CHAPTER VII

DON RODRIGO DE BASTIDAS

Discoverer of the Isthmus of Darien

"Conquistador y Pacyficador de Sancta Marta"

"Spain's Best and Noblest Conquistador"

"Aqui hace su manida
Don Rodrigo de Bastidas,
Que con crüeles heridas
Acabó la dulce vida.

"Tuvo pujanza y valor,
De riquezas copia harta,
Y ansi fué gobernador
Primero de Santa Marta."

Juan de Castellanos.

THE first European to reach the Isthmus of Panama was Rodrigo de Bastidas, who, in 1501, a year before the visit of Columbus, discovered the eastern half of the Isthmus, from the Gulf of Darien as far west as Bastimentos and Punta Manzanilla.

When the letters of Columbus reached Spain, containing an account of his third voyage, of 1498, with specimens of gold and drugs from Paria, and numerous samples of pearls from what he called the Pearl Coast, navigators and adventurers were excited to renewed interest in the lands of the Western ocean. It was believed that, at last, Columbus had arrived at the borderland of the rich East, if not close to the terrestrial paradise, as he himself thought. The first to follow the Admiral to Paria was Alonso de Ojeda, the hot-headed soldier of fortune who had made the dashing capture of Cacique Caonabó. Ojeda had returned from Hispaniola to Spain, and was loitering about the Court when the glowing reports of Columbus arrived. Bishop Fonseca showed

the letters and charts of the Admiral to Ojeda, and the latter, with his knowledge of the Indies, immediately perceived that here was an opportunity not only to achieve greater distinction, but also to garner the first fruits of this new discovery.

Under the royal license of April 10, 1495, issued when Columbus was in great disfavor, any subject of Spain might make a voyage on his own account; provided he carried inspectors appointed by the Crown, which should receive a share of the profits. He was forbidden to touch at any land belonging to Portugal, nor lands discovered by Columbus prior to 1495. The share of the Crown varied from a tenth to one-third. The ships usually carried a treasurer and a notary. Later sovereigns modified this license so as to regulate discovery, trade, and settlement in Spanish territory. At least two ships should undertake the voyage; they should carry two pilots, and two priests; and the articles allowed for trading were specified. Under date of September 3rd, 1501, *Los Reyes,* as the King and Queen were designated in documents, decreed that anyone sailing without the royal license should suffer a forfeiture of ship and goods.

Always venomous towards the Admiral, Fonseca was only too glad to further the scheme of his favorite, and with his own name signed the license permitting Ojeda to follow Columbus to Paria and the Coast of Pearls. With the aid of wealthy speculators, Ojeda fitted out four ships, and sailed from Port St. Mary, opposite Seville, on the 20th of May, 1499. Twenty-four days after leaving the Canaries he reached the shore of South America, about two hundred leagues east and south of the mouth of the Orinoco, probably the coast of Surinam. Ojeda then followed the land to the northwest, sailing through the Gulf of Paria in the wake of Columbus. He continued westward until beyond the Gulf of Maracaibo, and at Cabo de la Vela (Cape Vela) turned away from the mainland and put in at Hispaniola. It is sometimes stated that Ojeda, on this voyage, sailed along the shores of Venezuela and Colombia as far west as Cabo Tiburon, in Darien, the western limit of the Gulf of Urabá. Under this surmise, Ojeda is given credit for being the first to view the Isthmus, in 1499; but the claim is not well founded, and the honor should be accorded to Bastidas.

The example of Ojeda roused the emulation of others, and Pedro Alonso Niño, a pilot of Moguer who had sailed with Columbus, obtained a similar commission from Fonseca. Taking with him Cristoval Guerra, whose brother furnished the

money, they departed from Spain about the first of June, 1499, but a few days later than Ojeda. "They sailed from the little port of Palos," says Irving, "the original cradle of American discovery, whose brave and skillful mariners long continued foremost in all enterprises to the New World." Their little caravel of fifty tons reached Paria soon after the arrival of Ojeda, and likewise sailed westward, trading for pearls and *guanin* at Margarita, Cumaná, and Cauchieto. Niño returned safely to Spain in April, 1500, nearly two months ahead of Ojeda, "so laden with pearls that they were in maner with every mariner as common as chaffe." For being successful, after risking life and fortune, Niño was accused of not accounting for all his treasure, and thrown into prison, but freed later.

