his whole material from it, the Cavalier, Alonzo de Carmona, and Juan Coles being merely fictitious authorities. Be this as it may—the implied falsehood—there can be no doubt to-day, that the Portuguese narration could not act otherwise, on a sympathetic reader, than to stimulate a desire to commemorate such deeds of heroism as the Inca must have heard of from old Floridian explorers, since the "Gentleman from Elvas," in his account, completely ignores them, or mentions them with niggardly praise.

Luis Fernandez de Biedma, the royal factor of the expedition, also wrote a brief official report of it, which he presented to the king and council of the Indies, on his return to Spain in 1544; a dry summary, made up from memory, with all the slips and errors in it incident to such a composition. And finally, to complete the enumeration of authorities on the subject, there is, or rather was, the report made by Rodrigo Ranjel, the secretary of De Soto, based upon a diary kept during the march, a version of which is contained in Oviedo's History (edition 1851), the original text being unknown.

As long as there have been in this world two men telling the same story, there have been two ways of telling that story; and if there are two readers, there will be just so many ways of believing it. It seemed hardly more necessary here, than in the soldier stories of our own Civil War, for instance, to confute and refute, sift and weigh evidence, when the question is only one of mere human characteristics, exaggerations, and discrepancies, which are the earmarks, after all, of human experience, varying in detail, but agreeing in the main essentials.

The Inca, as half Indian, naturally looks upon the native of Florida with a more sympathetic eye than does the Portuguese gentleman; and melancholy over the inevitable doom of the Indians in their unequal contest with the Spaniards runs in an undercurrent through his narration as through his heart. He magnifies the Indians; their fine courage, noble bearing, beauty, and courtliness of manner, the size of their armies and importance of their villages, with perfect sincerity and simplicity, and with no conscious deviation from truth; for in his eyes there was but the difference of God's will between the Indian and the Spanish cavalier — between his mother's people and his father's people.

The Portuguese gentleman looked with shrewd eyes at everything — Florida, Indians, Spaniards, and even at the Adelantado himself. There was no glamour of sentiment over his vision, particularly when the failure of the expedition became apparent to it. He, on his side, is methodical in minimizing

the Indians — and the country — and the Spaniards in comparison with the Portuguese. When he praises, he praises God alone; and the only heroic deeds in the Conquest are attributed to Him, without whom, not a Spaniard would have left Florida alive. His long list of villages along the line of march suggests that the Portuguese gentleman wrote from carefully preserved memoranda. The Inca gives fewer names, but his spelling of them is more in accord with our pronunciation to-day.

Many of these Indian names remain to-day and serve as landmarks to trace the general line of De Soto's march. The precise line of the march has given rise to infinite discussions, with the concomitant advantage of much zealous research, and patient investigation of Indian antiquities and traditions, and local features that might throw light upon it.

The original accounts are all within easy reach of the curious; the critical estimates of them, still nearer at hand, are codified in Justin Winsor's *Narrative and Critical History of America*. In this present volume there has been no attempt at aught else than to form the original versions of De Soto's expedition into one natural and continuous narrative, with as little alteration of language and spirit as possible. What seemed most important and most interesting has been taken; for the sake of brevity, much that was only interesting was discarded; conflicting statements were avoided; and some of the Inca's descriptions and the Portuguese gentleman's long speeches were abridged. Although, as it were,

to preserve the contemporary spirit from modern interruptions, few notes and explanations are given, the author has been guided by careful reference to such accepted authorities as Jones's History of Georgia and Antiquities of Southern Indians; Pickett's History of Alabama; Claiborne's History of Mississippi; Yoakum's History of Texas; Marcy's Exploration of the Red River; Irving's Conquest of Florida; Schoolcraft's American Indians; "Muskogheean Indians" in Johnson's Universal Cyclopedia; and the Archives of Louisiana History; La Salle's Journal of his voyages down and up the Mississippi River; Joutel's Narrative of his journey from the coast of Texas to Canada; Iberville's Journal of his voyage up the Mississippi River from the mouth to Tensas Lake, and back again; Bienville's Journal of his expedition to the Red River Country; St. Denis's Overland Journey to Mexico; and the "Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours du Mississippi," by Guillaume de L'Isle of the "Academie Royale des Sciences," published in the Amsterdam (1707) edition of Garcilaso de la Vega, which traces De Soto's route with the most reasonable accuracy, and which, based as it was upon the memoirs and reports of all the previous exploration of this region, might be said to resume the ancient and begin the modern history of the Mississippi.

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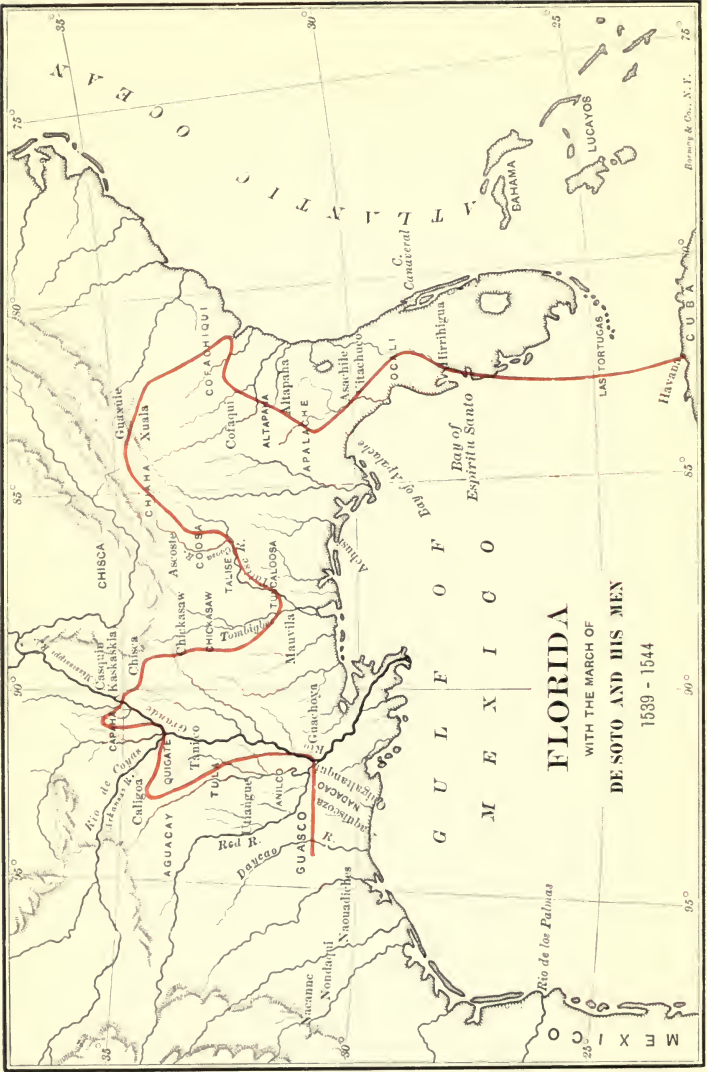
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G U L F O F
M E X I C O

FLORIDA
WITH THE MARCH OF
DE SOTO AND HIS MEN
1539 - 1544

Barnes & Co., N. Y.

Hernando de Soto and his Men in the Land of Florida

CHAPTER I

HERNANDO DE SOTO

HERNANDO DE SOTO and his men came within sight of the land of Florida on the twenty-fifth of June, 1539. It was Whitsunday. The faint white streak of land between the calm blue heavens and the quivering, flashing blue waters of the Gulf broke like a new dawn. It seemed the crest of a wave held fast, a wisp from a white cloud overhead, — nothing more; but to the Spaniards it looked hardly less than the very symbol of the Holy Spirit, whose day it was, hovering over the bosom of the waters; a token of divine approbation and promise, the sure warrant of the fulfilment of their hopes and expectations. So, a quarter of a century before, the same vague white line appeared to Juan Ponce de Leon on that radiant Easter morning when he named the country "La tierra de la Pascua Florida," — the land of the flowery feast; and as he looked towards it, he could hear, sighing over the waters behind him, the soft

voices of the Indians borne down in their weakness by their oppressions, murmuring, "Over there! Over there lies Bimini! The land of the fountain of Eternal Youth! The land where none grow old." "Eternal Youth!" Young warriors catch not at such words; but the old, weather-beaten adventurer and companion of Columbus heard them and listened with his heart; for the voice of the siren can be heard only in the heart, and she sang to him the song that never fails to lure the heart of the old — the song of joyous youth, of fresh love and fresh hopes. Gold and Silver, Fame and Honour! What paltry baubles in comparison with Eternal Youth! Ponce de Leon hastened to secure the conquest of that land, and set sail for it with men and arms. His own efflorescence, his own radiant resurrection, was the festival he had in mind when he named the shore. Alas! poor old Ponce de Leon had been dead and buried now some fifteen years.

On De Soto's fleet, the cry of the lookout, signalled from ship to ship, was answered with glad shouts and cries; trumpets sounded, swords flashed in the sun; the decks darkened with a rushing throng, and the ships, as if they, too, scented conquest, bounded and leaped forward over the rippling surges, their sails thrilling in the wind. These men were pursuing no myth; the magic fountain no longer lured men on, and, besides, these were all young, possessed already the magic fountain of youth; there was but one white-haired man in the thousand of them. The song they heard was the



“Swords flashed in the sun.”

song the siren sings to the young; the song of the future, the fortunate future, the future of fame and wealth, of golden rivers and flashing mines, spoils and prizes, ransom of kings and capture of kings' daughters; the future that youth gladly squanders youth to obtain. And the gilded San Cristoval was no more appropriate at the prow of his ship than was Hernando de Soto at the head of such an expedition; the pilot at the wheel could not steer a straighter course across the ocean than he to that land; for had he not been to it, had he not been guided by the lodestar of his hopes into the very haven of it?

An unknown youth of sixteen, the son of an obscure, impecunious hidalgo of Villanueva de Barcarrota, with no possession of his own, as the saying went, but his sword, no other recommendations than his valour and good qualities, he set out from Spain, one of the thousand of motley adventurers that followed the new governor, Pedrarias d'Avila, to Darien. Twenty years later he returned a conqueror of Peru, and rich with fame and fortune; the lieutenant general and right hand of Pizarro, captor of Atahualpa and one of the spoilers of the golden city of Cuzco; his name standing only after the two Pizarros in the list of the division of the prizes; and young still, still in the prime of life and enjoyment, and good looking and unmarried, withal. Pizarro, even Cortez himself, was held by not a few in Spain to have but a closing vista of life in comparison with the career opening before him.

Of medium height, a figure that appeared as well on foot as on horseback, dark complexion, regular features, expressive eyes, noble address, he looked the cavalier and soldier he had proved himself to be ; inexorable of will, inexhaustible of resources, cool and daring in battle, prudent and subtle at the council board. He was by common consent reputed to be the best horseman in the Peruvian army, and always excepting the incomparable Pizarro himself, also the best lancer in it, his lance being ever reckoned equal to any ten of the best. He was in truth the first Spaniard — and his horse, the first of those fateful animals that the unfortunate Inca beheld — if he beheld them.

The story of the celebrated interview came with De Soto to Spain, but its truth was discredited then, as it is now. Sent as envoy to Atahualpa, in Caxamalca, De Soto found the Inca, in all his sacred majesty, seated on a throne, surrounded by attendants, awaiting him. The glittering troop of lancers galloped to the spot and halted. Atahualpa's eyes were fixed upon the ground. The troop passed and repassed before him ; still he did not raise his head, nor would he look at the envoy nor receive his message nor answer him. An attendant looked, listened, and answered for him. Stung by the contemptuous disdain, De Soto spurred his horse and curveted and pranced the animal so close to the throne that the hoofs almost grazed the royal face. The Peruvian attendants fled in terror from the great, strange beast. Atahualpa then raised his eyes

and spoke. He commanded the attendants to be put to death.

Seventy of the Peruvian conquerors returned to Spain with De Soto, among them the distinguished cavaliers Luis de Moscoso d'Alvarado, Nuño de Tobar, and Juan de Lobillo. All went together to present themselves at court in Valladolid, — Juan d'Añasco, a rich young cavalier of Seville, and an amateur in adventure and science, accompanying them. They presented themselves in such costly apparel and made so gallant a show, that the historians of the time pause in their serious narratives to chronicle it, and tell us, with naïve simplicity, with what smiles and favour they were received. De Soto was treated with especial distinction and honour; and when it became known that of his prize money he had loaned the king upwards of a hundred thousand ducats, it became known also that royal favour, the best gift of the blind goddess even in the days of America's conquest, was not to be withholden from him. Returning to Seville, he took the lodgings and set up the state of a nobleman with attendants, a steward, gentlemen-ushers, pages, a gentleman of the horse, a chamberlain.

While, of all the cities of Spain, the gay Andalusian capitol would sow in the breast of a youth the surest seeds of desire to turn him from contented provincialism to roving adventure after gold, yet would she, more surely than any other city, lure him back home again; for none other could vie with her in the gratifications that a Spaniard coveted wealth to en-

joy. Around her fountains, in good sooth, old warriors could forget even to wish for the fountain of youth. There, society counted but one season, the carnival, which had lasted ever since the days of Columbus, with such a glittering flow of adventurers streaming through it to and from the New World as gilded it beyond the semblance of reality, as the streams of Castilla de Oro were said to gild their beds.

When De Soto came to Seville, the brilliant queen and leader of this society was Doña Isabella de Bobadilla, the widow of Pedrarias, his first chief and patron. She had sailed in that same expedition to Darien with her husband, to accompany him, doughtily leaving behind her eight children in Spain, and showing, it is chronicled, no less stout a heart on the tempestuous voyage than the mariners who had passed their lives upon the deep. And no less stoutly did she stand the bloody tempests of her husband's terrible reign in Darien (*Furor Domini*, he was called for it). And it is not to be forgotten that, in one of her efforts to mitigate it by reconciling the vindictive Pedrarias with Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, she betrothed her eldest daughter to the glorious young discoverer of the Pacific. But she could not prevent the bloody execution of Acla. . . . Doña Isabella, in fact, not only touched the Spanish conquest with her own hands, as it were, but, reaching back a little, she could touch the discovery of America and the great discoverer through her aunt, the charming Beatrice de Bobadilla,

Marchioness of Moya, the favourite and intimate friend of Queen Isabella, but better known now as the ardent admirer of Columbus, and his friend at court when he most needed a friend.

Doña Isabella's court in Seville was made up of charming women like herself and a train of cavaliers recruited from the fine flower of the Spanish chivalry and adventurers of the day. De Soto found in it the same welcome and the same favour and distinction as in the less charming imperial palace at Valladolid. His marriage to Doña Isabella's daughter, the young Doña Isabella de Bobadilla, follows in logical and romantic sequence. And now it would seem that De Soto's star had reached its zenith. With fame, fortune, and a noble wife, what higher was there to guide him to? He had but to buy land, found a great estate and family, and sit down content with his happiness. But it seems ordained that ambition may aspire to every success but content, and fortune purchase every gift except independence of fortune. De Soto had already sought and obtained from the king the conquest of Florida, offering to achieve it at his own expense. A curt old chronicler who took part in the Florida expedition, speaking for himself doubtless, says it all came about simply through Cabeza de Vaca and his talk.

Cabeza de Vaca had made his appearance at Valladolid, too, after his adventures in America. There was no splendour of fame and wealth about him; nothing of the conqueror; his return to his native

land was in striking contrast to De Soto's. He, too, guided by the lodestar of his hopes, had gone to the New World in quest of his future. He had found his future but not his fortune; the expedition had been a fool's errand, and he had come back broken in health and in wealth. Massacre, shipwreck, starvation, captivity, and hopeless wanderings through vast unknown savage territories, this was the tale he brought back to Spain. Pamphilo de Narvaez had been his leader, Florida his El Dorado. Ten years afterwards he and three companions made their appearance on the frontiers of Mexico, the sole survivors of the six hundred men who had landed on the coast of Florida. Nevertheless it was observed at court that in his relation of his adventures, Cabeza de Vaca every now and then would arrest his words suddenly, as if on guard against revealing secrets,—or would add such phrases as "The rest which I saw I leave for conference between His Majesty and myself." To kinsmen who urged him to be more explicit he would say that an oath bound him from revealing what he saw, but that Florida was the richest country in the world; and he gave out that he was determined to beg the conquest of the country from the emperor. The device is a well-known one, but as long as the world is peopled, its success may be relied upon.

Hernando de Soto unhesitatingly threw his fortune into equipping this expedition. Luis de Moscoso, Juan de Lobillo, and Nuño de Tobar eagerly

backed him with their prize money and their services. The king, who himself, from Cabeza de Vaca's delusive manner, believed that Florida was another Mexico or Peru, thought De Soto another Cortez or Pizarro, and accorded him all the rights and privileges and titles necessary or useful to the Conquest. He named him governor and captain general of Florida, with the title of Adelantado for life, and the office of lord high sheriff in continuity to his family; he gave him a grant of two hundred leagues of land along the coast, and twelve leagues square in the interior, of his own choosing, with the right of importing negro slaves into it, and allowed him one-seventh of the ransom and the spoil of all the goods of any cacique, or chief captured. He made him also governor of Cuba, and as a last compliment, knight in the military order of St. Iago.

De Soto chose his old companion in arms, Luis de Moscoso d'Alvarado, for master of camp, Nuño de Tobar for lieutenant general; Juan d'Añasco, the rich Sevillian, who also put money into the undertaking, was appointed royal treasurer. And now the news was spread through Spain with great trumpeting of the grants, privileges, titles, and prospects. Nothing else was talked about in city, town, and hamlet but how Hernando de Soto and other conquerors of Peru, not content with their hundreds of thousands of ducats of spoils, were going to spend all in an armament for a new conquest; and while everybody wondered and marvelled, each one confidently held that this second conquest must indu-

bitably be far richer and greater than the first. From all parts of Spain, volunteers flocked to get a place in it, — cavaliers, soldiers, peasants, labourers, artisans; nephews of cardinals and ministers; young relatives of De Soto, of Luis de Moscoso, and even of Cabeza de Vaca. Those who had money brought it with them; others sold or mortgaged estates to purchase an interest in the investment. Peasants parted from vineyards and farms, artisans from trades, to equip themselves with a horse and a lance. Who could doubt of the venture when gold and silver were coming in by the ship-load from the New World? And they all were willing, say the chroniclers, to leave home, parents, family, and friends, to part with rents and estates, sell vineyards, farms, and trades, and venture life on the expectation that Florida would prove richer than Mexico and Peru.

The excitement spreading over to Portugal, the cavalier, Andreas de Vasconselas, with a troop of three hundred Portuguese cavaliers, all finely mounted and equipped, enlisted; and they were the prettiest company in the expedition; the most soldierly. All the returned soldiers from Peru, already trained and whetted for conquest and plunder, eagerly volunteered. There was no lack of choice; more came than could be taken, and when De Soto embarked at San Lucar de Barrameda, a crowd of disappointed adventurers was left on the quay, among heaps of luggage of all kinds, for there was an oversupply of provisions also. Money had been

spent so lavishly that more was brought than the seven large ships and three caravels could take. In San Lucar it was said that a finer expedition had never left that part for the New World, and San Lucar knew; for since the time of Columbus the water-gate of Seville had been the passageway to the New World, and the memory of a middle-aged mariner could easily hold all the expeditions that had sailed from it. The fleet set sail on the sixth of April, 1538, and crossed the bar, trumpets sounding. Doña Isabella, the true daughter of her mother, accompanied her husband.

The fleet made the usual stop for water and provisions at the Canary Islands. The governor of Gomara, a cousin of Doña Isabella's, entertained her royally. Living with him was a daughter, the Doña Leonora de Bobadilla, a young girl of sixteen, and so extremely beautiful that Doña Isabella begged her of her father as companion, and sailed away with her,—she and De Soto promising for her a good marriage and establishment in Cuba or in Florida. Meeting a calm, but no tempest, the expedition made the harbour of Santiago de Cuba in due order, and due pleasure, we may well say, for here were assembled all the notables of the island to greet and welcome the new governor and his bride. The welcome lasted for three months, with banquets, balls, masquerades, bull-fights, and games, with prizes of gold and silver for the gallants, as if celebrating in anticipation the triumphs of conquest. A very harvest of pleasure and tri-

umph it was to the Spanish cavaliers and a triumph of conquest too. But, above all others, shone the young lieutenant general, the handsome, dashing Nuño de Tobar, mounted on his splendid dapple grey charger. He carried off all prizes, and all hearts, and chief prize of all, the heart of the beautiful young Doña Leonora. When Doña Isabella and her husband discovered the romance, it had already sped to a secret union. The young cavalier hastened to make the reparation of a public celebration of his nuptials; but De Soto's displeasure was implacable, and resenting the insult to his family pride and dignity, he dispossessed Nuño de Tobar of his title and office, and, in truth, would never forgive him, nor restore him to favour.

The fleet moved round the island to Havana, and the summer and winter were passed in Cuba, while still further provisions and preparations were made for the success of the Conquest. Two more vessels were bought and loaded, reënforcements of Cubans were added to the army, and horses of the fine breed that this island was then producing for the trade of conquest.

By spring all was ready for accomplishment, even to favourable winds. Installing Doña Isabella as governor of Cuba during his absence, De Soto bade her farewell, and, embarking in his flag-ship, the San Cristoval, sailed out of her sight into the Gulf, toward the Land of Conquest.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNING OF CONQUEST

THE fleet cruised along the wavering coast-line until the bay marked on the chart as the Bay of Juan Ponce was discovered rounding inland. De Soto changed the name to Espiritu Santo, in honour of the day, and by sunset he had furled sail and dropped anchor across its mouth. Barges were sent out in the morning to search for a channel and landing-place. They returned in the evening loaded with greens of all kinds for the horses. The vines heavy with grapes gave great joy, for neither in Mexico nor in Peru had grapes been found. The week passed in exploration, and it was not until the next Sunday, Trinity Sunday, that formal possession was taken of the land; and the Spanish banner and royal arms were raised and fixed in the beach, and the Conquest officially begun in the name of the Church and the King. The rest was a mere question of human powers.

The three hundred soldiers sent ashore for the ceremony scattered over the beach, carelessly and easefully, enjoying their first taste of ownership

of so beautiful a land. As far as eye could see, the dark, serried forest ran to the right and left, God's fence, as they might call it, about their vast property of inland kingdoms, cities, treasure. In front stretched the sparkling Gulf, blue as another heaven. The fluttering of the flag of his Catholic Majesty, the soaring of a bird overhead, the glint of a fish through the water—naught else to fleck the measureless Sabbath calm; nor had there been aught else during the past week, save a few faint spirals of smoke rising here and there in the horizon—camp-fires, perhaps signals. At nightfall, after their supper, the soldiers stretched themselves upon the ground around the royal standard for their first sleep upon the bosom of their conquest. It was rudely enough broken. Just before the grey hour of dawn there burst from the silent black forest a tumult that might have come from hell; cries and yells, leaping naked forms, and arrows darting like a tornado of serpents through the air, and slashing into the flesh like knives. Overwhelmed and confused, the untrained conquerors could only run in helpless terror down the beach and out into the water, whence their trumpets sent clamorous calls over to the ships for help. It came promptly; horse and foot put out in barges, and before the savages could finish their victory, they were driven back into the forest, and Spain put again in possession of the beach.

The army was at once disembarked and camped around the standard, but the Indians made no

further demonstration. After a few days of rest it marched to a deserted Indian village discovered on the shore about ten miles distant, where De Soto decided to quarter himself for the present. The village, a small one, consisting only of one row of low wooden cabins, thatched with palmetto, stood about an open space, the cabin of the chief on a mound at one end; opposite, on another mound, the temple bearing its wooden effigy of a fowl. The Adelantado with his staff took the cabin of the chief, the officers the rest of the cabins; the soldiers, tearing down the temple and gathering brush, made rude shelters for themselves. The ground was cleared of trees and underbrush for a crossbow-shot around the village, sentinels were posted, and horsemen ordered on regular rounds, and the little savage hamlet was changed into a trim military Spanish outpost. The vessels, coming in gradually with the tide, were unloaded and the provisions stored; details were sent out every day to capture natives for guides and to learn something of the country. A few stragglers were caught in the forest, but without interpreters they were almost useless. De Soto managed to understand from them, however, that the village he was in belonged to a chief named Hirrihigua, who, warned of the approach of the Spaniards, had taken refuge with all his people in the forest. These captives were always set at liberty with presents for Hirrihigua and messages asking for friendship. But the savage chief would none of them — neither presents

nor messages. On the contrary, he would rail at his people for bringing him fair words and promises from Christians, telling them to fetch him no presents, but to bring him their heads—these he would receive; but until then he wished to hear neither their words nor their names. So much, only, could De Soto at first learn: that Hirrihigua knew the Spaniards and hated them.

At length, however, by patience and painstaking he gathered from the Indians the explanation,—an incident of Pamphilo de Narvaez's expedition, which, with all his talking, Cabeza de Vaca had omitted. When Narvaez landed on this coast, in this bay, Hirrihigua received him and treated him as a friend; but the Spaniard acted as the Spaniards (may God forgive them for it, say the pious chroniclers) too often did, repaying kindness and confidence with treachery and cruelty. He seized Hirrihigua and mutilated him vilely by cutting off his nose. But this was not the worst: the chief's old mother he had thrown to the dogs, and she was devoured before the eyes of her son. This could not be forgotten; it had haunted the memory of Hirrihigua ever since, driving him at times into the wild frenzy of one possessed by the evil one. One, and only one, morsel of revenge in his long-famished craving for it he had enjoyed. A Christian ship sailed one day into the bay. Divining at once that it came in search of tidings of Narvaez, who had marched into the forests and had nevermore been seen or heard of thereabouts,

Hirrihigua sent messages to it, indicating by signs that Narvaez had left papers there to be given to Christians who would come for them. In proof, bits of paper and old letters found in the Spanish camp were tied to sticks and held up from the beach, but Hirrihigua refused to give them up unless the Spaniards came in person for them; the Spaniards, on their guard, were afraid to trust themselves ashore. Hirrihigua then sent four of his warriors to remain on the ship as hostages, whereupon four Spaniards agreed to go ashore, paddling away in the canoe that had brought the warriors. But the canoe had barely touched the sand, when the four warriors sprang with a great leap from the ships into the water and swam away like fish. The four Spaniards were dragged off in triumph into the forest. Hirrihigua tortured and killed three of them; the fourth escaped to a neighbouring chief.

When bit by bit the story pieced itself together in the camp and grew into a clear meaning to the soldiers, that a Spaniard was even then living in captivity among Indians, neighbouring to Hirrihigua and to the village, there was, there could be, but one thought among all, officers and men—to advance no further step in the conquest until he was delivered. The Adelantado at once sent out two detachments of horse and crossbowmen, one under Juan de Lobillo, the other under Balthazar de Gallegos, with orders to go in different directions and search a week for the village in question. Juan de Lobillo had a vexatious time of it; his route

lay through bogs and swamps, where the horses could not travel, but where the Indians were at their best. As one of the soldiers described them: "Warlike and nimble as they are, they care not a whit for any footman. When we charge, they run away; and as soon as we turn our backs, they are upon us again. They never keep still, but are always running about, so that no crossbow nor arquebuse can be aimed at them, and before a man of us can make one shot, they make six." Juan de Lobillo returned at the end of his time, bringing six men wounded, one mortally, with nothing gained but four frightened Indian women captives.

Balthazar de Gallegos followed his guide down a smooth open road; but after a time the Indian seemed to grow uneasy in his mind and uncertain in his conduct. He turned from the road into the forest, and leading the troop from one by-path into another, he wandered with it round and round aimlessly; or, he might have been seeking a swamp into which finally to leave it while he escaped. The woods thinning a little, the Spaniards saw the masts of the ships in the bay, and discovered the treachery. Gallegos frightened the Indian into guiding them back into the right road. They had gone but a short distance when, turning into an open plain, they came face to face with a small band of Indians. The troopers, all eagerness to fight, spurred forward at full speed, with lances set. The Indians broke, darting like hares into the leafy coverts of the forest. The horsemen overtook only two: they lanced one



“Sevilla ! Sevilla !”

in the back just as he was running into the woods ; the other, turning, warded off with his bow the lance thrust aimed at him, making a great sign of the cross in the air, crying out "Sevilla! Sevilla!" "Are you a Spaniard?" called out the astonished pursuer. "Yes, yes," answered the man.

The lancer was Alvaro Nieto, the strongest and most athletic man in the army. Drawing rein, he stooped down, picked up the man with one hand, threw him over the saddle and galloped off with him to the commander, his comrades following with the wounded Indian. Balthazar de Gallegos, after putting a few questions to the prisoner, turned his troop, and rode at full speed back to the camp.

CHAPTER III

JUAN ORTIZ

IT was late in the night. The camp lay in the silence of sleep. The sound of horse galloping through it roused it up into wild alarm. The Adelantado and his officers rushed to the front of their quarters, sure that some disaster had happened to one of the detachments, for neither was expected for several days. The troop galloped straight through the village to the mound and dismounted, Balthazar de Gallegos calling out to calm the alarm. Up the mound and into the great square room of Hirrihigua's cabin he brought the Spanish captive and placed him before the Adelantado and his cavaliers. Naked, sun-scorched, emaciated, scarred, the poor wretch seemed no better than a savage, and he looked like one. He had almost forgotten his own mother-tongue, his words came hard and strange to him, and he helped himself along with gestures like the Indians. He was asked for his story. His name, he began, was Juan Ortiz. His capture and that of his three companions took place as the Indians had related. Dragged through the forest to this very village, Hirrihigua's village, they soon

found out into whose hands they had fallen, and for what deed they were to atone with their lives; and kept under careful guard, they saw the preparations go gleefully forward for the great feast of all the tribe, at which their death was to be the entertainment. The day came; they were stripped and one by one driven into the open space, out there; warriors with their bows and arrows surrounded it like a fence. One by one three of the captives were chased to death like wild beasts, the warriors not shooting pointed arrows, for that would have killed them too soon, but blunt ones, which prolonged the agony,—and pleasure. Hirrihigua all the while stood aloof, gloating over the sight of his victims fleeing hither and thither, from one side of the square to the other, seeking for some refuge, shelter, succour, but finding none; finding nothing but pitiless death. At last came the turn of the fourth, Juan Ortiz, a lad barely eighteen years of age. He was driven into the square, and the sport of killing him was about to begin when a squaw, the wife of Hirrihigua, followed by her three daughters, ran across the open space to her husband and with violent gestures loudly begged him to spare the boy, to be content with the death of three men; that the boy was almost a child; his youth cried to him for mercy; he had not shared in the guilt of Narvaez; it would be enough punishment to make him a slave.

The chief, who loved his squaw, listened to her, and spared Juan's life; but he made it so bitter for

him that, in truth, the boy often envied the fate of his companions. For what with the continual labour of fetching wood and water, the scant food and sleep, and the constant buffetings, cudgellings, and beatings he received, if he had not been a Christian, he said, he would have put an end to himself to get out of his misery. And on every feast day he would have to play wild beast for the amusement of Hirrihigua, and be chased and pelted by arrows all day long, from sunrise to sunset. Even when Hirrihigua went to his meals, he left warriors on the watch to shoot at him and keep him running. When the sun went down, and Juan lay panting on the earth like a dog, all that kept him in life was the kindness of the chief's wife and her daughters. They would come to him and tend him and care for him, bring him food and speak soft words to him. And it seemed, because his cruelties and torments did not kill the boy, Hirrihigua's hatred of him grew fiercer and fiercer and more ungovernable. One day it suddenly determined him to put an end to Juan at once. He ordered a great fire to be built in the square, and a barbecue made. This was a frame like a bedstead standing about three feet from the ground. When the fire had burnt to a bed of coals, he had Juan seized, stretched and bound upon the barbecue, which was then set over the red coals. At the cries of agony the burning drew from him, the squaw of the chief, with her daughters, rushed out to the spot. The wife did not know of the intentions of her husband. When

she saw what was being done, she threw herself upon the frame, and tore it from the fire, berating the warriors and her husband for their cruelty, and begging them for mercy, all in one breath. She and her daughters loosened the boy from the frame. He was already half roasted; the flesh from the ribs stuck to the barbecue and peeled away from him, like the rind from an orange, the blood gushing out pitifully in streams.

The chief again let his wife have her way; perhaps he was rather glad of an interruption that preserved a precious subject for cruelty, for he had often regretted aloud that he had killed the other Spaniards so quickly instead of keeping them for his longer enjoyment. The women took Juan into their cabin and dressed his wounds with herbs, their hearts moved with great pity for the state they found him in. They themselves, when they saw all the pain and misery inflicted upon him, had more than once repented saving him from death that first time. After days and days of nursing and suffering, Juan was seemingly cured, although his wounds never entirely healed, but remained sore and fresh. Then Hirrihigua, to rid himself of the constant prayers of his wife, and her of the sight of the sufferings of the boy, found a new form of persecution for him. He set him to guard the burial-place of the village. This was an open field in the depths of a dense forest, far distant from the village—a lonely, isolated spot, with no sight or sound of human habitation. The bodies were laid in wooden

boxes, resting flat upon the ground, and covered only with loose timbers held down by stones. Every night beasts of prey from the forests would come prowling among the boxes, and again and again would force them open and carry off a corpse, to the great grief and humiliation of the village. Hirrihigua gave Juan four darts to defend the place with, and swore to him that if he allowed one corpse to be carried off he should be burned alive this time without fail. Juan's only feeling was one of gratitude to Providence for delivering him from the presence of Hirrihigua, and he feared not but that he would fare better with the dead than with the living.

He kept good watch and was getting along well until, one night, not able to fight any longer against his drowsiness, he fell asleep just before dawn, which always seems to be the time for sleep to exert its greatest power against watchers. The noise of a falling cover awoke him. Running to the burial-chests, he found that the body of a child brought there two days before was gone. He gave himself up for lost. Dawn was near, and every day as soon as it was light Indians came from the village to see if the bodies were all there. But he quickly determined to do what he could to find the body and kill the animal, or be killed by it. He ran wildly and vainly here and there through the woods in his despair, making up his mind to attempt flight, although he knew that escape was impossible, when, hark! he heard a noise like the crunching

of bones. Listening with all his might, and creeping slowly, slowly forward, he came to a clump of bushes; beyond them, through the dim light, he saw the figure of an animal crouching. Calling upon God, and summoning all his strength, he threw one of his darts. He waited and listened. It was too dark to see what kind of a shot he had made; he only knew, as hunters do at night when they cannot see, by the feeling in his palm that it was not a bad one. He waited and listened; the animal did not move. Hope began to rise within him as, the creature still not moving, he waited and listened, and watched for daylight. And so daylight found him, and showed him the animal dead with a dart through its heart, the little corpse in its paws. Although he saw it, Juan could not believe his eyes. Beside himself with glad relief, he ran quickly, put the corpse back into the chest, and then, taking the brute by one of the feet, he dragged it along, with the dart still sticking in it, to the village.

His elation was not greater than that of the Indians over the feat; for it was a wonderful one to them, and they marvelled over it and praised him well for it. At so fine a stroke of good fortune, the wife and daughters of Hirrihigua plucked up courage and began again upon the chief, trying to persuade him that, as Juan had proved himself so valiant, he should be employed in ways better fitting to his strength and courage. And Hirrihigua for a while followed this advice, and treated

Juan far better than he had ever done. But every time it was recalled to him that he had no nose, that it had been cut off, his rage would break out afresh, and this would bring back the memory of his mother, and he would wax wild and furious again, and even though he tried to control himself, he could not, the desire for revenge so maddened him. At last he told his wife and daughters that he could stand it no longer; that it was impossible for him to live and suffer the Christian to live; that they must never again intercede for him unless they wished to share in the hatred he felt for the youth, for he was decided now to put an end to him once and forever, to have him shot to death like his companions, at the next feast. The wife and daughters, seeing that this was the truth, and that now, indeed, no more mercy was to be hoped for, submissively told the chief that, as he wished so, so it should be. Nevertheless, a few days before the feast the eldest daughter took Juan secretly aside and warned him of the fixed resolution of her father. "But," said she, "if you are a man, and have the courage to fly to-night, I can still save you;" and naming an hour and place, she continued: "You will find an Indian whom you can trust. He will guide you through the swamp to a bridge. When you get there, send him back in time to reach here before daylight, so that he may not be missed, and my daring to help you may not become known, to bring evil upon him and me. Beyond that bridge a road leads to the village of a chief

who wants me for his wife. His name is Mucozo. Tell him from me that I send you to him in this last need for him to help and protect you. And now put yourself in the hands of your God, — for I can do no more for you.” . . . Juan threw himself at her feet and kissed her hands in gratitude for her pity and kindness then and always; and that night, he met the guide at the hour and place named, and following her instructions, sent him back from the bridge.

Speeding, as one fleeing from sure death, he reached Mucozo's village before day, and waited on the outskirts until light, when he saw two warriors leave it and come his way. At sight of him they put their arrows to their bows, but when they heard his message, they sent word to their chief, who came at once. Mucozo was a young warrior about twenty-six, handsome of face and figure, with a noble address. Juan hurriedly told his story of Hirrihigua's torments, showing in proof the marks upon his body, the welts and scars and running sores from the burning, and telling how that now, there being no more hope for mercy for him, the eldest daughter, as a last and only means, had sent him to beg Mucozo's help and protection. The young chief listened and looked with pity. He could see Juan's proofs easily enough, for the Spaniard went as the savages, with no other covering than a cloth around his waist.

When Juan came to the end of his message, Mucozo kissed him on the cheek, the Indian token

of friendship, and told him that he would do for him all that he could, of that to be certain. And what Mucozo promised he performed. He kept Juan with him, treating him like a brother, and a dearly loved one. And although Hirrihigua sent again and again for his slave, the young chief always put off the messenger with excuses, and at last sent answer that he would not give up Juan, and that the loss of so hated a slave could be but a small one to so great a chief. Hirrihigua then induced Mucozo's brother-in-law, Urribarricuxi, a powerful neighbouring chief, to demand Juan; but Mucozo answered him also that it did not beseem a chief of spirit and courage to deliver up a poor wretch to an enemy to be hunted to death like a wild beast. And so Juan had lived with him ever since. And that morning Mucozo had called him and said to him, "You must know, my brother, that in the village of your good friend, Hirrihigua, is a Christian general with a thousand warriors and a great number of horses, come to conquer the country. You know all I have done for you. Now you must go to the Christian general, and pray him, from me and from you, in return for the good I did you, not to harm me and my people in this one little piece of land we possess. Take warriors with you, and look out for their safety, as our friendship obliges you to do." Juan Ortiz thanking God in his heart for the news, assured Mucozo that he would give the Spaniards such an account of his kindness as would make the whole army his friends; and overjoyed almost past

reason at the wonderful prospect of deliverance, he set out at once upon the road to find the Spaniards on the very morning that the Spaniards set out to find him.

When the cavaliers and officers had heard Juan's story to the end, when they looked upon his poor naked body, — the side that had been against the fire one great burn and foul running sores, — tenderness and compassion overcame them, and the Adelantado, rising and going to him embraced him, as if he had been a son, thanking God for returning him again to his people. And all the officers embraced him with tears and emotion. The Adelantado commanded that without the loss of an hour's time messengers should be sent in the name of the emperor and king of Spain, and in his own name, and that of his officers, and of all Spaniards, to thank Mucozo for his bountiful kindness to Juan, and to assure him of their unending friendship, and to pray him to pay a visit to the camp, that they might all see and know him and thank him and honour him in person.

There was no sleep in camp the rest of that night, for there was not a soldier in it but wanted to embrace and greet Juan, to hear his story, see his scars and drink his health, and thank God over him as over a brother. But none thanked God as Juan did, or shed such tears of joy.

The next day clothing was given him, the Adelantado himself presenting him with doublet and hose of fine black velvet. But from long habit of

going naked Juan could not wear them; for over twenty days he could not bear anything on his skin except the loosest linen covering.

Two days later, Mucozo, in answer to the invitation sent him, made his appearance with a retinue of warriors. To the Adelantado's graceful acknowledgments and the handsome speeches of the cavaliers he answered through Juan as gracefully and handsomely as any of them, that he had only done what his self-respect commanded, and that Juan, even without other recommendation, was, on account of his virtue and courage, worthy of all the consideration he had received; that in sending him to De Soto, he had acted for his own benefit, so there was no occasion for thanks or gratitude for that. The cavaliers who saw and knew Mucozo and told about him in Spain, always closed their relation of him with: "For grace and discretion, polish of manner and high-flowing language, this savage chief had nothing to learn from the courts of kings and emperors."

CHAPTER IV

THE MARCH INLAND

THE fleet being unloaded, and the supplies stored, the large ships were sent back to Havana; the caravels were kept for the service of the army. And now the Adelantado was ready to penetrate inland, into that vast and unknown interior, imagination of which had armed and equipped this expedition. Proclamation was made for the army to prepare to march, and at the end of three days Luis de Moscoso had it drawn out in regular order, — vanguard, rear-guard, centre, — the baggage train packed. Pedro Calderon, a cavalier and good soldier, who enjoyed the glory of having served as a boy under the great Gonzalvo of Cordova, was appointed commander of the small garrison to be left in charge of the village and caravels.

The march was northeast, for in that direction, according to Juan Ortiz and the Indian captives, lay the best provisioned lands. And pleasant enough the march was for about one hundred and fifteen miles. The more the Spaniards saw of the country, the more they liked it. How could it be otherwise, or what better could they have asked? The

soil was rich beyond expectation, with magnificent forests of oak, pine, mulberry, and other handsome trees that they did not know, and all were wreathed with vines, drooping with luxuriant clusters of grapes. The soldiers stepped along elated and merry, every glance of the eye as it were bringing them good news. They left the territory of Hirrihigua and entered that of Uribarricuxi, the brother-in-law, as has been mentioned, of the courtly and generous Mucozo. His village was deserted and abandoned, chief and people having fled into the forest. Like Hirrihigua, Uribarricuxi would make no answer to the messages of De Soto; he kept in his hiding-place and would not be tempted out either for peace or for war.

As the village was large and well stored with provisions, the army remained there a week, while scouts reconnoitred the country ahead of the line of march. They found a great swamp which seemed to be an impenetrable barrier against further advance to the north; but when the army set out again, De Soto marched straight to it and pushed through it in two days and camped in a beautiful plain beyond. And now his scouts returned, saying that the swamp just passed through was child's play to the one that lay ahead,—one that it would be utterly impossible to penetrate; the mother swamp, they called it, of a group of smaller swamps, that held a vast region in a state of impassable mire.

The Adelantado saw that he must be his own scout. Taking a troop of horsemen and some Indian

guides, he set out, leaving Luis de Moscoso to follow with the army when he sent him word. Deciding to try for a passage in another direction, he retraced his steps across the swamp just crossed, and travelled for three days round the edge of it, sending out scouts at regular intervals to push through the dense growth, looking for some opening or foot-path used by the Indians. No path was found, but Indians were in abundance. They infested the place like mosquitoes, swarming out with sudden fury, shooting a volley of arrows and disappearing almost before they were seen; and indeed against the armour of the Spanish horsemen the arrows were but little more harmful than mosquito stings. A few captives were taken and forced to act as guides, but they guided like captives and enemies, leading amiss and astray. De Soto had four of them thrown to the dogs, for these bloody executioners with teeth well fleshed and appetites kept keen by starvation were carried along on every reconnoissance. They soon made an end of the four Indians and their patriotism. A fifth, in terror of a like fate, offered to guide faithfully. He did so, and the Spaniards saw how hopeless would have been their search without him. He led them clear away from where they were and set them in a clean, smooth, broad road, running outside and making a circuit of the swamp. Following this about four leagues they came to a bayou of clear water. Plunging into it, the guide led on through water breast high, but over a firm bottom, until they came to a channel about a hun-

dred paces wide which was too deep to wade. Here the Indians had made a crossing by cutting trees from the opposite sides and fastening the ends together. Over this same bridge the guide said Narvaez and his army had passed ten years before. It was overgrown with bushes and vines. Calling for Diego de Moreno and Pedro de Oliva, the Adelantado commanded them to take their hatchets and clear the obstructions. The men were native Cuban mesticoes (half-breeds of Indian and Spanish parentage), great comrades and the best swimmers in the army. They sprang forward to the task, but were hardly upon the bridge before canoes of Indians dashed out from the bushes on the further bank, sending clouds of arrows whizzing at them. With a high curve through the air the mesticoes leaped into the water, and diving deep, swam under it to the bank, the arrows pattering above them. The Indians, as if satisfied, then paddled away as quickly as they had advanced.

Much pleased at having found what he had determined to find, De Soto, without a moment's delay, turned for a messenger to take his orders to Luis de Moscoso. Casting his eye over his cavaliers, he called out to Gonzalo Silvestre, and gave him this command in a loud voice before the whole troop: "Gonzalo Silvestre, luck has given you the best horse in the army, but it was in order for you to do the most work with it; and therefore, I shall have to put upon you the hardest tasks that come in our way; so take patience and prepare yourself

for them. Now you must know that our lives and the Conquest require you to return this night to the camp, to tell Luis de Moscoso that we have found the passage through and that he must march forward to join us. And he must send you back at once with some biscuit and cheese for us; for as you know we are hungry and in sore need of food. And that you may come more safely than you go, order him to send along twenty lancers to protect you on the road. I shall wait for you here until to-morrow night, when you must be back, even though the road seem hard and long and the time short. I know whom I am trusting. And that you may not go alone, take any companion that best suits you; and be quick about it, so as to be in the camp by dawn to-morrow; for if daylight catches you in the swamp, the Indians will surely never let you get out of it alive."