In June, Ojeda came sailing into Cadiz, his ships crowded with Indian slaves; but when the expenses of his large outfit were paid, but five hundred ducats remained to be divided between fifty-five adventurers.

In that same year of 1499, a second expedition started from Palos (the third to follow Columbus to South America), under command of Vicente Yañez Pinzon. In December, 1499, Pinzon departed from Palos with four caravels; and on the 20th of January, 1500, made the coast of Brazil at a point now called Cape St. Augustine. He landed and took possession for Castile with the usual formalities.

Pinzon sailed to the north, and found himself in fresh water, with which he replenished his casks. Standing in to the land, he came to a number of verdant islands, peopled by friendly Indians, who fearlessly came off to the ships. These islands were situated in the mouth of the great river of Marañon, later called the Orellana, and now the Amazon. Pinzon was also the first to cross the Equator on the American side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Having regained sight of the pole star, he continued his course to the northwest, passing the mouths of the Orinoco, and entered the Gulf of Paria, where he landed and cut Brazilwood. The fleet left the Gulf by the Boca del Drago, and headed for Hispaniola, where they arrived about the 23d of June. Later, while among the Bahamas, Pinzon lost two of his vessels and many of his men; and when he got back to Palos it was to face weeping widows and angry creditors.

Closely following Pinzon was his fellow-townsman, Diego de Lepe, who, early in 1500, sailed from Palos in two vessels for the new Terra Firma to the southwest. He passed Cape St. Augustine, the limit of Pinzon's voyage, and proceeded on

down the shores of South America, going farther south than any other mariner reached for upwards of ten years afterwards.

The next voyager, in chronological order, to sail from Spain for the West Indies was Rodrigo de Bastidas (or Bastides), a wealthy notary of Triana, the maritime suburb of Seville. But too little is known of this man who has won the almost unique distinction of acting like a human being in his dealings with the natives of America, and exhibiting some of the tenets of that religion under whose banner the White Man conquered the Red Man. Bastidas was a gentleman, and a man of learning and honesty; an entirely different type from the impecunious courtier, the swashbuckler, and the adventurer. He was a man of standing in his community, and his character was superior to the weaknesses of common men, who found in the New World such free vent for their evil inclinations.

Bastidas encountered no difficulty in obtaining a royal license, in which he agreed to pay to the Crown a fourth of the profits of his voyage. A copy of this license is still in existence among the Archives of the Indies. He fitted out two vessels, and took with him that able pilot, Juan de la Cosa, who had sailed with Columbus, and had just returned from his voyage with Ojeda to Paria and the Pearl Coast. The expedition set out from Cadiz in October, 1500, and took on wood, water, fresh meat, and cheese at Gomera. They reached the coast of what is now Venezuela, and steered west in the route taken by Ojeda and Cosa in 1499. From Cabo de la Vela, the farthermost point reached by Ojeda, Bastidas continued on to the west, trading with the Indians for pearls and gold. He entered and named many of the ports. West of Cape Vela he came to Rio Hacha, Santa Marta, and the Rio Grande de Magdalena, which he discovered in March, on the day of the woman's conversion. Narrowly escaping shipwreck, he continued westward. At one place the Indians wore crowns, so Bastidas named the port Coronados. He sailed past the harbor of Cartagena and came to the river of Cenú.

Rounding Punta Caribana, the ships turned to the south in the Gulf of Darien; and we can imagine Cosa thinking that here was the strait leading to the Indian Ocean. He explored the gulf, and found the southern end to receive the fresh water of the Atrato river, so great in volume that, when the tide was low, the water in the gulf was sweet; so he called it Golfo Dulce. He also noted the *farallones,* or rocky islets near the Darien shore.

Sailing out of the gulf, Bastidas rounded Cabo Tiburon, and,

in 1501, explored the north coast of the Isthmus as far west as Bastimentos and Punta Manzanillo. West of Cape Tiburon, he came to Caledonia Bay, Punta Mosquito, the islands of the Mulatas, Point San Blas, Nombre de Dios, and possibly to Puerto Bello. When Columbus reached the latter place, in 1502, he began to hear of the previous visit by white men to the eastward.

Bastidas was having great success collecting pearls and *guanin* and entrapping natives, when he found his vessels leaking so badly from the borings of the *broma,* or teredo, that he was compelled to terminate his traffic and exploration. About the region of Point Manzanillo he turned from the Isthmus and steered for Spain. The next land reached was Jamaica, where the ships were supplied with wood and water. After leaving here, Bastidas found so much water coming in through the worm holes that he stopped at an islet, called Contramaestre, one league off Hispaniola, and made repairs. He sailed again, but encountered a gale, and was glad to put back to the little island for shelter. Starting out a second time, the worm-eaten vessels filled so rapidly that La Cosa ran into the port of Jaraguá, where the two ships sank.

Most of the poor Indians, who were chained or beneath the deck, were drowned; and the Brazil-wood, and some gold and pearls were also lost, amounting in value to about 5,000,000 maravedis. Bastidas landed the most precious and portable articles of his cargoes; but later destroyed such of his arms and ammunition as he could not carry, lest they should fall into the hands of the natives. Placing what he had saved upon the backs of the surviving slaves, he set out for San Domingo, distant some seventy leagues to the eastward. In order the better to live off the country, Bastidas divided his men into three bands, two of them headed by La Cosa and himself, and traveled by separate routes. Each party carried a pack of trinkets, which they traded with the natives for provisions while on the way.

The pig-headed Bobadilla, who had superseded Columbus as Governor of Hispaniola, heard of these parties marching through the country; so when Bastidas arrived at the city of San Domingo he was seized and imprisoned for carrying on illicit trade with the Indians. Bobadilla claimed that the commission given to Bastidas permitted him to trade only in lands discovered by himself; while the notary maintained, very truthfully, that his commerce on Hispaniola consisted simply in paying for guides and supplies.

As Bobadilla was just about to return to Spain, Bastidas was ordered thither for trial. The ship in which he sailed, in July, 1502, was one of the few which lived through the hurricane predicted by Columbus. Bastidas easily cleared himself before the sovereigns, and, notwithstanding his losses, paid a handsome royalty into the treasury. Three chests full of gold and pearls, which he brought back, were ordered to be displayed in the towns through which he passed, in order that others might be induced to venture in the Indies, gather in the gold, and pay the King his fifth.

Being successful, Rodrigo de Bastidas and Juan de la Cosa were each awarded an annual pension of fifty thousand maravedis; which, like most all the rewards granted by the King, was to come from the future revenues of the new lands they had found. Cosa, in addition, was made *alguacil mayor* of Urabá.

Bastidas was so well pleased with the Indies that he took his wife and children to Santo Domingo, where he became rich in cattle, at one time possessing 8000 head, and that when a cow in Española was worth 50 *pesos de oro*. In 1504, the notary, in two ships, again sailed to Tierra Firme, carrying off six hundred natives from the mainland and from the island of Codego, to be sold as slaves in Española. The Emperor Charles, in 1520, gave Bastidas the pacification of the island of Trinidad, with the title of *Adelantado*. This grant was opposed by Diego Colon, on the ground that Trinidad was discovered by his father, and hence within his jurisdiction. Thereupon Bastidas waived his claim to that island, and the following year, 1521, the King gave him a license to settle and exploit a tract of land extending from Cabo de la Vela westward to the Rio Grande de la Magdalena.

The expedition was delayed, and it was not until 1524, or 1525, that Bastidas sailed from the city of Santo Domingo with four caravels and a ship which he bought of Xeronimo Rodriguez. He carried a great quantity of supplies, including lime and bricks, such as his long experience in the New World indicated to be useful by an infant colony. The force of Bastidas consisted of four hundred and fifty persons, many of them married. The Governor's staff included Pedro de Villafuerte, *Teniente General;* Rodrigo Alvarez Palomino, *Maestre de Campo;* and Juan de Ledesma, as *Contador*. Among the captains were Goncalo de Vides, Antonio Ponce Carrion, Carranca, and Hernan Vaez Portugues.

On the 29th of July, 1524, *"dia de Santa Marta,"* Bastidas

sailed into a port within the limits of his grant. Here he landed (*"saltó en tierra"*), and a few days thereafter started to build a town, which he named Santa Marta. One of the first acts of the Governor was to make peace with the chiefs of the Gayras, Tagangas, and Dorsinos, tribes of Indians surrounding his settlement.