Without a word, Gonzalo Silvestre turned, mounted his horse and rode off. Passing by Juan Lopez Cacho, a page of De Soto's, who also had a good horse, he drew rein to say: "The governor orders you and me to go on a message from him to the camp before daylight, so follow me at once, for I am on the way." "On my life!" said Juan Lopez, "I cannot go, I am tired; take some one else." "The governor ordered me to choose a companion; I choose you. If you will come, come and welcome; if not, stay where you are, for going two together will not lessen the danger, nor going one alone increase the toil." And Gonzalo Silvestre,

spurring his horse, rode on. Juan Lopez Cacho, cursing his luck, jumped on his horse and followed.

The sun was just setting. They were both youths, hardly over eighteen years old, and soon, light-hearted enough, they were trotting over the first miles of their journey, for the road was clear and free of Indians; but when they struck the low marshy places the troop had just struggled through, the bogs, thickets, and canebrakes, the slow bayous oozing in and out of the great swamp, their troubles began. There was no regular road or path to follow, and knowing nothing of the country, they could not go round or avoid the bad places for fear of getting lost, but were forced to follow the track made by the troop two days before, looking out for what marks and signs they could remember. Night fell, and soon in the gloomy forest they could not see anything distinctly. And now, the risk of being caught by the Indians was so great that nothing could have saved them if they had not been helped by the marvellous instinct of their horses. As if possessed of human understanding and reason, they, so soon as they saw that their riders could not guide them, set themselves of their own wills to trace the road, thrusting their nostrils to the ground, and like hounds or setters, scenting the trail. The men at first not catching their meaning, pulled again and again at the reins, but the horses would not lift their heads from the ground, except when they lost the scent, then raising and tossing them,

they would snort so loudly that it seemed certain they must be heard by the Indians.

The horse of Silvestre was surer on the trail and quicker to find it when it was lost than the other one. But that was not astonishing, for he was indeed, by every sign that nature gives, a perfect horse, either for peace or for war. A dark chestnut he was, with a white stocking on his left hind foot, white marks on his forehead, and a white rim around his mouth. The horse of Juan Lopez was a light bay, with black feet; an extremely good horse too, but not to be compared with the chestnut, which took the lead and kept it. Recognizing at last the good sense of the animals, their riders gave them full rein and let them do as they would, without opposition or protest. And so the youths journeyed on through the slow black hours of the night, nearly dropping from their saddles from fatigue and sleep and hunger, for during three days they had had no rest, and nothing to eat but the corn-stalks they gathered as they rode through the fields of the Indians. And their horses were not much better off; for during the same length of time they had not been unsaddled, and the bits had only been taken out of their mouths to let them eat. And now, as the youths felt their way along, seeing nothing as they said but death looking them straight in the face, camp-fires began to glimmer through the trees, to the right and left. Sometimes pictured in a great circle of light, bands of Indians would be seen feasting and dancing and

merry-making, and sometimes so near were they that their singing and music and din of noise and confusion could be distinctly heard. The Spaniards thanked God that it covered the footfalls of their horses. Even the sudden and frantic barking of the more watchful dogs trying to give the alarm passed unnoticed. Had it been otherwise, the Spaniards would never have lived to tell of it.

When the forest was silent and dark again, Juan Lopez said to his comrade: "Either take your lance and kill me here on the spot, or let me have a wink of sleep; I cannot go a step farther, nor hold myself on my horse, for I am dropping with sleep." Gonzalo Silvestre, who had already refused Cacho three or four times, could not withstand his importunity any longer. "Get off your horse, then," he said impatiently, "and go to sleep, if you would rather run the risk of being killed by the Indians than resist one hour longer. The pass through the swamp cannot be very far off now, and we must get through that before day, for if light catches us here we shall never get through alive." Juan Lopez, without waiting for more than consent, had dropped from his saddle upon the earth like one dead, and before Silvestre had finished speaking was fast asleep. Silvestre took his lance and bridle from his hand. A great cloud passed over the night and rain poured down in torrents; but all the water of that or any other deluge would have failed to waken or even disturb Juan Lopez.

The rain ceased, the clouds passed away, and in a flash it seemed to Silvestre it was broad daylight; perhaps he himself had slept on his horse like his companion on the ground. Hastily calling to Juan Lopez in a suppressed voice, he tried to rouse him, but finally he had to take the end of his lance to him. "Look," he whispered angrily, "what your sleeping has brought us to! It is daylight and we shall never escape the Indians now!" Juan Lopez was in the saddle like a flash, and the two galloped at full rein, the two horses stretching their legs as gallantly as if they had had no past stress. But in the light of day, as the Adelantado had told them, they could not help being seen by the Indians. In a moment the forest was clamorous with alarm; cries and yells, blowing of horns and conch shells, beating of drums, the hue and cry rising behind, spread on each side, then flew on ahead and was answered by Indians far away in the distance before them. As the two youths galloped into sight of a great stretch of marsh and of water, lying before them, from every bush, reed, and branch there darted canoes filled with yelling savages. It seemed to them that the very leaves fell from the trees to turn into canoes filled with savages. They saw the fate awaiting them, but they saw too that in daring, not in prudence, lay their only chance. They galloped through the marsh and spurred into the deep water and swam. Arrows pelted them like hail. "God alone," they exclaimed afterwards, "knew how they

did it," but they got through. As they came out on to the dry land, Gonzalo turned his head for a look backward: he said that the water was strewn with arrows as a street is strewn with flowers on a day of high festival.

The wild clamour of the pursuit had reached the camp. Suspecting the cause of it, the troopers, calling out to one another, jumped on their horses and spurred down the road to the rescue. A long way ahead of them all sped Nuño de Tobar, racing his beautiful grey charger. Disgraced though he was, and unranked, he was still the handsomest and most dashing cavalier in the army, and the soldier's ideal, in truth, of a noble cavalier, who for a friend would of himself defy the onslaught of armies. The Indians burst like a thunder-cloud from the forest and into the road, but at sight of the troopers charging towards them they stopped, turned, and vanished.

Gonzalo Silvestre delivered his message, and in less than an hour afterwards was on his way back to the Adelantado with the supplies of food and his escort of twenty lancers. Juan Lopez Cacho remained with Moscoso. "For," said he, "now that the danger is over, the captain-general did not order me to return any more than to go."

The Adelantado received Gonzalo Silvestre as handsomely as he had sent him. Before all his troops, and with the high-sounding words that he knew so well when and how to use, he praised his energy and courage in the incomparable peril

of his mission, confessing that he had not dared to hope to see him alive again. "No man," he concluded, "could humanly do more," and he pledged himself that Gonzalo one day should receive his fitting reward.

CHAPTER V

ACUERA

THE Spaniards marched through the territory of Uribarricuxi, and came into that of another tribe and chief, Acuera, for tribe and chief here, as in many other parts of Florida, had the same name. As before, the line of march was deserted, the Indians having fled to the forest. As soon as a few captives were secured, De Soto sent them with presents and greetings to their chief, as he had sent to Uribarricuxi and Hirrihigua. He kindly invited Acuera to come from his hiding-place and meet the Spaniards in peace and friendship. The Indians, he said, should rejoice to have the Spaniards as friends and brothers, for they were a brave and warlike people, and if their friendship were not accepted, they could do much harm and damage to the land. And Acuera could hold it for certain that he, their commander, had no will to injure any one, as was to be seen by the country he had already passed through, where he had done no harm, but on the contrary had shown friendship even to those who did not care to receive it, his first and principal intention being to bring all the provinces of that great country into subjection to his master, the

powerful emperor and king of Spain. Therefore, he wished to see Acuera and talk to him fully and freely, so that he could explain to him, and tell him of the orders the king had given about the treatment of the natives of the land.

Acuera, like Urribarricuxi, and Hirrihigua, was too wily to be lured into the power of the invaders of his territory; but unlike them, he answered the Spanish general. From other Spaniards, he said, that in years gone by had come into the land, he had become well acquainted with what manner of people they were, and knew their life and manners. They held it their business to go wandering round like vagabonds from country to country, robbing people who had done them no offence whatever. With such a people he wished no kind of peace and friendship, but war, deadly, never-ending war. Even if they were as brave as they boasted themselves to be, he had no fear whatever of them, for he and his people held themselves to be no less brave. To prove this he promised the Spaniards to fight them so long as they cared to remain in his lands; not openly or in field of battle, but by ambush, stratagem, and surprise. So he warned them and requested them to be on their guard, for he had ordered his people to bring him every week two Christian heads; no more, as he would be content with that. By beheading two of them every week, he could finish them all in the course of a few years; for even if they settled and took up their abode in his land, they could not perpetuate them-

selves there, as they had not brought their wives to raise families. As to what the Spanish general said about obedience to the king of Spain, he himself, Acuera, was king in his own land, and there was no need for him to become the subject of another, who already possessed so many subjects. Moreover he held those men to be most vile and pusillanimous, who put themselves under another man when they could live free. He and his people would rather die a hundred deaths to maintain their freedom and the freedom of their country; and this they said not for once but forever. And as to what the Spanish general said about the Spaniards being servants of the king of Spain, and going about conquering new lands for him, they were welcome to that position; and now he held them in even less esteem than before, since they confessed that they were servants and fought to gain lands for another to rule and to enjoy. As they bore the hunger and toil, and suffered the ills and hardships, and risked their lives, it would be more honourable and profitable for them to win lands for themselves and their children, not for some one else. And since they were so low that even at this distance they did not lose the name of servants, they need never, at any time, hope for his friendship; he did not care to bestow it so basely. He did not need to know the orders of their king, as he knew what to do in his own lands, and how to treat the Spaniards, who, in short, were to get out of it as quickly as possible if they did not wish all to die in it.

Acuera proved to be a man of his word. During the twenty days the invaders were in his territory his people neither slept nor rested in the fulfilling of his commands. Not two heads every week, but two every three days was the tally they kept of their work. A Spaniard could not wander a hundred yards from camp without being spitted by an arrow; and however quick a rush was made to the rescue, his comrades found a headless corpse awaiting them. If the body was buried where it was found, the Indians would return the following night, dig it up, cut it in quarters, and hang the members in the trees, where the Spaniards might see them. Fourteen Christian heads were sent to the chief by his warriors. And this was not all, for they wounded the invaders besides by the score. The forest lay so close around the camp that they could make their strokes with very little risk to themselves, escaping easily and quickly to it afterwards, and they never left undone a stroke that opportunity offered. And so great was their caution and vigilance, that the Spaniards, with their utmost efforts, and with all their advantages of armour and horses, were never able to kill more than fifty of them. Truthful indeed were the words shouted by the Indians after the army all along its march: "Pass along, robbers! Pass along! In Acuera you will find what you deserve. Your bodies will be cut into pieces and hung in the highest trees on the roadside."

The captive Indians spoke of a province lying

farther along to the northeast, called Ocali, where the people wore ornaments of gold. This decided the Adelantado to direct his march thither. The country, as the distance increased from the sea, became more and more beautiful, the soil more and more fertile. Such a region of fine trees the Spaniards had never beheld; they noted every variety of nut, oak, and pine known to them, and great numbers of other trees that they did not know, and the forests were so clean and clear that the horses could get with ease through them. Swamps and low places were no longer met, nor those murderous deceptive stretches of grass that lay along the seashore, where a footfall would send the surface into a tremble for fifty paces around, upon which, if a horse ventured he would sink out of sight. And as had been foretold by the Indians, the country was well supplied with food; little groups of empty cabins surrounded by teeming cornfields stretched along miles of the march. But no gold was seen, nor any evidence of it.

The village of the Ocali was deserted, but its storehouses had been left well filled with corn and vegetables, dried plums and grapes, pumpkins, nuts, and acorns. De Soto quartered his army there, while runners carried the usual messages and presents in search of the chief, who allowed himself to be persuaded to come upon a visit to the camp. The Spaniards received him with many protestations of friendliness, but he proved so suspicious and watchful that nothing was gained from the

visit. Near the village was a river, which was too deep to be forded, and the chief agreed that his men should build a bridge over it. As he and De Soto were walking along the bank selecting the proper place, a band of about fifty Indians with bows and arrows suddenly appeared on the opposite side, and shouting, "You want a bridge, do you, robbers? You will never see it made with our hands," they let fly a volley of arrows at De Soto and his suite.

The cries they gave roused the greyhound Bruto, whose collar was held by a page. The dog, with a spring that dragged the page to the ground and made him loose his hold, leaped into the water and made for the Indians on the opposite bank. The Spaniards called to him, but he would not heed. Swimming steadily forward through the swarm of arrows, which were soon sticking in him as closely as pins in a cushion, he reached the bank and eagerly sprang upon it, but tottered and fell dead, — literally shot to pieces. More than fifty arrows were counted in his shoulders and head. The Spaniards grieved bitterly over him, for he was a rare animal and had proved himself as good a soldier as any in the conquest. By day and night he had stood his watch and guard, and in the province Acuera had, by his vigilance, saved many a man his head. Indeed, as his fate showed, he was never off guard. Many of his feats would have been considered marvellous for another animal. Only a few days before, four young warriors came to the camp, ostensibly

as envoys, really as spies. The Adelantado received them with his habitual affability, giving them some gaudy Spanish trifles as presents, and ordering them to be provided with food. The Indians were sitting quietly eating, when seeing the Spaniards completely off their guard, the four of them jumped up as one man and ran towards the woods at full speed, which was too fast for any Spaniard to overtake them on foot, and there were no horses at hand. Bruto, who happened to be near, hearing the outcry, and seeing the Indians running, gave chase. With human judgment, he flew past the first Indian, the next, and the next, and catching up with the one ahead, sprang upon his shoulders, pulled him to the ground, and held him there, until the Indian behind came up. Leaping upon him, he pulled him to the ground and held him; and so on, repeating the manœuvre until he had all four on the ground, he sprang from one to the other, as fast as one arose, jumping upon him, and barking so fiercely and furiously that, confused and stunned, all lay helpless until the Spanish soldiers came and took them in charge.

On another occasion, before the army reached Ocali, while some Spaniards and Indians were talking together on the bank of the river in the most amicable way, one of the Indians, acting from one of those foolhardy impulses that seemed irresistible to the race, struck one of the Spaniards over the head with his bow and leaped into the stream, all of his companions leaping after him.

Bruto, seeing it, sprang also into the water, and swimming past the others, until he reached the Indian who had struck the blow, he tore him to pieces in mid-stream. In truth the Indians were just in hating Bruto as if he were a Christian. He was of that breed of dogs that passed into the saying that it was not the Spaniards so much as their dogs and horses that conquered the New World. Had he lived, he would assuredly have been as famous as Becerillo of Porto Rico, to whom the Spaniards always allotted a man's share of the spoils, or as Becerillo's pup, Leoncillo, belonging to Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. This dog owned gold and slaves, and, it is said, could always distinguish the Indians who came with peace in their hearts from those who came with war.

The Spaniards after this made their own bridge, and crossing the river, moved on towards the next province. But before leaving Ocali they set ambushes, and captured thirty Indians for slaves. They had brought some along from Hirrihigua and Urribarricuxi; but there were still many soldiers unprovided, and they grumbled for cooks to make their bread. Pounding corn in a wooden mortar, they said, and sifting the meal through their coats of mail, and then making the bread and baking it upon tiles, was so troublesome that they preferred eating the corn parched whole.

CHAPTER VI

VITACHUCO

BY means of fair words, gifts, and promises on the one hand, and dire threats on the other, the Indians captured at Ocali were made to act as guides as far as the next province. This was a vast territory called Vitachuco, measuring fifty leagues as the army marched across it. It was divided among three brothers, the eldest Vitachuco ruling over one half, the next over three tenths, and the youngest over two tenths of it. The army arrived first at the lands of the youngest brother, Ochile, and the Adelantado moving quickly ahead with a squadron, surprised and captured the village one morning before daylight, with Ochile and all his warriors in it. The Indians were terrified beyond resistance by the sight of the strange, new army, the men in armour, the horses, banners flying, and above all, by the bands playing their loudest music, for De Soto had commanded the band to play its loudest at the assault. All the other captives were set at liberty, and only the young chief kept a prisoner. But he was treated with such honour and flattery that in his gratitude he was easily per-

suaded to send messages to his brothers counselling their submission also to the invaders. He told them how the Spaniards had come into his territory, and how they said that their desire and spirit was to have all the Indians as friends and brothers; that they were going on through to other territories, and would not do any injury on their march, particularly to those who received them peaceably. But if there were any who would not thus receive them, the Spaniards would destroy their village, burn their cabins for firewood, devastate their cornfields, and waste and scatter their provisions, taking at will what they needed,—in short, conduct themselves as in the land of enemies. All of this might be avoided by accepting the peace they offered, and it should be done for the country's interest.

The second brother, who lived near Ochile, answered at once, thanking his brother for the advice, and promising him to come in three or four days in state and ceremony to make peace with the Spaniards, supplicating his brother in the meantime to keep on good terms with such powerful conquerors. Three days later he came, with a suite of his finest looking warriors, and he left nothing undone in the way of submission to keep the Spaniards in a good humour.

Vitachuco made no answer to the message of Ochile beyond holding the messenger and not letting him return. The two brothers, under the compliments and presents of the Spanish com-

mander, sent another messenger to him, begging him not to delay accepting the terms offered, for the Christians were indeed a folk whom the Indians could not hope to get the better of in war. In person they were the bravest of the brave, and were truly what they called themselves, invincible, being in truth, by blood, spirit, and valour, children of the sun and moon, the deities of the Indians; as such they came from the country where the sun rises, bringing with them beasts called horses, which were so brave, fleet, and powerful that the Indians could not withstand them by strength, nor escape them by flight. Therefore, as his brothers, anxious for his life and safety, they besought him not to bring destruction upon himself.

Vitachuco's answer to this was: "It is very plain that you are youths, and that you lack judgment and experience to talk as you do about these Christians, praising them as good men who never harm any one; as children of the sun, valiant and deserving any service that we can render them. The captivity that you have put yourselves in, and the vile, cowardly spirit that you have acquired in the short while since you gave yourselves up to be servants and slaves, make you talk like women, praising that which you ought to vituperate and abhor. Do you not see that these Christians cannot be better than those of the past who did such base things, for are they not of the same nation and the same land? Do you not see their perfidy and

treachery? If you were men with men's judgment, you would see that by their own lives and words they show themselves to be children of the evil spirit, and not of the sun and moon, your gods; for do they not go from land to land killing and plundering and destroying whatever they find in their way, taking away the wives and daughters of others instead of bringing their own with them? As for their making homes and settlements of their own, they are not content with any land they see or tread, for their delight is to wander like vagabonds, living upon the toil and sweat of others. If they were all good, as you say, they would not leave their own country, where they could make use of their goodness in sowing, planting, and gathering their crops to sustain themselves, without harm to others, and go about as they do, committing their robberies without shame and without fear of the Great Spirit. Tell them not to enter my territory; for I promise them, however valiant they be, if they put their feet within it, they shall never get out of it alive; for I shall destroy and make an end of them all in it. Half I shall roast,—the other half I shall boil alive."

And now that he was started, Vitachuco did not wait for further messages, but every day sent two or more of his warriors, who came like heralds into the Spanish camp, sounding their horns and proclaiming his defiance and threats of the various ways he would put an end to the Spaniards so soon as they set foot within his domains: "He would

make the plains open and swallow them up; he would make the hills come together and fall upon them and bury them alive; he would order such wild, furious winds to blow that the trees would be uprooted and hurled upon them as they passed through the forests; he would command a great multitude of birds to fly over them with venom in their beaks, which they should drop upon them, so that their flesh would fester and rot away from them; he would poison the water, the grass, the trees and the fields, and even the air, so that neither man nor horse among the Christians should escape with life; and their fate would thus serve as a warning to all who thereafter should dare to enter his lands against his will."

Nevertheless the Spaniards advanced steadily upon their march, De Soto and his officers all the while feasting and entertaining the young chiefs, and they working with might and main to please their masters and bring their haughty, ferocious brother also into the same subserviency. Finally, seeing that their messages were of no avail, they obtained the Adelantado's leave to go themselves and speak to Vitachuco. And in truth they did so work upon him with their fears, and with the fact, that notwithstanding his threats the Spaniards were already well within his territory, that Vitachuco began to consider the policy of dissembling his hatred until a more convenient season for expressing it; that is, until under cover of pretended friendship he could fall upon and destroy them all. With this in his

mind, he changed his former savage words into others of mildness and suavity, telling his brothers that he had no idea the Spaniards were men of such parts and qualities as they described, but now since he was convinced, it would please him to enter into peaceful and friendly relations with them. But first he would like to know how many days the army would be in his territory; what provisions would be required during its stay; and what levies would be made during their march through it. De Soto replied handsomely that he would stay no longer in the territory than Vitachuco desired to have him; that he required no more provisions than Vitachuco desired to give him; and that he asked for nothing further than Vitachuco's friendship.

Upon this, Vitachuco began to make ready for a grand reception of the Spaniards, and for a grand massacre of them afterwards. He gave out publicly that day by day his affection for the Spaniards and his desire to serve them were growing. He summoned the bravest and finest looking of his warriors to go with him to meet them, and commanded a great store of food, water, and grass for the horses to be gathered together in his village against their arrival in it, so that there should be no lack of anything, either for hospitality or for entertainment. When all was in readiness to his satisfaction, he sallied forth with his two brothers and an escort of five hundred warriors in gala array to meet the army. A handsome and noble sight they presented, striding over the country with

their magnificent war bonnets of feathers waving above their heads, their finest bows in their hands, and their gayest quivers at their backs. Vitachuco's haughty head and fierce countenance rose preëminent above all. He was of about the same age as De Soto, finely proportioned and noble in bearing, and as he stepped forward to greet the Spanish commander, in the eyes of the onlookers, the savage had no concessions to make the cavalier either in presence or in manner; in truth he acted his rôle with the grace and ease of a subtle courtier. De Soto, always won by submission, embraced him warmly.

The Spanish army entered the village in full military style, horse and foot, in regular squadrons, banners flying, bands playing. The village was a large one, of about two hundred well built cabins, and surrounded on the outskirts by a fringe of smaller and meaner ones. The Adelantado with his staff and body-guard lodged in the great cabin of Vitachuco, with him and his two brothers; and for three days the Spaniards and Indians gave themselves up to good cheer and conviviality. Then the two brothers took their leave, and Vitachuco entered upon the second act of his drama. His ostentatious friendliness had in fact so put the Spaniards off their guard that he was able in all security to work out his plans against them, and success lay within his grasp, when, and lucky it was for the Spaniards, he let it slip from him. As if drunken from imagination of the fumes of the blood he was



De Soto and Vitachuco.

going to shed, he could not keep his elation to himself nor his counsel, and like the drunken he would not fear nor calculate. There were in the army four warrior captives from a distant tribe, carried along by the Adelantado as interpreters; Vitachuco secretly sent for them, and not only told them of his approaching triumph, but vaingloriously gave them all the details of it, promising them honour and position if they chose to lend a hand. He told them that he had collected and held in readiness ten thousand braves, who came as they pleased in and out of the village upon pretext of fetching in wood, water, and food, the Spaniards suspecting nothing. In three or four days he would muster them all in the plain outside the village, with their weapons hidden at their feet in the grass, and then he would invite the Spanish general to go with him to see what a fine band of warriors he had to fight for the Spaniards, if need be, in the Conquest. "As we are friends," explained Vitachuco, "he will come with me without distrust. I shall have twelve strong, daring warriors with me who will keep near him, and as we get close to where my bands are drawn up, these warriors will jump upon him and seize him, whether he is on foot or on horseback, and make off with him to the woods. This will be the signal for my braves to seize their weapons and fall upon the strangers, who, unarmed and stunned by the capture of their chief, can easily be destroyed."

The four Indians, carried away by the same ex-

citement as the chief, pledged themselves to aid in the massacre, which they praised and lauded as a plot worthy of a great warrior and chief. But better judgment came to them after a while, and showed them the enterprise in all its dangers and difficulties. Their experience with the Spaniards did not lead to the belief that they could be taken unarmed and put to death so easily and simply; and the more they thought about it the more they were convinced of this. Therefore sure and certain fear triumphed over doubtful hope, for their death as participants in the treachery was sure if the Spaniards should find it out before they revealed it. They decided as to themselves to change their design, and secretly going to Juan Ortiz they told him all that Vitachuco had told them. Juan hastened to repeat the revelation to the Adelantado. He at once called a council of all his officers and laid it before them; and they all agreed that their best plan was to meet dissimulation with dissimulation, treachery with treachery, and to take Vitachuco in the very same trap that he had prepared for them. Orders were given the soldiers to be on their guard, but to continue in their seeming careless gayety, so as not to arouse suspicion; and twelve of the strongest soldiers in the army were selected and kept in readiness to escort the Adelantado whenever Vitachuco invited him to review the Indian muster. And so the day for the third, and, as Vitachuco thought, the last, act of his drama arrived — a bright, exhilarating morning.

At an early hour the chief presented himself at the Spanish headquarters, and with a great show of courtesy prayed the Adelantado to grant him the favour of coming out into the open field to see his people drawn up in their battle array, so that, inspired by so great a presence, they might wish to fight for the Spaniards with courage and spirit whenever occasion offered. He added that he himself wished the Spanish general to see that his warriors could form in squadrons as well as those other warriors on the other side of the world, about whom the Spaniards told such great stories. De Soto answered that he should like nothing better than to do what Vitachuco asked, but to make the sight still finer and to give the Indians themselves something to look at, he would order out his men, formed also in their squadrons of horse and foot, and the two armies could thus excite one another by their rivalry. The chief had not bargained for so much pomp and ceremony, and was rather taken aback by the prospect of it. But obstinate in his conviction of the superior strength and courage of his warriors, and sure of their being equal to destroying the Spaniards, no matter how well prepared they were, he accepted the proposed match.

The two walked to the field together, each followed by his twelve picked men. The field, just outside the village, was a beautiful and spacious one. On the right hand, a dense forest closed it in; on the left were two lakes, one in full view, small, round, and so deep that a man could not touch

bottom five feet from the bank ; the other lake was more like a wide river flowing past, both ends being out of sight. Half-way between the forest and the lake stood Vitachuco's squadrons — noble looking warriors, with height magnificently increased by their superb war feathers. Their squadrons were formed with perfect military precision — files straight, ranks open, pickets properly stationed. The Spaniards eyed them with soldierly admiration. To all appearances they were unarmed.

The Spanish squadrons marched gayly in with their flags and music and took their position ; the infantry skirting the forest, the cavalry near the middle of the plain. In the breathless silence, and under the fixed gaze of the two armies, Vitachuco and De Soto walked forward together toward the spot where each was to give the signal to his men to seize the other. It was a game in which the first move won, and the Spaniard gave his signal first. His twelve men threw themselves upon Vitachuco, and although the twelve Indians as quickly jumped upon them, they could not wrest the chief from their grasp. At the same moment the trumpeter sounded the charge. De Soto, vaulting upon a horse held in readiness by a page, spurred upon the Indians with his battle-cry, the cavalry following.

It was said of De Soto in Central America that he was fond of the sport of killing Indians, and he showed that day that the saying was a true one. He and his horsemen charged over the Indian squadrons as over a wheat-field, trampling, crushing,

slaying with their swords, right and left. And it was proof armour against naked skins; Toledo blades against bows and arrows: the Indian files went down under them like rows of wheat under the sickle. Brave as they were, the moment came when they could stand it no longer. They broke and ran, some towards the forest, and those who could outrun the horses and dodge the crossbowmen, escaped. Some ran towards the long lake, and there also, those who distanced the horsemen jumped into it, and swimming under the water, escaped.

The vanguard, as usual formed of the best and bravest, paid as usual the penalty of their position. The cavalry headed off their retreat either to the long lake or the forest, where there was some chance of escape. The only refuge open to them was the small lake, and some nine hundred managed to reach it and jump into it, the Spaniards spurring after them up to their horses' necks in the water. But the Indians swam out of reach. The Spaniards then surrounded the lake, the soldiers running from all over the plain to the bank. All day long they stood there trying to frighten the warriors into surrender, shouting threats to them, but shooting only a few bolts from their crossbows, aimed not to kill, for the Indians were already, with no earthly chance of escape, held as captives. But all day long, desperate though their situation was, the surrounded warriors withstood their foe, shouting back their threats of defiance, swimming round and round. The Spanish soldiers related afterwards

in Spain the perhaps incredible story that the warriors ceased not to shoot at the Spaniards with their best aim until their arrows were exhausted ; and to shoot, a warrior would mount upon the backs of five or six of his companions, and send off arrow after arrow, until his quiver was exhausted, when he would drop down into the water and another would take his place. The water was too deep for standing ; they had to keep swimming or drown.

At sunset not one had surrendered. Night came on ; the Spaniards lighted fires and kept up their cordon, horse and foot stationed at regular intervals, so that not an Indian could hope to put foot on the bank either for rest or escape. Sometimes swimming stealthily under water, with a lily leaf held in his mouth to hide his head, a warrior would get safely up to the edge of the land ; but a lance thrust or a bolt from a crossbow would drive him back at once to deep water. The Spaniards thought that by keeping the Indians swimming all night, fatigue would force them to surrender. But, however much they exerted themselves to harass and torment, they could not exert themselves to the measure of the strength and spirit of the Indians.

Midnight came, and the warriors had been fourteen hours in the water, and the water was now freezing cold ; but not one had yet surrendered. Juan Ortiz and the four Indian interpreters then came to the bank, and they laboured with their best heart and will, and by pleadings and persuasions and oaths to

protect them, they coaxed one by one the most exhausted out of the water ; but so slowly that by daylight only fifty had given themselves up. After that, seeing that the Spaniards had kept their promises, and that none of the fifty had been killed, but that on the contrary they had received good treatment, others came forward, but so reluctantly and so much against their will, that, after swimming close in to the bank, many would turn and swim back again to their comrades. But the love of life would draw them back again to the bank, and thus after a while they would surrender. About ten o'clock, two hundred came out in a body. They had been in the lake twenty-four hours and it was pitiable to see them — stiff with cold, spent with fatigue, hunger, and want of sleep. By three o'clock only seven remained in the lake, and neither the entreaties of the interpreters, nor the promises of the Adelantado, nor the example of those who had surrendered could prevail upon them to yield. On the contrary, they seemed to have recovered the courage the others had lost, and still swimming about, they could shout their defiant answers to the bank : “ We ask not your promises, and fear not your threats of death.” Their courage and endurance would beyond a doubt have ended only with their lives but that it seemed to the Adelantado inhumanity to permit men of such strength of soul as conquered the hearts even of their conquerors to perish. When their voices grew faint and finally ceased, he commanded twelve soldiers, good swimmers, to swim into the lake with

their swords in their mouths, and fetch the Indians out by force. It was done, the Spaniards seizing them by a leg or an arm or the hair and dragging them along to the shore, and throwing them upon the sward, where they lay stretched like the dead. They had been thirty hours in the water without as far as their conquerors knew having once put foot to the earth, or having received any other form of relief. Carrying them to their quarters, the Spaniards used every means to restore them to consciousness. But the Indians did not revive until near midnight.

When Vitachuco, neavily guarded in his own cabin, heard of the end of his great attempt, that his noblest and best warriors had not only been conquered but were now captives and slaves of the Spaniards, forced to cook for them and serve them, he gave himself up to the unrestrained fury of his passions, and by day and night he thought of nothing but vengeance, vengeance, vengeance. And now, precipitated, as it were, into an abysm of blind ferocity, he wrought out his own destruction and that of his people. The idea came to him in his lurid frenzy that, as these nine hundred warriors captured from the lake were picked men, the bravest of his braves, they alone might suffice to accomplish what his thousands had failed to do. At any rate he counted that each one of them was good to kill one Spaniard, as he himself was good to kill one — the Adelantado. And man for man, there were just about as many Indians in the village as Spaniards.

The wild exploit once suggested, he rushed into it, without knowing whether his warriors were in chains or free, whether they had weapons or not. He himself needed no other weapons than his own strong fists; and so he decided it must be with the others. The four Indian boys who served him in his cabin prison were sent secretly through the camp to pass the word round that on the third day from the following, precisely at noon, each warrior was to be ready to kill the master to whom he had been allotted. The signal to begin would be a war-whoop that he, Vitachuco, would give—a whoop that he promised would be loud and clear enough to be heard from one end of the village to the other. The warriors sent answer that they would do as he bid or die in the effort.

It was just one week after the last attempt. The midday meal was ending; Vitachuco, having been pardoned and reinstated in favor, occupied his usual place at the officers' table, at the head of the long bench, on the right hand of the Adelantado. As he finished eating, he stretched himself full length upon the bench, and began to twist and turn his body from side to side, to clinch and open his hands, stretch one arm and then the other, draw his fists up to his shoulders, and strike them out again with all his strength until the joints cracked like snapping reeds. Then springing to his feet with lightning quickness, he seized the Adelantado by the collar with his left hand, and with his clinched right gave him such a blow over the face

and mouth that De Soto hung limp in his grasp like a child. Flinging him to the earth, Vitachuco jumped upon him with both feet, giving a war-whoop so clear, shrill, and loud that it was heard for miles around. It was his last call to his men. The Spanish officers, drawing their swords, ten or twelve blades plunged into his body ere the mouth closed, and Vitachuco fell dead upon his enemy. The officers were none too soon. Another blow from that fist would have finished the commander. De Soto, unconscious, the blood streaming from eyes, nose, and mouth, looked as if a sledge-hammer had struck him in his face; his nose was flat, jaws were shattered, teeth knocked out.

And now from all over the camp rose the sound of brave fighting. As Vitachuco's cry pierced the air, every Indian rushed upon his master with whatever utensil or missile he had in his hand or could seize. Pots were jerked from their hooks, and their contents dashed over heads, scalding away the whole face from men. Tongs, pokers, fire-irons, red hot from the fire, burned away brows and nostrils, and branded backs. Plates, dishes, brooms, chairs, tables, jugs, were smashed with intent to kill. Some Spaniards fell stunned at one stroke. Many, like De Soto, had their faces crushed and teeth dashed out by clinched fists. Many were flung upon the ground and kicked and thumped and so left for dead. The Indians kept their promise to their chief. They did as he bade them, wielding their fists and grotesque weapons with all the best passion that could fire the hearts of

men, and they died in the effort. The first moment of surprise over, the Spaniards, calling to one another, seized their weapons, and jumping upon horses, were not long in having the Indians at their mercy. And no mercy did they show. Every man of them was killed. Not one of them was left alive, which was a great pity, as the Spaniards themselves bore testimony; for they were brave and true warriors, doing all that men could for their chief and their people. In all, only four Spaniards were killed, but numbers were seriously wounded; and, indeed, there was hardly a man in the army without a burn, bruise, cut, or welt on some part of the body. And lucky it was for the Spaniards, as they acknowledged, that most of their captives were in chains, for, if all had been free, brave and strong as they were, although unarmed, man to man against their foes, they would have gone dangerously far towards making good their chief's call upon them. When the conflict was over, every Spaniard brought what slaves he had in chains into the public square, where platoons of halberdiers despatched them.

As for the Adelantado, his injuries were painful and long in healing. For twenty days his swollen, disfigured face was kept in bandages and plasters, and it was a month before he was able to eat any but soft food.¹

¹ The village of Vitachuco can be located only vaguely, as being in the province of Apalache.

CHAPTER VII

APALACHE

FOUR days later, with their bodies sore and stiff, and their heads in bandages, the Spaniards withdrew from the bloody village, glad enough to leave it behind. But they soon found that only the village was left behind, not the people, nor the fierce, indomitable spirit of resistance. Seventy-five miles, as they counted it, from Vitachuco's village, lay the village of the next province, Osachile.¹ The country was pleasant to the eye; easy woodland, with long stretches of fields of standing corn, overrun with pumpkins and beans; but it was a hornet's nest to march through. From every mile of forest and field Indians swarmed in furious hordes, desperately throwing away ten lives to wound one horse or one man. The Spaniards, also maddened at last beyond themselves by such fierce hatred, struck back as savage against savage, chasing and running down the Indians like wild hogs, and sticking their lances through them, throwing one wretch in his agony aside to

¹ Irving suggests that the river Oscilla may take its name from that old Indian name and village.

spur after another, taking no prisoners, killing all they saw. The route could be traced by the dropping of dead bodies, like the route of Hop o' my Thumb in the fairy tale by the dropping of white pebbles. The Osachile village (to follow the Spanish chronicles, which give the same name to tribe, village, and chief) was silent and bare, not a living thing to be seen in it. It stood on the bank of a river and was like all the Indian villages seen in Florida—to see one was to see all, and the description of one serves for the description of all—but the mound of the chief's cabin was more considerable than any seen before, and was indeed a fortress. It was from twelve to eighteen feet high, with room on top for ten or twelve cabins. A wide path paved with logs laid flat upon the earth led by such easy stages to the summit that the horses of the Spaniards easily ascended and descended it. The sides, steep and straight, were walled in by a stockade of stout logs, which also extended up the sides of the path.

The Spaniards remained here only long enough to ambush some slaves to replace those lost in Vitachuco's village, and these were carried along, as the others had been, with chains fastened at one end to iron collars about their necks and attached at the other to the belts of the troopers. But the Spaniards complained that sometimes, when sent into the forest for wood, the slaves killed their troopers and ran away with their chains; and sometimes, at night, they filed or broke their chains with a piece of stone,

and so made their escape. The women and young boys, when they were a hundred leagues from their country, were loosed from their chains and thenceforth they always served their masters faithfully.

The march from Osachile was towards Apalache, the great province of which the Spaniards had heard marvellous tales ever since they entered the country; tales, not only of its fertility and plenty, but of its brave, indomitable people. As had been shouted about Acuera, flying Indians now shouted threats of Apalache at their pursuers: "There you will find men to kill you!" After marching three days through the neutral forest that separated the two provinces, the army came to the frontier line and demarcation of Apalache. This was a swamp of such dimensions, so vast, so impenetrable, that the Spaniards ever afterward called it simply the "Great Swamp";¹ all other swamps encountered dwindled by comparison into utter littleness. De Soto halted his army in the open space that lay before its sheer, precipitous heights of trees and vines, one massive green mountain of foliage, and, as the day was yet early, sent a hundred men through the only opening he could discover to reconnoitre what lay within and beyond; and if they found water, to sound its depth. The path, barely wide enough for two men abreast, wound like a serpent between the huge trunks of gigantic trees wedged one against another in the dank, damp soil; no light or sight

¹ By some authorities supposed to be the great swamp of Okefinokee; by others, the Ohahichee swamp.

of day—nothing visible overhead in the subterranean gloom but the dropping coils and loops of gaunt black vines, the path lying at the bottom of it like a trail through a chasm.

The detachment had gone but a short distance in it when they saw ahead Indians prepared and determined to resist. The path was so narrow and the growth so impenetrable that on neither side could any fighting be done except by the two foremost men in each file. The Spaniards therefore placed two of their best armoured men in front, and behind them two crossbowmen; and so, the one pair using their swords steadily from behind their shields, the other driving their bolts over their comrades' shoulders, they drove the Indians along, step by step, through two miles of the crawling, twisting way, until suddenly, through a narrow aperture, they burst into a broad sheet of water. Here, where they could spread out, a sharp struggle followed, with killing and wounding, good shots and fine cuts on both sides. The Indians held their own; the Spaniards could neither sound the water in front nor advance one step farther with their reconnoissance; and so they sent hurried word to the Adelantado. He came at once himself, with reinforcements, the best foot-soldiers in the army. The Indians also sent for reinforcements, and now the fight that followed was fast and furious. Both sides met in water up to their waists, clambering over fallen logs, their feet slipping and sliding over roots and cypress knees. The Spaniards, knowing

that it would not do to turn back without finding the passage through the water, fought doggedly, never yielding an inch, but edging slowly forward, the Indians as doggedly holding their own—or trying to—but forced step by step backward through the water, and finally driven across and up the bank on the other side.

A clear, narrow path was discovered beneath the water, which led to where felled trees bridged the deep part of the channel, and on the other side of this a path under the water led onward to where the gigantic, impenetrable forest began again. De Soto at once returned to the camp to make his preparations for the next day. Two hundred picked men, provided with axes and hatchets, were ordered to get ready to make their way again through the forest and across the water, and clear a space on the opposite side for a camp. As before, the men in armour were to lead, protecting the archers behind. Two hours before day the start was made, each soldier carrying his rations for the day, a handful of parched or boiled corn, in his bosom. With all possible speed, they filed through the path and reached the water. To their surprise there was neither sight nor sound of opposition. That the Spaniards should dare in the darkness of night to hazard the difficult passage had never occurred to the Indians, and they had not prepared for it. When daylight came, however, and they found that the Spaniards had crossed the bridge, they made the

forest ring with their fury. Yelling like demons, they rushed into the water to defend the rest of the way, and fought with more than redoubled ferocity. The struggle was too fierce to be a long one. The Spaniards stood stoutly where they were, and as on the day before, the Indians were forced to give way before armour and steel weapons. Step by step the naked mass of them was driven back, out of the water and up the bank; there was no way of retreat except into the narrow path, through which they could not fly except in single file. The Spaniards pushed and crushed them all into it one upon another, and then fifty men marching in after them closed the entrance. The others set at once to work to clear the space for a camp. And so both sides remained during the rest of the day—the baffled and enraged Indians sending out war-whoops and yells of defiance and insult, the Spaniards cutting trees and burning brush. When night came on, there was not much change, for the Indians kept up their din, and the Spaniards sat or lay where they were, and made no attempt at sleeping. Daylight brought the Adelantado, with the rest of the army and baggage following slowly and painfully. Although there was no opposition or obstacle from the savages, there was from the narrow path, through which men, horses, and baggage could advance only one by one and at a crawling pace. It took all day for the whole of the army to reach the clearing and pitch their camp. And that night, again, the whoops, yells, and cries of the imprisoned

Indians made sleeping an impossibility. The guard in the defile stood watch behind fixed lances and swords, their food being passed to them from hand to hand. As soon as day dawned, the army was put in motion, and again advanced, pressing by physical force the Indians before them, step by step, keeping them at exactly the length of their swords' points and no more.

The last stretch of the jungle was passed and put behind, and the woodland opened clear again. The Indians were now foot and elbow free, and well they profited by it. Creeping from tree to tree, hiding behind bushes, crawling on the ground with the noiselessness and quickness of serpents, they picked off the Spaniards one by one; wounded them by scores with sudden storms of arrows; surprised them now on one side, now on the other, now in front, now in the rear, unceasingly, incessantly. The Spaniards, jaded for want of sleep and dogged and teased into ill temper, accused the trees of turning themselves into warriors, and the skies of raining down arrows against them. The woodland was clear, as has been said, but not clear enough for the horses to act, and the crossbowmen and archers seemed utterly useless; for, as usual, while one of them was making one shot, an Indian made six or seven; indeed, one arrow had scarcely left the string before another was ready aimed upon it. The few open spaces where the horsemen might have had a chance the Indians had blocked with felled trees, barricades of timber, and branches tied from tree

to tree with vines. As for the canebrakes and thickets, otherwise impassable, they had cunningly perforated them with paths, like trap-doors, all the length of the route, and in and out of these they darted incessantly, and never without grimaces, jeers, and insults, reminding the Spaniards over and over again how in this very route they had met and defeated Pamphilo de Narvaez eleven years before, and as they had done to Pamphilo de Narvaez and his army, so would they do to De Soto and his. But, notwithstanding all, the Spaniards continued their advance, slow as it was, and finally came out into the open country.

Thanking God aloud, the troopers gave rein to their horses and to their tempers. The tables were now turned in their favour, and the Indians paid for their harrying and insults and jeers, their taunts about Pamphilo de Narvaez, and their boasts that they would destroy this army as they had done that one. Every Indian seen was run down, and few were taken alive.

That evening, camp was pitched in an open field which marked the beginning of the cultivated lands of Apalache, so famed for their fertility throughout Florida. But the Indians had no mind either to rest themselves or to let their invaders rest after their toilsome days and sleepless nights. All night long they kept up their demoniacal tumult; not one hour of it but was broken by an attack, or a feigned attack. With day, the weary army resumed its march, passing through mile after mile of rich fields

of corn, pumpkins, beans, and other vegetables, extending as far as eye could reach on either side, and dotted with groups of dwellings sufficient, the Spaniards estimated, for a large population. Indeed, experience proved it, for from every cornfield and cabin-group darted out band after band of warriors, rabid to wound if they could not kill. The Spaniards, once more astounded and infuriated by such persistent ferocity, broke through all discipline and order, and slaughtered without command and without mercy, each man for himself. But their insensate cruelty was in vain, for the more they killed, the more they had to kill, the Indians, as they saw themselves so hopelessly overmatched, waxing only the more daring, the more eager to lose life.