Soon after founding the city, the Governor made a friendly reconnoisance of the adjoining territory, and marched into the interior with peace and good-will towards the natives. Four leagues from Santa Marta a band of Indians, called the Bondas, received the newcomers in a warlike manner, but were soon defeated by the superior arms of the white men, who captured their gold.

Eighteen or twenty leagues inwards, Bastidas came upon a very large Indian town, called Tarbo, the most attractive feature of which was a large *bohio* containing a smelter for gold (*"Casa de fundycion doro"*). The sight of gold always maddened the Spanish adventurers, though at the time they might be actually starving for the want of food. The ruffians became angry that they were not allowed to rob the place, and murmured against their leader, declaring that he cared more for the Indians than he did for them. As it was, Cazique Taybo thought it politic to present Bastidas with 600 pesos worth of gold. Instead of receiving their share of the spoils, his followers learned that the gold collected on this trip would be applied to defraying the expenses of the colonization.

The Governor had honored Pedro de Villafuerte by making him his lieutenant, and intended that he should succeed to the rulership of the colony. Nevertheless, ambition entered into Villafuerte, and he thought that if Bastidas were put out of the way, he would at once become Governor. Three or four days after returning from the rich Indian population to Santa Marta, Villafuerte took advantage of the discontent among the soldiers and plotted a conspiracy against the Governor with Montesinos de Lebrija, Montalvo de Guadalajara, Pedro de Porras, Xoan de Merlo, Samaniego, Serna, Bazantes, and other Spaniards to the number of fifty. Binding themselves by an oath, they bribed the captain of the guard, and two of their number entered the house of the Governor at night and stabbed the sleeping Bastidas five times, leaving him for dead.

As soon as the assassins went out, the Governor called for help, and Palomino hurried to his assistance. The conspirators now returned to finish their bloody work, but the faithful *maestre de campo* defended the door with a broadsword and

of Santa Marta. Lerma soon died, and the Audiencia at Santo Domingo again filled the office by naming Don Alonso Enriquez de Guzman and the Licentiate Infante.

In 1535, the Emperor made Don Pedro Fernandez de Lugo, Adelantado of the Canaries, Governor of Santa Marta, with succession to his son, Don Alonso Luis de Lugo. With a large armada, including a force of eleven hundred persons, Lugo arrived at Santa Marta and continued the conquest and settlement of that province.

On the 22d of December, 1528, Don Rodrigo de Bastidas, legitimate son of the late Governor of Santa Marta, and dean of the holy church at Santo Domingo, presented a petition to the president and judges of the Audience praying that the services of his father be recognized, and that the estate be settled for the benefit of his widow and sons. Among the many witnesses in this hearing there appeared in January, 1529, Gaspar de Espinosa, who had won renown in Panama and was then residing at Santo Domingo.

This famous *Conquistador,* who discovered so many leagues of American coast, is not even mentioned in the bulky encyclopedias of today. If, in accordance with the custom of his time, Bastidas did enslave the Indians, yet he ever treated them humanely, and gave up his life at last to protect them from outrage. Within the old cathedral in the city of Santo Domingo is a chapel called the *capilla del Adelantado Rodrigo de Bastides,* wherein are interred, not far from the alleged *restos* of Columbus, the remains of Bastidas and his family. Thus the ashes of the two discoverers of the Isthmus of Panama rest beneath the same roof in the old capital of the Indies.

Of Bastidas, the eloquent *Quintana* has said: "Bastidas no se hizo célebre ni como descubridor ni como conquistador; pero su memoria debe ser grata á todos los amantes de la justicia y de la humanidad, por haber sido uno de los pocos que trataron á los indios con equidad y mansedumbre, considerando aquel pais mas bien como un objeto de especulaciónes mercantiles con iguales, que como campo de gloria y de conquistas."

The license granted Bastidas to discover new lands and traffic with the natives, is yet preserved in the *Archivo de Indias.* As showing the character of the document, the following summary is presented.

"El Rey é la Reina, El asiento que se tomó por nuestro mandado con vos Rodrigo de Bastidas, vecino de la ciudad de Sevilla, para ir a descobrir por el mar Océano, con dos navios, es lo siguiente:—it goes on to state, First, that we give license to you, the said Rodrigo de Bastidas, that with two vessels of your own, and at your own cost and risk, you may go by the said Ocean Sea to discover, and you may

discover islands and firm land; in the parts of the Indies and in any other parts, provided it be not the islands and firm land already discovered by the Admiral Don Cristóbal Colon, our admiral of the Ocean Sea, or by Cristóbal Guerra; nor those which have been or may be discovered by other person or persons by our order and with our license before you; nor the islands and firm land which belong to the most serene prince, the King of Portugal, our very dear and beloved son; for from them nor from any of them you shall not take anything, save only such things as for your maintenance, and for the provision of your ships and crew you may need. Furthermore, that all the gold, and silver, and copper, and lead, and tin, and quicksilver, and any other metal whatever, and *aljofar,* and pearls, and precious stones and jewels, and slaves and negroes, and mixed breeds, which in these our kingdoms may be held and reputed as slaves; and monsters and serpents, and whatever other animals and fishes and birds, and spices and drugs, and every other thing of whatsoever name or quality or value it may be; deducting therefrom the freight expenses, and cost of vessels, which in said voyage and fleet may be made; of the remainder to us will belong the fourth part of the whole, and the other three-fourths may be freely for you, the said Rodrigo de Bastidas, that you may do therewith as you choose and may be pleased to do, as a thing of your own, free and unincumbered. *Item,* that we will place in each one of the said ships one or two persons, who in our name or by our order shall be witnesses to all which may be obtained and trafficked in said vessels of the aforesaid things; and that they may put the same in writing and keep a book and account thereof, so that no fraud or mistake happen.' After stating further under whose direction the ships should be fitted out, and what should be done on the return of the expedition, the document is dated at Seville, June 5, 1500, and the signatures follow: Yo El Rev. Yo La Reina. Por mandado del Rey é de la Reina, Gaspar De Grizio.'. All this under penalty of the forfeiture of the property and life of the captain of the expedition, Rodrigo de Bastidas. *Archivo de Indias,* printed in *Pacheco* and *Cardenas, Col. Doc., ii.* 362-6.

CHAPTER VIII

TIERRA FIRME

Comprising Nueva Andalucia and Castilla del Oro.

THE GOVERNORS ALONSO DE OJEDA AND DIEGO DE NICUESA,

Rivals in Fame and Rivals in Misfortune

"Do you know the blue of the Carib Sea,
Far out where there's nothing but sky to bound
The gaze to windward, the glance to lee,—
More deep than the bluest spaces be
Betwixt white clouds in heaven's round?
Have you seen the liquid lazuli spread
From edge to edge, so wondrous blue
That your footfall's trust it might almost woo,
Were it smooth and low for one to tread?
So clear and warm, so bright, so dark,
That he who looks on it can but mark
'Tis a different tide from the far-away
Perpetual waters, old and gray,
And can but wonder if Mother Earth
Has given a younger ocean birth."

Edmund C. Stedman.

IN a general way, the entire coast-line to the south and west of Hispaniola was called Tierra Firme, firm land, or mainland, and believed to be a part of the continent of Asia. No passage through it had been found, but all believed that a strait existed, leading to the ocean south of India. After a few years the term Tierra Firme came to be applied more particularly to the Isthmus and the region east of the Gulf of Urabá (Darien). When the politic Ferdinand began to realize the magnitude and wealth of the new lands added to Castile, he did not renew the powerful office of Viceroy of the Indies, which might rival and endanger his own authority, and of which he had defrauded Columbus. He now treated the West Indies (which at that time meant also the mainland) as appendages to the Crown, and exploited them as personal possessions of the Sovereign. He gave licenses to trade at certain parts, and commissions to look for new lands; and the older regions were divided into provinces, over which gov-