After the cornfields came another stretch of woodland, and after these a deep river running between steep banks cut athwart the advance—a difficult crossing and one that the Indians had done their best to make more difficult. Barricades stopped the approach of horses, while a formidable palisade bristling with warriors stood in readiness for the foot-soldiers. The Indians did not await the attack. Seething out from their palisade, they threw themselves before the Spaniards. The horsemen, jumping from their horses, dashed upon the barricades with their battle-axes, to cut them away. The combat was a brave one on both sides, and despite their armour, the Spaniards fell in numbers, for the Indians fought like wild beasts, or desperate men making their last effort. But the Spaniards fought

like brave men who knew the danger they were in, and feared it. So they won the victory. Crossing the river, the army marched two leagues farther, still through a flat country of cornfields and scattered cabins, and pitched the camp far from the forest, hoping to get some sleep at last; four days and nights now they had been constantly on the watch and in the fight. But they slept as little that night as the others. The Indians, under cover of darkness, crept out from the forest to keep up their alarms and din of war-cries; and surely, the Spaniards said, they maintained the reputation that the people of Apalache were valiant and vigilant above all other people of Florida.

At the close of the fifth day's march, the army at last reached its goal, the great or chief village of Apalache. It was deserted; so in its two hundred and fifty cabins the Spaniards found at last a comfortable and much-needed rest. The Adelantado, however, was not a commander to give his men much rest. He at once set them to repairing the walls of the village and gathering provisions from neighbouring villages for the winter, while squadrons were sent out in different directions to reconnoitre the country. Two of them returned within the fixed limit of time with about the same report — a fine country, fertile lands well supplied with food, and quantities of villages filled with people; no swamps nor formidable forests.

Very different was the report made by Juan d'Añasco, who had been sent towards the south in

search of the sea, which the Indians said lay about thirty leagues from Apalache. The guide was a young Indian who had volunteered for the service with many protestations of fidelity to the Christians. After travelling two days over a good road through a level country, D'Añasco and his troop came to a village named Aute. It was deserted but well filled with provisions. Supplying themselves for four days, they proceeded onward, following the same good road. The Indian guide then began to play them false, leading them out of the road into the swamp where the fallen trees and tangled undergrowth distinguished the mire from "pools of land," as the Spaniards called them, clear, open spaces covered with grass, that looked solid enough but sank under foot like veritable pools of water. And under foot, ambushed all through water and mire, there grew a bramble bearing long, upright, sharp-pointed thorns, that wounded the feet of the horses and men most cruelly; and do what they would they could not escape nor avoid them.

Five days, however, the Spaniards struggled through the swamps, following the guide, who turned them hither and thither, first in one direction then in another, circuiting and doubling. Three times they came near enough the sea to hear the sound of the waves, but each time the guide turned from it inland. The provisions gave out and D'Añasco decided to return to Aute for more. But the way back to Aute was even more vexatious than the way to the swamp had been. The only path to follow

was in the trail of their own footprints, and the trampling of the troop in the soft earth had made a narrow furrow of water, where men and horses sank to their knees and bogged at every step. They reached Aute half dead with hunger, as men would be who had eaten nothing but herbs and roots for four days.

Supplying themselves again for five or six days, they set out again upon their quest, not by a better way but by the worst that could be found by the devilish maliciousness of the guide. And now, either in pursuance of an original design, or grown desperate at the futility of his efforts to discourage the Spaniards in their obstinate persistence, or acting upon an insane impulse with the recklessness of his race, the guide one night, while the soldiers lay sleeping upon the ground, seized a firebrand and beat one of them in the face. The other soldiers were for killing him at once, but D'Añasco interfered, saying that the guide must be borne with, as he was the only one they had, and they could not procure another. When all were asleep again, the Indian repeated his assault. The soldiers then fell upon him and beat him unmercifully; but the Indian undauntedly made still another attack upon a sleeping Spaniard before day. The Spaniards in their rage hardly knew what to do with him; but for the moment they satisfied themselves with beating him again, and chaining him to one of their number, who was to have particular watch and guard over him. As

soon as it was light the party set forth, and the guide trudged along quietly enough for a short while. Then springing like a panther upon the soldier he was chained to, and seizing him in his arms, he lifted him high up in the air and threw him upon the ground, and jumped upon him with both feet to stamp him. The Spaniards now took their swords to the Indian and soon left him on the ground for dead, with a hound loosed upon him. They had barely moved away when they heard the most terrible howling from the hound. Running back to see what was the matter, instead of finding the Indian dead and half eaten by the dog, they found the animal helpless in the hands of the savage, who had thrust his thumbs in the dog's mouth, one on each side, and had torn the jaws apart. The Spaniards again used their swords, and one of them, taking out a knife, cut off the Indian's hands, and even then so firm was their grip they could not be unclasped from the dog's mouth.

And now the Spaniards stood confused and undecided, not knowing what to do, doubting, most of them, whether they should ever make their way back from the swamp. Faithful Chance, however, the friend of all, came to the rescue by sending a straggling Indian that way. Fearing the fate of his dog-eaten tribesman, he quickly enough answered the questions put to him, and by signs gave the Spaniards to understand that he could guide them not only to the sea, but to the very place where Pamphilo de Narvaez had made his boats and

embarked from Florida. Although the sound of the waves breaking over the beach could be distinctly heard, never in their lives, he said, would they reach the sea from where they were; they must return to Aute and strike out in a different direction. This they did, and taking a smooth, easy road, came to the sea within two leagues of the village, coming out upon the shore of the spacious, beautiful bay of Apalache. And guiding them still farther along the shore, the Indian led them indeed to the site of the last camp of the unhappy Pamphilo de Narvaez, the place where he and his men had made the boats in which they had sailed to shipwreck and death. There was the forge upon which they had turned their stirrups into bolts and nails, the heaps of ashes still piled about. There were the hollow logs, the water-troughs of the horses, the racks that had held their feed, and lying about were the skulls of the same horses slaughtered to furnish skins for sails, hair for ropes, and flesh for food, as Cabeza de Vaca has described in his relation.

D'Añasco and his men searched in all the hollows of the trees for letters or papers, and examined the bark for names, dates, or marks, but with no success. They followed the shores of the bay to the sea, and at the ebb of the tide they paddled out in some old canoes that they found upturned on the beach, but nothing more was found of the unfortunate expedition. The channel was sounded and found of good depth for large ships. Fixing signals to the tops of the highest trees, so that ships

sailing along the coast might see and recognize them, and taking also in writing a description of the place, Juan d'Añasco returned to the camp. The troop had been absent so long that the Adelantado felt much anxiety about it, but the joy of his welcome was more than doubled when he heard of so fine a harbour near the camp. His satisfaction, in fact, was complete, for no discovery could have been better for the conquest of the country. He decided forthwith to bring his caravels there, and the men left at Hirrihigua's village to Apalache, where he made up his mind to pass the winter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RIDE OF THE THIRTY CAVALIERS

JUAN D'AÑASCO was selected to carry the orders to Calderon. A daring man was needed, and so far the cavalier and gentleman from Seville had distinguished himself above all other captains in the expedition. His orders were to choose twenty-nine cavaliers to accompany him, and to make his preparations as quickly as possible. The army had faced perils enough in its hundred and fifty leagues of march from Hirrihigua to Apalache, but how much greater would the perils be now when there were only thirty horsemen to encounter them, and when they were bound to find the Indians better prepared and more revengeful and determined even than when the army passed through! These considerations, however, were not the ones to make the thirty cavaliers selected by D'Añasco shrink from the expedition; on the contrary, they seemed stimulated by them into greater alacrity for it. The preparations were quickly made, and a few days later, it was on the 20th of October, they rode out of the camp several hours before day. They were equipped as lightly as possible, in helmets and coats of mail, car-

rying only their lances in their hands and, hanging from their saddles, a small wallet of food for themselves and their horses. Their plan was to travel at full speed, galloping their horses wherever the road permitted, and to kill every Indian met, so that no news or alarm could get ahead of them, for the danger most to be feared was that the Indians, warned of their coming, would ambush them. The first day they killed two Indians and covered the eleven leagues that lay between Apalache and the great swamp, which they crossed without opposition or molestation. This was a rare and unhoped-for good fortune; for a very few Indians in that narrow defile through the forest or in the water-stretch would have been enough to kill or maim some of the horses, and the loss of even one horse might mean the destruction of the troop. They stopped at night in an open field, away from all forest or trees, sleeping in relays, ten at a time. Long before day they started again; and as before, galloping when they could, they cleared the twelve leagues of the uninhabited reservation that lay between the two provinces of Apalache and Osachile.

As they neared the village of Osachile they thought in terror that the Indians might have heard of their coming and be on the watch for them. Turning aside they waited until midnight, and then riding up to it as noiselessly as possible, they spurred their horses, and galloping through it at full rein, were out of it by the time the first hoof-beat was heard. A league the other side of it, they again turned aside

and rested the few remaining hours of the night, and at dawn mounted again, and galloped on without drawing rein, for now they were in the region of cabins and cornfields, and their danger was getting more and more imminent. The five leagues to the Osachile River cost the horses dear, but the good animals stood the expense bravely. Gonzalo Silvestre, always in the lead on his noble chestnut, was the first to catch sight of the river, and fear was in his heart lest he should see it more swollen than when the army crossed it. But instead of more, there was less water in it, and in his joy he rode straight into it just as he was, without stopping, and swam his horse over to the other bank. When his companions saw him there, they also gave way to their sense of relief, for each man had been carrying in his heart the same secret dread of the river.

And now the village of Vitachuco lay before them, and if they had to fight their way through it, as they feared they would have to do, knowing the people, the thirty of them would never come out of it alive. They therefore agreed with one another that under no circumstances should any of the number stop to fight, but all should push ahead in any way possible without check or pause. And so they galloped towards it, but their fears died away before their eyes. The village, in Indian superstition a cursed and ill-fated spot, had been burned and destroyed, the walls thrown to the ground, and the dead bodies of the Indians, as if unworthy of sepulture, left scattered all about, just as the Spaniards had killed them.

The troopers had hardly left the ghastly scene behind them when they came upon two warriors hunting, and never dreaming of seeing Christians again. One jumped under a large, low-branched tree standing near; the other made a dash to reach the forest, but before he could reach it the Spaniards had lanced him in the back. The warrior under the tree, fitting an arrow to his bow, faced the Spaniards. The horses could not get under the branches, but, stung by his courage, some of the Spaniards wanted to dismount and attack him on foot; Juan d'Añasco would not consent. "It is neither brave nor prudent," he said, "to kill a desperate man at the risk of the life of a man or a horse at a time when both are so necessary to us; for, as you know, we are not provided with remedies even to cure a wound." As he was in the lead, while he spoke, he galloped his horse in a wide circle away from the road which ran near the Indian and the tree. The warrior took aim at the face of the first, second, third, and at each trooper galloping by him, and when the last had passed, and he saw that none had attacked him, but all fled from him, he shouted after them, daring and taunting them, calling them cowards and poltroons who, thirty of them on horseback, had not dared to attack one warrior on foot. And he stood his ground under the tree with more honour, the Spaniards said bitterly, than had the thirty who avoided him. As they were galloping on, a moment later a great outcry of alarm broke upon their ears from the corn-fields all around, the Indians calling to one another

to head the Christians and cut them off. The Spaniards saved themselves from their peril, as from many another, by the speed of their good horses, which, galloping steadily on, distanced even the cries of their enemies.

On this, the third day of their journey, they made over seventeen leagues. The next day they made seventeen leagues again, in addition also racing down and lancing seven Indians. At night-fall, they rested in an open plain until a little after midnight, when they mounted again, and by daylight had travelled five leagues, reaching the river Ocali, where, it will be remembered, the hound Bruto was shot to death. The Spaniards had some hope of finding it, like the Osachile, with lower water than when the army had crossed it. But not so; a good while before getting to it, they found that it had not only filled its banks, but had overflowed the land beyond. And when they came up to it, the current was pouring down so swift and strong and turbid, twisting and circling everywhere in such angry eddies and whirlpools, that it was most ugly to look at, and how much more to swim across! And to heighten the critical peril, faint war-whoops and cries of a new alarm could be heard, and not from behind alone, but from both sides of the river, the cries of Indians opening the chase. The lives of the Spaniards hung upon the time that the swift-footed enemies took to reach the bank of the river. And every moment the cries grew louder.

In a flash the men decided what to do — and did it, without waiting for orders. Twelve of the best swimmers, stripping themselves to their casques and coats of mail over their shirts, with their lances in their hands, jumped their horses, stripped also, into the stream and swam over to the other bank, to hold it before the Indians could get to it. Fourteen others, with their best haste, cut branches from the trees, and tied them together into a raft to ferry over the saddles, bridles, clothing, and the men who could not swim. The four remaining horsemen stationed themselves to resist the Indians coming from behind. The horses, as if they too recognized the emergency, hastened to obey orders with human intelligence, stepping into the water without balking, and swimming across as told, to the no small relief of their masters.

Eleven of the swimmers came out safely on the other side by an opening in the bank; the horse of the twelfth, Juan Lopez Cacho, missed the opening, and unable to stem the current and turn back, Cacho let him go down with it, looking for some other break to land in; but although he tried him at several places, the bank was so steep that the horse could not gain a foothold, and would always slip back. Juan Lopez then tried to return to the side he started from; but the horse, which had been swimming a long time without stopping, was too spent with fatigue, and his master had to call for help to the men who were making the raft. Four of them sprang into the water, and seizing the bridle

and swimming with it drew both him and his horse out in safety upon the bank ; and just in time, for both were too exhausted to help themselves longer. The raft, ready in an incredibly short time, was thrown out into the stream, and two swimmers at once started to the other side with a rope to haul it over.

And now the war-whoops and cries, coming nearer and nearer, broke through the trees, and on both banks at once the Indians rushed upon their enemies in their wildest impetus of noise and fury. On one bank the eleven cavaliers held them back ; on the other, the four. The raft in the meantime flew between the two landings, carrying over first the garments of the eleven cavaliers, who were calling for them loudly, for a north wind had arisen, and catching them wet and with nothing on but shirts and coats of mail, was stiffening them with cold. Then the other baggage was thrown upon it and hurried over. Those who could swim did so, to save time, climbing out upon the other bank, and running to reinforce the eleven hard at work upon the ever-increasing numbers against them. At the last trip of the raft, Gonzalo Silvestre and another horseman only remained on guard. While his companion jumped upon the raft, pulling his horse by the rein into the water for him to swim alongside, Gonzalo charged upon the Indians and drove them back, then returning at full speed, rode his horse into the water as he was, bridled and saddled, and jumping upon the raft cast

loose the rope that held it. They were half-way across the river before the Indians reached the bank again to hurl their shouts of disappointment and rage after them. The whole troop, charging and lancing, soon got rid of the Indians opposing them and galloped away from them.

It was now about two o'clock in the afternoon. Instead of going round the Ocali village they turned into it, for Juan Lopez Cacho, from his hard work and long stay in the water, and exposure to the cold wind afterwards, had become stiff and numb, and sat his horse like a statue of marble, unable to move hand or foot, and his companions were forced to halt to do something for his relief. The village seemed deserted; but they dismounted in the open square, not daring to enter a cabin, fearing an ambush. They hurriedly made four large fires, and laid Juan Lopez de Cacho in the heat of them, wrapped in all the coats of his companions. One man gave him a dry shirt. It seemed a miracle to find one more shirt than they had on their backs, and it was the greatest comfort that could have been given Juan Lopez. The rest of the day was passed in anxiety and perplexity; they feared to travel with Juan Lopez in the condition he was in, and feared, if they delayed, that the Indians would get tidings of their coming. But they decided to put the life of their companion above the thoughts of their own safety, and with this set to drying their saddles and clothing, giving their horses their fill of corn from the Indian granaries, and resupplying their own wallets. At night

they stationed sentinels all around the village. Near midnight came from them the word of alarm. Noises in the distance were heard, as of a great band of Indians. Fortunately Juan Lopez had shown signs of returning consciousness. His companions hastily put him, wrapped as he was, on his horse and tied him in his saddle, for he could not hold himself upright. He looked like the dead Cid, sallying forth from Valencia to conquer in that famous battle. A companion took the reins of his horse, and as secretly as possible the troop left the village, and galloped so well that by daylight they were six leagues away from it.

Pushing onward without a stop all day, they spurred like couriers through the inhabited regions, killing all the Indians they met, drawing rein only when they came to uninhabited tracts, to let their horses breathe against the next run. Thus, on the seventh day, they came into the perilous and dreaded province of Acuera. As they were riding along in intensest strain of watchfulness, one of the men sickened and died in his saddle. His comrades had heard him sigh once or twice and groan, but thinking only of the Indians, they paid no heed. Now, with remorse enough in their hearts, they dug a grave with their hatchets and buried him, and sorrowfully rode on again. By sunset they arrived at the great swamp. It also was swollen with water and had become a vast lake, with great bayous pouring into and out of it. They camped upon a spot of dry land on the edge of it.

It was bitter cold, with a north wind blowing, and

they suffered so keenly that, despite their fear of the Indians, they were forced to build a fire, and with this on their minds even those off watch could not rest. Indeed, by this time the strain upon their vigilance had become such that no man could close his eyes in sleep a second without starting up thinking he heard an alarm. About midnight, the comrade of the man who had died during the day sickened and died too, almost in a moment, and as usual, says the chronicle, there were not lacking fools to cry: "The plague! The plague!" Three or four of the troop, forgetting all their past courage, ran away panic-stricken, at full speed. Gomez Arias, the second in command, like the man of sense and judgment he was, called after them: "What more plague do you want than we've got already in this expedition! Plague enough we have in it that you cannot run away from, no matter how much you try, or how fast you go; and if you do run away from us, where do you think of going for refuge? Do you think perchance you can run to Seville?" This brought the cowards back, and they fell on their knees and joined in the prayers for the dead that the others were reciting; but no one would touch the body to bury it, for all persisted that the man had died of the plague.

Relieved enough were they when daylight came, and they could set about getting through the swamp. The eight men among them who could not swim took the saddles, bridles, and clothing of the others over the bridge. The other twenty, naked as they

were born, undertook to drive the horses into the water; but when the animals felt how cold it was, they would not go into the deep part where they had to swim. Tying ropes to their halters, some of the men swam out ahead and pulled, while others behind beat the horses with sticks; but the trembling brutes planted their four feet firmly on the ground, let the blows rain on their backs, and would not budge. When at last one or two did yield to the pulling and driving so much as to swim a few strokes, unable to stand the cold, they turned round and made for the bank, dragging the swimmers after them. And so, for more than three hours the twenty Spaniards, standing in the water waist deep, worked and laboured; but do what they would, and with all their energy and skill, trying first one horse and then another, they could not get one of them to cross the channel. At the end of four hours, they were rewarded by getting two over, Juan d'Añasco's and Gonzalo Silvestre's. But even after these crossed, none of the others would follow.

Some of the men, those who could not swim, then saddled, bridled, and mounted their horses, to be in readiness in case of attack. The others, still standing in the water, shivering, shaking, and freezing, their naked bodies mottled and black as negroes, grew desperate and savage. Juan d'Añasco, in his clothes, sitting on his horse, all saddled and bridled, was watching the proceedings from the other bank. Vexed at the delay and the fruitless efforts of the men, and not considering that it had not been for lack

of trying, and not noticing the condition that the men were in, he fell into a temper, for he had one of his own — one which sometimes cost him the respect of others — and riding into the water as far as he could, he called out in a loud voice : “ Gomez Arias, why do you not get those horses over and be done with it ? The devil take you all ! ” Gomez Arias, knowing that he and his companions were more dead than alive, and hardly able to stand the agony they were enduring, with disgust and contempt in his heart for the ingratitude of Añasco, answered as angrily and as loudly : “ The devil take you yourself, sitting there on your horse in your clothes and forgetting that we have been here in the water freezing and doing our best ! Get off your horse and come over here, and we shall see whether you can do more than we. ” And to these he added other words neither kinder nor more polite, for his anger when excited also knew no bounds. Juan d’Añasco restrained himself, for he saw that the companions of Arias restrained him. The discord subsiding, the Spaniards returned to their work, and as it was now near midday and the coldness of the water somewhat tempered by the sun, the horses began to act better. But with all the pushing and pulling and haste that the men could put into it, it was three o’clock in the afternoon before the last one crossed.

The state of their riders was pitiful — livid, and so frozen and spent with fatigue that they shivered and shook the rest of the day, and could hardly hold

themselves upon their saddles. And it must be remembered that they had no other food than corn to restore their strength. But they rode along, thanking God that at least the cold had kept the Indians in their cabins, and that to the other trials a savage attack had not been added. When night came on they slept with their usual precautions, and before daylight were on the road again; the horses of the two dead companions going along with the others, often taking the lead as if their riders were guiding them.

By dawn the next day, the twelfth of their journey, they came to the village of Urribarricuxi. A little while after midnight as usual they mounted again, and had journeyed about two leagues when they saw a fire in the forest, and drawing near, discovered a group of warriors and squaws busily cooking fish. The Spaniards decided to capture as many of them as they could, even if they were Mucozo's people, and hold them until it was known whether the chief had kept peace with Pedro Calderon. So they charged upon the camp. The warriors fled on all sides into the forest, leaving the women and children. These raised up their voices, and wept and wailed, calling upon the name of Ortiz, uttering no word but that, and repeating it over and over again, to remind the Spaniards of the kindness of their chief and themselves to him. But it was of no avail; they were taken and tied and carried along; the Spaniards, however, paused to eat the fish first, and although in the skirmish both Indians and horses had trampled

them into the earth, they tasted to them better than the best they had ever eaten before.

They made a circuit around the village of Mucozo, and had travelled about five leagues, when the horse of Juan Lopez Cacho broke down. As for Juan Lopez himself, what with the excitement of getting away from the Indians and his own robust youth, he was again himself, and completely restored from the effects of his fatigue and exposure, and during the rest of the expedition he fared the same and did his work the same as the others. And now his horse, after all his brave struggle to cross the Ocali River, was to give out only three leagues from the end of the journey! His master urged and the men coaxed, but it was impossible to get him on farther, so they left him in a fine meadow where there was plenty of grass, taking off his saddle and bridle, which they hung in a tree, so that the Indian who captured him would have him with all his accoutrements; but they feared that the first Indian that saw him would shoot him to death without mercy.

Their sadness over the good horse lasted until the premonitions of a still greater trouble drove it away. This came when they were within a little more than a league of the village of Hirrihigua. They looked in vain upon the ground for hoof-prints or any signs of men and horses, and it seemed only natural that the ground should have been tracked thus far and even farther. Their fears suggested that the garrison had been massacred by

Hirrihigua, or that it had abandoned the country in the caravels. If the men of the garrison were still living and in the village, it was impossible, the cavaliers kept repeating to one another, that there should not be signs of them so near the place. In this troubled state of mind, they took counsel as to what they should do if their fears proved true. They would have no boat to travel in by sea, and to return by land to the Adelantado, after what they had passed through, seemed utterly impossible. But coming out of their forebodings with equal spirit and determination, they decided unanimously that, if they did not find their companions in the village, they would retire into some hidden nook in the forest where there was grass for the horses, and while resting there from their fatigue, would kill the superfluous horses for food ; then they would start out again and try to get back to the Adelantado. Even if they were killed on the road, they said, they would end like good soldiers, trying to do their duty in the charge given them by the captain-general ; and if they came through in safety, then they would have accomplished their duty like good soldiers.

So they pushed on, their suspicions and fears growing more certain as they advanced, for still no sign or sound of Spaniards or horses could they discover. But when they came to the little lake that lay about a half league from the village, they saw where lye had been made, and clothes recently washed. Shouts broke from them, and they laughed for joy ; and as for the horses, when they came upon

the scent of other horses, they pricked up their ears and spirits, pranced and reared, and showed so much mettle that it was as much as their riders could do to hold them in; and this, when they were so strained and jaded that they could barely stand on their feet.

When the village of Hirrihigua came in sight, the sun was just setting and the night-watch was riding out of the gate two by two, lances and shields fixed at parade. Juan d'Añasco turned to his men and gave a command. They formed their column two by two, grasped their lances and shields, set their helmets erect, and with a ringing war-cry dashed into the village and up to the headquarters of Calderon, as if they were entering a tilt or tournament, says the chronicle, and not ending the ride we have described.

Calderon, according to his orders, at once sent Gomez Arias in the caravel to Havana to carry to Doña Isabella a report of the expedition so far. He carried her also a present of slaves. The two brigantines were put in order and manned, and D'Añasco himself sailed with them to the Bay of Apalache. The camp at Hirrihigua was then broken up, and the garrison started on the march to Apalache.

CHAPTER IX

CAPAFI

IN the meantime the Adelantado had not been idle. He was, in fact, kept incessantly on the alert day and night by the assaults and ambushes of the Indians. His soldiers dared not venture outside the camp without meeting death, or at the least, wounds. It seemed to him that there was but one way to put an end to a mode of warfare in which he was hopelessly overmatched by the savages; that was, to get their chief into his power. He bestirred himself with the utmost skill and secrecy to find out where Capafi, as the chief was called, had hidden himself, and by slow degrees obtained certain information that he might be found in the centre of a great forest. Although only eight leagues from the camp, Capafi thought himself safe, relying upon the canebrakes, swamps, and impassable places that surrounded him, the fortifications he had thrown up, and the number of warriors he had summoned to his defence. De Soto resolved to make the capture himself. Taking his spies and guides, he set out with the needful number of men, horse and foot, and at the end of three

days of toil and difficulty reached that part of the forest, an impassable jungle to all appearances, where, as he was told, lay Capafi's lair. In the very centre of it, the spies said, a space had been cleared for the dwellings of the chief and his attendants, and the only way to it was a narrow footpath more than half a league long, barred the entire length, at intervals of a hundred paces apart, by high palisades of stout logs. Behind each palisade stood a band of picked warriors. There was no other path or opening to get out of the fort on the other side, for Capafi was so confident of the strength of his fortifications, and of the bravery of the warriors defending them, that, even if the Spaniards succeeded in reaching him, it would be impossible for them, he thought, to take him. Inside of the last barricades was Capafi himself, and the warriors around him were such as would die, to the last man, before seeing their chief in the power of his enemies.

At the mouth of the pathway, the Adelantado found the savages ready for him. The fight that followed was no easy one in the narrow standing-room; it was hand to hand and foot to foot. The Spaniards cut away the palisades with their hatchets to make their way through, and the Indians punished them severely while they were doing it. But the palisade was gained, the Indians driven back, and the next one attacked. And after this, one by one, each barricade was cut through, and the Indians driven to their next defence, and the centre palisade and Capafi were at last reached. There

was no further retreat, and the fight the Indians had made before was but a spark to the fire that raged now. An explosion of fierce despair it was; for their chief was looking on, with life and liberty at stake. They threw their naked bodies upon the bristling ranks, to catch the swords and lances in their hands. But the Spaniards were too near the prize they were after, or the loss of all they had gained, to falter now, and they fought with the determination that never fails to win. The Adelantado, like the good captain he was, fought in front, calling to his soldiers, each by name, to strike with him; and the soldiers, like the good soldiers they were, at every call, leaped forward. Capafi, seeing that his men were being cut down ruthlessly, and that by naked warriors more could not be done than they had done, and that to the last man they would die before yielding, now raised his voice, and in tones that rose above all the tumult, commanded them to surrender. They would not obey, until with cries to the conquerors to put them all to death but to spare the life of their chief, they secured his safety. Then they stood aside and the chief came forward to give himself up, borne in the arms of attendants, for he could not walk; he was too fat.

The Spaniards gazed in wonder upon him. Never in their lives had they seen so fat a man. He not only could not walk, he could not even hold his body upright on his feet. In public he had to be carried everywhere; in private he crawled

about on his hands and knees. And this was the reason, as the Spaniards now discovered, why he could not fly to a greater distance from them.

De Soto received him affably, as was his wont with chiefs, and, very much pleased to have him in his power, returned at once with him to his camp. He was confident, now, that the Apalachians would prudently modify their warfare, and that the Spaniards would be able at least to step out of their camp without incurring the penalty of wounds and death. But never was a man so mistaken in his calculations. The Apalachians, on the contrary, showed themselves more audacious than ever, more persistent and more diabolically fertile in their resources of ambushes and surprises; and the death line was maintained more rigidly than ever around the Spanish camp. The loss of their chief had made them only freer, by relieving them from the care of guarding him. They could now devote all their energies to the Spaniards and fight with both hands, whereas before one had been tied. The exasperated Adelantado turned upon his prisoner and bitterly upbraided him for the ingratitude of his people after the kindness and mercy shown their chief; for the Spaniards, he said, if they had liked, could have killed him and destroyed his village and cornfields. And the Adelantado warned Capafi, if he did not wish to bring a war of fire and blood on the land, to command his people to cease their attacks, bidding him remember that he was in the hands of the Spaniards, and that, although they had hitherto

treated him with all honour and respect, they might change.

Capafi, with all the gentleness and patience in the world, and most submissively, and with much show of feeling, replied that it pained him beyond everything that his people did not return the kindness and mercy of De Soto by becoming friends with him and serving him, as he, their chief, had tried to induce them to do since he had been a prisoner. He had sent messengers to them to command them to cease harming and vexing his captors; but the messages had been of no effect, for the Indians believed that they came not from the chief, but from De Soto. He could not persuade them to believe the favour and consideration with which he had been treated, nor that he was allowed to go about the camp at liberty; on the contrary, they suspected that he was being badly used, that he was kept in prison and in chains, and for this reason they were bolder and more aggressive than before. Therefore, he prayed De Soto to send him, Capafi himself, as a messenger of peace, to have his soldiers carry him some five or six leagues from the camp to a spot in the forest that he would show them, where his best and noblest warriors had taken refuge. There, shouting in a loud voice, he would call them up by name, and they, hearing the voice of their chief, would all come at his call, and he would take away their evil suspicions of the Spaniards, and would calm and soothe them, and they would do what he commanded, as De Soto

would see. This, he said, was the quickest way and the only way to bring them into any sort of peace. Nothing would ever be gained by sending messengers to them, because the answer would be that the messengers were false, sent by their enemies and not by their chief. And Capafi, reasoning thus, in his low, musical voice, and serious, grieved countenance, persuaded De Soto to do as he said — to send him to the forest as a messenger to his people.

The orders were given and carried into prompt execution. Two companies, one of cavalry and one of infantry, were detailed to go with the chief, De Soto himself strictly charging them with his watch and guard, so that he could not escape. They left the camp before daylight, and travelling hard, by nightfall reached the spot chosen by Capafi. He at once, as he said he would, began to shout and call, sending also his Indian attendant into the woods. In a short time ten or twelve warriors stood before him to receive his commands, which he gave in the hearing of the Spaniards. They and all the Indians in the forest were forthwith to prepare to come together before him the next day, for he himself in person wished to tell them things most important for them to know.

Darkness closed in over the forest; the tired Spaniards set their sentinels and placed their guard over the chief, and betook themselves to sleep, well satisfied with themselves for what they had accomplished so far, and enjoying the results of

success in anticipation — their triumphal return to camp the next day, leading the whole of Capafi's tribe behind them, in docile submission.

But a man's surest hopes seem ever his vainest ones. When daylight came and the Spaniards awoke, they found themselves without their chief, and without a single Indian in the camp. They looked at each other blankly and they asked one another what had happened. And the only answer they made, the only one they could make, was that what had happened was impossible unless the chief had conjured up demons who had carried him away during the night through the air. Not one suggested that, tired with their long day's march, and trusting confidently in the chief's pleasant words and genial manner, as well as the unwieldy bulk of his body, they had made themselves easy and all gone to sleep together, those on guard as well as those off. The chief having been carried, was of course not tired nor asleep; but astute warrior that he was, awake, alert, and watchful; and so he seized his opportunity, and simply crawled out on his hands and knees into the arms of his lurking warriors, who, hoisting him upon their shoulders, made off with him, and this time carried him well beyond the reach of his enemies.

The Spanish captains and their worthy soldiers beat the forest wildly for their captive all day long, but came upon neither track nor sound of him. The hardest bird of all to catch is, in truth, the one just escaped from the snare. The Indians, having deposited their chief in a place of safety, returned,

and now they did not bother to fight the Spaniards, but, laughing at them, mocking them, jeering at them, insulting and affronting them in every way possible, they let them return to their camp in safety. The soldiers arrived at last, ashamed and discomfited enough by the confession that a fat Indian who had been given with so many charges into their guard should have escaped from them on all fours. They composed a thousand fables to relate to the captain-general and told them all, vowing that all that night they each one of them had felt the most extraordinary and unnatural things happening to them, and that by all the saints the escape would not have been possible unless Capafi had flown through the air with devils; for it was contrary to reason to suppose otherwise in face of the stern watch they had kept and the good guard they had posted everywhere.

The Adelantado saw through the affair perfectly well, but in order not to hurt the feelings of the chagrined captains he pretended to be convinced by their explanations, and even helped them out by saying that the Indians were such great wizards and necromancers that they could perform even greater wonders than that. Nevertheless, he never forgot nor ceased to resent in private the carelessness his soldiers had shown. Everybody else in camp said that it was a divine mercy that the Indians had not returned and massacred the last one of them, which they could easily have done while the Spaniards were sleeping so soundly.

During the last week of December, Juan d'Añasco,



“The caravels had arrived.”

with the caravels, arrived in the bay of Apalache. Six days later Pedro Calderon and his detachment marched into camp, slowly and painfully, for men and horses were sore and wounded. That any had survived the march was a surprise to the comrades who listened to their accounts of it. In every detail, the painful experiences of the Adelantado's march had been repeated, with the difference only of far more overwhelming numbers of Indians against them. Every day, nay, every mile, furnished its skirmish; every night had been a sleepless one; every forest had proved a trap; every piece of shrubbery in the open fields an ambuscade. When they at last reached the camp, each man thanked God, as if for his resurrection.

A week later, Diego de Maldonado was ordered to take the caravels and coast one hundred leagues west from the bay of Apalache, exploring what harbours he found. Two months were allowed for the voyage. At the end of the term, Maldonado returned bringing two captives and the news of the discovery of a most beautiful port, the finest yet seen, called by the Indians Achusi (Pensacola Bay), sheltered from every wind, but large and deep enough for the largest fleet of vessels.

The success of the conquest seemed now beyond doubt and everything seemed to be working in its favour; for the prime necessity for an establishment in the country was just such a port as Maldonado described, where vessels could enter and land emigrants, horses, cattle, poultry, seeds, implements,

and utensils. A few days after Maldonado's arrival, therefore, the governor sent him to Havana with the two caravels to announce to Doña Isabella, and to all the other dignitaries of the island, the assured success of the expedition. Maldonado had orders to return with Gomez Arias to Florida the October following, which would be in the year 1540, bringing the three caravels and any other ship or ships he could buy, loaded with supplies of ammunition and clothing and reinforcements of men and horses. At the date named the governor reckoned to be at Achusi, after having made a long circuit of discovery in the interior.

After this the winter wore on in Apalache with no events to chronicle save the daily exploits of the Indians. One of the Spaniards years afterwards paid this compliment to them: "Perfectly brave and dauntless, they showed us well — curse them! — how it was they had been able to drive Pamphilo de Narvaez out of their country. They came up to our very beards every day to shake their fists at us; and, always prowling about the woods, whenever we went out to cut wood, at the first sound of an axe, they would swarm upon us; kill us, break the chains from our slaves, brought along to carry the loads; take our scalps; and by the time one's cries brought help, all would be over. I remember one day that seven of us went out from the camp on horseback hunting for a mess of game, opossum or coon (little dogs, the Spaniards called them), and I tell you we held that for a famous day when we

could find one, and no pheasant ever tasted better to us. And so, going along, hunting our best, we ran across five Indians with their bows and arrows. All aimed at us, and one of them, making a mark on the ground, told us not to pass over it or they would kill us all. We, not understanding foolery of that kind, charged upon them; they let fly their arrows, killed two of our horses, wounded two others, and one of our men badly. We killed one of them, but the others ran away and escaped; for in truth as they were swift on their feet, and having no clothes on to disturb them, they generally did escape — except in a long run against the horses.”

One day Juan d’Añasco and six other cavaliers, carelessly talking, walked their horses through the village and into the fields beyond; they were without armour; one carried his lance, the others had only their swords in their belts. In the bushes on the edge of the clearing, they discovered an Indian man and woman gathering peas from vines left over from the year before, and at once they dashed forward to capture them. The woman, at the sight of the horses, stood transfixed with terror. The man, taking her in his arms, ran into the woods, and putting her down under the first tree gave her two or three pushes to make her go farther in. He could have gone with her and escaped, but on the contrary, running back to the spot where he had left his bow and arrows, he seized them and advanced to meet the Spaniards with as much firmness and self-possession as if they were only another

single Indian like himself. As he came forward, the Spaniards declared it was an unworthy act for seven Spaniards on horseback to kill one Indian on foot, and so gallant a one merited to be taken alive. Surrounding him, therefore, before he had time to use his bow and arrows, they pressed their horses upon him, crowding him to the ground, and calling upon him to surrender. The harder pressed he was the more furiously the Indian fought, on the ground as he was, shooting his arrows and thrusting his bow into the bellies of the horses above him. Then, darting from under the hoofs to his feet, he dealt, with his bow in both hands, such a blow upon the head of the cavalier who was thrusting at him with his lance, that the blood gushed from his face, and he reeled in the saddle. "Plague take you!" cried the Spaniard, furious. "While we are fooling to save your life, you will kill the last one of us." And he gave the warrior a thrust through the breast which stretched him dead. All seven of the horses were wounded.

And again, to give another story: about the breaking up of the winter, in the beginning of March, a detachment was sent to a neighbouring deserted village to bring back corn. After taking all they wanted, the soldiers hid themselves in ambush to catch any Indians that by chance might come along; and very soon an Indian did come along through the village square. A cavalier, too eager for the honour of his capture to think, galloped into the open space. The Indian, with in-

credible swiftness, ran a short distance ; but seeing that the horse was gaining upon him, he threw himself under a low tree, and with an arrow in his bow, waited for the horseman to come within shot. The cavalier, not being able to get under the branches of the tree, galloped alongside, thrusting his lance at him. The Indian, dodging the lance, shot his arrow just as the horse was abreast ; the horse stumbled and fell dead. A second cavalier had by this time ridden up, and he also, not being able to get under the tree, galloped past just as the first had done, thrusting his lance under the branches at the Indian. The Indian, as before, waited, and then sent his arrow as before ; and the second horse stumbled and fell alongside the first. Leaping from their saddles the two cavaliers ran forward on foot to attack him. But the Indian, satisfied with unhorsing his pursuers and putting them on foot like himself, now easily and lightly skipped before them to the forest, turning to grimace and make mocking gestures at them, jeering, " Let us always fight on foot, and then we shall see who are the better men ! "

A few days later two soldiers rode outside the camp to gather fruit in the woods near by, and unable to reach the lowest branches from their horses, climbed from the saddles into the tree. The Indians, always on the watch, waited only to let them get well into the trees, then darted out towards them. One of the men dropped to the ground to run to his horse, but an arrow, driving between his

shoulders and coming half-way out of his breast, stretched him flat. The other man was shot in the tree, and falling with three arrows in him, had not reached the ground before he was scalped. The frightened horses ran to the camp. One had a drop of blood on his flank and was taken to the farrier. As the wound was no larger than a lancet's point, the farrier said he could see nothing to dress. The horse, dying the next day, was opened and an arrow was found to have gone nearly through the whole length of his body, lacking only the breadth of two fingers of coming out. The stories of wonderful arrow shots are innumerable in the chronicle. The fine horse of Gonzalo Silvestre, later shot by an arrow, fell dead without quivering a muscle. Astonished that so strong and large an animal should die so quickly from one shot, the Spaniards opened his body. They found that the arrow, entering the breast, had cut straight through the trunk, piercing the heart in its way. Luis de Moscoso, in an engagement, was shot by an arrow that passed through a doublet of leather and the coat of mail he wore underneath, a coat that cost in Spain one hundred and fifty ducats. The rich cavaliers, who wore similar fine and costly coats of mail, determined to find out what they were really worth as defence against arrows. So in the open square they set up a pole, upon which they fastened one of the stout osier baskets plaited by the Indians, and over the basket they drew one of their best coats of mail. Then loosing an Apalachian warrior from his chains, they

gave him a bow and arrows and, placing him about fifty paces away, told him to shoot at the basket. The Indian aimed and shot; the arrow passed so clean, clear, and strong through the coat of mail and basket that, if there had been a man on the other side, it would have gone through him too. The Spaniards then put another coat of mail on top of the one already on the basket. The Indian shot again; the arrow passed through the four thicknesses but lodged in the last; when he saw that his arrow had not gone clear through, he angrily begged for another shot. "Let me try once more," he said, "and if my arrow does not go as clear through as the first, hang me at once." But the Spaniards had enough evidence, and did not care to see their coats of mail still further discredited. But henceforth they called them derisively their court dress and gala costumes, and replaced them by very ugly but much more serviceable wadded vests, and skirts wide enough to cover the breast and haunches of the horses.

The dexterity of the Indians was not to be wondered at considering their training, say the Spaniards who suffered by it, for babies of three years or less, as soon as they could stand on their feet, were given tiny bows and arrows, with which they went out hunting against the beetles and insects crawling round their cabins; and when they found a mouse or a lizard in a hole, they would stand on the watch from three to six hours, waiting for it to come out, so as to shoot it. If there was nothing

else to shoot, they shot at the flies on the floor and walls of their cabins. The bows of the warriors, made of oak or other strong, heavy wood, were of the height, and in proportion to the strength, of the men that used them ; and as the Indians of Florida were generally six feet high, no Spaniard in the army, straining to his utmost, could draw the string to the face ; while the Indians, with the greatest ease, drew it behind the ear.

CHAPTER X

COFA AND COFAQUI

SEEKING indefatigably among his captives for information about the country farther inland, which he was about to explore, De Soto discovered a lad about sixteen or seventeen years of age, who, reared by Indian traders, had often travelled with them to great distances. He offered to act as guide through the country he had gone over, a distance of at least twelve or thirteen days' march. A few days later another boy, also a trader's, was captured, who had penetrated still farther into the interior, and knew even more about the country than the first boy. When questioned about gold and silver and precious stones, specimens of which were shown him, he said that in one country he had travelled through, called Cofachiqui, there was to be found much of the yellow and white metal, and great quantities of pearls, selecting one from the jewelry before him to show what he meant, and he told how the gold and silver were taken from the mine and melted, just as if he had seen it done, or, as the Spaniards said, as if the devil had inspired him. This spread wild delight among the conquerors, who

could dream and think and talk of nothing else than Cofachiqui and their longing to be there, each man at once seeing himself the lord and master of great and noble treasures, and acting and arranging his future thereby. As soon as the spring was well begun, about the end of March, the Adelantado gave the word of command, and the army gladly shaking the dust of Apalache from their feet, started towards the joyfully expected El Dorado.

After three days they came to an uninhabited neutral region, and crossing it entered a new province, Altapaha. Here was found a different country and a different people—kindly, peace-loving, and domestic tribes living in comfortable villages surrounded by cornfields. At every village the army was received with presents of game and fruit, and entertained with generous hospitality; a peaceful Sabbath period it seemed to the Spaniards after Apalache. The villages were better built than any seen before in Florida; the cabins were thatched with cane instead of straw and palmetto, and the walls daubed with clay; fireplaces were provided, and in front of the cabins there were porticos with benches or seats of cane. The people wore mantles of skin or of stuff woven by the women from dried grass or bark of trees, or fibre of nettles, which was beaten out and bleached like flax; and the skins were so skilfully dressed and dyed that they looked like the finest broadcloth. De Soto, perhaps as a votive offering for the peace and friendship found in the province, set up a cross in the village of

Altapaha, explaining to the people in whose memory it was done.

The army moved on towards the sunrise, the quarter where the Indian lad said Cofachiqui lay. The different chronicles of the expedition diverge here somewhat, being confused about the route, giving the village names in different orders. In giving their accounts of the expedition afterwards, the Spaniards were wont to say that they never expected to know where they marched in Florida until they had finished serving God here below and had gone to their eternal home, when the exact line of their march, with the other unknown things of earth, would be revealed to them. They were looking for gold and not topographical knowledge; no maps were made, no bearings taken, and individual memory is the only authority for the succession of names that vaguely track them for us to-day through the plantations, towns, and railway centres that occupy the territory and forests of four centuries ago. Cofa was the chief of the next village where a halt was made. As he had left the Christian symbol in Altapaha, De Soto now left the symbol of Christians in Cofa. This was the one small cannon which, with infinite trouble and vexation, the army had dragged along with them so far. But first, to show the chief what he was leaving with him, he ordered the cannon to be drawn in front of the chief's house, loaded, aimed, and fired at a large, beautiful oak standing outside the village. In two shots the tree was demolished, the chief and his warriors standing

by speechless and motionless from awe and admiration, and pride that so wonderful a thing was confided to them. When the army left his village, Cofa provided it with pack bearers and guides and interpreters, and he, with a great following of warriors, accompanied it a day's march towards the next territory, which belonged to his brother Cofaqui, whom he had also warned by a forerunner of the coming of the Spaniards, bespeaking hospitality for them.

Cofaqui, acting upon the recommendation, prepared to receive the strangers in a manner that would impress them with his importance and greatness. Before they entered his territory, he sent a band of his most noble warriors, escorted by a large body of followers, to bid them welcome; and as they crossed his boundary, the pack bearers and guides of Cofa were dismissed to return to their homes, and their places were taken by tribesmen of Cofaqui. When the sentinels in the watch-tower of the village gave the cry that the Spanish army was approaching, the young chief and his body-guard sallied forth to meet them. A beautiful sight they presented to the colour-loving eyes of the Spaniards, and if the language of their description seems exaggerated, it is doubtless the fault of their eyes, always unreliable about what they loved to look upon. All handsome and all young they were, or looked to be, — the attribute of the warriors of Florida that may have given rise to the myth of the Fountain of Bimini. Their heads were crowned by the tallest

and handsomest of war bonnets; over their shoulders hung mantles of dyed skins, lustrous and bright as satin and velvet; quivers decked with bright and dancing tassels rose at their backs.

The ceremonies of greeting and speech over, the Adelantado and Cofaqui, the Spanish officers and Indian warriors, all entered the village together, with great show of good-will and cordiality, interchanging their signs and gestures, and passing polite messages to one another through their interpreters. The dwelling of the chief was placed at the disposition of De Soto, and the village abandoned to the army; and the rest of the day was given up to feasting and jollity, Cofaqui retiring in the evening with his people to a neighbouring village. The next morning early he was again with the Adelantado, and after answering at length and freely the questions about his province and the country, he put this question: "I should like to know your will, whether it is to remain here, or to move on farther; for according to it must we prepare what is needful for you." The Adelantado answered that he was going in search of other provinces, which he had been told lay farther ahead of him, one of them being called Cofachiqui, and that he would not stop anywhere until he had seen the whole country. The land of Cofachiqui, the chief said, was next to his, but as there lay betwixt them a vast neutral region that would require seven days to cross, he offered to send people to escort the army and to carry the luggage and the provisions,

which he would furnish. He at once set about giving his orders to collect with all speed the necessary supplies, and the Indians to carry them. And so great was the obedience of his people, or his desire to get rid of the Spaniards, at the expense of his neighbours, who were also his enemies, that four days later he had in readiness Indians, thousands in number, to serve as pack bearers, and a fine band of warriors for guides and escorts. Patofa, the warrior chief, who led all of Cofaqui's war parties, was put in command. The Spaniards, at sight of such a force, although collected to serve them, grew suspicious and watchful, and kept rigid guard.

On the last night before their march, when all was ready for an early start in the morning, there came the secretly expected alarm ringing through the air, the loudest and wildest "Help! Help! They are killing me. Treason! Treason!" With a "To arms," the soldiers rushed out with their weapons, and formed in their companies, infantry and cavalry. They waited; no enemy came — no further sound. A detail was sent in search of the cause of alarm. It was found to be one of the two Indian boys captured in Apalache — Pedro the Spaniards had dubbed him. The other boy, whose name had also been Christianized into Marco, had guided the army over all the country that he knew. Pedro was now to take his turn and guide the way into the province of Cofachiqui, where he had said such great treasures of gold and silver and precious stones were to be gained. The soldiers found him

in his cabin, crying, shivering, and trembling from fright. The devil, with a most terrible face, he explained, and a great band of other devils, had come and told him that he must not guide the Spaniards where he had promised, under pain of death; they had seized him, dragged him out of his bed and over the floor, beating him so that his body was too bruised and sore for him to move. He thought that they would have finished by killing him if the Spaniards had not come; but when the great devil saw them coming in the door of the cabin, he had loosed his hold and fled at once with all his little devils. From this Pedro understood that the devil was afraid of Christians, and so he begged and clamoured to them to baptize him at once, then and there, before the devils came back to kill him; for he was sure, if he were a Christian, they would not touch him, because he had seen them flee from the Christians.

The Adelantado and other officers were summoned, and Pedro repeated his story to them, and showing the marks and bumps and bruises all over his face and body in proof of the blows received. The Adelantado ordered the priests to be called. They came and listened to Pedro, and after hearing the story, baptized him at once and stayed with him all night, reciting prayers and giving him restoratives, and the next day they confirmed him. The march was put off a day, and when the army started, Pedro was given a horse to ride, for he said he could neither stand nor walk.

The two armies marched well separated from one another, and at night camped apart, the pack bearers, as soon as they had delivered their loads to the Spaniards, fling off to sleep with their own people, and Indians and Spaniards alike posting sentinels, as if in fear of declared enemies. The Spaniards were suspicious; but the Indians, free and easy, anxious only to please and serve the Spaniards in every way possible, adopted their military precautions only through imitateness. The uninhabited neutral territory, the Despoblado, as the Spaniards called it, was a pleasant enough country for marching. The woods were open, the hills light, and the streams small and easy to cross, with the exception of two, whose current was so furious that the horses were ranged side by side to break the force of it, so that the foot-soldiers could pass through.

All went well until the seventh day, about noon, when the two armies were thrown into great confusion and perplexity. The road hitherto followed, a broad, smooth highway, came suddenly to an end, and although there were several footpaths leading from it, each one of them after a few paces lost itself in the forest. The Indians in Patofa's army as well as in De Soto's confessed that they were all astray, and there was not one among them who knew where he was, nor in what direction to go to get out of the forest. The Adelantado summoned Patofa, and confident now in his suspicions, accused him of leading the Spanish army astray. But Patofa indignantly swore that neither he nor

any Indian in his command had ever before reached the spot they were now in, for, in all the warfare between the two provinces, Cofachiqui had always proved so superior in numbers and strength that the people of Cofaqui had not dared to venture beyond the boundaries of their own province ; this alone was the reason, he said, why they did not know where they were, or how to go on. And moreover, he added, if the Spanish general suspected him of leading the Spanish army there out of malice or treason, he would tell him that he and his chief were truthful men and above such perfidy. De Soto then called Pedro, who up to this time had been so certain of his route that he could tell always the night before what the next day's stage would be. But like the rest of the Indians, Pedro seemed to have lost his memory, and he now declared that it was four or five years since he had been over that road, and he had forgotten it so completely that he did not know the way any farther, nor would he even suggest in what direction Cofachiqui lay. Seeing him deprived so suddenly of his knowledge, the soldiers suggested that the devil had been after him again ; but devil or no devil, De Soto in his anger threatened to throw him to the dogs, and he would have done so if Juan Ortiz, who needed him as an interpreter, had not begged him off. The rest of the day was spent pushing along wherever the forest was thin enough to pass through, until about sunset they were stopped by a river, wider than any seen yet, and too deep to ford.

And now the anxiety and perplexity grew yet greater, for there were not provisions enough in the army to last if it delayed to make rafts and canoes. Cofaqui's supplies had been measured only for seven days, and although thousands of Indians had been ostentatiously sent along to carry them, their loads were not half the weight of an ordinary one, as the Spaniards now found out, for each pack bearer besides his load carried his bow and quiver. Although the day before proclamation had been made that food was to be saved and measured, as it was feared that the army would not reach the end of its march as early as expected, the notice came too late; there were no provisions left to be saved. So here were nearly one thousand Spaniards and three hundred and fifty horses to feed, and nothing to eat in sight but roots and herbs. The horsemen were sent out to hunt at random in all directions for a road. At nightfall they returned, faint and weary, leading their exhausted horses, with no road or sign of habitation found. By the next dawn De Soto had started out four detachments, two of horse and two of foot, to follow the course of the river up and down until they found some inhabited country. The camp awaited their return in the pangs of starvation. Their great hunger, the soldiers afterwards called this experience. The daily measure of corn could be counted by the grain. The soldiers spent these days searching for edible roots and herbs. The Indians hunted and fished indefatigably; but a few birds and minnows was all they

brought back after a day's effort; and although starving themselves, they would force these upon the Spaniards, who, however, says the chronicle, always returned half. At last the Adelantado saw that he must kill the swine. The hogs brought from Cuba had multiplied into a herd, which had been carefully guarded, and brought along with the army, in view of just such a crisis. But killing as many as they dared,—for breeders had to be reserved,—the rations of meat were so small that they seemed rather to aggravate than still the soldiers' hunger. And so, as the soldiers said, cheerfulness and courage were after all their best substitute for food. Officers and men fared alike; for the Adelantado would never, and even in this dire strait, fare better than his soldiers.

Juan d'Añasco commanded one of the four detachments, and with him went Patofa with a band of warriors. They went up the river. After travelling three days they came to a village. Very few people, but great quantities of food, were found in it. The gladness of the famished men may be imagined, and when they had killed their hunger, as they expressed it, they mounted to a housetop; as far as the eye could reach they saw along the banks of the river, villages, with cornfields lying all around. Four troopers at once started back to carry the good news to the Adelantado,—and that night, while the Spaniards were sleeping, Patofa and his men sated their thirst for the blood of their enemies. Slipping away from their allies they fell upon the

unsuspecting village of Cofachiqui, and for once, if not forever, settled scores with their foes. The Spaniards understood now the true significance of Cofaqui's generous escort of warriors, and train of pack bearers.

The news of food in the hungry camp roused it from death to life. The soldiers did not wait for orders, but each one sped for himself, guided by Juan d'Añasco's blazing on the trees. The Adelantado and those who had the best horses reached the village in twelve hours, the rest as their horses or legs brought them. The Adelantado put an immediate end to Patofa's bloody work by sending him and his people back to Cofaqui, but with much largess of presents and thanks. And none too soon; for when the army, resuming its march, advanced up the river through the line of villages, no live Indians were found, only dead ones; men, women, and children, and all scalped.

CHAPTER XI

COFACHIQUI

AT last the Spaniards were in the land of Cofachiqui! While the army camped for the night, the enterprising Juan d'Añasco with a small party went out on a private reconnoissance. They were back again before day, reporting the discovery of a large village on the other side of the river, about two leagues distant.¹ The Adelantado at once started for it himself with an escort, and, following the bank of the river, soon reached the canoe-landing opposite the village. Juan Ortiz and Pedro called loudly for some one to bear a message to the chief. Indians came out, but seeing the strange wonder of Spaniards and horses on the other bank, they turned and ran with all speed back into the village. Soon six warriors came to the bank; men of fine presence and, as the Spaniards judged, of authority. They entered a canoe with a number of rowers, and quickly crossed the river and landed. Advancing towards the strangers, all six of them at the same time made three profound

¹ Indian traditions locate Cofachiqui at the modern Silver Bluff on the east bank of the Savannah, in Barnwell County, South Carolina.

bows, the first towards the east, to the sun, the second towards the west, to the moon, and the third to the Adelantado. The Adelantado was seated in state on a throne, or rather in a large arm-chair, which he carried along with him wherever he went, and always sat in to receive chiefs and deputations. "Sir," said the warrior spokesman, "do you wish peace or war?" "Peace," answered the Adelantado, as usual, "not war"; adding that he only asked passage through the territory, and provisions, in order to reach other provinces that he was in quest of; he desired rafts and canoes also to cross the army over the river, and lastly, friendly treatment while he was marching through the country, so that he might cause it the least damage possible.

Peace, the Indians said, they could promise; as for food, they had themselves but little, because during the past year a pestilence had raged throughout the province, and it had driven the people from their villages into the woods, so that they had not planted their fields; and although the pestilence was now over, very few of the Indians had returned to their homes. The village opposite alone had been free of it. They went on to explain that their village was named Cofachiqui, and that their chief was a woman, a young girl, but recently raised to the position; they would return and bear to her the demands of the strangers, who in the meantime must await her answer; with good confidence, however, for although their chieftain was a girl she had the judgment and spirit of a man, and as

such would do for the Spaniards all that she possibly could. With this the six warriors returned to their boats and crossing the river, disappeared in the village. Only a few moments later the Spaniards saw two large canoes hastily being made ready, mats and cushions laid in them, and a canopy raised over one of them. Then a litter approached the bank, borne upon the shoulders of four warriors; a young squaw, evidently the princess, descended from it and seated herself in the canoe that had the awning. Eight Indian women followed, taking the paddles; the men went in the other canoe. The women rowed the princess across the river, and when she stepped out of the canoe, they followed, walking up the bank after her.

Those among the cavaliers who knew classical history could not help reminding one another, although this scene was rustic and simple in comparison, of Cleopatra going down the river Cydnus to meet Mark Antony. The princess, making a low reverence before the Spanish general, seated herself upon her throne, a kind of bench that her attendants brought and placed for her at his side, and without waiting for him, she began to speak. She repeated what her warriors had said; that the pestilence of the past year made it impossible for her to furnish the amount of provisions she would wish, but that she would do all that was in her power. And, that De Soto might see her will in her deed, she gave him at once one of her two storehouses of corn, collected in the village for the relief of her

people who had escaped from the pestilence; the other one she prayed De Soto kindly to spare for her own necessities, which were great. In a village near by there was another store of corn from which, she said, he could take as he needed. For his lodgement, she would give up her own dwelling, and she would order half the village to be vacated for a part of his army; but the rest of his soldiers would have to content themselves with shelters of green branches, which she would have put up for them. If it would please him more, she and her people would abandon the entire village, and retire to a neighbouring one. Canoes and rafts would be ready on the following day.

The Adelantado replied most graciously and gallantly, accepting her services in the name of the emperor and king of Spain, his master, who would repay them, he said, when time and occasion offered; as for himself and his army, he promised that her great hospitality and kindness should never be forgotten. Conversing further about her province and other parts of the country, the young girl replied to all the questions put by the Adelantado with such ease, well-ordered ideas, and sound judgment as the Spaniards could hardly believe possible for one reared so far from schools and courts. But they had noticed that the Indians of the provinces they were now travelling through were more delicate and refined in appearance, more affable and less fierce, than all the others met in the discovery. While talking, the princess had quietly and slowly

unwound a long string of pearls as large as hazelnuts that coiled three times round her neck and fell to her waist, fingering and playing with them while the interview lasted. When it was over, she handed them to Juan Ortiz and told him to give them to the governor. They would be valued more, Juan said, should she give them with her own hands. She replied that she dared not do that for fear of going against the modesty which all women should hold fast. Asking what the young girl was saying and being told, the Adelantado said: "More than the pearls themselves would I value the favour of receiving them from her hands; and in acting so she would not go against modesty, for we are treating of peace and friendship, of all things the most important, most serious between strange peoples."

The princess, after hearing this, rose and gave the pearls with her own hands to the Adelantado. He also rose to receive them, and taking from his finger a golden ring set with a handsome ruby that he always wore, he gave it to the princess. She received it with great dignity and placed it on one of her fingers. This little ceremony over, she took her leave and returned to her village, leaving the Spanish cavaliers charmed and half in love with her, not only on account of her mind, but of her beauty, which they vowed then and ever afterwards she possessed to the extreme of perfection. And so also then and afterwards they called her by no other name or title than *La Señora*, the Lady of Co-

fachiqui; and the name was right, says the chronicler, for a lady she was in all respects. The master of camp arrived with the rest of the army, and it was put across the river next day by means of the rafts and canoes provided by the Indians.

Learning that the widowed mother of the princess lived in retirement about fifty miles away, the Adelantado wishing, as he said, to make sure of peace and tranquillity as long as he was in the country, determined to get her into his power. He therefore requested the princess to send a message to her mother to pay a visit to her. The princess did so, urging her mother to come and see a people never seen before in those parts, who went about on the strangest kind of animals. The widow not only refused to come, but when she had heard how kindly her daughter had received the strangers, she fell into a temper and soundly rated the warrior who brought the message for having consented to so easy and quick a friendship with a people, the like of whom, as they said, they had never seen before. She added many other pruderies, the Spaniards said, such as irate widows and mothers the world over are wont to scold about. All of this being duly reported to the Adelantado made him more determined to get hold of her. He sent for Juan d'Añasco, and ordered him as one, he said, who had a lucky hand in such affairs, to take thirty soldiers, and disregarding the privacy and seclusion of the lady widow to bring her with all the friendliness and kindness in the world by force with him to the camp.

Juan d'Añasco, although the day was already advanced, set out at once on a mission that came ready made to his taste. The princess herself with her own hands presented the guide to him; a young warrior, who, she explicitly directed, when the party neared the dwelling-place of the old princess, was to go in advance and warn her of the Spaniards' coming, and supplicate her to go peaceably and as a friend with them; and he was to be sure to say that her daughter and all her people made the same petition to her. The young warrior had been reared in the very arms of the old princess, and she loved him as her own son; and the daughter chose him on this account, hoping that love for the messenger would mitigate the pain inflicted by his message. The young warrior matched his princess-chief in looks and bearing. He was about twenty-one, and nothing less than beautiful in face and figure; and as the Spaniards expressed it, the nobility of his air stood to the nobility of his blood, as does the flower to the fruit. And gallant enough he was in dress for such an embassy, with his diadem of the rarest feathers, mantle of finest deer-skin, magnificent bow, and elegant quiver of arrows.

Chatting gayly as he went along, he entertained the Spaniards with all manner of happy pleasantries. About midday the party stopped to eat and to rest awhile under the shade of a grove of trees, for it was very warm. Sitting apart the guide seemed to give himself up to thought, resting his head on his hand and every now and then breathing a long

sigh. He took off his quiver, put it on the ground before him, and began slowly, one by one, to draw the arrows from it, passing them on to the Spaniards who came round to look at them. In polish and workmanship they were, indeed, exquisite. Some had heads of stag-horn, sharpened and polished like diamonds; some of fish bones, wonderfully and cunningly adapted. Others were tipped with palm and various other hard woods, pointed like steel or iron. The Spaniards broke into exclamations of surprise and pleasure over them, for each one had some particular beauty and novelty of its own. At last the young warrior drew out a flint head, long and flat, pointed and edged like the blade of a dagger; with a quick motion he plunged this into his throat and fell. Before the Spaniards could rush to him, he was dead. Astounded and shocked, they questioned the Indian attendants. Their answers pieced out the explanation, that the young warrior knew that his mission was that of an enemy against the old princess, because when other messengers had been sent to her she had refused to go and see the Spaniards, and for him now to guide those same Spaniards to where she was, that they by fair means or foul might take her away with them, was not according to the love she had always shown him, nor the care with which as mother and princess she had reared him. And at the same time it was clear to him that if he did not do what the young princess commanded him, he would fall into disgrace with her and be dismissed from her

service. Either of these two misfortunes seemed more painful than death; and as whatever he did for one would be against the other, and as he could not live to please both, he determined to die for both.

The Indian attendants were then pressed to act as guides, but they all swore, whether truly or falsely, that they did not know where the old princess lived; that the young warrior alone knew the secret of her hiding-place. The Spaniards strove for two days to push along without a guide, but the difficulties under foot, and the excessive heat, with the weight of their armour, wearied and disgusted them, and they returned empty handed to the camp. Three days later Juan d'Añasco made another attempt, this time by water, and came almost within reach of his prize, but the old lady, warned that the Christians were after her, fled farther away and hid herself where she could not be tracked. It was the gossip of the camp that Añasco's persistence and energy were not directed so much after the widow as after a great treasure of pearls that rumour whispered she had with her.

Meanwhile the Adelantado had been in pursuit of surer treasures at hand—those that were to make the conquerors lords and wealthy for life, visions of which had kept them awake at night in restless anxiety. He began by summoning the princess before him and his officers, and confronting her with Pedro and Marco, who were ordered to tell her that she was commanded to bring all the yellow and white metals and pearls she possessed,

like the finger rings and pieces of silver, and pearls and stones set in the rings, that the Spaniards showed her. The princess without hesitation spoke to her attendants, and they at once ran in all haste and came back fetching a great quantity of shining gold-coloured copper, so much brighter than the brightest brass that the Indian boys might well have been deceived into thinking it gold. For silver, were brought forward great white slabs as thick as planks, shining like silver, but having no weight whatever and crumbling between the fingers like dry earth. As for precious stones, the princess said there were none in her land, but there were pearls; and if the Spaniards wished, they might go up there, pointing with her finger to a temple that stood upon a mound. "That," said she, "is the burial-place of the warriors of this village; there you will find our pearls. Take what you wish; and if you wish more, not far from here there is a village which was the home of my forefathers; its temple is a far larger one than this; you will find there so many pearls that even if you loaded all your horses with them, and yourselves with as much as you could carry, you would not come to the end of them. Take all, and if you still want more, we can get more, and even more still for you from the fishing-places of my people." This great news and the magnificent way in which it was told, raised the spirits of the Spaniards considerably, and consoled them somewhat for their bitter and keen disappointment about the gold and silver.

While waiting for Juan d'Añasco, the royal treasurer, to return, the Adelantado set a trusty guard about the temple, and at night himself went the rounds for fear that the secret of the wealth inside might come to the soldiers and excite their cupidity into some lawless attempt; and as soon as D'Añasco made his report, he took him and all the royal fiscal officers, and thirty cavaliers to the temple, opened the door and entered it. The usual burial-room of Indian temples was presented to them. Around the four sides on benches were ranged the burial-chests of the tribe — chests of wood or great baskets of finely plaited osier. The Spaniards lifted the covers; all were filled to the top with pearls,¹ large and small, fine and coarse, pure and discoloured, quantities upon quantities of them. And here and there over the floor lay heaps of the finest skins, dressed with the fur on, and dyed, hardly less valuable in European markets than the pearls. It seemed to the Adelantado and his companions that there were no less than thousands of bushels of pearls in the temple, and while the Adelantado was looking around, the officers of the treasury began quickly to

¹ C. C. Jones, in "Antiquities of the Southern Indians," after careful examination of the subject, states that sufficient historical evidence has been adduced to satisfy the mind of any candid observer, beyond reasonable doubt, that the quantity and value of the pearls possessed by the Indians of the sixteenth century have not been exaggerated by the Spanish chroniclers. The numerous shell heaps upon the Gulf coast and the banks of the inland rivers and lakes furnish indications of the local sources whence the pearls were procured. Examinations of the Unionidae found at the present day, in the Southern streams and lakes, have revealed in them seed pearls in great quantities. It is not unlikely that rarer gems may have been procured by trade from the Gulf islands, and Pearl Islands of Central America, even from the Pacific Ocean.

weigh them, in their scales, which they had brought along. When he saw what they were doing, he told them that the army could not be hampered and burdened by heavy loads of pearls; that his intention was to take only two arrobas of them (fifty pounds), to show their quality and purity; as for the quantity, he said that would have to be described in writing. The treasury officers implored him to let them take what had been weighed, which they said could not be missed from what was left. He consented to that, and dipping into the pearls, he gave his two joined hands full to each cavalier to make rosaries of, he said, to say prayers for their sins on. So they left the temple elated, but also ardent to see the other one, which the princess said was larger and richer than this.

Two days later the same officers and cavaliers, with a company of picked soldiers, set out to visit it. The distance was about a league, through what seemed to be a garden, so green was the country with shrubbery and fruit trees, growing in regular order, as if they had been planted by hand. The party rode pleasantly chatting through them, picking the fruit and admiring the fertility of the soil, in happy content—the golden dawn, as it were, of the realization of their dreams brightening before them.

They found the village of Talomeco, as it was called, situated upon the high bank of the river. It held about five hundred cabins, all strong and well built; and from its superiority of size and appearance over other villages, it looked as if it

might really once have been the seat and residence of a powerful chief. His house on its mound rose dominantly — but it was in turn dominated by the temple. The Spaniards' eyes, in fact, could see nothing but the temple — more than one hundred paces long, and half as wide, with a tall, pointed roof, that glittered before them like a thing of magic. Canes, slender and supple, woven into a fine mat, served for thatching, and this was studded with row upon row of all kinds and sizes of shells, with the lustrous side out ; great sea-shells of curious shapes, conchs and periwinkles ; and between these shells dropped strands of pearls falling all the way from cone to edge — a marvel of playing light and colour, like the drippings of a summer shower with the sun shining through.

Throwing open the two large doors, the Spaniards paused at the threshold, spellbound. Twelve gigantic statues of wood confronted them, counterfeiting life, with such ferocity of expression and such audacity of posture as could not but awe them. Six stood on one side, and six on the other side of the door, as if to guard it and forbid any one to enter. The first ones, those next the door, were giants about twelve feet high, the others diminished in size by regular gradation. Each pair held a different kind of weapon and stood in attitude to use it. The first and largest raised in both hands great clubs, ornamented a quarter of their length with points and facets of copper ; the second brandished broadswords of wood shaped much like the steel

swords of the Spaniards. The next ones wielded wooden staves about six feet long, the end flattened out into a blade or paddle; the fourth pair had tomahawks with blades of brass or flint; the fifth held bows with arrows aimed, and strings drawn ready to shoot; the sixth and last statues grasped pikes pointed with copper.

Passing between the file of monsters, the Spaniards entered the great room. Overhead were rows of lustrous shells such as covered the roof, and the strands of pearls; but interspersed among the strands of pearls were strands of bright feathers, and clusters of feathers strung on a fine, dull-coloured thread, so that the feathers and pearls seemed to be floating in the air. It was most beautiful. Looking lower, the Spaniards saw that along the upper sides of the four walls ran two rows of statues, figures of men and women of natural size, each placed on a separate pedestal. The men held various weapons, and each weapon was ornamented with strings of pearls, coiling around them five or six times; the pearls separated at regular distances by tassels of coloured threads, which much enhanced their effect. The women had nothing in their hands. All the space around these statues was covered with shields of skins and fine cane mats; and these were also ornamented with pearl ornaments and strings of pearls brightened with tassels of thread. As in the other temple, the burial-chests were placed on benches around the four sides of the room, but in the centre, upon the floor, were also rows of caskets,

placed one on the top of another, rising in regular gradation like pyramids. All of the caskets, large and small, were filled with pearls, and the pearls too were distributed according to size, the largest in the largest caskets, the smallest, the seed pearls, in the smallest infants' caskets. In all there was such a quantity of pearls that, seeing it with their own eyes, the Spaniards confessed that what the princess had said about the temple was truth and not pride and exaggeration. As she declared, even if they loaded themselves with as much as they could carry (and there were more than nine hundred of them), and loaded their three hundred horses with them, they could not take them all; there would still be hundreds of bushels of them left. And in addition there were, as in the other temple, great heaps of the largest and handsomest deerskins, dyed in different colours, and the skins of other animals dressed with the hair on; cured and dressed as perfectly, the Spaniards said, as could have been done in Germany or Muscovy. Around this great room were eight small rooms, all filled with different weapons—pikes, clubs, tomahawks, bows and arrows of all varieties, and of the most exquisite workmanship; some with three-pronged heads like harpoons; some two-pronged; some with chisel-edges, like daggers; some shaped like thorns. In the last room were mats of cane, so finely woven that there were few among the Spanish crossbowmen who could have put a bolt through them.

The revenue officers again proposed to take out

from the spoils the royal fifth that belonged to his Imperial Majesty, and to carry it away with them. But the Adelantado, as before, said that this would only embarrass the movements of the army with excessive luggage; that even now it could not carry its necessary munitions and provisions; that all must be left just as it was. They were not dividing the land now, he reminded them, only discovering it; when they did divide it, then he who should be in possession could pay the royal fifth. Upon this, the officers took nothing of all that they saw, but they returned to the village with enough and more than enough in their minds to stir their imaginations about the unexplored country before them.

Greedily questioning the Indians if they knew of any still greater land or chief farther inland, these answered, as they had learned now to answer the Spaniards, to get rid of them, that further on was a greater and more powerful chief ruling over a richer country called Chiaha. De Soto made up his mind at once to march thither. The men and some of the officers protested that there was no need to travel any farther, for where they were the soil was rich, the climate temperate, and treasure abundant; but it seemed as if the Adelantado, like the other Peruvian conquerors, could be content with nothing less than the wealth of Atahualpa. And, says one of his soldiers, the Adelantado was a stern man and of few words, and although he was glad to sift and know the opinion of all, yet, after he had delivered his own, he would not be opposed, and always did

what he himself liked, and all others were forced to bow to his will ; and although it seemed an error to quit that country, yet there were none who could say anything against him after they knew his resolution. Whenever any one would speak of wanting to settle where they were, he would answer with the argument that there was not food enough in that country to last the army a month, and that at any rate they must return to the port of Apalache, where Maldonado was to bring the ships. If no richer country could be found, he said, they could return to Cofachiqui whenever they chose. In the meantime the Indians would be planting their fields and laying up stores of provisions for them. And so he ordered the march and prepared for it.

CHAPTER XII

XUALA, GUAXULE, CHIAHA, COOSA

WHEN the army left Cofachiqui, the princess was taken along, carefully guarded; and, according to the account of one of the Portuguese cavaliers, she was not treated with the usage she deserved after her kindness to the Spaniards. She was carried in a litter or marched on foot, followed by her women attendants; and now, as always, a lady, it was she who, throughout her province, provided the supplies and gave the commands that secured pack bearers from one village to another, her messengers running ahead of the army to bear her orders. She also sent warriors into the next province to prepare the chief for the coming of the Spaniards, and to bespeak a peaceful reception for them. All along the march the Spaniards found numbers of captives taken from other provinces, working as slaves, with one foot maimed to prevent their escape, a savage substitute for chains.

The last stopping place in the princess's dominion was the village Xuala,¹ built on the slope of a

¹ Supposed to be the site of the present town of Qualatche at the source of the Catahootche River.

hill near the bank of a furious little river. Plenty of food and hospitable treatment tempted the Spaniards into a halt of fifteen days to rest their horses. When they started again, the princess instead of being dismissed was still carried along with them towards the next province. But on the first day's march beyond her country, she and her women, as they were walking along, quietly passed out of view in the woods; and when the guard sought for them, they could not be found, nor the casket of pearls they carried with them. The Adelantado intended to take it from them, and only out of courtesy had let the princess keep it so far.

The good treatment received in the next village, Guaxule, passed into a luck-word with the Spanish soldiers, who ever afterwards at a good throw of the dice would call out, "The house of Guaxule!" The chief answered the messages of the princess of Cofachiqui by coming out with a retinue of about five hundred warriors to receive the strangers and conduct them to his village, where everything had been prepared for their entertainment. The village was prettily spread out among a number of small streams that ran down from the hills in the distance. The chief's house was given up to the Adelantado, and the rest of the village was turned over to him for the use of the army. The Indians in this part of the country had quantities of fat dogs, and seeing how much the Spaniards enjoyed the flesh of them, they gave freely and constantly of them. The Indians themselves seemed to eat no flesh but game.

The Spaniards, deprived as they were of animal food, would so pine for it, that the sick soldiers would moan, "If I had but one piece of meat, I should get well." As the Indians here said that just ahead lay a great territory, a far larger and richer one than Guaxule, De Soto decided to push still on and not turn back until he saw it, although he calculated that he was nearly two hundred and seventy leagues from Apalache, his point of return. The Spaniards always remembered the little village of Canasauga¹ in this region as the place where a file of twenty Indians met them bearing on their heads baskets of fresh mulberries.

The little streams that rippled past Guaxule, all joining together, formed a great river, which as the army followed it broadened and shallowed, and at last separated into two branches, flowing around an island which held a village, Chiaha — a pretty village, with a friendly chief and people eagerly curious to see the strangers, and simple and unaffected in showing it. They wished, they said, that they could open all the doors in their breasts so that the Spaniards might look with their own eyes into their hearts. The weather was hot; and the army instead of quartering in the village camped in a beautiful meadow outside, where the men spread out at their ease, each one selecting his own tree for a tent. The horses were also given their ease in a large field about a quarter

¹ A small tributary of the Coosa; the Connesauga perpetuates the name of the village in modern geography.

of a league away, and they enjoyed it, for provender had been short and marches long ever since leaving Cofachiqui.

With their camp so scattered and out of order, the Spaniards would have been in evil case to defend themselves, had the Indians set upon them, but the war and strife of the Apalachians had been left completely behind with their country, so that the army felt as secure in the enjoyment of their good living as if in camp at home. In the cabins of the Indians the Spaniards found, to their delight, gourds of bears' fat, which melted in the mouth like butter, and tasted as good; and walnut oil as clear as olive and as savoury; and pots of wild honey, which they had never seen before in the country. But the Indians, plied as usual with questions about the country, gave what was still better than jars of butter and pots of honey, for they said that in a province called Chisca there were many and rich mines of the yellow metal the Spaniards sought, and the chief even offered guides to lead safely there and back any Spaniards who would go and verify the story. Two soldiers at once volunteered and set out.

While they were away, the chief gave to De Soto a beautiful string of pearls, a princely gift, if the jewels had not been discoloured by fire, for the string was two yards long, and the pearls as large as hazelnuts. The Adelantado in return presented the chief with pieces of velvet and different coloured cloths, which he received with great expressions

of gratitude. Being asked about pearls, he said that they were fished in his country, and that there were great quantities of them in the temple of his village and in the other villages of his province, and if De Soto wished, he could take all he wanted. The Adelantado then asking how the pearls were obtained from the shells, the chief promised he should see the next morning how it was done. That night forty canoes were despatched to the fishing-place, and in the early dawn great heaps of wood were piled on the river bank and set on fire. By the time the canoes returned, the fire had burned to coals, which were raked out, and as the shells were taken from the canoes they were thrown upon them. As the shells opened, Indians would seize them and thrust their fingers between them, and pick out the pearls. The first ones opened yielded ten or twelve pearls as large as peas.

A curious accident happened here one day. A cavalier, lance in hand, was walking in a meadow near the river, when he saw some small animal, a coon or an opossum, running at a little distance from him. He threw his lance at it eagerly, for in the great lack of animal food the Spaniards were always wild for any game. The lance shooting past and ahead of the animal whizzed over the bank of the river. Here it chanced another Spaniard was sitting fishing. The lance drove through his head, going in at one temple and coming out at the other. The cavalier following to look for his lance found the man there dead, holding his fishing-rod in his

hands, the lance sticking in his head. What most grieved the cavalier was that the victim of his cruel throw was the one white-haired soldier in the army, "father," as his comrades all affectionately called him, and as a father in truth, respected by them all.

The two explorers returned from their gold mines, which turned out to be the usual ignis fatuus — copper. As it was close on to August, and the men were rested, and the horses fat once more, orders were given to prepare to march. The kindly hospitality of the people, misunderstood, as hospitality often is, by the recipients of it, was now to be presumed upon. De Soto, incited by his men, demanded thirty Indian women-slaves to accompany the army. But that night the Indians with their women and children fled from the village, the chief pretending that it was against his will and command. A troop of Spaniards was sent in pursuit, ravaging the cornfields on the way; but the Indians had taken refuge on an island where neither foot nor horse could get to them; and so the army marched away without their slaves.

At the other end of the island, on the point where the two branches of the river came together again, was another village named Acoste. Warned, perhaps, by runners from Chiaha, they gave the Spaniards quite a different reception. The chief made no pretensions whatever of friendship, and although he came outside of his village with his warriors to meet the army, it was with bows in their hands, and

not to offer hospitality and courtesy, but fight. Not for an instant would they lay their enmity or their weapons aside, and the night was passed by both camps watching in arms, as if in front of a declared enemy. The next day the Spaniards crossed the river in the boats and rafts found moored at the bank, and pursued their way from Acoste, thanking God for delivering them out of so tight a peril as that island-village might have proved, had peace once been broken.

The next province belonged to a chief called Coosa. Over one hundred leagues the Spaniards journeyed through it, finding everywhere a fertile soil, and a thick population, passing ten or twelve villages every day, without counting those they saw at a distance to the right and left, and all showing contentment and prosperity. The Indians came out to receive the strangers with great demonstrations of friendship, lodging them in their houses at night, giving them with the utmost generosity all the food they had, and accompanying them along the road as far as the next village, and turning back only when they saw them well received. Sometimes the army slept in the villages, sometimes in the open fields, wherever the day's march happened to end. The chief's village lay at the other end of the province. He sent messengers almost every day, welcoming the Spanish general to his territory, and begging him and his men, the greatest compliment that hospitality had yet paid the Spaniards, to journey as slowly as possible through it, and to enjoy them-

selves and feast themselves as much as they would in it.

At the end of twenty three or four days, as they neared his village, they saw a brave assemblage advancing to meet them, more than a thousand warriors in war plumes, with bows and quivers. All were tall and well made men, and as they advanced in a solid body of twenty front, the Spaniards could not but exclaim at the sight.

Coosa, the chief, a good looking young warrior, about twenty-six years of age, was borne in a litter upon the shoulders of his noblest warriors. He was seated upon cushions, and wore a magnificent diadem of feathers and a mantle of marten skins that fell in royal folds about him. Around the litter walked musicians playing upon pipes and chanting. Coosa made the customary speech of welcome with the air and manner suitable to the princely ostentation of his reception of the strangers; and his conversation and answers to the questions put to him by the Spaniards did not belie the sense and judgment betokened by the expression of his face. On the whole, the Spaniards thought he was the equal in appearance of any prince brought up in a European court. His village, built on the bank of the river (supposed to be the Coosa of to-day), looked what it was, the capital of a populous and prosperous province. It contained five hundred houses, all large and well built. The three houses that formed the chief's personal establishment were given over to the Adelantado and his officers; one-half of the village

had been evacuated for the soldiers, and they all were easily quartered in it.

During the ten or twelve days' halt here, the entertainment was of the kind usually reserved in the Old World for very dear brothers; for the chronicler says that none but so tender a word could express the geniality of the people to the Spaniards. That their good-will and esteem were sincere could not be doubted; for one day after dinner, during which Coosa and the Adelantado had talked much about matters pertaining to the discovery and conquest of the land, and the eventual settlement of it by the Spaniards, the young chief rose to his feet, and making a low bow to the Adelantado, and running his eyes over the cavaliers seated to the right and left of him, to include them all in what he had to say, made a speech. After praising the Spaniards and the fertility and resources of his land, he proposed to De Soto to make his settlement there, or at least to make a trial of the province by wintering in it. And again the Spaniards thought that the Adelantado could not fare better by going farther; but he, as before, reiterated that under no circumstances would he settle in the interior of the country before first founding a port to receive his ships from Spain with the requisites of colonization. As it was getting time now, according to the plan laid down, to return to the sea to meet Maldonado and the brigantines which were expected soon, when the army started, he headed it for the south. In fact, ever since

leaving Xuala, he had been curving the route towards the coast, to be within easy reach of it by winter. Coosa accompanied the army to his boundaries, or was carried along as hostage, according to the policy of the Adelantado.

CHAPTER XIII

TUSCALOOSA

TALISE¹ was the last village under Coosa's rule, and, as a frontier post should be, it was strongly fortified and well situated, the river almost encircling it in a bend and making a peninsula of it. But the village was not entirely subservient and obedient to Coosa; the double dealings of the neighbouring chief, Tuscaloosa,² a fierce, arrogant warrior, too astute and subtle to come to open warfare with Coosa, kept it in a disaffected, rebellious attitude towards its rightful chief. The Spanish forces were not more than quartered in Talise before the son of Tuscaloosa arrived with a fine following of warriors, bearing greetings of peace and offers of service from his father. He was a youth of only eighteen, but of such fine stature that he stood breast high above the tallest man in the Spanish army; the tallest Indian he was yet seen in the country. Having delivered his message, and hearing that the Spaniards were journeying towards his father's territory, he said, with frank promptness:

¹ If Tallahassee be not merely a verbal echo of Talise, the latter exists to-day in the town lying in the elbow of the Tallapoosa River.

² Tuscaloosa is Choctaw for Black Warrior.

“To go there, although the distance is short, you have two roads; I beg that you will command two soldiers to go by one and return by the other, so that they can see which would be the better for your army to take. I will give guides who will conduct them there and back in safety.” His advice was taken; the guides were sent, and upon their report the Adelantado selected his road, and the son of Tuscaloosa was dismissed with presents.

Coosa here disappears from the narrative, “muy gentil hombre” to the last, as the Spaniards said. It was discovered that a soldier had remained behind, concealed among the Indians in his village. Every effort was made to induce the deserter to return to the army, but all in vain; for most indecently, says the chronicler, he sent the Adelantado’s messenger back with the reply, that he preferred living with the Indians to going on with the Spaniards. The Adelantado made a demand upon Coosa to cause his Indians to fetch the man by force. The young chief, however, with the greatest courtesy and polish, replied that since not all the Spaniards, as he desired, had chosen to remain in his country, he was much rejoiced that even one should by his own choice have done so, and that the general must pardon him if he did not use force against the man, whom he on the contrary greatly esteemed. The Adelantado then let the matter drop.

Tuscaloosa did not wait in his own village for the Spaniards, but came forward to one of the smaller ones to receive them on the road. Early

in the morning of the third day after leaving Talise, the army came in sight of him, posed in majestic state, in a beautiful plain, a village rising on a hill at his back. He sat on his royal chair, a seat hollowed out of solid wood; at his feet were spread beautiful mats; above his head was held a yellow banner striped with three bars of blue; it was of buckskin, but it looked like the richest silk; and it was the first banner seen by the Spaniards in Florida, and the one Tuscaloosa always carried with him wherever he went. Over a hundred warriors in war plumes and mantles stood round him. Like his son, Tuscaloosa rose above the heads of the tallest about him by a foot and a half. To the Spaniards he was a giant. His face was handsome, but ominous of the stern ferocity and savageness of soul he afterwards showed. His eyes were as large as those of an ox; his shoulders became his height, but the girth of his waist was not more than two-thirds of a Spaniard's sword belt; arms and legs were straight and well joined to his body; his shins were as long as most men's legs. In fine he was, say the Spaniards, the perfection of colossal form and feature. He seemed barely forty years of age.

The cavaliers and captains of the army riding in advance of the general gained no sign of recognition from him, either by movement or expression; it was as if he, like the Inca, Atahualpa, did not see them, or they were not passing before him. Luis de Moscoso came up and spoke to him, and he and his escort coursed their horses to and fro, prancing

them up to where he sat. But Tuscaloosa would only lift up his eyes to glance at them with disdain. He made no offer at all to rise when the Adelantado approached. So he, dismounting, went up to him; they then embraced and the two remained together while the army marched up into the village. Then, hand in hand, they followed until they reached the building prepared for De Soto; there Tuscaloosa left him and strode away. The Spaniards remained in the village two days, and when they set out again, the chief and his retinue accompanied them, he resplendent and magnificent in a gorgeous gold embroidered scarlet coat and cap presented by the Adelantado. The chiefs on the march always rode on horseback, but when a horse was sought for Tuscaloosa, among all the chargers in the army there was not one that could bear such a weight as his, and the Adelantado would not hear of putting upon him the affront, in the sight of all Spaniards, of making him ride a mule. Finally, a hack belonging to the Adelantado, which for its strength had been used as a pack-horse, was impressed for the service; but the chief was so tall that when seated in the saddle his feet nearly touched the ground.

The march proceeded in a pleasant and leisurely fashion, each day advancing three to four leagues, until the principal village of the province, the one from which both chief and province took their name, was reached. It was a strong place, built on the favourite site of the Indians, a neck of land, almost surrounded by a river, which was the same

stream that flowed by Talise, but swelled to great volume, depth, and current. A day was given to crossing the army over it, and camp was pitched in a beautiful valley just beyond its bank. Here two soldiers were found to be missing, and it was suspected that the Indians, finding them astray from the camp, had killed them. But when the Indians were asked about them, their insolent answer was: Had they taken charge of the Spaniards? Or what obligation were they under to account for them? The Adelantado did not push his investigations with too much insistence, for fear of affronting the chief and provoking something worse; but he stored the deed in his memory, and only deferred the moment of retribution until he could be sure of it.

The next village on the road through Tuscaloosa's territory was Mauvila.¹ All along the march, the chief had been sending messengers to it, to warn his people, as he explained to the Spaniards, to collect provisions and pack bearers for the army. The army halted within five miles of it, at the close of a beautiful June day. Luis de Moscoso was of the opinion that it would be wiser in the hot weather to keep on camping outside the village in the field, as they had been doing; but the Adelantado, weary it is said of sleeping in the open, decided to camp

¹ The historian of Alabama, Pickett, says that he is satisfied that the site of Mauvila was upon the north bank of the Alabama at a place now called Choctaw Bluff, in Clarke County, about twenty-five miles above the confluence of the Alabama and the Tombigbee. It is needless to say that it gave its name to the city and bay of Mobile.

outside only that night, and to lodge in the village during his stay there.

The next morning at daylight he sent two soldiers ahead, ordering them to spy round and find out what sort of place Mauvila was, and if it were true, as was famed all over the country, that Tuscaloosa had gathered great numbers of his people there for festivities and rejoicings over the arrival of the Spanish general and his army. The soldiers were to wait in the village for De Soto, who would ride immediately after them. So, as soon as they were well on their way, he, with a hundred cavaliers and footmen, followed by their slaves and the pack bearers of the army with the luggage, set out with Tuscaloosa to the village. The master of camp was ordered to follow promptly with the rest of the army. Riding quickly over the five miles, the party reached the village about eight o'clock. It was seated in a beautiful meadow, and surrounded and concealed by a wall—a great palisade three pike lengths high, made of well-grown trees, crossed by timbers almost as large, fastened together by vines and plastered with a thick mortar of mud and straw, which filled all the interstices and crevices, and formed a surface as smooth and unbroken as if made with the trowel of a bricklayer. About the height of a man, loopholes for arrows had been pierced; and about every fifty paces were towers capable of holding seven or eight men. Numbers of trunks of trees, driven into the ground for posts, had taken root and had branched out all the length

of the walls, crowning it with green and giving great beauty to it. There were but two gates, one opening to the east and one to the west.

As the Adelantado and Tuscaloosa neared, bands of warriors came forward, dancing and singing; and after the warriors came bands of beautiful Indian girls, likewise dancing and singing. They led the way into the village and through the one broad street that ran across from gate to gate. The Spaniards looked round in astonishment; the houses were few in number, but they were as large as barracks, the smallest capable of holding five hundred men; the largest, a thousand or fifteen hundred.

The little procession came to a stop in the public square. The Spanish scouts were seen waiting to one side. De Soto and Tuscaloosa dismounted, and the chief, calling Juan Ortiz, said, pointing with his finger: "In that large house will lodge the general with his cavaliers, and the warriors he wishes to keep with him; in that other one near it, his attendants and servants; for the rest of the army, an arrow's flight outside of the walls my people have built huts of green branches where they can lodge, because the village is small and will not hold us all." The Adelantado replied that his master of camp would fix the quarters as the chief desired. Tuscaloosa then said something about remaining in the village and not being troubled with travelling any more with the army, and receiving no reply from De Soto, he turned and strode away to his house, the largest one around the square,

and entered it. The other cavaliers dismounted and sent their horses outside the village to the place assigned for the camp.

Gonzalo Quadrado Xaramillo, one of the scouts, now came up to the Adelantado. "My lord," he said, "I have been carefully examining this village, and what I have seen and observed gives me no security whatever of the friendship of this chief and his people. On the contrary, I have an evil suspicion that they have planned some treason against us; in those few houses you see there, are more than ten thousand warriors, picked men, for there is not an old one among them nor a menial; and they are armed to the teeth; and those other houses are filled with weapons; they are magazines of arms. And besides, although there are a great many women in the village, all are girls; not one among them has a child, nor is there a child to be found in the whole place; thus they are all free and without impediment. For an arquebuse-shot, all around the village, the ground, as you may have seen, has been cleaned and cleared so carefully and particularly that even the roots of the grass have been pulled up by hand, which seems to me to mean that they are going to give us battle, and nothing in the world will prevent them." Warning was passed from mouth to mouth to the Spaniards standing round to be on their guard; and Xaramillo was ordered to see Luis de Moscoso as soon as he arrived and post him as to how matters stood, so that he could make his arrangements accordingly.

In the meantime, a great council of war in the building that Tuscaloosa had entered was deciding upon the last arrangements for the massacre of the Spaniards. For all along Tuscaloosa had been determined to slay them in the village of Mauvila, which he had selected for the purpose. For this he had sent his son to welcome them, and spy out what their wishes were, and their manner of weapons; and for this, he had himself gone to meet them, to conduct them thither, where his messengers had collected that great concourse of warriors, not only from his own people and subjects, but from among all his neighbours and allies, inviting them to join in the triumph and glory of putting an end to all the Christians at once, promising them as a reward Spaniards for slaves, and horses to ride, and plunder of scarlet coats and caps. Looking round him, Tuscaloosa saw the bravest and most noted warriors of all that region. He told them to decide promptly what they were going to do: whether they would at once kill the Spaniards who were at present in the square, and after them the others as they arrived, or whether they would wait until all came up. The warriors fell into a division; some advised not to wait for the rest of the Spaniards to come up and increase the difficulty of the enterprise, but to kill those that they already had under their hands, and afterwards the others as they arrived. Others, the braver ones, said that as they, the Indians, had the advantage of the Spaniards in valour, agility, and fleetness, as well

as in numbers, it showed fear to fall upon the Spaniards in small divisions. Let them all come together and then at one blow kill them all, for that would be greater triumph and honour, and a deed more fitting the fame of Tuscaloosa. Those of the former opinion contended that the Spaniards together would then be able to make a better defence, and kill more Indians; that what the warriors wanted was to kill all the Spaniards, and the best and surest way was the one that was safest to themselves. This last counsel prevailed, although the other suited Tuscaloosa's pride and daring better. But he was so impatient to begin the killing that every moment of delay, however short, seemed to him long. And so the warriors agreed to seize the first excuse that offered; and if no excuse offered, they would make one. With enemies, they said, it was not necessary to seek reasons for killing them.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLE OF MAUVILA

WHILE this was going on, the servants of the governor, in the lodgings appointed him, had gone busily to work preparing breakfast. When it was ready, the Adelantado was asked to come to table. He sent Juan Ortiz to summon Tuscaloosa, to eat with him. Juan Ortiz gave his message at the door of the chief's house, as the Indian attendants would not let him enter. They answered that Tuscaloosa would come presently. Some time passed; Tuscaloosa did not appear. Juan Ortiz went again with his message to the door, and received the same reply. After another interval of waiting for Tuscaloosa—a good long one—he went a third time, telling the guards to say to Tuscaloosa that he must come at once, for the Adelantado was waiting and the food was upon the table. Thereupon a magnificent warrior stepped to the door. “Who,” said he, arrogantly, “are these vagabonds and thieves who are calling to my chief, Tuscaloosa, their ‘come, come!’ as if they were talking to one of themselves? By the Sun and the Moon, there is no one here who is going to put up with their insolence!”

The words were not out of his mouth before a warrior, coming up behind, put a bow and arrows in his hand, and he, throwing his marten-skin mantle back, placed the arrow on the string and aimed it at a group of Spaniards standing in the square. Balthazar de Gallegos happened to be standing just by the side of the door. In a flash he drew his sword and gave the Indian a cut that opened him from shoulder to waist. The warrior fell over the threshold dead. Then the fight began. The first in the rush of the warriors from the door was a beautiful-looking youth, perhaps the son of the first warrior. He shot six or seven arrows at Gallegos with frightful skill and quickness, but seeing them fall harmless from the armour of the Spaniard, he took his bow with both hands, and closing with him he thundered five or six blows over his head so strong and quick that Gallegos saw stars dancing before his eyes. With blood streaming down his face, the cavalier gave two thrusts of his sword, and the young warrior fell dead over the old one.

A prolonged war-cry now rose from every quarter of the village, and from every house in sight Indians poured out, and charged upon the Spaniards in the square. So great was their number, and so wild and furious their rush, that the Spaniards, like leaves before the hurricane, their feet barely touching the ground, were borne along before it, and cast outside the gate more than two hundred paces, into the open field. The horsemen flew to get their horses before the Indians should reach them. The

quickest of foot managed to reach them and mount ; the slower reached them only in time to cut their halters, so that they could escape the arrows shot at them. But there were some who could not do even this, and their poor beasts were shot to death by swarms of dancing Indians, who emptied quivers of arrows into them. The pack bearers and the slaves of the Spaniards had remained outside the village, laying their packs down all over the ground near by the walls, and waiting for orders to direct them to their quarters. And now while one band of the men of Mauvila was killing the horses, and another pursuing the hard-pressed Spaniards, a third, leaping from the walls, made these Indians take up their packs again and carry them into the village, where the chains were struck off from the slaves, and bows and arrows given to all to fight with. Thus the luggage of the army, the clothing and the pearls and all the property of the Spaniards passed into the hands of the Indians, and the cavaliers and soldiers were left with only what they had on their backs.

The few cavaliers who had been able to mount their horses charged upon the furious mass of Indians, before whom the little handful of Spaniards on foot, fighting with might and main for their lives, were retreating down the open field. The shock of the horses gained them a moment's respite in which to reform their ranks ; and now in two divisions, footmen and horsemen, they turned and charged upon their pursuers, and fired by the disgrace and humiliation of their flight, they did not stop until

they had driven the Indians back within their walls. The gates were pushed to and barred. The Spaniards beat and strove against them, but such a storm of arrows and stones fell from the wall and towers, that they were forced to withdraw out of their range. Seeing the Spaniards again retreat, the Indians made another furious charge, dashing out of the gate and leaping over the wall; and the Spaniards, cursing in their shame of it as they did, were again hurled back more than two hundred paces, but facing their enemies, and fighting steadily, shoulder to shoulder. They knew that in order and discipline alone lay their one chance of safety, and a slim enough chance that was, few as they were, and in such sore need of the rest of the army, which still did not come up. Again they charged, and drove the Indians back into the village; but again the walls were too deadly for them, and they were forced to retire. And so, advancing and retiring, charging and retreating, they fought without pause for the space of full three hours, always retreating, however, a little farther, to draw the Indians farther and farther from their walls and out into the open, where the horses could have more ground and space for their charges.

And in their rear, coming up and falling back, with them, now close at their shoulders, now careering at full speed away from their rear, rode the young Dominican priest, Juan de Gallegos, the brother of Balthazar. He wanted to give his horse to his brother, and kept calling to him at the top of his voice to come and get it; but Balthazar, in the

front rank of the fighters, had no time to respond, nor would he have left his place. And thus, in one of his retreats, an Indian happened to clap eyes upon the priest and planted an arrow between his shoulders. The wound was only a slight one, for besides hood and gown, the friar's back was protected by his large felt sombrero, that had slipped from his head and hung by its cord round his neck like a shield. After that the friar kept his distance from the combat. Many Spaniards had already fallen, dead or wounded, but the greatest loss, and the one which caused most pain and grief to comrades and soldiers, was that of Don Carlos Enriquez, a cavalier of Badajoz, who had married the niece of the Adelantado, and who was by all odds the best loved man in all the army. He was on horseback and fighting like the bravest of cavaliers, as he was, when, in one of the charges, his horse was shot by an arrow, just above the breastplate; and as he retreated he bent over to draw the arrow out, passing his lance to his left hand, and stretching himself over the horse's neck and pulling at it. The turn of his head exposed a streak of throat; instantly a three-pronged flint-headed arrow cut across it like a knife, and he fell from his horse, almost beheaded.

The Indians, seeing their great disadvantage in the open ground on account of the horses, now, with shrill cries, called their forces together from all over the field, and falling back into the village, closed the gates and manned their walls. De Soto called upon the best armoured cavaliers to dismount and storm

the gate. Quick as his word they formed a column and, holding their shields over their heads, they dashed upon the gate with their axes, cut it open, and with one impetus charged through it. Not to be kept outside and lose time from the fight by waiting to push through the narrow openings, other Spaniards assaulted the wall itself, and with quick blows of their axes cut great breaches in the smooth mortar, and clambering over on the crosspieces, jumped down inside. When they saw the Spaniards again inside the village, the Indians, maddened to fury, threw themselves upon them and fought like wild beasts; up and down the broad mainway, in and out the passages between the houses and from the roofs. The Spaniards were shut in, front, rear, and above.

It was the fourth hour of the fight, and it was as dogged as at the first. The Indians still serried and firm, the Spaniards steadily using their swords and lances, but finding that the more they killed the deadlier and fiercer was the spirit against them. Command was given to fire the houses; in an instant sheets of flame and smoke rose from the nearest ones. The roofs were thatched with straw, dry as tinder, and in another instant, in the small enclosure, the heat of hell was added to the carnage, the blood, the dust, and the noise. Up to this time the Adelantado had fought on foot; now, running out of the village, he seized a horse. Nuño de Tobar followed him, and the two soon came thundering back like a whirlwind through the mainway, calling

out, "Our Lady!" and "Santiago!" and shouting to their men to make way. The Spaniards opened ranks, and on they rode through and broke into the mass of fighting Indians in front, and charged through them, from one end to another, lancing to the right and left, the Indians rushing together behind them, like water behind the keel of a vessel; and when the cavaliers turned their horses again, a solid front of fighters met them. Back and forth they charged, shouting their battle-cry, arrows following them like a cloud of dust, pelting their armour and dropping off. While De Soto was rising in his stirrups to give a thrust of his lance, an Indian sent an arrow through his coat of mail into his thigh. There was no time to have the arrow pulled out, so he fought the rest of the day standing in his stirrups, a feat of horsemanship that was ever afterwards cited with admiration by his men.

The flames raging more furiously from minute to minute, the village was now one sheet of flame. There was no escape from it. The Indians fighting on the roofs did not have time to leap down from the blazing thatching; the women crowding the inside could not get out and were suffocated in heaps, and thousands perished. The cavalry now surged back and forth in the public square; and here the wind would blow the smoke and flames now upon the Indians, blinding and driving them back, now against the Spaniards, driving them back, when the Indians would charge forward and regain all the space that they had lost. Wild with heat



“Back and forth they charged.”

and thirst, the Spaniards would run for drink to a pool near the walls; it was running blood, but even so they drank and returned to the fight. Four o'clock came, and the eighth hour of the fight.

The Indians, seeing what numbers had gone down under fire and steel, and that their ranks were weakening for want of fighters, called now upon their women, crying to them to take up arms and avenge the death of their men, and if they could not avenge them, to do as the men were doing, die rather than be made the slaves of the Spaniards. Women were already fighting by the side of the men, but now, when that cry came, all responded, not one held back; on they ran, grasping from the ground swords, partisans, lances, or bows and arrows, which they used with the skill and strength and deadly ferocity of the men. It was like pouring oil upon a conflagration, and the fight was such as the Spaniards had never seen. The women braved death even more recklessly than the men, throwing their naked breasts upon the keen weapons of their enemies, so as to seize the points in their hands. The Spaniards, their foes being women, and fighting only to die, weakened against them, and refrained from killing them, admiring them in truth for their youth and beauty and fierce indomitableness. And all day long the drums and trumpets had not ceased to sound loud and clear for the rear-guard to make haste and come to the relief, and still it did not come. The master of camp was

taking his time about it, and when he drew his army out, his men, careless and lazy after the long peace and good time that summer, scattered over the fields and advanced at their ease and leisure, picking fruit, laughing and talking, wandering forward like a picnic party. It was not until about four o'clock in the afternoon that they came within earshot of the village, and heard the drums and trumpets, and cries and shouts, and saw the smoke boiling out as if from the crater of a volcano. The alarm ran from mouth to mouth; fear and anxiety hurried them along fast enough now, and they raced, each man for himself, and came running into the village. The Indians trying to head them off, the fight flared up again outside the wall, and for a space the contest was as hot outside as in. Ten or twelve horsemen, who were not to be stopped, spurred their way in, among the first Diego de Soto, the brother-in-law of Don Carlos Enriques. Hearing of the fate of Don Carlos, he threw himself from his horse in a passion to avenge him, and with shield and sword flew through the bloody corpse-strewn mainway to where the fight was fiercest and hottest. He had barely reached it when he fell with an arrow shot through his eye, coming out at the back of his neck.

And now, one by one, by tens, and finally by columns, the rear-guard came into the fight. Fresh and eager, they threw themselves in front of their tired, straining comrades; and the reënforcement told. Soon about the middle of the open place

stood only a hollow square of warriors and women, in the culmination of their desperation, hoping and caring for naught but to die fighting. The horses leaped upon them, trampling them down, charging upon them with such impetus that they overthrew the Spaniards, fighting on the other side. Over and over again they charged, until the hoofs of the chargers trampled only the dead, for not one would surrender; all died there standing, fighting like the superb soldiers they were, says the Spanish chronicler. This was the end; the battle was over; the Spaniards had at last won the day. It was sunset; both sides had been fighting for nine hours, but all was now over. Not all!—one warrior still fought, until, looking round, he saw that his people were all dead and gone—all; that he alone was left alive. He turned, and with the lightness of a deer ran to the wall and leaped upon it. Below him, on the outside, the Spanish foot and horse were chasing Indians and killing them all over the field. There was no escape for him there, and his pursuers were upon him. He loosed the string from his bow in a flash, twisted one end round the branch of a tree growing in the wall, the other round his neck. A spring, and as the Spaniards reached him, he hung dead.

CHAPTER XV

AFTER THE BATTLE

THE Adelantado ordered the killed to be collected for burial, the wounded to be carried to the surgeon. The dead amounted to eighty-two men ; eighteen of them had arrows sticking in the mouth and eyes, the Indians by this time having learned to aim not at the armoured body, but at the face. Forty-five horses were killed. There were seventeen hundred and seventy wounds for the surgeon to treat ; that is, dangerous wounds that he alone could attend to — deep cuts in flesh and muscle, shattered bones, broken skulls, arrows in the back, bones, or joints. The slight wounds, such as arrows in the calf of the leg, hips, arms, or body, which caused no fear of death or lameness, were cared for by the men themselves, one wounded man tending another. There was hardly a man in the army that came out of the fight with less than five or six of these slight wounds ; many of them had ten or twelve.

There was only one surgeon in the army, and he now proved himself neither competent nor skilful, but stupid and almost good for nothing. And this

was not the worst. In their dire extremity, the Spaniards found that they had no medicaments; that the oil, bandages, and lint had been destroyed; and not only that, but all the supply of linen clothing, the sheets and shirts, that could have been used for bandages and lint, and, in fact, all the clothing of any kind whatsoever, had been carried into the village by the Indians and there burned in the fire that the Spaniards themselves had kindled. There was nothing even to eat, for all the food, that which the Spaniards had brought and that which the Indians had in their houses, had been consumed, too, by the flames, to the last grain. Without a physician worthy of the name, without remedies, bandages, or lint, without food or clothing to cover themselves with, without shelter, even, in which to escape from the cold and the night — such was the condition of the Spaniards after their victory. And even if they had wished to go in search of anything, the darkness and their ignorance of where they were prevented; and so exhausted were they that they could hardly stand on their feet. The only abundance they had, says the chronicler, was in sighs and groans. They prayed to God for help, and he helped them — as he always does help the brave — for he sent them the reflection that there was no help for them but what came from their own strength and courage. So they recovered heart, and, all at once and with energy, went to work to relieve the situation, each man helping the man who was worse off than himself.

To procure shelter, some ran to the huts put up by the Indians for the encampment, and, fetching away the twigs and branches, built sheds against the portions of the wall that were still left standing. Others opened the bodies of the dead Indians and got out the fat for salves and oils to dress the wounds; others brought straw to cover the sufferers. One party stripped their dead and living companions of their shirts; and of these the linen ones were reserved for the dressing of the most dangerous wounds. Another party busied themselves in butchering the dead horses to get the meat for broths and teas, for there was nothing else to nourish the sick with. And in addition to all this, they did sentinel and guard duty, although there were only few among them capable of bearing arms. A very small force of Indians that night could have accomplished Tuscaloosa's design and finished them all.

Eight days the Spaniards lived in the miserable sheds against the walls. When they were able to leave them, they went to the huts made by the Indians for their encampment, where they remained for fifteen days, waiting for their wounds to heal. Those who had the slightest wounds went on reconnoissances to the villages round about to look for food. The villages were small, but there were great numbers of them; and in all were found many wounded Indians, but never a sound man or woman tending them. The Spaniards believed that Indians hidden in the woods came at night to minister to

them, returning to the forest by daylight. No Indian was seen in the fields nor on the road; and the horsemen hunting captives to get information, caught in all only fifteen or twenty. Questioning these as to whether the Indians were collecting anywhere to come out again against the Spaniards, they said that, as in the last battle all their strongest, most noble, and valiant warriors had perished, there were none left to take up arms. And this seemed to be the truth; for in all the time that Spaniards were in that encampment, no Indians appeared, even to give a war-cry or false alarm.

The Spaniards believed that upwards of eleven thousand of them had perished. More than twenty-five hundred bodies were found around the village outside of the walls, among them the body of the splendid young warrior, Tuscaloosa's giant son. In the village more than three thousand more were found; one could not walk in the main road nor in the passages between the houses without stepping upon corpses. The fire, the Spaniards calculated, must have consumed more than thirty-five hundred, for in one house alone upwards of one thousand burned corpses were found, and the pity of it was, to the Spaniards, most of them were women. For a distance of four leagues all around the village, in the thickets and hollows, the Spaniards reconnoitring the country found more than two thousand dead or wounded Indians who had tried to get to their homes but could not; and it was pitiful to find the wounded ones moaning all alone in the forest.

Of the fate of Tuscaloosa himself, nothing certain was ever learned. Some of the Indians said that he had fled and escaped, others that he had perished in the fire, and this last seems the more probable and worthy of him.

There was a loss from the fire that the Spaniards suffered from in another than a bodily way—this was through the burning of the wheaten flour and the wine, set apart and carefully guarded for the Sacrament, with the chalice, altars, and ornaments and all other appointments for divine worship. And from that time on the celebration of the Mass in the army became an impossibility, because there was no wine nor bread to consecrate for the Eucharist. It was debated among the priests and officers whether bread of corn might not be consecrated, but it was agreed that, in their ignorance, it was safer not to do so. And so the matter was left; for even if the priests had found anything to consecrate for the Eucharist, they would still have lacked chalice and altar. Nevertheless, every feast day and Sunday the priest, in vestments of deerskin, would stand before an altar of their own making and repeat the creed and prayers and read the Epistle and Evangel, and preach the sermon. The soldiers called it dry Mass, and it was all they had during the rest of their sojourn in Florida.

On the march to Mauvila, the Adelantado had gathered from the Indians the information that two ships were sailing along the coast. This was confirmed by the captives after the battle, from whom

it was also learned that Achuse, where Maldonado was to bring his ships, lay not more than six days' journey from Mauvila. This was news to rejoice all, for it meant the end of the long march in the interior, and the beginning of the settlement and ownership of the land. The Adelantado could now fix a colony in the port of Achuse as he had planned, where he could safely receive vessels from all parts of the world, and then he would found another colony some twenty leagues in the interior, whence he could rule all the Indians of Florida, and bring them into subjection to the Roman Catholic faith and the crown of Spain.

But never is a great scheme conceived by man but there is conceived at the same time the discord that is secretly to destroy it; and the door through which discord entered this expedition was, as ever, the lust and greed of men. The soldiers who had been in the Conquest of Peru, and had seen the great wealth of gold and silver there, were ever vaunting that country; and as, on the contrary, there had been no gold nor silver found in Florida, it seemed impossible for them to be contented with the idea of settling and colonizing this land. And to their disappointment about the gold and silver was added that of the incredible fierceness of the battle of Mauvila, which had strangely discouraged them. So, when they heard of the ships at Achuse, they began to talk about wanting to leave the country, to get out of it as soon as possible. They said it would be impossible to conquer so warlike,

or to subdue so free and independent a people, and that, judging from what they had seen, neither force nor cunning would ever bring them under the yoke of Spanish dominion; that they would all let themselves be killed first. There was no use, the malcontents argued, going along, wasting away their strength little by little in that country, when they could go to other wealthy ones, already conquered, like Peru and Mexico, where they could enrich themselves without so much work. Therefore they thought it would be well, as soon as they reached the coast, to leave the cursed land they were in and go to a New Spain. Such, and other similar ideas were whispered and passed round; but not so secretly that it did not come to the ears of loyal friends of the Adelantado; and through these he heard what was going on in the army, that the soldiers were talking about leaving the country as soon as they came to any ships or boats whatever.

The Adelantado would not credit it, without first testing the truth for himself. And so he went the rounds of the camp at night in disguise, spying and listening, and thus heard no less a personage than the royal treasurer, Juan Gaytan, and others in his hut, plotting together, as soon as they arrived at the port of Achuse, to take the ships and sail to Mexico or Peru, or return to Spain. There was no doubt left in the mind of the Adelantado; his army was disbanding, and his men looking out for other places to go to, abandoning him as Francisco de Pizarro had been abandoned in the beginning of the

Conquest of Peru. And he knew if these men deserted him and went away, there was no possibility of ever raising a new army; that he would be left, dispossessed of his position, authority, and reputation, with all his wealth wasted in vain, and all his excessive toil lost.

The blow struck keenly, and upon a man so jealous of his honour as De Soto, it could not but have an instantaneous and desperate effect. But putting vengeance and punishment out of his mind for the present, he dissimulated his anger and resentment, determined never to suffer the evil meditated by the weak, cowardly souls to come to pass. And so without giving any insight whatever into his feelings, or letting his anger be suspected, he carefully suppressed further tidings about the ships and secretly made his plans to lead the army imperceptibly again into the interior, and away from the sea-coast, and thus deprive the traitors of their opportunity to betray him. And here it was that De Soto's failure commenced; this was the prime cause of the loss of his expedition. Deceived in his hopes and thwarted in his ambition for conquest and fame by his own soldiers, he was from that day a changed, a discontented, and an unhappy man. Never afterwards was the army able to accomplish anything that pleased him, or that he would even pretend to be pleased with; on the contrary, he seemed to feel only contempt for it. And this disconcerted and dissatisfied his friends, who said among themselves that he should boldly have pursued his first plan,

and gone to the seashore, where he could have put an end to the mutiny by punishing the heads of it, which would have frightened the rest of the conspirators, and still have saved his expedition. But however clear-headed he was in habitual temper, the Adelantado threw his judgment away when in a passion, or used it only to gratify his passion. To keep his men from suspecting his designs, he went about among them, encouraging them, telling them in a very different spirit from his usual frank one with his soldiers, to hurry and get well, so that they could leave that cursed country where they had suffered so much.

On the twenty-fourth day after the battle, on Sunday the 18th of November, he broke up his camp, starting his army as if to return to Achuse in the same road they had travelled to Mauvila.

CHAPTER XVI

IN THE CHICKASAW COUNTRY

THE Adelantado marched without stopping out of the territory of Tuscaloosa, and turning due north, entered into that of the Chickasaws. Here, a large village standing on the steep bank of a deep river¹ brought him to a halt; for drawn up in front of it was a formidable looking band of about fifteen hundred warriors. Their defence, however, was only a show. When the Spaniards charged, they threw themselves into the river and crossed it swimming, abandoning the village, which had already been completely emptied of the women and children and provisions. They drew up on the other side, fronting the army, spreading out along the bank, as reënforcements arrived. That night and the following, noiselessly paddling over the river in canoes, they gave the Spaniards in camp little rest or respite from their attacks. The third night the Spaniards, hiding themselves in deep pits along the bank, lay in wait for them, and when the Indians had landed, and were well away from their canoes, they rushed out upon them and slashed

¹ The Black Warrior River, says Pickett, near the modern town of Erie.

them with their swords. After this, the Indians gave up crossing the river and concentrated all their energy upon guarding their own bank.

Seeing that he was losing time waiting for the enemy to relax vigilance, the Adelantado ordered two large flat boats to be built, the carpenters working back in the forest, to keep the Indians from finding out what they were doing. When the boats were finished, they were carried to the river and launched during the night, and before day each boat started over with ten cavaliers and a load of footmen. The infantry rowed, while the cavaliers sat their horses, ready to leap on land the moment the boat touched. With all their efforts at silence and quiet, however, the quick ears of the Indians, patrolling opposite, heard them. Their war-cries broke out like the barking of watch-dogs, and it became now a race between the boats and the Indians to get to the landing-place first. The rowers bent and strained at their oars, but before they were half-way over every one of them had arrows sticking in him. As the first boat touched the bank and a cavalier jumped his horse ashore, Gonzalo Silvestre followed, and the two, charging the Indians, drove them back and gained time for the rest of their corps to land, repeating this charge until the other horsemen came to their assistance. The wounded infantry rushed through the arrows to a cluster of cabins, where they cowered under shelter.

By the time the second boatload had crossed, the Indians were retreating into the forest to make

their way to a camp they had fortified there. The Spaniards pursued, but the Indians remained behind their palisades; and during the night they disappeared, and the army could resume its march next day through the country without hindrance — always the same flat, pleasant country, filled with small villages, well stored with beans and corn. Coming to another river (the Little Tombigbee), the Indians were again found drawn up in line of battle. The Adelantado sent a messenger over with proffers of peace; they slew the man in the face of the army, but then, as if satisfied, with a great shout they went away. The Spaniards built other boats and crossed the river, and marching on, came the next day to a remarkably large and pretty village,¹ built on a rising plain crossed by rippling streams, and shaded by groves of oak and nut trees, standing in the rich mass of years of fruitage. It proved to be the great village of the Chickasaws, the one which bore the name of the tribe and the chief. The cabins were empty and the crops still un-gathered in the surrounding fields. The Spaniards entered and took possession, and as it was now the first week in December, and the men were beginning to suffer greatly in their denuded condition from the cold, the Adelantado decided that no better place could be found in which to winter. The walls were repaired and shelters built for the horses, the corn was gathered from the field and neigh-

¹ This village is supposed to have stood on the west bank of the Yazoo River, some two hundred and fifty miles north of Mobile.

bouring villages were raided for additional provisions.

At first something like peace and quiet was enjoyed here. The only military employment of the men was to give the horses a short run every day when the weather permitted, and catch what Indians they could to question for information about the country. By this time, as nearly every province travelled through had a different dialect, twelve or fourteen interpreters were necessary to communicate with the natives, Juan Ortiz standing at one end of the line and passing his sentence on from mouth to mouth, or from province to province, as the case really was, until it arrived at the last one under question. Most of the captives were at once set free and given presents to take to their chief, with messages inviting him to peace and friendship. To this the chief responded, also with presents of fruit, fish, and game; and one time with as many as a hundred and fifty rabbits, and always with great promises of coming soon, sending excuses and multiplying his falsehoods from day to day to entertain the Adelantado and keep him quiet.

But soon he dropped his amenities, and opened his campaign; a masterly one it proved. Every night the Spaniards were aroused two or three times by false alarms, the men jumping up and running out, but finding nothing to fight. This was kept up steadily for two months, and, as it turned out, was an industrious ruse to tire the Spaniards with keeping watch and to put them off their guard.

One night, during the last week of January, a north wind sprang up and blew furiously. The Adelantado had his misgivings, and that very night had warned Luis de Moscoso to keep up a strong watch; but the very worst men in the army seemed to have been put on duty. It was about one o'clock, and the wind was at its height, when from the four sides of the village there came such a blast of horns and conchs, clatter of drums, and war-whoops, as made the wind seem still.

The Spaniards sprang to arms, but before they got to their doors the roofs of their cabins were in flames, roaring and blazing in the wind, and the Indians leaping in all around them. In four separate bands, the Chickasaws had crept up on the four sides of the camp. Each man carried a lighted taper made of a grass that grows in that part of the country, which once lighted smoulders like the fuse of an arquebuse, until slung through the air, when it bursts into a flame. By fastening them to the tip of their arrows and shooting them, the Indians could fire a building at a distance. The Spaniards leapt through the flames, or crawled on all fours under them with what weapons they could snatch; but in whatever direction they ran, the wind drove the fire against them, while the Indians, springing nimbly and from shelter to shelter, shot them as they fled hither and thither in the confusion. The horsemen took no time to put on armour, or saddle horses, but as they were, in their shirts, jerked their steeds out by their halters, and jumping on their backs, galloped them

out of the flames. Many, to save themselves, were forced to abandon their horses.

In the eastern quarter of the camp the fire and attack raged most furiously. Forty or fifty Spaniards stampeded in a panic, running away as fast as they could. But Nuño de Tobar, on foot, sword in hand, ran after them, shouting at the top of his voice: "Come back, soldiers, come back! Where are you running to? There is no Cordova or Seville here to give you refuge!"

From the other side of the camp forty or fifty soldiers came running up just at the moment, and they, abusing the men for their cowardice, brought them to themselves, and all together they hastened round the village to a place where Andreas de Vasconselas with some twenty of his cavaliers were hard at work. And now from one direction and another men came running into the fight, closing with the Indians wherever they found them, and driving them back from the village. But where the hottest of the struggle was going on there was the Adelantado, holding his opponents at bay. He, who to be ready for such emergency slept always in doublet and hose, was on horseback and out of the village, fighting, before any other cavalier. When he saw his forces strengthening, he dashed forward with fresh spirit and strength. While rising in his right stirrup to give his lance full play, the saddle turned and pitched him head foremost into the midst of his enemies. Seeing his jeopardy, his men sprang to the rescue and fought so desper-

ately, that, before the Indians could get at him, he was dragged out from among them. The saddle was instantly upon his horse again, and he in the saddle and back in the fight. The saddle had turned, because in the wild haste of the moment the groom had not buckled the girth, and the Adelantado had been fighting all this time with the saddle simply laid on the cloth.

The Indians weakened, as they always did in the crisis of the fight, and the Spaniards were just about turning the tables against them when their cry to retreat was heard echoing all round the village; and almost as suddenly as they came, they turned their backs and fled at full speed. The Spanish pursued as far as the light of the burning village extended, and then returned to count their loss. It was greater than they feared; forty Spaniards killed and fifty horses. Twenty of the horses were burned in the stables, chained fast, for they had become so frolicsome and restive with high feeding and want of exercise that their masters had used chains instead of halters, and so the poor beasts had no chance to escape.

Nearly all the hogs — four hundred of them — were burned to death. To guard them the better from the depredations of the Indians, who had become so greedy for them that they constantly stole them, the Adelantado kept them in the centre of the village in a great pen covered with straw. This, of course, caught fire, and none of the hogs escaped except the little sucking pigs that

could run between the cracks of the posts ; and the hogs were so fat that, it was said, their melted grease soaked the ground for two hundred steps around the pen. Among other things related by the Spanish soldiers of this night attack of the Chickasaws was that each warrior came to it with three ropes tied around his body—one to tie and carry away a Spaniard, one for a horse, and the third for a hog.

Far more pitiable than after the battle of Mauvila was the plight now of the Spaniards ; for not only were the few clothes that remained to them burned, but all their weapons and saddles. It was well for them that the Indians did not attack them the next day.

The Adelantado, who had never forgiven Luis de Moscoso for not coming up more quickly with the troops at Mauvila, now, after the negligence that had permitted the surprise of the camp, deposed him and appointed Balthazar de Gallegos master of camp. The village was in ruins and there could be no question of remaining in it, so three days after the attack, the army drew out from it, and with their remnants of luggage, camped in an open field about a league distant. Temporary shelters were put up with the timbers and thatching carried off from neighbouring villages. The soldiers called the encampment Chickasilla, Little Chickasaw. Here a forge was contrived out of arquebuse barrels, with the bellows pieced out of bear skin, and in all haste and with all their energy, the men turned to making new lances, shields, and saddles, and to tempering

their swords. As for clothing, they looked more like gypsies than soldiers : one without a coat, another without breeches, and all barefooted ; and the winter was severe, with frost and ice in plenty. Their only comfort was fires ; but they complained that they spent the whole night turning from one side to the other, for while one side warmed, the other froze. They did not sleep under shelters, for the Adelantado, fearing another conflagration, camped them in the open in four separate divisions, each one with pickets and sentinels posted. To secure against surprise during the night, every morning five or six detachments of cavalry scouted the country in all directions and killed all Indians met. When they returned at sunset, they could truthfully say that there was not a live Indian in a circuit of four leagues around the camp. But within four or five hours at the latest, the Indians would be at the camp again, and seldom a night passed without a soldier or horse being wounded.

The winter wore on to March, and what with the constant toil, the nightly skirmishes, the cold, and being every night on duty, barefoot, and with nothing on but breeches and a shirt of buckskin, the Spaniards always said they survived only through the mercy of Heaven and Juan Vega. Juan Vega was one of the common soldiers, a peasant, who one day bethought him of making a mat of the grass which grew long and pliable thereabouts, to cover himself with from the cold of night. He plaited it four fingers thick and so long and wide that one

half served as mattress and the other as blanket. When he found how comfortable it was, he plaited quantities of them for his comrades and taught others to plait them. And so the men would take their mats with them to their guard stations at night, and wrapping themselves in them were able to resist the cold, from which otherwise, they said, they would have perished.

They were glad enough when the first days of spring came, and they could move away from the Chickasaw country and proceed with their discovery. After marching about four leagues, the Adelantado halted for the night, sending as usual a troop of horse to reconnoitre the line of the morrow's route. The troop returned with the report that only a short ride distant, and in direct line of their route, was a stronghold,¹ the most formidable yet seen in the country, filled with warriors, ferocious looking men, in war feathers and paint, with their bodies striped red, black, white, and yellow, and their eyes circled with rings of red, which made them look like devils. As soon as they saw the Spaniards, they beat their drums and with a great cry came out of the fort to meet them; but the troop retreated. The Adelantado at once went himself on a reconnoissance, and returning to camp said to his officers and cavaliers: "Before night we must drive the savages out of that fort; for after their past

¹ This fort of the Alibamo has been located by Indian tradition upon the Yazoo River in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi. The Alibamo Indians belong to the Chickasaw tribe.

success, they are so little afraid of us that they are not going to let us leave their country without a fight, and if we do not punish them, they will come out and punish us to-night." Officers and cavaliers, burning for revenge for their sufferings during the winter, heartily agreed to this; and various companies were at once ordered forward, a third of the army being left behind to guard the camp.

The fort, about two hundred paces square, was without doubt a strong one—a palisade of the stoutest logs driven so close together in the ground that they overlapped. Inside, two other palisades crossed from wall to wall. The entrance was through three small doors, one in the centre, the other two close to the corners, but so low that a man on horseback could not pass through. Almost underneath the rear wall, ran a narrow and very deep stream with high, sheer banks, most difficult for a man to climb, and utterly impassable for horses. The only bridge over it was a frail, narrow, swinging foot-log, anything but easy to cross.

The Adelantado, after studying the situation, ordered one hundred of the best-armoured cavaliers to dismount, and forming in three columns of three abreast, to assault the doors; the footmen, advancing behind and under their protection, were to support them and hold the doors after they were gained. He and Andreas de Vasconselas, with a troop of horse stationed on each side, were to charge when the proper moment came. The order was no sooner given than obeyed; and the three col-

umns were formed. The Indians, who up to this time had remained close within their walls, seeing the Spaniards ready to attack, now sallied forth, about a hundred men from each doorway, and with all dash and daring attacked the advancing columns of Spaniards. At their first discharge of arrows; two cavaliers in the front rank of one column fell, and one in each of the other columns. And after that, volley upon volley was shot, and men dropped out of their columns everywhere. The Spaniards, giving a loud shout to one another to close at once, broke into a furious charge upon the gates. At the same time the Adelantado and Andreas de Vasconselas charged from the sides with their troops of horse, and the Indians were driven back. The gates being too narrow to let them through, they were jammed and crushed and crowded against the walls, and cut down by the Spaniards, who leaped over their bodies and got inside the fort. Here was the entire force of the Indians, and here were the same small doorways, and, as before, the Indians blocked them. When the Spaniards saw the Chickasaws penned in thus, all their hatred, from the incessant warfare, anxiety, sufferings, and cruelty of the winter rose in relentless fury within them, and their swords opened flood-gates of blood in the naked mass of bodies before them. It was the same against the other wall, in the second enclosure: it was carnage, not killing. Some of the warriors, sore pressed, leaped from the palisade into the plain, only to fall into the hands of the troopers outside. Those who

could, got through the rear gates to the river, but the light foot-bridge, crowded with the confused mass, swayed and bent under them, and numbers fell, their bodies writhing and twisting through the air, into the river far below. Those who could not get to the bridge threw themselves into the river and swam across. On the other side of the river, reforming and ranging themselves in battle array, they still defiantly faced the Spaniards. De Soto with the two troops of horsemen rode up and down the bank looking for a ford, and the infantry drew up in a line facing the Indians.

While thus waiting and watching each other, a warrior stepped out from the ranks of his people and, calling over to the Spaniards by sign, challenged a crossbowman to come out and try skill with him. A hidalgo of Asturia accepted, and walking out upon the bank, took his position, placed a shaft in his bow, and bending his head sideways, crossbowman style, aimed at the Indian; the Indian, straight and erect, aimed at him. Both drew string at the same instant. The Indian tottered and fell dead, hit full and fair in the breast. The Spaniard walked away, with the arrow sticking like a needle through the nape of his neck, which he had exposed in bending his head.

The Adelantado, finding a ford, crossed the river with his horse and fell again upon the Indians, and put them to flight, pursuing and lancing them until night fell and darkness opened a refuge to them. As he had ordered, the fort was taken, and

the Chickasaws were punished; two thousand of them, at least, were killed in it. But not without cost; for, although it is not stated how many Spaniards were killed, yet so many were wounded that the army was forced to halt for four days on this account; and fifteen men died in camp and during the first days of the march.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GREAT RIVER

STIFF and sore, the Spaniards crossed the river and drew out of the Chickasaw country, cursing it as cordially as they had done that of Tuscaloosa. Beyond lay a vast wilderness of forest and swamp, the neutral territory between the Chickasaws and the next tribe. Always heading away from the sea-shore, De Soto led his men into this wilderness, almost impassable even for the horses, which had to swim across a great bayou and lake. Seven days it took them to get through, and when they came out to high land again and clear forest, they saw just before them a village, and as soon as they saw it, breaking through all order and discipline, they rushed forward and captured it, with every man, woman, and child in it, plundering the cabins of everything they could find. It was the village of Chisca,¹ whose people, on account of the extensive forest lying between them and the other province, had heard nothing of the march of the Spaniards through the land; they knew nothing of the

¹ It is hardly necessary to say that Chisca is only a variation in the Spanish spelling of Chicasa, *i.e.* Chickasaw, and that the Spaniards, although they were rejoicing at being out of it, were still in the country of the Chickasaws.

Spaniards, in fact, until they saw them breaking into the village. Only the dwelling of the chief escaped capture. It stood outside the village on a very high mound, which was walled like a fortress, having no way of ingress or egress save tall ladders. To this place some of the Indians fled for refuge.

The chief Chisca lay in his bed, for he was very old and infirm. When he heard the noise and confusion below in his village, he arose, and coming out in front of his cabin, saw what was going on: the place being sacked and plundered and his people captured. Wild with rage, he seized a hatchet and started down the ladder, with fierce threats against each and all who came into his village without permission—the threats of his long-past youthful warrior days, for the poor old frame had not strength now to kill a cat; and besides being ill and decrepit from age, the chief was so small and puny that the Spaniards held him ever to be the most insignificant looking of all the Indians they saw in Florida. His women and servants threw themselves upon him and with tears and prayers held him back, while the Indians who had fled from the village told him that the newcomers were men such as none of them had ever seen the like of before; that there were great numbers of them, and they were borne along upon great animals that ran most swiftly. If the chief wanted to fight, they said, he must remember he was taken off his guard and unprepared, and to revenge such an insult, he must call out all the people in

the province and bide his time and opportunity, feigning the while friendship with the enemy, and making the best of what had happened until the time for vengeance came; to rush into a fight now would bring greater risk and insult to himself and damage to his people. But, reason as they might, it was a long time before they could dissuade their old chief from going down the ladder to fight the Spaniards. And his temper was such, that, when the Adelantado sent a message, offering him peace and friendship, he would not listen to it, saying that he wished no messages from one who insulted him, but war, and a war of fire and blood; and this war he declared against the Spaniards at once, so that they could be prepared, for he meant to slaughter them all, and that soon.

De Soto and his officers and soldiers during the past winter had been rather surfeited with fighting, and now, with numbers of men and horses still wounded and suffering from their last engagement, they had no inclination whatever for more of it. Embarrassed and vexed at having so recklessly sacked and plundered the village, and angered the chief, they sent other and more and more urgent messages to him, using all the prettiest words and the politest and most suave phrases they knew. For they saw, with anxiety, that, in the three short hours they had been in the village, great numbers of warriors had rallied round the old chief, and they feared that greater numbers still would soon arrive to increase his already preponderating force.

And they saw, too, that the position of the village was favourable to the Indians but very bad and unfavourable to themselves; the ground being filled with trees and cut up with bayous, which would prevent their using their horses, a very necessary advantage to them now over the Indians. But what finally was of the greatest weight with them — and they had proved it well by their experience in the past — was the fact that wars and battles did not advance them a whit, but, on the contrary, the Indians killing off their men and horses were slowly and surely consuming their strength day by day. All of which made them want peace and want it heartily.

The Indians, on the other hand, seeing their strengthening numbers, and smarting under the capture of their women and children, wanted war, and would accept nothing but war, as the shortest and best way of obtaining restitution for their loss. However, there is always a proportion of prudent, even among the most daring warriors. These began to suggest that the peace and friendship offered by the Spaniards be accepted, as in that way, much more surely than by war, could the captured wives and children and lost property be recovered and such further damage prevented, as having their village burned and their fields destroyed when the time for planting was so near. What need, said they, to prove by trial the valour of the Spaniards? Their own senses told them very clearly what sort of men they were; for men who could pass through so

much country and so many enemies could not be other than the very bravest, whose peace would be far more profitable than their wars.

After much talking this counsel finally prevailed, the chief accepting it and guarding his wrath until the hoped-for future opportunity should arrive. He therefore replied to the waiting messenger of the Adelantado that, first of all, the Spaniards must tell him what they required. The answer was that the Spaniards required nothing more than to have the village vacated and given to them for lodging, and, as no man had a dispensation from hunger, the necessary food, which would be little, for they were on the march and could not stay long in that territory. The old chief said he would be willing to grant this, but only and solely on condition that his captured people should be freed at once, and that all property taken should be restored without so much as an earthen pot missing; and that if the Spaniards did not accept these terms, he defied them to battle then and at once.

The Spaniards accepted; the captives were set free and the plunder restored, not even an earthen pot, as the chief said, missing. The Indians then vacated the village, leaving the provisions in it. The sick and wounded were in such dire need of rest and refreshment that the army remained there six days. On the day before his departure, with the permission of the old chief, whose ire had somewhat abated, De Soto climbed up the mound to present his respects and thanks to him.

Marching from the village, and just outside of it, the Spaniards came to the greatest river they had ever seen, the Mississippi.¹ A half league broad it was, as they described it; "and if a man stood still on the other side, it could not be discovered whether he were a man or not; and it was of mighty depth and current, and the water was muddy, and brought along down stream continually great trees and timbers." The Indians called it the Chicagua River; but the Spaniards called it in their accounts nothing but El Rio Grande—the Great River. They marched along the bank until, at the end of the fourth day, they came to a place where it was open enough to permit the army to get to the water, for hitherto it was not only covered by a forest of the deepest and densest kind, but it was so steep and high that there was no way of getting either up or down. Finding an open field for a camp about a crossbow shot distant from it, the Adelantado halted to build boats. The great river, instead of stopping him, tempted him to cross and push his discoveries on the other side; moreover, in Chisca the Indians told of gold on the other side of the river; and of a great and rich province called Capaha, lying over there.

The forest furnished the best of timber, and the villages, corn; and the work was commenced forthwith and pushed along briskly. Simultaneously

¹ They were at what is now known as the Chickasaw Bluffs, 32° N., having in their march wound their way over Florida, Georgia, part of South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee.

with the Spaniards on one bank, appeared Indians on the other; a great gathering they seemed across the water, and provided with an innumerable quantity of canoes. Soon deputations began to arrive from them and from the chiefs round about, spying with eager curiosity, under feigned indifference. One day six Indians from the river below presented themselves, who said they came to see what manner of people the Spaniards were; for long ago they had been told by their fathers that a white people should come and subdue them; another day, warriors came to announce the visit of a great chief, named Aquixo, chief of many towns and tribes on the other side of the river. And, as announced, Aquixo was seen approaching with a flotilla of at least two hundred canoes, each with a file of Indians in war-paint and great war-plumes, with bows and quivers, and with shields in their hands, standing from stem to stern. The canoe of the chief had a canopy under which he sat. Paddling at full speed, they came swirling to within a stone's throw of the bank, when the chief called out a greeting to the Adelantado, who was standing there with his officers. The Adelantado called to him to come on shore, that they might the better talk together. The chief sent three canoes ashore with a present of a great quantity of dried fish and a bread which the Spaniards describe as made of prunes (the toothsome persimmon bread of the old-time southern pioneer). But the demonstrations turned out to be a piece of Indian treachery, the real purpose being to attack if possible; for, when

the Indians saw that the Spaniards were prepared — the Adelantado had drawn up his whole army in sight — they began to go away again. The crossbowmen, with a loud shout, sent a volley after them. The Spaniards gazed after them with admiration, for they retired in such perfect order; and the canoes were so symmetrical and graceful, the plumed warriors, with their bows and bright quivers, so erect, they seemed more like a festival pageant than a savage fleet.

By the end of three weeks four boats were finished and in the water. Three hours before day, one morning, the Adelantado embarked his first detachment; horsemen, crossbowmen, and rowers, selected by himself as men who would make sure of the passage or die. They rowed a quarter of a league up the river, and then crossing over, fell down with the current opposite the camp. The horsemen leaped out of the barges on horseback and forded to a sandy plat of hard, clean ground, where all the men landed without difficulty or opposition. The barges returned at once for another load, and within two hours after sunrise, the entire army with the baggage was over.

Stopping only long enough to break up the boats so as to save the nails and fastenings, they resumed their march. They journeyed five days up the river, through a savage, uninhabited stretch of country, and then came to some high hills, from the tops of which could be seen a large village of about four hundred cabins on the bank of a river flowing

towards the Great River. And up and down, the banks of the river were dotted with cornfields and groves of handsome trees. As the army approached the village the Indians came out eagerly to offer peace, and later on warriors came to De Soto from the chief, proffering the hospitality of his village, the principal one of the province, called Casquin (Kaskaskia). The Spaniards found it on the same side of the river seven leagues higher up. The country through which they passed going to it was all bountifully fertile and well populated; wherever the eye looked, in fact, could be seen no less than two or three little villages of from fifteen to forty cabins. The chief, called Casquin also, a handsome warrior about fifty years of age, with a large following of warriors, met the army on the road and escorted it to his village. The Adelantado, now anxiously careful to avoid any infractions of peace, accepted lodgings only for himself and officers in it, quartering the army in a grove near by, where the men were most comfortable, for it was now May, and beginning to be very warm.

Every day of the stay in Casquin, the Spaniards and Indians grew better pleased with one another; and one morning the chief and several of his warriors presented themselves before the Adelantado, and all bowing with the deepest reverence, Casquin spoke: "My lord, as you have the advantage over us in force and arms, so we believe you have the advantage over us in gods. These that you see here are the best warriors of my nation; and I, with

them, beg you to pray your gods to send us rain, for our cornfields need water sadly." The Adelantado answered piously, that, although he and all of his army were sinners, they would pray to their Lord God to show his favour as the Indians asked; and at once, in the presence of the chief, sending for Master Francisco, a Genoese, and a great master in carpentry and boat building, he commanded him straightway to make a cross out of the tallest and finest pine tree to be found in all the surrounding forest. And such was the tree to which the Indians guided the builder, and which the Spaniards cut down; for after clearing and stripping it, one hundred men could not raise it from the ground; and the cross that Master Francisco made of it was surely a grand one and proportioned in all perfection. It was carried to the top of a tall artificial mound raised on the bank of the river as a watchtower, and there it was set up.

A solemn procession was then ordered for the next day; and it was worthy the cross. All the army took part in it, except a squadron of cavalry and infantry stationed on guard; more than a thousand men there were, believers and unbelievers, the chief walking by the side of the Adelantado, the warriors by the side of the cavaliers. The priests and friars went first, chanting the litany, to which all the soldiers chanted the responses. With slow steps they advanced to the mound, ascended it, and falling on their knees repeated two or three prayers. Then, two by two rising, they went to the cross, kneeled

at its foot, adored and kissed it—the priests first, the Adelantado and the chief following, then the cavaliers and warriors, then the common soldiers and the other Indians, who did exactly what they saw the Spaniards do. On the opposite bank of the river, the Spaniards could see a great mass of people standing, watching, stretching and waving their arms, clasping their hands, raising their eyes too, praying as they saw the Christians were praying, and from both sides of the river rose the wailing of the Indian women and children. The Spaniards were much affected by the sight; the colossal cross, extending its wide arms over a multitude praying out of their dimness and ignorance to a God they knew not, seemed to them a sign to their church such as the rainbow was to the faithful after the Deluge. The procession returned in the same order to the village, all chanting the *Te Deum*. And that very night, a little before midnight, it began to rain; and the rain lasted two whole days, to the great joy of the Indians. Some days later the chief and his warriors came again, bowing reverently before the Adelantado, presenting now two blind men, and praying him to heal their eyes; and the blind ones also raising their voices, begged earnestly and loudly for sight. But this time only a long theological explanation of the Christian religion by the Adelantado was vouchsafed them.

When the Adelantado gave orders for the army to prepare to take up its march upon Capaha, Casquin insisted upon accompanying it with a great

train of his people to carry the provisions and clear the road, and to fetch wood and water, and gather grass and green food for the horses ; for the army, he said, would not only have to pass through an extensive neutral forest, but also have to cross a lake over which a bridge would be needed, and which his men could make. The Spaniards did not find out until later that the Casquins were at war, as their fathers, forefathers, and ancestors far back had been, with the neighbouring province of Capaha,¹ and that the chief of Capaha, a noted warrior, had so overawed and subdued the people of Casquin that they dared not take up arms for any purpose for fear of offending him, and thus they had been driven into the shame of never going outside of their boundaries. But now Casquin, the chief, saw a fine opportunity, under the protection of a foreign power, to avenge himself for all past injuries. So, in addition to the pack bearers, who carried their bows and arrows as well as their packs, he collected a great band of warriors armed to the teeth ; and with great pomp and ceremony he put himself at the head of these to go in advance, he said, to clear the road and prepare the camp for the Spaniards. The Adelantado prudently kept his army well behind them, and as the two armies travelled during the day, so they camped at night with a safe distance intervening.

At the end of three days the army came to a swamp — a very ugly one it was, as the Casquin chief had said, with a great lake in the centre. The

¹ The Kappas or Quapaw of modern accounts.

foot-soldiers and pack bearers crossed on the bridge that the Indians made, while the cavaliers swam their horses over. As the swamp was the dividing line between the territory of Capaha and Casquin, that night the Casquin warriors camped for the first time in their lives in their enemy's country. The village of Capaha lay within easy reach.

■

CHAPTER XVIII

CAPAHA

CAPAHA, the chief, was looking out from the porch of his cabin in the early dawn. His village, built on a mound — a hill in height and size — rose finely above the land. Along three sides of it ran a deep moat or ditch wide enough for two canoes abreast and filled with water which came and went through a channel dug by hand, extending to the Mississippi, three leagues away. On its fourth side, the mound was protected by a strong palisade, whose timbers were driven so close into the earth that they overlapped one another. As the chief, securely confident, as he well might be, looked about him in the brightening light, he saw gliding through the forest the dusky figures of his enemies, — the Casquins were upon him. He had but time before they broke from the forest to give the alarm and jump into a canoe and paddle as fast as he could through the canal. Such of his warriors as had canoes followed him, others fled into the woods.

The Casquins, finding no defence attempted, stopped in their rush, and crept into the village

slowly and cautiously, suspecting an ambush or stratagem; although they had the Spaniards behind them, they had been too often whipped by the Capahas not to fear them still. This delay gave some of the women and children time to escape; but many were unfortunate enough to be caught in the village; for when the Casquins had convinced themselves that there were indeed none to oppose, then they gave themselves up to the sweets of revenge for which they had lusted for generations. They killed and scalped; they destroyed, sacked, and plundered the chief's house with especial glee and delight; they went to the temple of the village, the sacred burial-place of the father, grandfather, and ancestors of Capaha, leaping and calling to one another so that all might enjoy the triumph; and knowing how much Capaha, proud and haughty as he was, would feel the desecration and sacrilege, they committed in the temple all the outrages and insults they could think of. They robbed it of everything it held in the way of treasures and ornaments, of spoil and trophy, acquired mostly through past victories over the Casquins; they threw the burial-chests upon the earth, broke them asunder, scattered the bones, and not even content with that, they trampled upon them with all kinds of revilement and contempt. They took down the heads of the Casquins which the men of Capaha had stuck on poles at the door, and replaced them with heads cut off fresh from the people of Capaha. In short, there was no form of vengeance they could think of that they did not wreak upon

their enemies, except burning the village; that they did not dare for fear of the Spaniards.

The Spaniards had not yet come up, and the Casquins, camping and marching well ahead of the army, were able to accomplish all this before they arrived. When the Adelantado came in sight of the village and heard what had taken place, and that the chief had fled, he at once ordered Casquin to stop the deviltries of his men, and he sent messengers after Capaha with offers of peace and friendship. But Capaha would not receive them. On the contrary, he made his way to an island he possessed in the Mississippi, summoning his warriors far and near to him, and the messengers found him busy fortifying it. When this was told the Adelantado, he determined to forestall attack by attacking; and he commanded Indians and Spaniards to prepare at once for an expedition against the island. Casquin, seeing before him now nothing less than the complete destruction of the Capahas, threw himself with all energy into the preparations for it. He sent in all haste to his village to fetch canoes up the Mississippi to a landing-place opposite the island, and he at once started off himself with his warriors to meet them there, ravaging, wasting, and destroying as he went, and setting free his people captured of yore by the Capahas, wherever he found them working in the cornfields — slaves, with the tendons of one foot cut to lame them.

When De Soto with his men arrived at the landing-place, he found seventy canoes awaiting

him. He found also that Capaha's island was an impassable growth of cane-brake and thicket, and that the chief had fortified it from end to end by palisades behind which he stood ready and waiting with his best tried warriors, the very flower of his fine tribe. The attack was immediately begun, De Soto setting out in the lead with two hundred of his men, Casquin and his men following in the rest of the flotilla.

In one of the foremost Spanish canoes crossing the river was a handsome young fellow, Francisco Sebastian, who, overflowing with gayety and good spirits, was always the life of any party he happened to be in; and now as ever, always talking, he was entertaining his comrades and keeping them in a laugh over his drolleries. "The devil himself it was," he was saying, "and no one else, that brought me into this scrape of a conquest. For God, He dropped me into a good enough country, I can tell you, — Italy, where, by the polite custom of language, I was 'My-lorded,' and bowed down to, and smiled upon as if I were a real lord with vassals under me; and you, rude boors that you are, you never think of using anything else but 'thou' to me and treat me like one of yourselves. There, like the beautiful people they are, they feasted me, and succoured me in my wants, as if I were every young girl's sweetheart, every old woman's son. That was in peace. In war, it was still finer; for, if I happened to kill a man, — Turk, Moor, or Frenchman, — I had him, I could strip him of

his armour, his clothes, his horse, and so he was always worth something to me. Here in this devil's own country, what have I got to fight? Naked, indecent creatures, who go skipping and hopping and dancing and capering before and around me, always ten paces off, shooting their arrows at me with all the grace and skill in the world, as if I were a piece of game or a pretty target, and if by good luck I do catch and kill one of them, what is there to strip him of? A bow and some feathers. Much use I can make of them. But what I feel most of all is that the famous fortune-teller and astrologer, Lucero of Italy, once told me to be careful about going upon the water, because I was going to die by drowning and I have avoided water ever since; and now just see! my ill luck has sent me to a country where we are never out of the water." The canoe had come within jumping distance of the island. Francisco, always the first daredevil in every adventure, quickly got up, and putting his lance overboard and bracing it in the river-bed he leaped, but instead of reaching land, he pushed the boat back and fell into the water, where his armour sinking him like a stone to the bottom, he helplessly drowned.

The Spaniards, attacking with their accustomed spirit and courage, gained the first palisade and drove the Indians behind the second. But there the Capahas were fighting with their chief; and knowing the peril they were in, and that, if they did not then and there conquer the Casquins they would lose all the honour and glory of their past

victories, and burning also with shame at having fled from the Casquins, they fought with such might that they held the Spaniards at bay, and neither they nor their Indian allies advanced a step. When they saw this, the men of Capaha could not restrain themselves, but in fierce exultation they called out to the Casquin men: "Come on, cowards, come on! and take us; you have taken our village, come and take us. But think of the time when these strangers go away and leave you to us! Then we will show you!" These words were enough for the Casquin men: whipped and cowed people that they were, they not only stopped fighting, but, losing all courage, turned their backs and fled to their canoes without any respect whatever to their chief or to the Spaniards and De Soto, who shouted after them not to abandon their friends. Throwing themselves into their canoes, they pushed away into the stream and made for the opposite bank. The Spaniards, left to face the overwhelming numbers of the Indians, were themselves forced to retreat towards the canoes, the Indians pressing more and more fiercely upon them. Their peril was desperate. But the Capaha chief by a brilliant stratagem changed all. Throwing himself before his warriors, in a loud voice he commanded them not to injure the Christians, but to let them go free. And well it was for the Spaniards, for otherwise the two hundred of them would have been all slaughtered.

Early the next morning, Capaha sent messengers to the Spanish camp offering peace and friendship,

and praying De Soto not to allow his enemies to work any more damage to his lands; praying, also, that the Spanish general would return to the village to protect it, promising to visit him personally on the morrow. The Adelantado, grateful for the magnanimity of the day before, answered that Capaha could come whenever he chose; that he would always be well received by the Spaniards, and that no further damage should be done in his lands. Public proclamation was made that neither Indians nor Spaniards should dare commit any more injury whatever in that province, and the Casquin warriors and pack bearers were ordered to take themselves without delay back into their own territory. This embassy of his enemy did not please Casquin at all, nor the answer of the Adelantado, for he saw that it might possibly come to pass that Capaha, with the favour and assistance of the Spaniards, would turn and destroy him and his people. He became very uneasy and would not leave the Adelantado a moment; he returned to the village with him and begged to stay on longer with the Spaniards. He and a few of his warriors were allowed to remain.

The next day Capaha came to the village accompanied by a hundred splendid-looking warriors in their handsomest feathers and skin mantles. Before he presented himself to the Adelantado, he went into his temple, and looking upon the ruin it had suffered, gathered up with his own hands from the floor the bones and remains of his ancestors,

and placed them in the chests. He then went to his house and saw what had been done there. Then he proceeded to the quarters of the Adelantado, who received him with great compliments and distinction. The chief was a young man, not more than twenty-six years of age, calm and self-possessed, with the manners and dignity of middle age. He answered the questions put to him by the Adelantado and the officers with great courtesy, patiently waiting until one after the other had finished. When he saw that there was nothing more for him to answer, he turned towards Casquin, who was standing near the Adelantado listening and watching, and whom he had pretended not to see until then. Now fixing him with his eyes, he addressed him: "Be content, Casquin, for you have enjoyed what you have never dreamed of nor hoped for out of your own strength, your revenge; and give thanks for it to these strangers. But they will go away, and we shall be here as we were before. Then, Casquin, pray to the Sun and Moon to help you." Before Casquin could answer, the Adelantado, who had asked the interpretation of what Capaha was saying, interposed, and charged upon the two chiefs the necessity of peace, and enforced at least the semblance of it upon them both, until the hour came for dinner.

When the Adelantado took his place at the head of the board, Casquin took his seat at his right hand—the seat that he had occupied since he had been with the army. Capaha remained standing; and looking Casquin full in the face said:

“You know very well that place is mine, Casquin ; and for many reasons, the principal of which is that my blood is more illustrious, my chieftainship more ancient, and my territory larger than yours, and for any one of these three reasons you should not take it, because, in virtue of every one of them, it belongs to me.”

The Adelantado, seeing that something new was happening, asked the interpreters again what Capaha was saying ; and being told, he spoke to him : “Even if all you have said be true, it is only just that the years of Casquin should be respected, and that you, who are a youth, should honour age by yielding him the superior place ; it is the natural obligation of the young to revere the old, and by doing so they honour themselves.”

“Sir,” Capaha replied, “if I had Casquin in my house as guest, either with white hairs or without, I should give him the first place at my meals, and would do him all the honour, besides, that I could ; but as we are eating with strangers, it does not seem just to yield my place, for it has come to me from my forefathers, and if I should do so, my people and my warriors would hold it ill of me. If you wish me to eat with you, you must give me the place at your right hand which belongs to me, otherwise I shall go and eat with my warriors ; this would be more honourable for me and more satisfactory to them than for me to be abased below the station in which my forefathers left me.”

Casquin, who on the one hand was desirous of

placating the wrath of Capaha, and on the other, knew that all he said was true, now rose from his seat, and said to the Adelantado: "Capaha is in the right, and only demands what is just. I beg you to give him the place that belongs to him; I shall seat myself on the other side, for at your table any seat is honourable." And crossing to the other side, without the slightest vexation, he seated himself there and began to eat. Capaha took his seat, and with all appearance of good feeling, also began his repast.

The army remained over a month in the village, and finding there great quantities of skins of deer, bear, and wildcat, the soldiers employed their time in tailoring, fashioning them into clothing. The large furs they cut into coats, cassocks, and gowns, lining them with wildcat skins. The deerskins furnished jerkins, shirts, hose, and shoes. Some bucklers of buffalo skin were appropriated as breast-plates for the horses. Food was abundant, not only corn in the granaries and in the fields, but fish in the moat and canal; the water was thick with them. The soldiers caught them with lines and nets found in the cabins; the moat itself was, in fact, a weir, and the Spaniards feasted on the fish they caught. Most of the fish were new to them. As they described them afterwards, there was one kind they called "Bagres," which had great prickles, like awls, along the gills and on both sides, and one-third of its length was head; some of them weighed a hundred and fifty pounds. The "barbilles" was a

little delicate red and grey fish with a long snout ; and another fish as large as a hog, they said, had upper and lower rows of teeth.

But the great necessity of the army now, as all along, although it has not been mentioned, was salt. The soldiers were suffering and even dying for it. Even when the army left the province of Coosa and entered Tuscaloosa, the provision of salt had begun to grow scarce, and shortly afterwards there was none at all, and then the soldiers began to sicken and to die of a dreadful, strange death. They would fall into a slow fever, and, at the end of four or five days, no one could endure the odour of them at forty or fifty paces ; they stank, says the chronicler, like the putrid bodies of dead cats and dogs. And as no one knew then what was the matter, they perished without any remedy. But even if the physician had had medicine, the sick could not have profited by it, because, when the fever seized them they were already past help, turning from the breast down as green as grass. The Indians told them to burn certain herbs, and make a lye from the ashes, and to use it as they did salt upon the food ; but the Spaniards called this unclean, and indecent, and said it was beneath their quality to eat as the Indians did. These were the ones, the chronicler says tersely, who died, and, when on their deathbeds they begged for the lye, it was too late to do them good. And then in their fear and horror the living were glad enough to make use of it. More than sixty men died thus during one year.

The Adelantado made continual efforts among the Indians to find out where salt might be procured but always in vain. By good luck here in the Capaha village he found some traders, who, among other wares, carried salt round to sell. They got their salt, they said, from some hills where it was found in plenty and of good quality; thither they offered to guide the Spaniards. Two soldiers joyfully volunteered to go to the place. They returned at the end of eleven days, worn out with fatigue and hunger, having travelled for a week through a bare region, where they found nothing to eat save green plums and corn-stalks. But they came back loaded with rock-salt, bringing also some specimens of shining copper, which they took for gold. The country they had passed through was, they said, poor and sterile, and ill populated; and the Indians had told them that towards the north it was worse still, for the climate was very cold, and few Indians lived there because of the great droves of wild beeves which destroyed the corn.

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE WEST

WHEN asked which way the country was most inhabited, the Indians all answered, towards the south; that, in the south was a great province and plentiful country called Quiguate. This, with the discouraging report of the salt country, decided De Soto to change his line of march and to return to the Casquin village, and from there to strike out in another direction.

From Casquin the army marched south; not as heretofore towards the north and away from the sea. Nine days it followed the river down its course through a rich and well-peopled country, and came to a village that in truth was the largest yet seen in Florida, Quiguate, the village from which the province and chief took their name. It was built in three sections or divisions, one of which alone sufficed to quarter the entire army. The chief and his people received the army with great show of friendliness; but, two nights later, all disappeared, not a native being left in the place. Then, perhaps fearing damage to their cornfields, with their crops ready to gather, a few days afterwards they all re-

turned during the night, and went their way about the village as if nothing had happened.

During the halt here, one night about midnight, the sergeant on duty came to the Adelantado to say that the royal treasurer, Juan Gaytan, being called for his round of patrol duty had refused to go, giving as an excuse his position as royal treasurer. The Adelantado fell into great anger. Juan Gaytan was not one he was likely to forget or to forgive. And now with this added to past resentment, he sprang from his bed, and going out upon the porch of his quarters, which from its mound dominated the whole place, he called out in a voice that everybody in that village heard, although it was midnight: "What is this, soldiers and captains? Are the mutineers still among you who in Mauvila plotted to return to Spain or to go to Mexico, that, with excuses of being officers of the royal exchequer, they refuse to take the watches that fall to them? And why did you want to return to Spain? Had you left there perhaps ancestral estates and titles that you want to get back to and enjoy? And why did you wish to go to Mexico? To show the vileness and littleness of your souls, that having had it in your power to become lords of so great and rich a country as this, you held it better in your pusillanimity and cowardice to abandon it, to fare through life living in others' houses and eating at others' tables, when you might have had your own house and your own good table to offer in hospitality to others! What honour do you think it will bring

upon you when this is known? Shame upon you all! And know that, officer of the royal exchequer or not officer of the royal exchequer, no one is to presume to excuse himself from duty, no matter who he be, for I shall cut off the head of the first man that does so. And do not deceive yourselves; so long as I live, no one leaves this land until it is conquered and settled, for we shall conquer and settle it or die in the attempt. Therefore do your duty and leave off your pretensions, for it is not the time for them." These words, ringing with all the bitter disappointment and grief of his heart, betrayed for the first time to the soldiers the cause of the perpetual discontent that had possessed the Adelantado since he left Mauvila, and that possessed him until he died. Those that took his words to themselves, from that time on did what they were ordered to do without murmuring, for they knew that the Adelantado was not a man to trifle with, and particularly after he had declared himself as he had done.

And still to the question in which direction the country was most inhabited, the Indians answered, "Towards the south, down the river, there are great provinces, ruled by great chiefs." Towards the northwest it was different, they said; all they knew of there was a mountainous country called Caligoa. However, De Soto and his officers, consulting together upon it, decided to go to this Caligoa, for perhaps, they said, the mountains would make a difference in the soil and that gold and silver might be

found there. The Indian guides led the army seven days through the thick wilderness of a forest, but every night it camped by some lake or pond, so filled with fish that the Indians killed them with cudgels, the slaves in their chains going into the water first to trouble it, so that the fish would come up on top. Caligoa was found upon a river at the foot of a hill. The Indians, who knew nothing of the Spaniards or their march, fled at sight of them in terror, leaping into the river, but the Spaniards, spreading out on both sides of the stream, captured a great many of them, and among them the chief. By his command, his people brought the Spaniards presents of deerskins and buffalo hides.

The soil of Caligoa was so rich that the people every year cast out old corn to find room for the new, and the Spaniards found that the beans there were better even than those of Spain; the pumpkins when roasted tasted, they said, like chestnuts. They were glad enough to see the Indians friendly and peaceable, because they had heard that the men of these parts poisoned their arrows, which frightened them very much, for if, they said, to their fierceness, courage, and skill in shooting was added poison, what should they do?

These Indians also said that further north it was very cold, and the country was poor and thinly inhabited, but there were great quantities of wild cattle there; the best and most populous country they knew was Coyas, towards the south. The chief of Caligoa furnished a guide to lead the army

to Coyas, which proved to be a five days' march distant. The village was small, and the cabins different from any yet seen, for over the frames were stretched skins, dyed in various colours and with designs drawn upon them; skins also lay on the floors like carpets. When De Soto saw that the village was only a scattering group of cabins, he thought that the guide had lied, for the Indians had all said Coyas was well inhabited, and he threatened the chief, charging him to tell the name of the town and where the army was. But he and all the Indians there and from other villages swore that the village was Coyas, and the largest in the country, explaining that though the cabins were straggling, there were many of them and they were well stored with corn and filled with people. The town was also called Tanico,¹ they said, from the river of that name that flowed by it.

The soldiers walking along the bank of the river in the afternoon happened to see, in a little tongue of water, a bluish kind of sand. One of them, taking up some, tasted it, and, finding it salty, told his companions that he believed they could make saltpetre out of it, for powder for the arquebuses. With this idea they gathered up a quantity of it, threw it into water, rubbing it with their hands; then straining the water, they put it to boil. The water evaporated, leaving a deposit of salt, yellow in colour

¹ The site of the village is generally supposed to have been at the hills of White River, the source of the St. Francis. The Tunica Indians were afterwards on the Mississippi.

but good of taste. The Adelantado immediately ordered a supply of it made for the army. It was then he learned that the village was one of the places to which the Indian traders came regularly for salt to sell. They gathered the deposit in wide-mouthed baskets ending in a point, made by the women for the purpose; and hanging these over an empty earthen pot placed on the fire, they poured water slowly into them, the water, dripping through upon the heated pot, evaporated, leaving a crust of salt.

So great was the craze of the soldiers for salt that they could not control themselves at all, but ate it by the handful as if it were sugar, answering those who chided: "Let us have our fill of salt now, for we have had our fill of hunger for it long enough." So nine or ten did get their fill of it, for they died of it, dying of the surfeit as the others had died of the hunger.

The army rested here a month, the horses fattening as much as the men from the great abundance of corn and fodder; and they too, in their eagerness for salt, drank so greedily of a hot, brackish lake near by that their bodies swelled from it. The Indians of Coyas, like all the other Indians the Spaniards met, knew of a better country that lay beyond; the province of Tula, towards the south. The chief gave a guide to it, but no interpreters; for his ancestors, he said, having always been at war, and never at peace, with the people of Tula, there had been no intercourse between them, and

they did not understand one another's language. And so, leaving the territory called "La Sal" by the soldiers, the army set out for Tula.

After four days' march through the despoblado that lay between the two provinces, the army halted about noon in a beautiful meadow which the guide said was a half league distant from the Tula village. The Adelantado rode out with an escort of horse to have a look at it that afternoon. They found it prettily situated in a meadow between two rivers. The inhabitants were taken completely by surprise, but at sight of the strangers, they gave the alarm and rushed out like hornets to meet them, the women with their weapons showing the same fierce and daring spirit as the men. The Spaniards charged, but they held firm; and, both sides fighting steadily, the one retreated and the other advanced into the village. And there the Spaniards found about as much work as they could do; for their opponents fought without fear of death, and, inferior though they were in arms and force, they would not surrender, but rather let themselves be killed, the women as well as men. To get out of the way of the horses, the Indians mounted on the tops of their houses, and shot their arrows down upon the assailants, and when beaten out of one house they would run to another, and when pursued in front, would slip round and come back to attack the Spaniards in the rear.

One of the cavaliers, dismounting, charged into a cabin and ran up the ladder into the loft, which,

as in all Indian cabins, was used as a granary. Here, he found five Indian women cowering in a corner. By signs he told them that he did not wish to harm them. When they saw that he was not followed but was alone, they dropped their fear, and rushing upon him like mastiffs upon a bull, and seizing him by his legs, arms, neck, and back, they bit, scratched, slapped, and pummelled him with might and main. He would not use his weapon against women, and was kicking and striking out with his fists, when suddenly the foot he was standing on broke through the flimsy floor and his leg sank into the opening up to the thigh; and there he was caught and held while the Indian women pounced upon him to finish their task, and they were in a fine way to kill him, for the cavalier, though he saw his peril, would not call for help in a fight with women. At the moment a soldier happened to enter the room beneath, and, hearing the noise above, he looked up and saw a naked leg hanging, without shoe or hose. Thinking it belonged to some Indian, for the Spaniards had gone so long bare-legged and bare-footed their skin was no whiter than an Indian's, he drew his sword to cut it off at a blow; but just in time a suspicion struck him as to what the commotion above meant. Calling quickly to some companions to follow, he ran up the steps, and there saw the Indian women inflicting their inglorious death upon the cavalier; and the Spaniards were forced to kill them all, for not a woman would loose her hold upon him.

It was dark before the Adelantado could sound the recall and return to camp. He left numbers of Indians killed and wounded behind him, but as some of his own men were pretty badly wounded, he was not at all satisfied with the events of the day, and his cavaliers owned themselves scandalized, as they called it, by the Indian women. The next day the army marched upon the village and, finding it deserted, took up quarters in it. Squadrons of horsemen were sent out in all directions to find out if the Indians were assembling for an attack. They came upon a few Indians, but it was impossible to capture any. As soon as one was overpowered he would throw himself upon the ground with gestures of "Kill me, or leave me," and though jerked and pulled, he would not rise, but would let himself be dragged along; and so the Spaniards were obliged to kill them all. In the village the Spaniards found a great many buffalo skins whose great size and thick hair had puzzled them before. The buffalo meat they supposed was beef, and looking in vain for cattle in the fields they could not understand where it came from.

The Indians of Tula differed from all other Indians the Spaniards had ever met. As has been said, the others were all handsome and well featured; these, however, women as well as men, had ugly, tattooed faces, and hideously long, narrow heads, deformed artificially by bandages fastened on at birth and kept on until the ninth or tenth year. Their faces were tattooed even to the inside

of their lips, as the Spaniards said, to match their ugly hearts.

On the fourth day after the Spaniards took up their quarters in the village, just before dawn, they were attacked in three different places at once, the Indians breaking into the camp so suddenly and in such overwhelming force and fury that some of the soldiers had not time to get their weapons, but were forced to fly for their lives, leaving what little possessions they had to be plundered. Desperate with the wild outcry and confusion, and the obscurity of the night which prevented them from distinguishing friend from foe, the Spaniards called out to one another their battle-cry, "Our Lady and Santiago!" The Indians answered at once with "Tula! Tula!" and the sound of their own names seemed to act upon their fierce passion like the dashing of spirits upon fire. The sun was just rising when they withdrew, and the Spaniards did not attempt to pursue them.

Instead of their usual bows and arrows, that night many of the Indians carried long staves, and they fetched such stinging blows with them that the Spaniards could barely get about, and they laughingly confessed that they felt as if they had been bastinadoed. A few Indians were taken prisoners, and of these the Adelantado sent six to the chief with their right hands and noses cut off.

The next day a party of Spaniards was sauntering over the field of the night's battle, and talking it over, when a trooper came riding up leading a

horse, his horse which had run away the night before and which he, on a horse borrowed from a companion, had just found and caught. As he stopped by the saunterers, one of them, Francisco de Salazar, jumped into the empty saddle to show off his horsemanship, of which he was inordinately proud; and at the moment catching sight of an Indian slinking behind a bush in the field, he and the other trooper galloped forward towards him, while the rest ran on foot. The Indian, seeing them spreading out to surround him, and that, cut off on all sides, he could not escape, came out from his hiding-place, and himself ran to meet the first Spaniard on foot. He had a hatchet in his hand, his share of the plunder of the night before, and the sharpened blade shone in the sun like a jewel. Raising it with both hands, he dealt the Spaniard a blow that sent his shield in pieces to the ground and left his arm dangling half in two. The man, stunned from the force of the blow and pain, stood unable to speak or move. The next Spaniard now coming up, the warrior turned to receive him and, with another blow aimed as surely as the first, cut through shield and arm, leaving him in exactly the same condition as his companion. Seeing this, the horsemen came spurring to the rescue. The Indian jumped aside under a low oak and, while the trooper was wheeling round thrusting at him under the branches, he darted from under the tree and, springing to the left of the horse, raised his hatchet in both hands and gave him a cut that opened

him from shoulder to knee, and the horse like the footman stood unable to move a step.

By this time another of the Spaniards, Gonzalo Silvestre, came up on foot. Thinking that two Spaniards on foot and two horsemen were enough for one Indian, he had not given himself much haste. The Indian turned to receive him as he had done the others, his strength and courage rising high in triumph at the fine blows he had delivered. Raising his hatchet for the fourth time in both hands, he would have given the same blow for the fourth time, if Gonzalo, quicker than the others, had not dodged it, and the hatchet, swerving and only grazing his shield, was carried in its impetus to the ground. Silvestre's sword flashed through the air and, slitting across forehead, face, and shoulders of the warrior, cut through the raised arm, and the hand, which dropped, hanging by a shred of skin from the wrist. The Indian, seizing the hatchet in his one hand, sprang forward to strike the Spaniard in the face. Silvestre caught the blow on his shield, while from under it he gave a mighty cut at the Indian's waist; his blade passed clean and straight through the body. The Indian stood for a moment, then fell in two pieces. Hearing of the feat, the Adelantado and his officers hastened into the field to verify it with their own eyes and to learn all the particulars; and saying that it was only right that so wonderful an achievement should be well certified to, he had a notarial account of it drawn up.

The army remained in Tula twenty days, during

which time horsemen overran the province in all directions, and as it was populous, they captured many Indians, men and women of all ages. But neither promises nor threats could induce any of them to go along peaceably; and when force was used, they would repeat the constant manœuvre of throwing themselves on the earth with "Kill me or leave me, just as you please." So indomitable were they, in short, that the only way to end a fight with them was to kill all, which the Spaniards did, excepting only the women and children. But one Indian woman of all the province was enslaved, and her temper was such that, if her master or any of his friends said anything to her about her cooking or about the food, she would throw the boiling pot or the fire tongs, or anything else she happened to have, in his face, bidding them either to kill her or let her do as she pleased. And so they let her alone and suffered all she chose to put upon them, and even then she ran away, leaving her master rejoiced at being rid of such a vixen.

The fierceness and cruelty of the Tula Indians, as the Spaniards learned later, made them such a terror to all neighbouring tribes that the mothers used the name, Tula, to frighten the children and make them stop crying; and the Spaniards relate that, when they left the province, they took with them, as their only captive, a boy of nine or ten years. In the villages, through which the army passed afterwards, when the children of the village and those of the army would all collect together to play their fa-

avourite game of a battle, the Tula boy would fight first on one side then on the other, and on whichever side he was, when he and his men charged with their cries of "Tula!" the other side always ran.

The Adelantado, inquiring his way among the Indians, was still told that towards the west the villages were scattered, but that towards the south-east there were a great many towns and plenty of corn, and that ten days' journey from Tula there was a great village called Utiangué, and that not far from it was a great water. The winter with its rain and snow would soon put an end to marching, and as scattering villages meant scarcity of food, the Adelantado decided to march forthwith to Utiangué and winter there. The great water, he thought, might be an arm of the sea; and his mind began to work on a new plan, or rather to take up again his old one. If the great water was the sea, in the spring he could march to the coast and make two brigantines and send the one to Mexico, the other to Cuba, to take news of himself and his expedition and bring back news to him, for he began to want to hear from Doña Isabella, and she must be wanting to hear from him, for it was three years since either had heard from the other. Moreover, he needed supplies of men and horses, for he had now lost all together about two hundred and fifty men and one hundred and fifty horses. Then, after reinforcements came, he would go on with the discovery and conquest of the country towards the west;

for, far as he had travelled, he had not yet come where Cabeza de Vaca had been and where he had seen the marvellous wealth, the secret of which he was afraid to divulge.

The army was eleven days in marching through the territory of the fierce Tulas. The population was scant as to numbers, but great in daring and audacity. They harassed the Spaniards every mile of their march, when there were no trees or shrubs for an ambush, lying flat upon the ground and covering themselves with grass, then rising like a flight of locusts, whirring off volleys of arrows, and making away at full speed. The horse, it is true, pursued and lanced them at their own good pleasure, but a mile further on there they were again, repeating their manœuvre, killing none but wounding many.

The army passed at last into the province of Utiangué, and arrived at the great village about the middle of October. As it was abandoned, they took possession without trouble. The Indians here were better looking than those of Tula; they did not tattoo their faces nor deform their heads, but they were hardly less fierce. They would accept no messages of peace, and their attitude was such that the first measure of the Adelantado upon entering the village was to strengthen its walls. Corn enough for the winter was collected from the villages round about, and a great provision of wood was laid in, and nuts, dried grapes, and pumpkins. In the fields were vast quantities of rabbits, which the Indians taught the Spaniards to catch in traps, and later on,

the Spaniards and Indians got up great deer hunts together, which kept their larders well supplied with venison. It snowed heavily at times, and for a month and a half the men could not get out of the village except by a pathway made by walking the horses to and fro through the snow. To keep up discipline, the Adelantado had the alarm given from time to time, especially when he saw slackness or carelessness among the men. Altogether it was by far the best winter that the Spaniards had passed in Florida, and they themselves acknowledged that, with their good supplies of food and fire, they would not in the houses of their fathers at home have fared better, nor even as well. The only demonstration from the Indians was a constant visiting or sending of pretended messengers to spy in the camp, but nothing came of it.

But Juan Ortiz died during the winter, to the great grief of all; for all loved him for the vicissitudes he had passed through, and on account of them each one hoped for Juan's return to his country more ardently than for his own. His loss was an irreparable one to the Adelantado. Pedro, the boy from Cofachiqui, replaced him as interpreter; but what Juan could extract from an Indian in four words it took this boy a day to get at, and then, as often as not, he misunderstood so completely that the army would march two or three days in the wrong direction and have to retrace its steps.

The Adelantado meanwhile was conning over his plans, for he was fixed in his mind now to return

to the Great River, by a different road from the one travelled away from it, in order to see other parts of the land. For his army was weakening, men and horses wasting away day by day. And, says the chronicle, sorrow more and more oppressed the Adelantado that without any profit to himself or to any one else so much toil had been suffered; he knew well that if he should fail or die without making the beginning of an establishment in the country and annexing it to Spain, it would be many, many years before there could be collected together for the purpose so many good soldiers, horses, arms, and ammunition as had been embarked in that conquest. And he sorely repented now that he had not gone on to the port of Achuse and settled it as he had decided two years ago, and his idea now was to repair the mistake as best he could. He did not propose to go in search of the sea-coast, but to settle his army upon the bank of the Great River in the best and most convenient situation to be found, and to build there his brigantines and send them down the Great River to the Gulf of Mexico, whence they could make their way to Mexico, Cuba, or Spain, carrying the news of the vast country he had explored and bringing back news to him; for above all and besides all other consideration was the longing in his heart to hear from Doña Isabella and to send tidings of his welfare to her.

So as soon as spring began to make a showing, he drew the army out from Utiangue, and turned its steps towards the region of the Great River; and

this was all the soldiers knew or cared to know about the line of march. For when they heard the purpose of their return, they had but one idea in their heads, or it might be said, feeling in their hearts, — to hurry on, through village after village, and province after province, by the longest marches they could make, so as to get to the river as quickly as possible, make their boats, and communicate with Spain, the land of Christians, as they fondly called it.

The river that flowed by Utiangue was the same¹ that passed by Coyas, and the Indians said that it ended only when it met the Great River. This was enough; the river became guide, and the army followed it along through forest and plain, by village after village, crossing it once, and crossing a great lake into which it fell with a furious current; and the river grew larger and deeper as they followed it until it became of the size of the Guadalquiver, as it flowed past the largest village seen since leaving Utiangue.

The advance squadron halted and waited for the rest of the army to come up. A large force of warriors drew up in front of the village, while women and children hurried over the river in boats and rafts, and when the army arrived they themselves jumped into the river and swam across without firing an arrow. The Spaniards took a few prisoners. Questioned, they said their village was named Anilco, and they knew of no other village below them on the river but Guachoya, and on the other side of

¹ Red River or some of its affluents.

the Great River, Quigaltanqui. Messengers were sent with offers of peace to the chief of Anilco. But he, not deigning even to speak with the messengers, haughtily, and as if he were dumb, made signs with his hands for them to leave his presence. The Adelantado decided not to tarry to enforce compulsion, but to push on to Guachoya. He sent some of his men down the river in boats, while he with the remainder crossed to the other bank, and marched on by land.

Four days later, on a Sunday, the village of Guachoya came in sight, and a crossbow-shot away from it rolled the majestic current of the Great River.

CHAPTER XX

DEATH AND BURIAL OF THE ADELANTADO

GUACHOYA and Anilco held each other in such enmity and hatred, and were carrying on such a bitter war, that not a word of warning had come to the people of Guachoya about the Spaniards, until some of the Guachoya warriors paddling up the river in their canoes caught sight of them marching forward. Returning in all haste to their village, the warriors gave the alarm. The chief and his people did not think of defence, but throwing themselves with whatever they could carry into their canoes, the whole population, men, women, and children, fled to the other side of the Mississippi.

The village was a double one, equally divided between the two mounds upon which it was built. The Spaniards entered and took possession; and the cabins were so large and so well stored with corn, beans, and dried vegetables and fruit that they said it was as if the place had been especially built and supplied by Providence for their ease and comfort.

It was not long before Guachoya,¹ the chief, heard

¹ Here as elsewhere in Florida the Spaniards always designated the chief by the name of his village, or the village by the name of the chief.

all that had taken place in the Anilco village, and how the chief there had rejected the Spanish general's offer of peace and disdained his friendship, and he saw, astute politician that he was and filled with subtleties, that an opportunity for revenge had come ready-made to his hands. He sent at once offers of his friendship and service to the Spaniards, begging their pardon for not having waited to receive them in his village, and promising to come in person and pay his respects. A few days later he came with a large band of his warriors in their gala costumes of feathers and skin mantles, and carrying superb bows and quivers. The Adelantado, sitting on his throne-chair with his row of interpreters standing like a body-guard behind him, received them in the great room of the chief's own cabin. Guachoya's warriors, as they filed in, ranged themselves along the sides of the room. While the interview was going on Guachoya sneezed loudly; instantly all the warriors, bowing their heads, opening and closing their arms, exclaimed, "The Sun guard you, the Sun be with you, the Sun shine upon you, the Sun prosper you, the Sun defend you, save you," and the like, the words speeding in a gentle murmur down the line. The Adelantado looked round in amazement, then smiling at his officers, "You see," he said, "all the world is alike!" The chief remained in the village in a cabin that the Adelantado caused to be vacated for him, his warriors going away at sunset and returning at sunrise. In due course of time he persuaded the Adelantado to go with him on an expe-

dition against Anilco, proposing to send the bulk of his warriors by the river, while he and the Spanish force marched by land. The Adelantado, if he could not get help out of Anilco for the building of the brigantines, wanted at least security from any fear of him while awaiting at Guachoya the return of the brigantines from their voyage; so he lent himself to Guachoya's schemes.

The expedition started, one part by river, the other by land, and all arrived at the meeting-place on the river bank two leagues below the village, where they camped that night. By daylight they were in march towards the doomed village. An Anilco Indian saw them and ran amain to give warning. But the country was flat and open; and before the village, taken completely by surprise, the Spanish horsemen were upon it. The chief was absent, and no one seemed in command. The people ran hither and thither in confusion,—the women and children shrieking.

Carried away by mere excitement, the Spanish horsemen rushed in and fought as if the harmless people had been their bitter enemies. The Guachoya warriors at their heels reaped the fruit of the carnage with an atrocity even beyond that of the Casquins; for they killed even the old women, first dragging off the little clothing they wore, and shooting them down as they ran through the village in their withered nakedness; and the infants they would throw by one leg up into the air, and

shoot them full of arrows before they could fall to the earth.

The Adelantado, whose worst intention had been to frighten the chief into a peace and not by a bloody punishment to force him into war, was greatly incensed when he came up and saw the riot of passion and cruelty. He sternly ordered the recall to be sounded at once, and turned away with his men, after having a proclamation cried that no one under penalty of death should set fire to the village or injure it further; and, that the Guachoya chief and his men should not excuse themselves with ignorance, the proclamation was translated and cried in their own language. But the Adelantado had not marched his army a quarter of a league away when, looking back, he saw smoke arising from the village and the houses bursting into flames. The Guachoya Indians, incapable of sparing the village of their enemies, and forbidden to burn it openly, had hidden coals of fire in the thatchings of straw; and as the straw in the summer heat had become as dry as tinder a mere breath of wind was enough to make it kindle. The Adelantado wanted to return to the rescue of the place; but seeing numbers of Indians running out from places of concealment to put out the fire he left it to them, and proceeded upon his road to Guachoya, in great anger, but concealing it, so as not to lose the friends he had for the sake of those he could not obtain.

Once more in the village and established in his quarters, he left all other cares to his camp officers

to take upon himself the building of the boats. For this he thought and planned day and night. At once he put men to work cutting the necessary timbers, and in the forest he found an abundance of the best. He collected together all the cordage and ropes in the army and in the village, and anything else that could serve for cordage from the villages around. He sent out Indians to fetch him all the pine gum and gum of other trees they could find to make pitch of; he had forges set up, and began the work of making nails and fastenings out of what metal they had, and repairing what nails had been used in the other boats. In his mind he had already selected the officers and soldiers, loyal friends whom he could trust, to take the brigantines to their destination, and to bring back supplies.

When the Guachoya chief was questioned about the sea, he answered that he knew nothing of it, nor of any villages down the river on his side. But on the other bank, he said, there were great provinces and villages. Thinking that the chief might be lying, to get the army out of his village, the Adelantado sent Juan d'Añasco down the river on a reconnoissance to see what habitations were along it, and if there were any signs of the sea. D'Añasco was gone eight days, and on his return said that in all that time he had not been able to go above fourteen or fifteen leagues, because of the streams running in and out the river, and the canebrakes and thickets along the bank, and that he had found no village, nor sign of village. This was discourag-

ing news, for with the Anilcoes at enmity, and no other villages to draw supplies from, the Adelantado did not know what he should do for food, and already it was running short. He sent Juan d'Añasco to reconnoitre the other side of the river. As Guachoya had said, it was well populated, and nearly opposite the Spaniards was a large village of some fifteen hundred houses, the village of Quigaltanqui.¹ The Adelantado made up his mind that instead of summering at Guachoya he would, as soon as his vessels were built and despatched, cross the river and take up his quarters in Quigaltanqui. With presents and a grand message, he sent an Indian to the chief, telling him that the Spaniards were the sons of the Sun, and that along all the way they had come through the country the natives had served and obeyed them, and that Quigaltanqui, therefore, should do the same and come to pay his respects to them, bringing with him, as tokens of his friendship and esteem, presents of those things that they most valued.

Quigaltanqui's answer to this was: If the Spaniards are the children of the Sun, let them dry up the river, and then he would believe them. As for coming to them, he was wont to come to none; rather all those of whom he knew in the country came to him and served and obeyed and paid tribute to him, either willingly or from force. If the Spaniards wished to come to him in peace, he

¹ Quigaltanqui seems, beyond reasonable doubt, to represent what was known later as the great Natchez village and people.

would willingly await them where he was ; if in war, he would await them none the less willingly, and would not shrink one step backward.

It went hard with the Adelantado not to be able to cross the river at once and meet Quigaltanqui, and see, as he said, if he could not abate some of his pride ; but he could not. The river was rising and coming down from above with furious current, and the population on the other side of the river was thick, while his own force was so weakened that he had to fight now rather with his wits than his power ; and lastly, he himself, ailing for a long time, was ill, and in fact, when Quigaltanqui's answer came, had betaken himself to bed, "evil" handed with fever, as his chronicler puts it. And in addition to all this, and to complete his measure of anxiety and vexation, he was very doubtful about the loyalty of Guachoya. The village was constantly filling with Indians, who came under pretext of bringing the Spaniards fish, and every day the chief was giving mysterious intimations that Quigaltanqui was coming to attack the village. Although the Adelantado suspected it to be a lie to drive him away, he had to keep prepared and ready for attack. And as the walls had great gaps through which the Indians were in the habit of passing in and out, and to mend them would betray apprehension, horsemen were stationed the length of them, and all night and all day they kept up their rounds, two and two, visiting the sentinels on their outposts and the cross-bowmen on guard over the canoes in the river.

The fever never left the Adelantado, but rose steadily, until it reached such a height that he knew his illness was to the death, and so at once, as a soldier and a Christian, he began to prepare himself for it. He drew up his last will and testament, which, for want of sufficient paper, was written almost in cipher; and he confessed his sins. Then he called for the royal officers, the captains and cavaliers, and the principal men of his army. When they had come, and had placed themselves around his bed, he told them, as one of them afterwards wrote, that now he was going to give an account in the presence of God of all his past life; and, since it pleased Him to take him, and since the time was indeed come for his death, he, His most unworthy servant, did yield Him many thanks therefor. And he desired all his friends, present and absent, to whom he confessed himself to be much beholden for their love and loyalty and singular virtues, which he had well tried in the travails they had suffered together, and whom he had it always in his mind to satisfy and reward when it should please God to give him rest and more prosperity of estate,—he desired them all to pray to God for him, that, in His mercy, He would forgive him his sins and receive him into eternal glory. And he asked them that they would free and quit him of the charge and office which he had over them, and that they would pardon him for any wrongs that they might have received from him in it. To avoid any dissension, which upon his death

might arise, upon the choice of a successor, he requested them to select a person able to govern, and whom all would like well. And he would thank them very much for so doing, for the grief that he felt would be somewhat assuaged, and the pain that he endured in leaving them in so great trouble, in a strange country, not even knowing where they were.

Balthazar de Gallegos answered in the name of the rest. First of all comforting the Adelantado, he set before him how short the life of this world is, and with how many troubles and miseries it is accompanied, and how God showed a singular favour to him who soonest left it; and many other things fit for such a time. As to the Adelantado's last request, he said, although his death did justly grieve them much, yet must they conform themselves to the will of God; and as for the captain-general to be chosen, he, Balthazar de Gallegos, besought him to name the man he thought fit, and they would all obey. The Adelantado at once named Luis de Moscoso d'Alvarado. Then the officers and most prominent soldiers of the army, and, after them, all the others by twenty and thirty came to him, and he swore them all to serve and obey Luis de Moscoso. When this was done, he took leave of them amid many tears from them, charging upon them the conversion of the natives of that country to the Roman Catholic faith, and the addition of it to the crown of Spain—the desires of his heart, which death alone prevented him from fulfilling.

And he prayed them most tenderly to live in peace and love with one another.

He died the next day, the twenty-first of May, 1542, on the seventh day of his illness, his fever never diminishing, but increasing to the end. "And thus," concludes the chronicler, "departed out of this life the valorous, chivalrous, and noble captain, Don Hernando de Soto, Governor of Cuba, and Adelantado of Florida, whom fortune raised, as it had done so many others, only that he might have the higher fall. The danger of all perishing in that country without him was clear before their eyes, and they grieved that any had borne ill will to him, or had not held him in the esteem they ought to have done."—All his good qualities and none but the good were remembered, for, as it must be ever, grief for the dead is largely the repentance of the living. He was, said the soldiers, the most patient of men; so much so, that the greatest comfort his soldiers ever had, in every toil and hardship, was seeing his courage and endurance. He always honoured his soldiers, and though severe in punishing military offences he pardoned all others with ease. In his own person he was the bravest of the brave; so true was this that whenever he fought in open battle all had to make way for him, as if for ten men, for, as has been said before, ten lances chosen from the whole army were not worth his single one, and wherever the fight was hottest there was he ever to be found. And there was one very notable and memorable circumstance always related of him; that



Death of the Adelantado.

in assaults, surprises, and engagements with the enemy by day, he was always the first or second, and never the third, to get to the fight with his arms; and by night, he was never the second, but always the first, so that it seemed to the men that he first armed himself and then ordered the alarm to be sounded. As for horsemanship, there was never better horseman among Spanish cavaliers — witness his fighting five hours standing in his stirrups at Mauvila, and one hour on a loose saddle at Chickasaw. And now, after losing in this Conquest of Florida all of his fortune, more than one hundred thousand ducats, he lost his life in it, — his fame, his hope of family and the great estate that he was to found.

Luis de Moscoso decided to conceal the death of the Adelantado from the Indians. They had always been made to believe that Christians were immortal, and that the Adelantado himself was a god, who could read their secrets; for he used to show them a mirror, telling them that the figures they saw in it told him everything they did or said, and therefore they were afraid to attempt anything against him. Should they find out now that he was dead, Moscoso feared that they would all, even the friendly Indians, set upon the Spaniards and overpower them. As soon as the breath left the body, the new captain-general ordered the corpse to be kept hidden in the house for three days; and to keep up the deception, the soldiers were bidden to hide their grief under gay, careless faces, and to say

that he was getting better. In all silence and secrecy, the officers made their preparations for the burial, seeking a place for the grave that the Indians should not suspect. In an open space just outside the village were a number of deep, wide pits dug by the Indians to obtain earth for their mounds. One of these was suggested and selected. At dead of night, with sentinels posted to keep the Indians at a distance, the officers, cavaliers, and priests carried the dead Adelantado thither, laid him in the pit, and filled it with earth. The next day, to obliterate traces of what they had done and still further to deceive the Indians, they gave out that the Adelantado was getting well; and jumping upon their horses with great demonstrations of joy and festivity, they galloped all over the plain, around the pits, and over the grave, upon which, on pretence of laying the dust, great quantities of water had been poured, so that the horses' hoofs trampled the ground into an even surface. But their precautions were in vain, for the Indians were seen passing and repassing among the pits, looking with careful attention about them, whispering to one another, motioning with their chins, and winking their eyes in the direction of the grave. The Spaniards now grew suspicious themselves, and, uneasy and in fear, they decided to take the body from the place it was in and bury it somewhere else, in some situation not so easily determined, where, if the Indians searched for it, they would not be so sure of finding it, and where the search would be more difficult. For, as the

Spaniards knew and said, if the Indians suspected that a body was buried there, they would dig the whole plain up, with their hands and never rest until they found it. And if they found that the body was that of the Adelantado, then would they wreak upon him, dead, what they would not dare even think of in his presence, living.

Then came the inspiration to bury the Adelantado in the Great River itself which he had discovered; there, and there alone, said the officers, would the body be safe from savage insult and outrage. His good friend, Juan d'Añasco, and four other captains undertook to sound for a proper place. Taking with them a Biscayan sailor who was clever with the lead, they rowed over in the evening to the middle of the river and, while pretending to fish, sounded it, and found in the channel a depth of nineteen fathoms. There they decided should be the grave. And as there were no stones in that region with which to weight the body and sink it to the bottom, they had a large oak tree felled, in the trunk of which was hollowed out a place the length of a man. The next night, with all possible secrecy and precaution, the Adelantado was disinterred and placed in the oak, where he lay as in a coffin, and the opening was carefully closed. The cavaliers and priests carried the trunk to a boat, and rowing out to midstream, and recommending the soul of the Adelantado to God, dropped his body overboard — saw it sink to the bottom of the Mississippi — the mighty bed for the mighty sleep.

The property of the Adelantado, cried and sold at auction the next day, consisted of two women slaves, three horses, and seven hundred hogs. Every slave and horse brought three thousand ducats, to be paid for — a long credit — at the first melting of gold or silver, or the first division of land in the Conquest, the men giving bond and sureties for the amount. Those who had no tangible property in Spain to mortgage, paid greater prices, as much as two hundred ducats for a hog, giving a lien upon what might be called their castles in Florida. But, says the chronicler, pertinently, those who had any goods in Spain bought with more fear and bought less. From that time on, most of the soldiers had swine; and they bred them and fed upon them, and enjoyed, among other gratifications, the pious one of being able to observe Fridays and the eve of feast days, which, as they had had no meat to abstain from, they could not do before.

When the shock of the Adelantado's sad death and burial wore off, the army returned to its usual condition of mind and morals; and now began to be heard the veering and shifting expressions that, through the long lapse of centuries ever separate and contrast *post-mortem* from *post-sepulchram* sentiments. Some were glad now of the death of De Soto, holding it for certain, they said, that Luis de Moscoso, who was fond of his ease, would prefer quiet rest among Christians to the laborious glory of discovering and subduing countries. And the view proved correct. With the death of the Ade-

lantado ended all his plans and schemes, for there seemed no thought of adding to the Crown of Spain or the Church of Rome, only of getting out of the country as fast as possible, which was, in truth, what a great number of them had been hungrily yearning to do ever since the disaster at Mauvila.

The new captain-general called a council of all the officers, to decide whether the better way of abandoning the country would be to go down the river, or to march through the country to Mexico, ordering each one to give his opinion in writing with his seal upon it. The officers were of one opinion that the voyage by river and sea was the more dangerous and hazardous, because they could not make ships strong enough to abide a storm, and they had neither master, pilot, compass, nor chart, nor knowledge of how far the sea was, nor in fact any knowledge of it whatever, nor even whether the Great River flowed straight to it, or made wide inland turnings, or fell over great rocks, where they all might be wrecked. The royal treasurer, Juan d'Añasco, always in the lead of every discussion, as of every adventure, related how he had once seen a sea chart of the country, which placed New Spain or Mexico about four hundred leagues, he calculated, more or less, from the region they were in now. Going by land he thought that, although they might have to make circuits round great swamps that they could not pass through, still by spending the summer in marching, and finding some well-provisioned villages in which to pass the next winter,

they could by the summer following come to Christian land. And on the march he suggested further there was always a chance still that good fortune might bring them to a rich country, where, as he expressed it, they might do themselves good. Luis de Moscoso wished to get out of the country in shorter time than that, but recognizing the impediments of the sea voyage, he consented to do what seemed best for all, — to march west until they came to New Spain. And now, that this was decided upon, there began to revive in the memories of all, the Indian rumours, discredited before, that far out towards the west there was another army of Spaniards marching and conquering the land; and belief in the rumour grew now into a conviction that there was a Spanish army out there that came from Mexico, and that they would of a surety reach it.¹

¹ In truth, while De Soto was marching west from the Mississippi, Coronado in his search for the seven cities was marching east towards it. As Mr. Bandelier so strikingly remarks in "The Gilded Man": "Had Coronado gone directly east or southeast, instead of in a northerly direction, he might have shaken hands with the discoverer of the Mississippi on the western shores of the Great River."

CHAPTER XXI

TOWARDS MEXICO

WITH eagerness and alacrity and hearty unanimity, the Spanish soldiers made their preparations, and the army left Guachoya fifteen days after the death of the Adelantado. They set their faces towards the west, resolved to turn aside neither to the right nor to the left, sure that going in a straight line would bring them out in Mexico. It was not a march, but in truth a flight. They hurried through the villages and provinces, as if death and destruction were at their heels, tarrying nowhere, observing only that they were not as well populated nor as rich in food as others seen in the country, caring not to learn their names, indeed caring for naught about them except to get through them faster and faster. The first stopping-place, Chaguata, was reached in a fortnight, and a day or two was spent there, gathering information about the next stage of the journey, the way to Aguacay.

The day after leaving Chaguata, a cavalier was discovered to be missing. A noble man and wealthy, he had joined the expedition, equipped with costly

apparel, handsome armour, and three horses, and in every way he had proved himself a gentleman, except in his passion for cards. It must be explained that, although the playing-cards had been burned with the rest of the possessions of the soldiers at Mauvila, they had been replaced by cards of the soldiers' own making, squares of skin, stiff like parchment, painted in the style of the thousand wonders, as they expressed it. It is true not as many packs were made as were desired, but at least as many as sufficed the players, who used them for a limited time, passing them round from one to another; and as they were of skin they stood well the constant usage. As soon as the cavalier was missed, the captain-general halted the army, determined not to proceed until he found him, seizing as hostage four warriors he had brought along from Chaguata.

A rigid investigation being made, it was learned that the cavalier had been seen the day before, and that four days previous he had gambled away everything he possessed, his clothing, his arms, a fine black horse that remained to him, and even, in his blind passion, he had staked and lost a beautiful Indian girl of eighteen that had fallen to his lot. He had honourably paid all his debts except the Indian girl, and he told the winner that he must wait for her four or five days, when he would send her to him. He had not sent her, and she was missing also. So it was suspected that, in order not to give up the girl, and perhaps also ashamed of having squandered

away his arms, among soldiers considered a basely vile act, he had fled to the Indians. The suspicion grew into certainty when it was discovered that the girl was the daughter of a chief of Chaguatè. Moscoso nevertheless ordered the four warriors to have the Spaniard brought back at once, threatening if they did not, to put them and all the Indians in the army to death.

The warriors sent runners in every direction where they thought the cavalier might be found. They returned, bringing word that the cavalier was with the chief of Chaguatè, who was feasting him with all possible honour, and that he said that he did not wish to return to his people. Moscoso, at this, accused the warriors of lying to him; he was convinced, he told them, that the Spaniard had been killed.

“Sir,” answered the spokesman, “we are not men to lie to you; and to prove the truth of our messengers, let one of us go and bring back a token that will satisfy you that the Spaniard is alive; the other three will remain with you as a pledge of good faith; and that you may be sure that the cavalier is not dead, have a letter written to him asking him to return or answer in writing. As none of us know how to write, you will see that he is alive.” This seemed reasonable, and Balthazar de Gallegos, who was a friend of the cavalier and from the same part of Spain, wrote the letter, reproaching him for his act, and exhorting him to return and perform his duty like a hidalgo, promising that his arms

and horse should be restored or others given him. The warrior who made the offer was selected as messenger. He went and returned in two days, bringing the same letter that he had taken, with the name of Don Diego de Guzman written across it in charcoal, and a message from the chief that the Spaniard had come to the tribe of his own free will, and did not wish to return to his people, and he would not force him. Upon this Moscoso, who had wasted three precious days upon the renegade, gave him up and went on with his march.

The village of Aguacay was found deserted. Moscoso rested there a day. Near by was found a bonanza of salt, which the Spaniards picked up like pebbles, and not far from the next camping place, a small village, they found a saline lake from which they made salt as they had done in Coyas.

The record of the march, as confused and irregular as the march itself, brings the army next to a camp between two mountains in a thin grove of woods ; then, about the middle of July, to the small village of Pato. Beyond was Amaye, a well-peopled province. The province next Amaye was Naguatex.¹

Camping on the road to Naguatex in a beautiful grove of trees, they descried a band of Indians watching them. The horsemen charged and made some prisoners. These, questioned by Moscoso, said that the band had been sent by the chief of

¹ Natchitoches (pronounced Nakitosh), on Red River in northern Louisiana, the oldest French settlement in the state.

Naguatex to spy upon the army and find out what kind of men were in it, and what order they kept; and that the chief with some of his allies were coming that day to attack the Spaniards. At that very moment, two bodies of Indians were seen advancing upon the army from opposite directions. When they saw that they were discovered, they gave a great cry and charged upon the Spaniards, and then suddenly turned their backs and betook themselves to flight. The Spaniards pursued carelessly, leaving the camp, which was immediately attacked by other bands of Indians lying in ambush, and awaiting the result of the ruse; these were driven off and also hotly pursued. A great many Indians were captured, and Moscoso, after cutting off the right hand and the nose of each one, sent them to the chief with the message that the Spaniards would soon be in his territory to do the same to him.

The next day, the army came upon the first village of the Naguatex country, a scattered and straggling one. Asking about the great village of the chief, Moscoso was told that it lay on the other side of the river that ran near by. When he marched to the river he found Indians gathered to resist his crossing. Not knowing whether the stream was fordable, and having a good many wounded men and horses, he decided to halt and rest for a few days, while he made a reconnoissance. He pitched his camp a quarter of a league from the river, in a small wood of beautiful trees that stood on the banks of a small bayou, and sent horsemen up and

down the river to look for a ford, and to find out what villages were on the other side.

The horsemen crossed the river despite the efforts of the Indians to oppose them, and found a great number of villages on the other side, well stored with provisions. Moscoso led his men four days later to the river, but found it risen to such a height that he could not ford it. As it had not rained for a month, he was much astonished, but the Indians told him that it often rose in that way without rain anywhere in the country; and then the Spaniards thought hopefully that it might be the tide of the sea that came into it. The Indians, however, had never heard of the sea, and they said the rise came always from above. Moscoso returned to his camp and remained there a week longer, when the river had fallen sufficiently to permit him to cross. On the other side he found the Naguatex village; but it was deserted. Here and in all this neighbourhood were found clay vessels¹ that were only a little different, says the chronicler, from those of Estremoz or Montemor in Spain.

Moscoso camped in the field outside the village, and sent to the chief demanding a guide. The guide not coming, he sent troops to burn the village and capture what Indians could be found. Great stores of provisions were consumed, and many Indians, men and women, captured. The chief trifled no longer. He sent guides who knew the language of

¹ Recent excavations in a mound in Natchitoches have brought to light a specimen of pottery, rarely beautiful in shape and design of ornamentation.

the country the Spaniards were to pass through. Three days after leaving Naguatex, the army entered the province of Nissone, the villages of which were poorly inhabited and bare of food. Then they came to a miserable little village called Locane, where an Indian was captured who said that the province of Nadacao was filled with large villages well supplied with corn. Securing a guide, Moscoso marched to Nadacao, and from thence to the next province, Socotino, passing through Ayas,¹ where the Indians in a large band made a stout resistance, keeping the army fighting the best part of the day and wounding many horses and men. The people of this region told Moscoso that they had heard Indians talk of having seen other Spaniards. This cheered the hearts of the soldiers mightily, for they thought that it meant that they were close enough to New Spain for the Spaniards to have come from thence; and if that were so, they felt that they held it in their power to get out of Florida as soon as they pleased.

Reaching a depopulated neutral region, the guide led them along an open high road through it; but after that, for three days, the road grew fainter, then narrowed into a path, and then ended. And for six days the army marched in an apparently limitless jungle. Food gave out, there was no corn nor meat, nor anything else to eat save herbs and roots.

¹ These names are given as spelled in the Spanish chronicles. They are easily recognized, by the sound, as the current ones of to-day in northwestern Louisiana and northeastern Texas.

Luis de Moscoso summoned the guide before him, and, incensed at his insolent bearing and answers, had him tied to a tree and the dogs loosed upon him. When the brutes began to tear his flesh, the Indian implored that they be taken off, promising to tell the truth. The dogs were leashed again, and he confessed that his chief had ordered him to lead the Spaniards astray in the forest, and to leave them there to die of hunger. But he pledged himself now, if his life were spared, to guide the army honestly out of the forest in three days, his life to be forfeited if he failed to keep his word. Luis de Moscoso and his officers were too furious at the desperate condition they were in, to listen to the man's prayers or promises. The dogs were loosed upon him again; and as they were hungry they soon finished him.

The Spaniards were satisfied in their vengeance, but they were worse off than before, for they now had absolutely no clue to the way out of the forest and were indeed lost. Confused and perplexed, they began at once to repent of killing the Indian, who, if they had been less foolish, might, as he promised, have extricated them. They could think of nothing else to do but to carry out the plans he had outlined; and so giving him dead the belief they had refused him living, they turned to the west, and pushed straight on without deviating a hand's breadth on either side. After three days of marching with ever-increasing hunger tearing at their vitals, they saw the forest thin and the ground

rise in hills ; and at last they looked down upon an inhabited country. But when they came to it, they found that the Indians had all fled, that the soil was lean and sterile, and that the villages were only groups of miserable little hovels rather than cabins. Nevertheless they found fresh meat in them ; and again they wondered where it could have come from, as they had never found any cattle alive ; and as before the Indians would not tell them. On account of the meat and hides found there and in all this region, they called it *Los Vacqueros*, or the region of the cowherd, and more than twenty days were they in marching through its sterile extent, suffering all the time for food. The little corn the Indians had they had buried in the woods, and the famished Spaniards, worn out at the end of a long day's march, had to burrow and dig, hunting something to eat.

All through this dreadful region the Spaniards saw a strange thing — little crosses of wood set up on the tops of the cabins ; there was hardly a cabin without one. In their mystification they could not account for it until those who knew *Cabeza de Vaca's* narrative gave the explanation. These Indians had heard of the miracles and cures which *Cabeza de Vaca* relates he was driven to perform to save his life (and by the same token, made it so precious and valuable to the savages as to defeat his purpose, for they would not then give him up or release him), and the fame of the cross as a medicine had been passed among them from hand

to hand and from mouth to mouth, as any sovereign specific would be to-day. They had for this reason made crosses and put them over their houses to ward off disease and peril from the inmates. This shows, says the chronicler, how easily they could have been converted to Christianity. The Spaniards could not believe that Cabeza de Vaca had himself crossed that region of country, because, as they remembered his accounts, he had passed only through the regions of gold and silver and precious stones, — regions the secret of whose riches he was afraid to divulge, regions that the eyes of these Spaniards had never yet come to the sight of.

At last a province called Guasco was reached, where was found corn enough to load all the horses and Indian pack bearers, and thence the army marched to a village called Naquiscoça, where, some Indians said, they had heard of Christians. The captain-general had them forthwith tortured to extract more information from them, and only learned that they were from the village called Naçacahoz. The army at once set out for Naçacahoz, which it reached in two days. Among some women captured, there was one who said she had seen Christians and had been taken by them and had run away. Moscoso ordered some horsemen to take the woman to the place where she said she had seen the Christians, and to find out if there were any signs thereabouts of them or their horses; but, after going three or four leagues, the woman said her tale was a lie, and so was all that the Indians had told of seeing Christians.

As the country was bare of corn, and further west no sign could be seen of human habitation, and in fact a great desert seemed opening before it, the army turned in its tracks and went back to Guasco. There the Indians told Moscoso that ten days' journey from there was a river called Daycao,¹ near which they often went hunting for deer, and where they had seen people, but they did not know what villages were there.

On again the Spaniards marched until they came to this river. Moscoso sent horsemen over it to reconnoitre the other bank; they came upon but one small village, whose people at sight of them took to flight, leaving behind all they had, which was nothing, said the Spaniards, but misery and poverty. In all the cabins only a half a peck of corn was found. Two Indians were captured and brought to the captain-general; but there was no one in the camp who could understand their language.

The army was worn out with hunger and fatigue, and Moscoso and his officers decided to advance no further until they knew what lay before them. Far away to the west, could be seen only the outline of high mountains and the shading of great forests, which they knew meant a despoblado. Companies of scouts were given food and sent in different directions. They all returned by the end of fifteen days, bringing almost all the same report: a sterile land

¹ The name suggests Caddoquiou, abbreviated into Caddo, the name of a parish of northwestern Louisiana, traversed by Red River.

and scant population, and the further they went the poorer were both population and country. That was what they had seen. What they heard from captured Indians, was still more discouraging; that although there were Indians in the country ahead, they did not live in villages nor dwell in houses nor plant fields; but they were a roving people who went about in bands, living on wild fruits, herbs, and roots, and by their fishing and hunting; wandering from one quarter to the other, according to the proper season for game. And this was the country the army had to go through to reach Mexico.

CHAPTER XXII

BACK TO THE MISSISSIPPI

MOSCOSO called a council of the officers and principal cavaliers, to discuss what had best be done. They decided that it was best to return to the Great River at Guachoya, where they would surely find corn, and there during the winter to make boats, and next summer go down the river to the sea, and along the sea-coast to New Spain. Although this seemed difficult, and of doubtful success, yet it was the only thing left them to do, for, they reasoned, by land they could not go further, that the country beyond the Dacayo River was the one mentioned by Cabeza de Vaca in his relation, where "the Indians live like Arabs, having no settled place, and feed upon tunas or roots of the field, and on wild beasts that they killed." If this were so, and the Spaniards attempted to pass the winter there, they could not choose but perish. They were already in the beginning of October, and it was urged if they stayed where they were any longer, they would not be able to return for the rains and snow. The decision was made public in the army, and orders given to prepare at once for the return march.

There were many among the soldiers who were greatly dissatisfied with the plan, for they held that the sea voyage, with the poor means they had for making boats, was as doubtful and dangerous as continuing by land. They still hoped that even yet they might find a land of gold and silver before they reached Mexico, for, said they, Cabeza de Vaca related, that after he had found clothes made of cotton wool, he saw gold and silver and stones of value. In Guasco, turquoise stones and mantles of cotton wool had been found, which the Indians by signs indicated came from the west; and they reasoned that, by pushing on towards the west, they must of necessity come to where Cabeza de Vaca had been.

Moscoso calculated that they had come about one hundred and fifty leagues from the Great River; and seeking information how, on the return, to avoid the despoblados passed in the advance, he learned that a curve to the right of the former route would be the shorter way back, but that it led through many bad places and stretches of uninhabited country. To the left, the road would be longer, but it passed through an inhabited country, where plenty of corn was to be found and Indians for guides. This last route was decided upon, and the army set out. And now the Spaniards put what strength was left in their bodies into their feet, and strained by longer and longer marches to get over the ground and out of the country of Los Vacqueros, with every care not to irritate the Indians, so as to avoid any delay that might arise from fighting.

But the Indians were far from letting them go in peace; on the contrary, they seldom let them go for the space of an hour without an attack. By day they swarmed out from ambushes behind the trees of the forest, or if in the open country from under grass with which they covered themselves so cunningly that they could not be distinguished from the ground; jumping up under the very feet of the army. By night they crept into the camp like lizards, the sentinels knowing nothing until they felt an arrow in their backs, or their horses drop under them. Finally when, footsore and weary, with a sigh of relief, they were crossing the last stream and boundary line of the cursed territory to go into camp in the plain beyond, they had to stand a brisk, fresh attack from them, made with all the daring and spirit of new foes. The cavalier Sanjurge was fighting about the middle of the stream, when an Indian from a thicket behind aimed an arrow with such skill and sent it with such force that it went through his coat of mail and saddle like a spike driven by a sledge-hammer, and nailed Sanjurge fast to his horse. The frightened horse sprang through the water and galloped up the bank into the plain, rearing, plunging, and kicking to get rid of arrow and master too, if he could. Comrades hurried to Sanjurge's assistance; finding him spitted to saddle and horse, they led him as he was to where the camp was being pitched, and there, raising him as carefully as they could, and cutting the arrow between him and the saddle, they freed

him and laid him upon the grass, and left him stretched there, recommending him to the benefit of his own skill.

It must be explained that among many kinds of skill that Sanjurge possessed, was one of curing wounds with rags and oil and certain words that he called healing words; and during the expedition he had made many such cures, to the great wonder and admiration of the soldiers, who thought he had a particular gift from God for the purpose. But since the battle of Mauvila, when all the oil and cloth had been burned, Sanjurge had given up curing, saying his words were of no good without rags and oil. He himself had since been wounded twice, once by an arrow that had gone in at the instep and come out at the ankle, from which he was four months in getting well; the other time in the knee-joint, the head of the arrow breaking off in the joint. He suffered such martyrdom this time while the surgeon was getting the arrow-head out, was so exasperated at the harshness and cruelty of the man, and at his awkward hands, that he furiously told him, as the greatest insult he could think of at the moment, that if ever he were wounded again, he would not call upon him, even if he knew that he had to die for it. The surgeon, to satisfy his feelings, retorted that even if he knew that he could save Sanjurge's life, he would never again attend him. And now Sanjurge could not call upon the surgeon, and the surgeon, although he knew that Sanjurge was wounded, would not go to him.

In this dire strait, therefore, Sanjurge had to do the best he could for himself; so in place of oil he took some hog's lard and in place of cloth rags, rags from an old Indian mantle — for it was many a long day since the Spaniards had had a shirt or coat of wool or linen among them; and his remedies proved so efficient, that in the four days that the army rested in camp on account of the wounded, his wound healed. And so on the fifth day when starting upon the march, Sanjurge jumped into his saddle as well as ever, and to show the Spaniards that he was really cured, he galloped his horse along first on one side of the army and then on the other, calling out: "Kill me, Christians, kill me, for a traitor and a false friend to you, for not curing you, thinking that the value of my remedies was in the oil and wool, and so letting more than a hundred and fifty of you die."

Twenty days the army travelled towards the south; then, thinking that they were falling too much below their goal, the village of Guachoya, they curved again towards the north, and thus crossed the road they had travelled going west. Along here they had sore trouble to find food, for wherever they had passed before they had so stripped the country that the Indians, now, at their approach, hid all their corn. But the villages they had burned in Naguatax were repaired and refilled with corn, and all the stretch of country, as on the westward journey, was well populated and plentiful of food. Striking the river at Ayas, they crossed it and followed it downwards.

The end of November overtook them ; and the winter set in with heavy cold and rains and keen winds. Faster and faster the men trudged, more and more dogged in their endurance. Their march was not even a flight now, it was a rout. Each day, no matter what the weather was, a stage of distance was laid behind, and when they reached their camping place at night, covered with mud and dripping with water, they had to go out again and hunt for food, and most times found and gained it only at the cost of life and blood. The winter still advancing, heavier rains and sometimes storms of snow swelled the streams so that even the smallest could not be forded, but had to be crossed on rafts, which took time ; for wood had to be collected and the rafts made with the Indians continually harassing and tormenting them.

After such days, when at night the Spaniards found dry ground to rest upon, they gave thanks to God, for most generally the earth was covered with water, and the cavaliers slept or rested until daylight on horseback, never dismounting. As for the footmen, standing in mud and water to their knees, imagination, says the chronicler, must tell how they passed the night. And what with the constant wading in water and crossing of bayous, their one garment of skin, belted around the waist, was always wet ; barefooted and barelegged, no food, no sleep, no rest, tired, spent, it was no wonder they sickened and died, — cavaliers, soldiers, slaves, — more than one hundred good men, among them the last priest,

and with them eighty stout horses. Hardly any slaves escaped ; and as some of these had been with their masters, serving them faithfully and devotedly since their advent in the land, they were missed and wept for as comrades. In the haste to get on there was no stop for sickness or death. Most of the victims died on foot, while walking along, and the living would hardly take time to bury the dead. Many were left as they expired by the wayside, and those who were buried received hardly enough earth to cover them. But with all these miseries and afflictions the soldiers kept up their watch by day and night, and their fighting with the Indians, who were still striking at them at every step of the way.

The river led them at last to Anilco, but there was no food in Anilco. The Indians had not planted their fields since their disaster in the spring ; and the Spaniards, who counted upon supplying themselves there, were dumfounded with disappointment. The discontented ones did not fail to make good their point now, that it was bad council to have come back and not to have followed their fortune to the west. By sea, they reiterated, unless God worked a miracle for them, it would be impossible to save themselves without pilot or chart, or aught to make sails ; without hemp for ropes, or oakum to calk the boats ; without tar to pitch them, without nails to fasten the timbers together. And, as in happiness man sees ever a greater possible happiness beyond to disturb his enjoyment, and in misfortune he sees ever greater possible depths beneath

to discourage him, these predicted that it must beyond peradventure happen to them as it had happened to Pamphilo de Narvaez.

But the discontented ones, as the discontented ever do, forgot the help of God, and now, says the pious chronicler, it pleased Him, in His goodness, to send the Indians of Anilco peacefully to tell them, that a two days' journey thence, near the Great River, lay a pair of villages which the Spaniards had never heard of, called Aminoya. Whether there was corn there, the Anilco men could not say, for they were at war with the men of Aminoya, but their country was fruitful, and they would be glad with the favour of the Spaniards to go and despoil it. The captain-general consenting, a body of horse and foot men set out at once with a party of Anilco warriors. In the afternoon of the second day, they came out of the forest into a great clearing, where two large villages rose in sight of one another, and there in front of the villages flowed the longed-for Great River. The gaunt, haggard, famished, sick Spaniards, when they saw it, wept. Word was sent to Moscoso, and he hurried up with the army.

CHAPTER XXIII

AMINOYA

AS soon as Moscoso saw the villages, he determined to capture them. Forming his men in battle array—and, far from being able to fight, the men could hardly stand—he commanded the trumpets to sound the charge. By the blessing of God, as the Spaniards tell the story, the Indians fled, abandoning their homes. The army then advanced upon the other place, and took it with the same facility. When the soldiers spread themselves through the villages, their wonder was that such small places could contain so much food—corn and grain of all kinds, vegetables, grapes, plums, pumpkins; truly they said, if they had intended to pass the winter there, and had busied themselves all summer collecting provisions, they could not have amassed so much. And this also they attributed to a particular mercy of God; for, as they confessed to one another, if they had not found such good food and such good cabins to winter in, to a certainty they would have all died in short order, because in their wretched condition they were unable to do anything for life or

safety. And even with their good fare and comfort, more than fifty Spaniards, too exhausted to recuperate, died of past want in the midst of present plenty,—among them the noble Portuguese cavalier, Andreas de Vasconselas, and, alas for Doña Leonora! the handsome, gallant, dashing, daring Nuño de Tobar. Perhaps in the next world, as says the chronicler, he may have gained the forgiveness and pardon which, despite his valour and knightly deeds, his devotion and loyalty, De Soto would never accord him in this.

For greater convenience and security, it was decided to join the two villages together, so that the force might not be divided in case of emergency. The soldiers were at once set to dismantling one village and removing the timbers, thatchings, and provisions to the other, which was also well fortified. But with all the will and energy the men could put into the task, so weak and exhausted were they, it took them twenty days to accomplish this. However, under good shelters, and with abundance of good food, the sick—and they comprised nearly the whole army—began to convalesce; and the natives were so kindly disposed, that, although they had not made any regular peace with the Spaniards, they did not oppose them in any way, nor molest them, nor harass them even with false alarms during the night.

As soon as health and strength were restored sufficient for work, orders were given to cut timber for the building of the boats. Master Francisco,

whom it was God's greatest mercy to have brought safely through all the hardships, for he was the only man in the army who knew how to build ships,— Master Francisco was made head master over all the workmen, in fact, over the captain-general himself. The timber was cut, and a Portuguese, who had once been a prisoner in Fez, and had learned there to use the long saw, now taught others, and together they sawed the trees into planks. Fortunately, a long saw had been preserved through all the marches. A forge was set up, and all the chains, and whatever bits of iron could be found in the camp, were collected to be made into nails; the stirrups, replaced by stirrups of wood, were put aside to turn into anchors. Four or five Biscayan carpenters were still alive, and two men of Sardinia were found who could calk. The only cooper fell sick, and was at the point of death for a long time. But it pleased God also to send him his health, and, although very weak, he made the casks to hold the water.

While these beginnings were being made, the chief of Anilco, fearing that his enemies of Guachoya might again secure the help of the Spaniards against him, now sought to secure for himself their favour and protection. Not daring to trust himself in the hands of the strangers, he sent in his stead a near relation and his most noted warrior, the one who commanded on all his war-paths. This warrior came in company with twenty-four fine-looking warriors, followed by two hundred Indians to serve them in any capacity required, and

by pack bearers loaded with presents of fruit, fish, and game. He gave the message from his chief, ending his offers of service and friendship with, "Sir, I do not wish you to believe my words, but the work we have come to do for you."

Two days later came the chief of Guachoya also with presents, for the news had spread to his village that the Spaniards had returned and were in quarters in Aminoya. It pleased him not at all to see his enemy, the Anilco warrior, there before him, forestalling him with service, and still less to see him receiving from the Spaniards the compliment and honour due a chief. He at once entered into a spirited rivalry with him to gain the gratitude of the Spaniards; and every week the two would go to their villages, returning with new and ever more generous presents of food and anything else that was needed.

Master Francisco, calculating the size and proportions of the vessels according to the number of the persons to be embarked, found that six were necessary, and for this number he demanded materials. In order that the rains and other inclemencies of the winter might not interrupt or disturb the work, he commenced by building four great sheds, under which all the men toiled together, without any distinction or difference, each man hastening to do what he was most fitted for, without command. For, as the hope of each lay in the making of the boats, there could be but unanimity of mind and heart in all. While some sawed the logs into

planks, others chipped with adzes ; here some hammered iron at the forge, there some twisted fibre into ropes, the soldier or captain who did the most work at what he set about to do being, for the time, the man most honoured by the others.

So they kept busy during February, March, and April, the Anilco warrior all the while proving himself the best of friends, offering with alacrity to provide anything that was needed to help the work along, collecting and bringing great quantities of mantles of fibre, and skin — the new ones for sails, the old ones to be ravelled to calk the boats — and cutting and bringing great lengths of vines to be used for ropes. Indeed, the captain-general, his officers and men in their gratitude looked up to him as to a Hernando de Soto himself ; and the warrior deserved it, they said, for in all respects — appearance, figure, and virtue — he was a gentleman. Guachoya also helped and provided ; but he did it in a niggardly manner, and the soldiers said the difference between his soul and that of the Anilco warrior could be seen a mile off. And from almost as great a distance also would be perceived his vexation and jealousy at the honour and respect paid by the Spaniards to one inferior to him in power and rank ; and his envy lay so heavy within him, that it allowed him neither rest nor ease.

It would be well to recall, if, perhaps, it has been forgotten, that opposite the village of Guachoya, on the other side of the Great River, was the large and powerful province of Quigaltanqui, whose chief, a

young warrior, had so audaciously braved De Soto. When Quigaltanqui heard that the Spaniards were above him, in Aminoya, making boats to go down the river and across the seas to their own country, he reasoned that, as they had seen so many and such fine lands in his country, they could not help extolling its greatness and richness; and so they would excite the greed of other people to come and take it away from its natural chiefs and masters. He thought, therefore, that it would be wise to prevent this by not permitting the Spaniards to leave the country alive, and to intercept and kill them all in it. He therefore sent out messengers, summoning together all the noted warriors of his territory, and declared his judgment to them, and asked their opinion. Quigaltanqui was as much feared outside his territory, as he was blindly obeyed within. Without hesitation the chiefs agreed with him and begged him to lead them against the strangers, promising that they would serve him until death. Quigaltanqui, further to insure his success, sent messages to the chiefs still farther away; and, warning them that the danger he feared and wished to avert was the same for all, he exhorted them to leave off bygone enmities and come together in a great league, to prevent the peril of strangers penetrating into their country and conquering their lands, and taking their wives and children, and making slaves of them. These chiefs also responded to Quigaltanqui with the greatest enthusiasm, lauding his judgment and forethought; and from one side of the river and

the other they all swore allegiance to him, each one agreeing to collect with all possible secrecy and despatch as many men and canoes as he could, and to make all other preparations for a war. All the while they feigned to be friends of the Spaniards, and to put them off their guard, they sent messengers and presents to them, each chief separately, Quigaltanqui, as the prime actor, sending his messengers first.

The captain-general, at first deceived, replied gratefully, thanking each and saying, which was the truth, how much he rejoiced to be at peace and friendly with the Indians; and all the Spaniards were indeed vastly pleased, as for some length of time past they had had their glut of fighting. Into this league, though he was bidden, the Anilco chief not only refused to enter, but he commanded his warrior to reveal it to the Spaniards in time to put them on their guard. In this manner they heard of it. They never could ascertain with any certainty whether Guachoya was in the league or not. He at least never gave any warning about it, and they considered an attempt which he made about this time to discredit the Anilco warrior might have been a subtle design to prevent his being believed, should he ever tell the Spaniards about the league. For as Anilco had not consented to enter it, Guachoya might well suspect him of being an enemy of it, and of betraying it to the Christians. One day, while Moscoso, his officers, Guachoya, and the Anilco warrior were standing together in the work-

sheds, Guachoya, without any provocation, turning to the captain-general, said: "For a long time I have been grieved at the honour that you and your soldiers pay to this Anilco man, for it seems to me that honour should be given according to station, and qualities, and possessions, and in all three he has little or nothing. He is poor, and his father and grandfather were poor before him; he is the subject and servant of a chief like myself, and I have warriors as good as he and superior to him in birth and possessions. I tell you this that you may know whom it is you are favouring, so that you shall not put so much faith in his words, and may be on your guard."

While Guachoya was speaking, the Anilco warrior made no sign of hearing him; on the contrary, without a word, gesture, or expression of the face, he let him say all he wished to the end. Then he arose and began to speak, and as Moscoso commanded the interpreters to repeat what he said, without suppressing a word, he spoke slowly and distinctly, waiting at the end of each sentence for it to be translated. "Guachoya, without any reason whatever, you have tried to insult me before the captain-general and his soldiers, when you should, on the contrary, have paid honour to me for what you know and what I shall tell now before you. You say that I am poor, and so were my father and grandfather. You say the truth; but they were not so poor as you make out, for they always had enough of their own to feed themselves; and I, through my

good fortune against you and other chiefs like you, have gained enough and more than enough for myself and my family. When you say that I am of base blood, you know well that you lie; for, although my father and grandfather were not chiefs, my great-grandfather and ancestors were, so that in family I am as good as you, and as good as any other chief in the land. You say that I am the subject of another. You say the truth; we cannot all be chiefs. But it is also true that neither my chief, Anilco, nor his father, nor his grandfather, has ever treated me or mine like servants, but like kinsmen; and we have never given them low service, but the highest. As you know, I had hardly passed my twentieth year when Anilco chose me for his warrior chief, and that for twenty years in peace or war I have been the first person in the tribe after Anilco. And I have won every battle that I fought against his enemies; against your father and all his warriors, and against you, for I have conquered you, and captured you and your two brothers, and all your best warriors — your land, and everything they and you possessed. If I had chosen then, I could have taken your lands from you and kept them for myself, for there was no one in the length and breadth of them to prevent me. But not only did I not do this, but instead I feasted you, and your brothers, and your warriors, and let you go free on your promise. Last year, when you broke, as you did, your promises, I had a mind to take you again and bring you back into captivity, as I shall do when the Spaniards are

gone out of the land ; for under their favour you came to the village of Anilco and burned his houses, for which you will pay well ; that I promise you. But it does not beseem men to quarrel by words like women and children ; let us go to arms and prove which one of the two, by virtue of strength and courage, merits to be the chief over the other. This Great River, going down, passes through your territory, but on this side of your territory is the river that passes through my territory. Let us, you and me, get into a canoe, and start down the river together, and he who proves himself the best man on the way, he shall take the canoe and go on to his village. If you kill me, you will have avenged yourself like a warrior. If I kill you, then I shall get all the satisfaction I want for what you have said against me." Guachoya did not answer a word. Whereupon, Moscoso and his officers thought all the more of the Anilco warrior, and treated him even with more respect than before, and Guachoya with less.

When the Spaniards took possession of Aminoya, they found in one of the cabins an old woman ; too old she was to fly with the rest of her people. She asked them what they were coming to her village for. They said to pass the winter there. Then she asked them what they expected to do with themselves and their horses in the high water, for every fourteen years the Great River rose and overflowed its banks, and covered all the land, and that the natives took refuge from it in the tops of their

houses, and that year was the fourteenth year. At this the Spaniards laughed very much, and then, as they said, cast it to the winds. The month of March came, and the Spaniards in their eagerness to get out of the country were working with might and main, not giving themselves a moment's respite or rest, and the Anilco warrior was still going incessantly backwards and forwards between the camp and his village to get what was needed.

And, on the other side of the river, Quigaltanqui and his allies in their determination to prevent the strangers leaving the country were no whit lazier; each chief of them was also with might and main levying men and collecting canoes. All was at last in readiness to assault the camp and burn the boats and massacre the Spaniards. The critical moment approached, and as usual with the Indians it was accompanied by sinister signs, looks, and winks, and incautious words. The Indian women secretly told their masters to be on guard. At night when the weather was clear, the paddling of canoes could be heard, and a great murmuring from over the river as from a camping place; and from point to point along the bank signal fires were lighted.

To all of it God, says the chronicler, put an end by sending a most tremendous flood, — the high water predicted by the old Indian woman. The water began to rise, and rose steadily day after day, until its current, pouring down with terrific force and swiftness, filled the great hollow space between its banks, then rose, and rose, until it lay smooth

and even with its banks. And then, on the eighteenth of March, Palm Sunday, while the Spaniards were walking in solemn procession, celebrating the entry of our Saviour into Jerusalem, the river came over its banks, and began to spread over the country, creeping further and further inland day by day and night by night. Ten days later there was no going about the village except in canoes or on horseback, and for forty days still the water rose.

A marvellous sight it was to the Spaniards to see forests and fields sunk into a sea, for the water spread over more than twenty leagues on each side of its banks, and in all that extent nothing was to be seen but the tops of the houses and trees. The Spaniards made rafts, covered with green boughs, for their horses, and they raised the floors in their houses, but they were driven from these up into the lofts, where for two months they were cooped up. But they did not cease from their work; they floored their dockyards, as they called their sheds, higher and higher, and in them kept up their various tasks, even to the burning of the charcoal for the forge. The timber for the oars of the boats was cut from the branches of trees standing in the water.

As for Quigaltanqui and his gathering forces, when the warriors saw that an overflow was upon them, they had to hie away in their canoes back to their villages to look after their women and children and provisions, and to put them in places of safety. At the end of April, the water began to fall, but as slowly as it had risen, so that it was the middle of

May before the Spaniards could get about the village except by wading; and it was the end of the month before it returned to its bed, or, as the Spaniards said prettily, to its mother.

As soon as the ground was dry enough to walk upon, the Indians began to collect their forces again upon the other bank, and the Anilco chief sent a warning to Moscoso that they were preparing for an attack on a certain day, which the Spaniards would know by its following four days after three presents of fish came, one in the morning, one at midday, and one in the evening. To prove the truth of this, Moscoso had one of the Quigaltanqui Indians who came to the village secretly captured and put to torture, and the confession was forced that Quigaltanqui and his allies would attack the camp three days after the different chiefs sent a great present of fish, one present in the morning, one at noon, and one in the evening. The slaves in the village were to steal away the lances which stood at the doors of cabins and set the village on fire, when the warriors ambushed in the forest were to rush in and make an end of the Spaniards. Moscoso had the man kept in chains, and waited. As he had said, on a certain day there came to the camp a great present of fish in the morning, another at midday, and a third in the afternoon. Moscoso seized the messengers, band by band, all thirty of them; and, resolved to inflict such a punishment as would terrify even the haughty Quigaltanqui, he had the right hand of each warrior cut off. The men submitted

without a word, and with the greatest stoicism. As soon as one man's hand was chopped off, another would step up and lay his upon the block, which caused great pity and compassion among the lookers-on. The mutilated braves were then sent back to their chiefs with the message that the rest of them might come when they would; that the Spaniards wished for nothing more than to meet them. The appalling penalty produced the effect expected by Moscoso; a pause of horror fell over the warlike preparations across the river. And now the Spaniards, knowing for a certainty that there would be only a short respite for them before retaliation, worked as never before at their last preparations. Advantage had been taken of the high water to float the boats into the river, and avoid the strain of launching, for the nails and fastenings had been scarce in the building, and what there were, were not of the strongest quality. So for some time they had been lying at the bank under guard night and day. Now all hands were put to rigging and loading them. The boats were open galleys, carrying seven oars to a side, and provided with sails of skin. As the decks were not covered, loose planks were laid down for the men to run upon to trim the sails; the cables were of vines.

Two sows and a boar apiece were given Anilco and Guachoya and other friendly chiefs, to breed from, and eighteen hogs were reserved alive in case of a stoppage at the mouth of the river; the rest

were butchered and the meat salted; the lard mixed with resin furnished tar for the outside of the boats. Twenty of the thirty horses that remained alive were tied at night to stakes and their veins cut, and so left to bleed to death; and their meat, par-boiled, salted, and dried in the sun, was added to the store of food.

The Spaniards would have had corn enough, but the high water had caused a famine in all the country round, and the Indians of Aminoya, whose provisions had been captured with their villages, had absolutely nothing to eat, and so were dying of starvation. They came in flocks to the camp, offering to work as slaves, hoping that the Christians, having taken all they had, might bestow a few crumbs upon them. So weak were they they could hardly stand, and there was so little flesh on their bones that they looked like skeletons. Many died on the road to the village from pure hunger and exhaustion. Moscoso forbade with severe penalties the giving of corn to them, commanding all to be saved for the voyage; but when the soldiers saw the misery of the poor wretches, and their willingness to work, they gave them a part of their own rations. When the time came for embarking, Moscoso's foresight was seen to be wise, for there was barely enough corn to serve their own needs. The horses and hogs were put into canoes, screened round with planks covered with skins as a protection against arrows. The canoes for the horses were tied two and two together, and the horses stood in

them, the fore feet in one, the hind feet in the other. Besides these, each boat carried an empty canoe in tow. Two days before the start, all the Indians in the village were dismissed, and when they were gone all the slaves were set free. But some of them, the first captured in Florida, and brought along from its most distant provinces, surviving all the hardships and ill fortunes of four years, begged with tears not to be left behind; for they said they would rather die with the Spaniards than live among the strangers in Aminoya, Anilco, and Guachoya; so they were allowed to follow along still with their masters into the unknown dangers ahead.

Moscoso appointed his captains, two to each boat, taking their oath that they would obey him until they came to the land of Christians. There were about three hundred and fifty men, and these were next distributed and told off in regular relays for rowing, no man to be exempted but the captains. And now there was nothing more to be done; all was completed.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FLIGHT DOWN THE RIVER

IT was the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, the 2d of July, 1543 — four years and one week since the expedition landed in Florida. Waiting until after sunset, the Spaniards quietly stepped into their boats, took their places, and pushed off from shore. Steering out into the current, they rowed down with it. They rowed all that night and the next day and the next night without stopping, speeding onward over the spot where lay the body of the Adelantado, passing the Guachoya village where he died. Canoes, in waiting there, followed them to the next bend in the river; then they dropped behind and out of view, and the vast river was all their own again. But when one of the boats went ashore to a deserted little village, an old Indian woman left there warned them that the enemy were gathering, and were coming fast after them.

The light of the next day brought to view a sight such as the Spaniards had never seen before, and never saw afterwards. Looking back, they saw the broad river, from bank to bank, covered with Qui-

galtanqui's canoes. So many were they, writes one chronicler, that the Spaniards could not count them, but only reckoned them by hundreds, — may be, reckoning with the imagination rather than their eyes. Each canoe carried from twenty to twenty-five rowers to the side, with a serried file of standing warriors, bows in their hands, quivers at their backs, tall, slim, erect, immovable—all to their crests of feathers. The trim, light paddles, polished like ivory, glistened in the sunshine, say the Spaniards, like the brightest of lance-heads, and they sent the canoes with a velocity that a horse, galloping at full speed, would hardly have excelled. To keep time, the rowers, in unison, sang war-songs, interrupted at regular intervals with cries and insults hurled at the Christians. Some of the canoes were dyed inside and out, all of a colour — black, white, blue, red, yellow, purple, with the paddles to match. And the bows and quivers and the feathers on the warriors' heads were all of the same colour as the canoes, so that the Spaniards, describing it, said that no tournament or joust of cavaliers on caparisoned steeds, and dressed to produce an effect, could have excelled the brilliant beauty of these savages. And the precision of their movements was as wonderful and beautiful; their canoes now rushing onward with the quick dropping words of their songs, now slowing off in long drawn-out cadences.

The Spanish vessels pushed steadily onward in the centre of the channel, the men rowing as men row for life and safety. At midday the canoes were seen

to separate into three divisions, and draw over to the right-hand side of the river. And now, the Spaniards had better opportunity to admire the beauty of their evolutions, and the strength and skill of their rowers. The first division, in a long, single file, shouting Quigaltanqui's name, flashed forward like a keen, curving blade athwart the course of the Spaniards; and a broadside of arrows, which darkened the air as they came, fell into the boats. The cavaliers ranged themselves with shield and lance for the onset, and some of the soldiers quickly stepped into the canoes in tow, to defend the horses; but the Indians passed onward to the other side of the river, and, twirling round, returned in the rear of the boats to take up their first position on the right bank. In the meantime, the canoes of the second division had advanced in precisely the same order, discharging their arrows, returning to the right bank and taking up their position after the first division; and they had hardly crossed before the third division was there in front of the boats, pouring its broadsides of arrows upon the Spaniards, returning to their position near the right bank, whence the first canoes immediately led off again, followed in due order by the second and third divisions. And thus they kept it up all day, crossing in front and discharging their arrows, and returning by the rear to their first position, giving the Spaniards not one moment's respite until nightfall.

Seeing that the Indians had no idea of coming within reach of their swords but intended to fight

with their arrows at a distance in the canoes, the Spaniards came back into the leading boats, leaving the horses to what protection they could get out of their coverings of mats and skins. During this first day twenty-five men were wounded in Calderon's vessel, which was in the rear. The soldiers not in armour tried to get out of the way of the arrows by going to the other side of the boat, and some of the rowers dropping their oars, the boat began to drift. But one of the cavaliers made a soldier take up an oar and steer back into the course, while he stood before him and guarded him with his shield, and so he saved the boat. The Spaniards then be-thought themselves of the mats that they slept in, which were so close and strong that no arrow could cut through them, and as soon as the Indians gave them the leisure for it they hung them along the sides of the boats. But the Indians, shooting their arrows with as deadly skill up in the air so that they might fall into the boats, wounded almost as many.

So the pursuit continued for ten days—beginning at dawn, ending at sunset—with no variation whatever in the manœuvre. At the end of that time two of the horses had been killed, and few of the Spaniards had escaped without a wound. The crossbowmen did what they could, but they were too few in number to do much. As for the arquebusiers, their powder had long since been exhausted and their guns forged into nails.

The Indians, seeing at last that their manœuvres had only forced the Spaniards into keeping in

closer order, now pretended to withdraw, and cunningly dropped out of sight and remained a distance up the river in hopes that their enemies, growing careless and off their guard, the boats would spread out and separate from one another, thus giving an opportunity to attack one by itself. The Spaniards fell into their trap before the day was out. Passing by a little village that looked as if it had been abandoned, and believing that the Indians had given over the chase and that the river was nearing the sea, Moscoso thought it would be well to lay in a new supply of corn. Word was passed along the boats for volunteers to go with Gonzalo Silvestre to the village. A hundred men immediately put out in their canoes, taking the horses to give them a little run, or, one chronicler says, to kill them for their meat. But the village was not abandoned; the Indians were out in their fields. Seeing the Spaniards coming, they fled to the forest, sending out wild cries of alarm. Gonzalo Silvestre and his men, making all haste, landed and ran to the cabins, grasping up all the corn and provisions and skins they could pack on their shoulders. Among the skins was a magnificent one, which Gonzalo Silvestre secured for himself, of the finest marten, very long and wide, and doubled so as to be the same on both sides, ornamented on the edge with pearls hung in groups like tassels.

In the midst of their looting, they heard the trumpets from the boats sounding a peremptory recall; Quigaltanqui's canoes were in sight, and

coming at full speed to the rescue of the villagers. The Spaniards jumped into their canoes, but they were too hard pressed to save their horses. They managed to reach the vessels, but the chase was so close that, if the Indians on the river had been a hundred paces in advance, they would never have succeeded. The Indians, furious at their disappointment, turned for revenge upon the deserted horses. The intelligent animals, as if knowing that they were at last in the power of their bitter enemies, began to neigh and snort and gallop over the fields. The delighted Indians pursued, shooting at them with the wildest glee until the last horse fell — the last of the three hundred and fifty fine horses that had entered upon the conquest of the country — the Spaniards looking on with such sorrow as men feel over the killing of little children.

The canoes again dropped behind, and kept out of sight; and the galleys rowing and sailing on under a prosperous wind with no foe in view for a day or two, the men again grew careless and off their guard; and one of the boats, the crew not noticing it, dropped out of the regular order and, separating from the others, fell behind more than a hundred yards. The Indians, who were on watch, lost not a moment of their opportunity. From all directions their canoes came charging over the water towards the straggler with the speed and fury of wild animals. The other six vessels lowered sails, and began to row back to the rescue as fast as they could. The distance was short, but against the current of the

river the headway was slow and difficult. When they reached the surrounded boat, the Indians were pouring over the sides, the Spaniards defending themselves as best they could, each man holding a circle at bay with his sword. But as the other boats came up, the Indians retreated, taking the canoes in tow with their cargo of live hogs. The Spaniards now returned to their first caution, Moscoso charging the captains if they did not want to fall into like danger again, not, on any account, to separate or break the regular order. But what avail charges when a fool takes it into his head to act?

Among the Spaniards was a rustic fellow, Estevan Añez by name, who had none of the qualities of a real soldier, but who, having safely passed through all the dangers of an expedition where so many brave men had perished, was puffed up with vanity, as if his valour had been his salvation. He was a great talker, and in his galley had talked himself into a great reputation for bravery among his companions, particularly among the young ones; and so one day he talked himself and five of them into believing that they could perform the most brilliant and most famous feat of arms in that discovery or any other—and somehow it is not hard to persuade youths that they can do the most famous and brilliant deeds of all ages. Among these was a young cavalier of twenty, the son of the brave Don Carlos Enriques, killed in the battle of Mauvila, as perfect of figure and as beautiful of face, says the chronicler, as it was possible for a human being to be,

and in gallantry and virtue, the worthy son of his father. He with the others followed Añez into the canoe in tow of their boat, and, casting off, they paddled away, saying they were going to speak to the captain-general. But as soon as they were a little distance from their boat, they, on the contrary, turned and, shouting out cries of defiance, paddled straight for the Indians who were keeping just in sight.

Moscoso, seeing the senseless act, ordered the trumpets in all haste to sound the recall, and with shouts and gestures he and his officers ordered the canoe to return. But the more and the louder they called, the more obstinate and determined seemed the course of the canoe. Furious at the disobedience, the captain-general ordered thirty or forty men to go and arrest and fetch him the leader, determined to hang him as soon as he was aboard. It would have been better to have remitted his punishment to the Indians, for they knew, and none better, how to cure such foolishness. As soon as the order was heard, from every boat Spaniards jumped into their canoes to execute it. The Indians as on the first day covered the river from bank to bank. When they saw the canoes of the Spaniards coming towards them, instead of advancing they kept their paddles going, merely to hold their line. Then, almost imperceptibly at first, in perfect unison and grace they began to back, to draw the canoes further away from the boats, which in the meantime had lowered their sails and were working their oars to stem the current.

Seeing themselves gaining upon the Indians, instead of suspecting something, Añez and his crew paddled still more fiercely towards them, calling out excitedly: "See, they are flying! They are flying!" When the first canoe of Spaniards and the three others coming after were near enough, the Indians began to spread out towards the sides, curving like a crescent, the centre still paddling backwards and leading on the Spaniards. When these were well in the trap, and could not get out even if they wished, the horns of the crescent began to curve forward; then suddenly closing they charged over the water, striking the four canoes of Spaniards on the side with such impetus and force that they turned them over, and passing over the place where they were in such numbers that the Spaniards could not even rise to the surface. Whenever a head appeared it was beaten by a paddle back into the water. And so perished forty-eight of the fifty-two men in the four canoes. "And all for the act of a fool!" exclaims the chronicler.

The four who escaped owed their lives to Pedro Moreno, the Mestico. Although overturned into the water, he with his great strength and skill was able to recover his canoe and get into it, pulling after him three others, among them the brave soldier Nieto, who, it will be remembered, lifted up Juan Ortiz to his saddle and rode away with him. Nieto held the Indians at bay while Pedro Moreno paddled. But neither his strength and courage nor Pedro Moreno's skill and dexterity would have availed

to save their lives, if the galleys had not come up when they did. Moscoso, as there was nothing else to be done, ranged his boats again in their order, returned to his course, but sorely hurt and grieved over the loss of his men. The Indians after this fine stroke followed the Spaniards only one day and night longer, sending their triumphant war-cries and yells over the water. On the seventeenth day of their voyage, at sunrise, with one great chorus of voices and horns and drums, they dropped out of sight, and this time their retreat was final. When the Spaniards saw they had really given over the chase, they were confident that the sea must be near, and that for this reason alone the savages had returned to their homes.

From this time the river continued increasing in width, so that going down the centre of it, the Spaniards could see nothing of either bank but its line of green foliage. They kept in midstream, not daring to turn in to either bank for fear of getting lost in swamps or lagoons. The river grew so wide at times, they said, that they did not know whether they were in the sea or still in the river. In this doubt they sailed and rowed three days longer, which brought them up to the nineteenth day of their voyage. On that day there appeared on their left a great expanse of driftwood; so immense it was that it looked like an island. Further on lay bare, naked sand. Beyond that the eye shot out into the sea itself.

CHAPTER XXV

ON THE GULF OF MEXICO

NOT knowing how far they were yet from the end of their voyage, Moscoso and his officers decided, before venturing out to sea, to examine the vessels and see if they needed repair. Going to work with their usual promptness and energy, the men soon had the boats unloaded and careened up on the driftwood island. They found very little to be done to them. They then slaughtered the few hogs that were still alive, and after that they lay down to sleep, and for three days they slept like the dead; for the Indians had allowed them no sleep on the river, and they were perishing for sleep; besides being spent with rowing, and almost starved, having eaten nothing for days, but parched corn measured out to them every day, a helmet full for every three men.

How many leagues they had travelled down the river during the nineteen days of their voyage they never knew. The Indians gave them no leisure in which to take measurements, and in talking it over among themselves then and afterwards, they expressed great difference of opinion about it, some

persisting that they travelled during a day and a night only twenty leagues, others thirty or forty; but most agreed that, as they came down with the current, they must have made on an average twenty-five leagues every twenty-four hours.

About noon of the third day of their rest, they were startled by seeing seven canoes of Indians come out from a clump of rushes on the marshy ground near by and paddle towards them. In the bow of the first canoe stood the leader, an Indian as tall as the great Philistine and as black as a negro, completely different in colour and appearance from any natives seen inland. Calling to the Spaniards in a loud and commanding voice and pointing towards the mouth of the river, with violent gestures he ordered them to leave under penalty of being killed. Then, without waiting for a reply, he turned his canoe and, followed by the rest, disappeared in the rushes again. The Spaniards, watching, saw other canoes busily coming and going in and out of the rushes. Evidently an attack was in preparation, and they quickly decided that it should come from themselves, and before nightfall. For after dark the savages could easily fall upon them and burn their boats and, knowing the land and water about them as they did, could safely escape, while the Spaniards in their ignorance would be helpless. Therefore Moscoso ordered Gonzalo Silvestre and Alvaro Nieto with a hundred men to get into canoes and paddle into the marsh in search of the savages.

Pushing stealthily through the tall rushes, the

Spaniards found them in a clear, smooth round of water walled in by the thick growth, — seventy canoes of them. Charging at once into them, the Spaniards upset three of their canoes, killing some of the Indians, and wounding more; and pushing on they fought with their utmost skill, courage, and strength. But the Indians were brave fighters, too, and they used a weapon the Spaniards had not seen in Florida before, although it was known and feared by the Spaniards of Peru, — a kind of dart of cane with a sharp-pointed head of fishbone, which they threw with deadly skill and unerring aim, inflicting wounds as large as a man's hand. And their canoes, smaller than the ones used on the river, were like trained horses under rein, swerving, dodging, darting, wheeling round and round, easily turning inside their length, fleeing and charging back again, while the Spaniards broke their arms trying to get up to them. But the Spanish arms and armour told, as they always did, and the savages finally retreated. In the meantime the Spaniards at the driftwood were busily reloading their boats, and when Gonzalo Silvestre and his men returned, being fearful that the savages might still collect and come that night to burn the boats, they hurriedly embarked, and sailed over to the sand island at the mouth of the river. There they anchored and passed the night sleeping on board.

The next morning Luis de Moscoso called all the men together in a council, and commanded each one to speak his mind, and say whether he thought

it better to cross over the high seas to Mexico or to keep along the coast. There were various expressions, and finally Juan d'Añasco arose and spoke. He maintained that it was better to go by the high seas and across the Gulf, for that would be three or four times shorter in distance than it would be going along the coast, on account of the twisting and turning of the land; and he exhibited a chart that he had traced upon deerskin from memory of a chart of that coast that he had once seen, and an astrolabe, which in his fondness for such things he had picked up from the ruins of the fire at Mauvila, and had kept, and a jack-staff he had made with a carpenter's rule. With these he now proposed to direct the voyage; and referring to his chart he showed that the coast ran east and west to the Rio de las Palmas, and from there north and south to Mexico, so that by sailing along in sight of land they would lose much time, and would be in greater danger of being overtaken by winter before they could get to their haven; whereas by crossing directly, they might be there in ten or twelve days.

Most of the men were against this; they said that, although following the coast was longer, it was safer, because their boats were not strong, and were without decks, and that a very small storm would be sufficient to wreck them. If they should be hindered by contrary weather on the open sea, they said, or delayed by calms, as they could carry but a scant supply of water in their casks, they would run great risk of perishing from thirst. And even, they

said, if the boats were strong enough to venture across the sea, having neither pilot nor pilot's chart, it was not good judgment to attempt to do so. Although Juan d'Añasco with his talk moved the captain-general and some others to sustain his opinion, the greatest number being in favour of going along the coast, that counsel prevailed.

While they were raising anchor to depart, Moscoso's cable of twisted rags parted; the best divers in the crews dived until three o'clock for the anchor, but they could not find it, to the great disappointment and dismay of Moscoso and all in his galley. A grindstone was found, however, and some bridles which the cavaliers still had left from their horses, and with these a weight was made which would serve for an anchor. And then they all put out to sea. It was the eighteenth day of July, 1543, the wind fair and weather prosperous.

Seeing Moscoso's boat, as usual, in the lead, steer out two or three leagues from the shore, the captains in the other boats sailed up and overtook him, demanding why he put off so far from shore. They told him that, if he intended to leave the coast, he should say so, but not to do it without the consent of all, and, if he did, that they would not follow him, but each man would do what seemed best for himself. Moscoso answered that he only bore off from land to sail the better and safer by night, and that the next day he would return in sight of the coast again. So they sailed along in a reasonably good wind that day, the night following, and the next

day, until the hour for the evening prayer. They were still in fresh water, which surprised them very much, for they were very far from land; but, as they explained it to one another, the current of the river was so strong, and the slope of the bottom so gentle, that there was no reason why the fresh water should not extend far out into the sea.

That night, when they came in to land for the night, discouraged, perhaps, by the slow progress they had made, they allowed Juan d'Añasco to win them over to his way of thinking, and all consented on the morrow to commit themselves and their boats to the high sea, for the great advantage of shortening the voyage. They sailed thus two days, but when they wanted to come in to land for water, they could not, for the wind was off shore. So they kept out two days more; then their water began to fail, and temper and murmurs arose against Juan d'Añasco and his nautical makeshifts and pretensions. They said he was always talking too much, and pretending to know. Did he not say he could lead them by land to Mexico? And was he not the cause of that useless march, and the loss of so many brave men? He was not a seaman, and had never been to sea in his life until he had come upon that expedition; yet here he was pretending to pilot them. Even the men in his own boat mocked at him and his instruments. And they grumbled, too, against Moscoso for following him, and all swore that if they ever got ashore again, they would never go from it, and the captain-general

could go where he pleased. Juan d'Añasco, hearing all this, grew so angry that he threw his chart and jack-staff overboard. But they were not lost; the men in the boat coming after prudently picked them up, for they were tied together and floated on the water. The wind changing a little, at the end of five days, by dint of hard rowing, they got back in sight of land, their supply of water completely exhausted. But that very evening the wind rose, and, the anchors being too weak to hold, the boats would have been driven ashore if Moscoso had not commanded the men to jump into the water on the shore side, and, as the waves receded, to push the boats out again. So they worked until the wind eased in the morning, when they made their way into a bay and went ashore, and, by digging in the sand, secured fresh water enough to fill their casks.

Putting out, they sailed two days, until, the south wind again blowing hard, they ran into a small river and waited there four days for the sea to calm. Venturing forth once more, they sailed a day; but, towards evening, the wind grew so strong that it drove them in to shore, and they were sorry enough that they had left the good harbour of the day before; for, as the night came on, the wind waxed into a tempest, and all night the five boats fought for their lives in the wild roadstead. Their anchors refusing to hold, with seven or eight men to an oar, they kept pulling to seaward; as the waves broke over the boats, some would jump out and push them

from shore as fast and as hard as they could; then, jumping in again while the next breakers were coming, they would all set to bailing the water out. And in the thick of the storm, and of their fears of being wrecked, they endured from midnight on an intolerable torment of swarms of mosquitoes which settled all over them, stinging so venomously that their faces swelled to an enormous size.

With dawn the wind slacked and the sea calmed, but not the mosquitoes, for the sails were black with them, and the men at the oars could not row unless their comrades kept them off; and, distressed as they were, they were forced to laugh at one another's grotesque masks of faces. Turning into a little bay, the mouth of a small creek, they found the bank lined with a black scum cast up by the sea, which proved to be the resin copal, used by the sailors in the West Indies and South America to pitch their ships with; so the Spaniards stopped here long enough to pitch their boats with it.

After two days' rest, they put out to sea again, sailed two days, and stopped and rested two days. The wind was against them, but, in their craving to shorten their voyage, they put out to sea with their oars, and for ten days pushed along with sail and oar, making very little headway, however, for all their labour. The next stop was under the lee of a small island; and while they were there, there fell out such another storm that they gave thanks to God for being in shelter. They were weather-bound here fourteen days, during which they caught quantities

of fish ; and, too, a fish came near catching one of them. A man who had gone to sleep with the end of his line tied to his arm awoke just as he was being drawn out into the water up to his neck. He remembered his knife just in time to cut the line and save himself.

When fair weather at last came, before taking to their boats, they marched in a solemn procession along the strand, beseeching God to bring them in safety to a land where, as they contritely said, they could repent of their sins and serve Him better than before. After this they sailed a period of six days, — and so they made their way, day after day, league after league, how many leagues they never knew, keeping count only of the days ; always either beating out to sea to keep off shore, or beating in to shore to keep from being driven out to sea ; using their oars whenever they could ; coming in to land for water and harbourage every two or three days. If the place were good, they stopped to fish, some dragging the net and casting the line, while others waded along the strand for shell-fish ; for, since they had used up their grease in pitching their boats, they had nothing to eat but dry corn. As they were more often in the water than out of it, they had long since discarded all clothing save their short skin-breeches.

Fifty-three days passed, and it seemed to them they must be nearing the River of Palms, that it could not be far away ; and with each dawn rose hope of coming in sight of it, and with each sun-

set the hope went down. And each day some one with a new pretension to cosmography or seafaring knowledge would hazard prophecies and convictions about it. But, in truth, those that knew most never knew for a certainty either what sea they were in, or what land they were coasting. The only thing they did know was that if they kept on sailing in the direction they were now following, and if the sea did not swallow them, they would reach Mexico; and this one certainty it was that enabled them to support the voyage. And whenever the wind subsided, discussion would as surely arise as to the course, on all the boats, Juan d'Añasco again obstinately insisting that it were well to bear more to seaward; for he remembered distinctly that the coast from Rio de las Palmas ran north and south. Some believed that they had overshot the river at night, and others said that it was not good to sail at night, lest they should overshoot the river; others maintained that it was not well to lose time by not sailing at night while the weather was favourable, for they were not near enough to the place yet to pass it by in the night. It was finally agreed as a compromise to take in half the sails when they sailed at night.

On the fifty-third day, while they were sailing along, looking ahead at their hopes, in the blank sky and water of their horizon, for there was nothing else to see, a north wind sprang up,—one of those north winds that blew more furiously on that coast, the Spaniards said, than in any other region

they had ever known. Five of the vessels, among them the captain-general's, were sailing together. Seeing the storm coming, they began to draw in to shore, using the oars and looking for some inlet in which to find shelter. The other two boats, sailing carelessly far from shore, were caught by the wind and before they knew it driven out to sea. This was what every man in the fleet had most dreaded, and justly. For the tempest waxed to frightful violence all that night; as the men said, it clutched them by the throat, and they fought back with the Credo between their teeth, labouring and struggling with wind and wave. The mainmast of one of the boats went down in the blast, and the crew gave themselves up for lost; but they righted the mast, and desperately battled on through the darkness and the vortex of yawning waves grinning like toothed mouths around them.

When daylight came, they thought the fury of the storm would abate, but it grew still wilder, fiercer, and more relentless, and they fought on all the day as they had all the night. Through flashes of cleared sky, they could see afar, as in a vision, the five other galleys riding at ease in some haven or heaven, safe from the hell they were in, and they strained anew to make that harbour themselves. But the clouds would close over them again, shutting them in with the savage elements, and many times the boat went under the waves, they thought for good and all. At last they gave up, and trying no more either for themselves, companions, harbour,

or home, they turned their prows to the wind and let themselves go with it. They had then been fighting twenty-six hours without a wink of sleep, a moment's rest, a mouthful of food, half-way up their legs in water, now pulling at the sails, now bailing out the water which the waves poured over them.

Sunset came, and still no prospect or promise of betterment; the sea was even more hideous, more ominous than before. Suddenly, along the line of sullen light on the right hand, the wind, as the chronicler says, seemed to be picking up hills of white sand, blowing them from one place to another with incredible ease and speed; on the left a pitch-black line appeared. Then in one of the boats the high, shrill voice of a lad called out: "Señores, I know this coast! Twice I sailed along it when I was serving as cabin boy on a ship; but I do not know the land nor what country it belongs to. The black line on the left is a rocky and dangerous coast; it runs a long way until it reaches Vera Cruz. In the whole length of it there is neither port nor harbour, only sheer sides and rocks with points like knife-blades, where, if we strike, we shall be ground to pieces between them and the waves. The white coast on the other side is clean and easy; and so before night comes, while we still have light, we had better try to make it; for if the wind drives us off it, and on that black line, there is no hope for us to escape alive."

The captain of the brigantine ordered warning

to be shouted to the other boat, which was under command of Juan Gaytan, so that he also might avoid the peril. The waves ran so high that the boats most of the time were not visible to each other; but whenever they arose in sight on the crest of a wave, shouts were sent across to head for the white coast and beach the boats. But Juan Gaytan objected to destroying his boat, which he said was worth money. At this, as one man, all his crew jumped up to answer him: "How much more do you own in this boat than any one of us? In God's truth! you own less than we, or nothing in comparison, for in your official dignity as treasurer for the king you refused to cut the wood for it, or saw the planks, or get charcoal, or work at the forge to make the nails, and help to build it, or even to calk it, or do anything else of any use for it, while we did all this work. And so what do you lose in losing this boat? Perhaps you think it would be better to lose the fifty men in it?" Some of them sprang to the sails, a Portuguese took the tiller, and the rest seized their swords and shields and stood ready. Tacking first on one quarter, then on the other, and daring the tempest still at its height, for their last chance for life, they headed the boat for the white coast, and just as the sun went down under the water they drove hard upon it. A huge breaker carried the boat further on the beach; the next turned it over. Jumping out, the crew righted it and held it, while the cargo was pitched over and caught and carried up on dry land. In no time the

boat was emptied and by the help of the waves was pushed upon the beach and propped there, so that it could be easily launched again if necessary; the other crew, doing exactly the same thing to their boat, beached it about two crossbow-shots away.

The men of both boats came together to determine what was now to be done. All agreed that their first duty was to find the captain-general and the boats they had left behind and seen far away, lying at anchor, and give him a report of what had happened. But considering the immense toil of all in the tempest for the past twenty-six hours, no one dared name the soldier for the mission and the manifest peril. None knew how far the tempest had carried them beyond the other boats, nor what the coast was, nor what country they were in; and so each man stood thinking until the silence was broken by Gonzalo Quadrado Xaramillo, who, stepping out in front of his comrades, said: "I offer myself for this service. I promise that I shall walk all this night, and not stop until daylight bring me to the captain-general, or I will die in the attempt. If there is any one who will come with me, let him come; if not, I shall go alone." Another soldier came forward, and putting himself by the side of Xaramillo, "To life or death," he said, "I will go with you!" And as they were, without a moment's delay, each one with only his sword and shield and a handful of corn for food, they started off. It was one o'clock at night.

CHAPTER XXVI

MEXICO

THE Spaniards on the beach posted sentinels and went to sleep in their boat. At daylight they all came together in council again, and three parties of twenty men were selected to explore the country in different directions: one along the coast towards the south, one towards the north, and one under Gonzalo Silvestre inland. The men following the coast returned, after walking about a league, bringing, each party, some fragments of gilded and painted porcelain, such as is made in Spain. They had not looked for anything else, as this was best evidence that they were in a Spanish country; but Gonzalo Silvestre and his men, when they returned, brought with them two baskets of fruit and corn, a turkey, two fowls, some conserves, and an Indian. Their comrades were making great rejoicings over the fragments of porcelain. But when they saw the turkey, the fowls, the fruit, and the rest of the spoil of Silvestre, and understood that it had come from a hut, they could not contain themselves, but danced and laughed like madmen. The surgeon, who was in the crew and had been

in Mexico and knew something of the Mexican language, spoke to the Indian. "What are these?" he said, holding up a pair of scissors. The Indian answered in Spanish, "Tijeras."

Then the Spaniards knew that they were in Mexico, and they fell upon Gonzalo Silvestre, kissing and hugging him, and finally raising him up in their arms, and putting him on their shoulders, they carried him round in triumph, shouting and hurraing for him, praising and acclaiming him, as if he had presented to each one of them the land and its lordship. The outburst over, returning to the Indian with more calm and reason, they asked him the name of the country, and of the river or body of water in which the captain-general and the five galleys had found refuge. "This land," said the Indian, "belongs to the city of Panuco, and the river is the river of Panuco, which flows into the sea twelve leagues from here. I am a slave of a citizen of Panuco." He added that about two leagues away was an Indian lord or master of slaves, who knew how to read and write, having been taught by the priests, and he offered to go and bring him to them. He went and returned with the Indian lord, who was followed by slaves loaded with fowls, corn, fruit, and bread; he brought also paper and pen and ink, with which the Spaniards at once wrote a letter to their captain-general and sent it by one of the Indian slaves.

Xaramillo and his comrade walked all night without stopping, and at daylight reached the mouth of

the river Panuco, and shortly afterwards beheld the galleys. The captain-general and all his officers and men, who were in great distress over the loss of the other two galleys, could not believe their own joy when they saw the two Spaniards coming. After hearing Xaramillo's story, they related theirs. Pedro Calderon had been sailing ahead. A quarter of a league before he came to the river, he saw muddy water in the Gulf, and knew it to be the fresh water of a river, and steering into it, he soon saw the river pouring over its sand bar into the Gulf. He was in doubt whether to sail in or not, but was driven in by the storm for shelter. Advancing up the stream he saw, as in a dream, on the bank men and women dressed like Spaniards. Asking them what country it was, they answered Panuco. The gladness of the Spaniards at that moment, says the chronicler, was as if they had been born again; going ashore, they kissed the ground, and with hand and eyes lifted to heaven, they gave thanks to God. The other boats, following Calderon, entered the river also, and lay at anchor there during the storm.

When the Indian messenger arrived with the letter, Moscoso sent back the answer, that, as soon as the two crews were rested, all were to journey up the river to the city of Panuco and arrange there what further they were to do. Eight days later all came together in Panuco; barefooted, half naked, in their ragged skin garments, disfigured, black as negroes, thin, parched, weak, they looked more like the wild beasts, whose skins they wore, than human

beings; the people of Panuco pitied them with tears, for they knew that there were many high-born cavaliers among them. At last they were in the land of Christians; and the first thought of the conquerors was to return public thanks to God. This they did at once, walking to church in procession. The chief magistrate took the captain-general into his own house, and quartered the rest of the men among the townspeople, who treated them with all generosity and courtesy.

A messenger was sent with the news to the viceroy of Mexico. He and the citizens of Mexico could hardly credit it, for it had been so long since any news had been received from De Soto's expedition that it seemed impossible that any part of it could have survived. The viceroy returned a command that the men should be treated with all hospitality and distinction, and, when rested, sent on to the city of Mexico; everything they wanted, lodgings and food, was to be furnished them free along the way, and Indians given them to carry their luggage.

For ten or twelve days the Floridians, as they were called, rested in Panuco. And now a strange change came over their minds. Observing attentively the city they were in, they saw that the life there was a hard and poor one; for there were there neither mines of gold nor silver, nor any forms of wealth, save a few horses bred for sale in other parts of the country, and a few groves of mulberry trees cultivated for silkworms; and the

only food, what could be produced from the ground. Most of the people, even the richest, wore garments of cotton, and the richest were those who, besides horses, raised a few head of cattle for sale. All the fruit trees were brought from Spain, the houses were poor and small and thatched with straw, and, according to the saying, the future was all the furniture in them. In short, the Florida conquerors saw that the land they were in could not be compared with the one they had left, in any manner or way. For in Florida the natives, instead of cotton coverings, wore mantles of the finest skins and furs; there was no need there to plant and cultivate mulberry trees, for they grew naturally and in the greatest quantities, as did nut and fruit trees of all kinds, and grape-vines. And so from one thing to another, memory brought back to them all that they had seen in Florida,—the fine provinces, the rich soil, the bountiful harvests, the beautiful meadows, the spacious grazing lands, the grand forests, the great rivers, and, finally, the vast accumulation of pearls there.

What a contrast with the wretched poverty they saw around them! and with great sorrow of heart and pity for themselves, they confessed their sad thoughts to one another. “Could we not have lived in Florida,” they said, “as these Spaniards live in Panuco? Were not the lands there better than these? If we had been willing to remain and settle there, should we not have been far better off than our hosts here? Have they, perchance,

any more mines of silver and gold than we found there, or any of the treasure of pearls we despised there? Is it well that we should be receiving hospitality and charity from others poorer than ourselves, when we ourselves might have shown hospitality and entertainment to the whole of Spain? that we, who might have been lords of vassals, are come to be beggars? Would it not have been better to have died there than to live here?" And the more they thought and talked about it, the more disgusted they became, until they grew so excited and angry over the riches they might have had, that they went to quarrelling with one another, laying upon one another the blame of abandoning the land. And so fierce and bitter grew their feelings, that they took to fighting and using their swords upon one another as freely as they had once used them upon the Indians. Their greatest hatred was turned against the royal officers and nobles and cavaliers from Seville, for it was they who, after the death of Hernando de Soto, had most strenuously insisted upon abandoning Florida, instead of carrying out the Adelantado's plans, — the building of forts and sending for reënforcements; and they had proved for themselves that ships and armadas might easily have ascended the Great River.

The quarrels grew at last so fierce, and the cutting and slashing so reckless, that none of the captains and officers dared go out of their lodgings; and the soldiers then waxed so furious with one another that the whole of Panuco could not keep peace among

them. The mayor, seeing the discord increasing day by day, sent a report of it to the viceroy. He ordered the men to be sent at once to the city of Mexico, in detachments of ten and twelve, the detachments to be formed only of men of one way of thinking, so that they might not kill one another on the road; and so they set out. Those who had a coat of mail were able to exchange it for a horse, but the most travelled on foot. All along the road, as they passed through the villages, the Indians received and served them well.

The fame of the Floridians preceding them, when they arrived at the city of Mexico, the richest and noblest of its citizens and cavaliers were assembled to greet them and take them to their houses, where they clothed and fed them with the best to be had. The viceroy's hotel was free to as many as were willing to go there, and he commanded apparel to be given them; and those who were of quality sat at his own table. The viceroy moreover proclaimed that throughout the city of Mexico he alone was to judge these Spaniards, as some inferior magistrate had put some of them in jail for wounding one another in their disputes. For their disputes had broken out with even greater heat and bitterness in Mexico than in Panuco, seeing, as they did here, what value the rich citizens put upon the few articles they had brought back with them, the pearls and particularly the skins, which, soiled and covered with grease and pitch though they were, were bought as soon as shown. And they made the gallantest hose

and doublets imaginable; the richest cavaliers buying them at the highest prices, and having them cleaned and made into garments which they wore with greatest effect on the public square of Mexico. He who could not procure a whole garment of the furs was mightily content to have a collar of them, and wore it as a costly thing, and one of great rarity. All of this served only to drive the Florida conquerors to the greater grief, rage, and desperation.

And now the ringing words of Hernando de Soto in Quiguate came back to them: "Why do you wish to go to Mexico? To show the smallness and vileness of your souls? That, having it in your power to become the lords of this great kingdom containing so many beautiful provinces, you would go and abide in the house of strangers and eat at the table of charity, when you could have had your own lands, and your own table to share with others?" The viceroy, seeing that the men were in truth beside themselves and had lost their reason, appeased them with all possible blandishments and suavity; and to console them, he gave them his word and promise that he would himself, some day, undertake the same conquest, if they would go with him, taking at once into his pay as many as chose to serve him.

Juan d' Añasco, Juan Gaytan, Balthazar de Gallegos, and Pedro Calderon returned to Spain, preferring, they said, to live there poor to growing rich in the New World. Some of the soldiers joined religious orders, following the example of the brave

Gonzalo Quadrado Xaramillo, who entered the order of St. Francis. Luis de Moscoso remained in Mexico, marrying a noted and rich lady of that city. Most of the men, however, rebuilding their demolished hopes, went to Peru, and taking part in the war among the conquerors there, gained, some of them, fame and fortune.

And now there is nothing more to tell except how Gomez Arias and Diego de Maldonado fulfilled the orders they had received from De Soto. After reporting to Doña Isabella de Bobadilla, and spreading the news of the discovery and conquest throughout the islands of the Indies, they bought three vessels, and loaded them with the food, arms, ammunition, and cattle, the calves, mares, horses, seeds, eggs, wheat, barley, and vegetables that were needed for the new settlement. And they could have loaded as many ships more, because the inhabitants of Cuba and San Domingo and Jamaica, excited by the accounts of Florida, were enthusiastically generous.

Sailing into the port of Achuse and not finding the Adelantado there, the captains sailed out again, and going the one to the east and the other to the west, coasted the length of the land until winter set in, and forced them to return to Havana. The following summer they set sail again, and returned to Achuse, and again, not finding the army there, they coasted the continent from Nombre de Dios in Mexico to Newfoundland, in search of sight or sound or rumour of it, and in vain. As soon as

the next summer permitted, the two captains made still another effort, spending seven months searching for the Adelantado, but were driven as before, by winter, back to Havana.

In the summer of 1543, although three years had now elapsed since any one had heard of the expedition, they sailed again to Florida, determined to persist in their search until they had definite knowledge of its fate; for they could not believe that the land had consumed the Adelantado and all of his men without any being able to make their way out in some direction. On this cruise, arriving at Vera Cruz about the middle of October, the captains learned that three hundred of the Spaniards had escaped into Mexico, but that the Adelantado was dead in the land of Florida. They returned to Havana and communicated this to Doña Isabella.

And Doña Isabella—what of her? When to the three years of sleepless anxiety and grief were added the death of her husband, the failure of the expedition and the loss of their fortunes, and the ruin of their estate and house, the heart of Doña Isabella, brave though it was and strong, broke under its weight of sorrow. She died shortly afterwards.

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