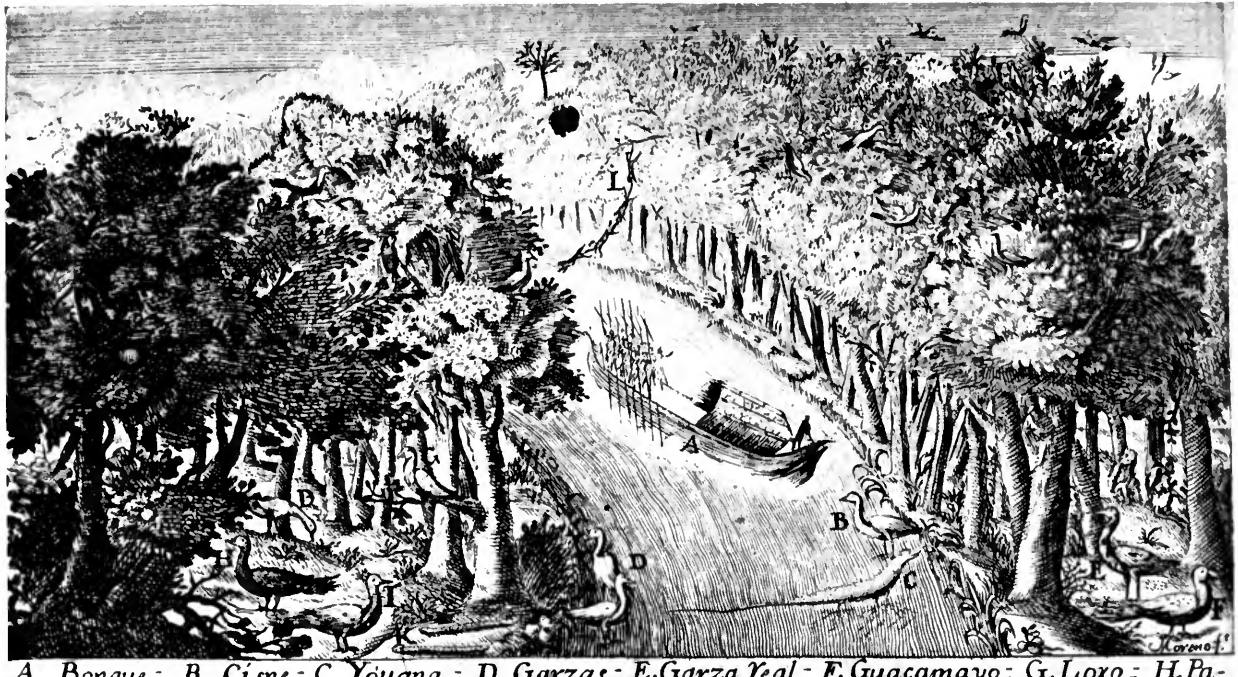
ernors and other officers were appointed for limited periods. Colonies were planted by private enterprise; and when pensions and rewards were granted the money was to come, as in the case of Bastidas, from the future earnings of the colony.

The riches of the Pearl Coast and of Veragua, reported by Columbus, being confirmed by subsequent voyages, Ferdinand resolved to settle and develop Tierra Firme; and looked around for a capable governor. The Admiral having died in 1506, the choice, by right, should have fallen upon his brother Bartolomé—still Adelantado of the Indies—who had proved himself so efficient both as navigator and administrator.

In 1508, Don Diego Colon, eldest son and heir of Columbus, brought suit before the Council of the Indies for restoration of the offices and privileges given in the capitulations between their Highnesses and the Admiral. The case was yet pending, and the wily monarch was loath to grant any more rights to a family that might, in time, become too powerful.

The friends of Alonso de Ojeda urged his appointment to the new governorship. He was without funds, but his friend, the veteran pilot, Juan de la Cosa, offered to fit out the expedition, and even went from Hispaniola to Spain to promote the claim of Ojeda. Alonso de Ojeda, as we have seen, was the first to follow Columbus to South America, in 1499. He took with him Juan de la Cosa, and also Amerigo Vespucci, the Florentine, whose name, by a singular caprice of fortune, has been given to the whole of the New World. The statement that Ojeda was the first to reach the Isthmus of Panama, in 1499, probably arose from the fact that Columbus called Paria and the Pearl Coast, Tierra Firme, and the name extended along the whole northern coast of South America, including the Isthmus, and even up the shores of Central America. There is no reliable evidence that Ojeda's voyage of 1499 extended farther west than Cape Vela.

In January, 1502, Ojeda made a second voyage to Tierra Firme, with authority to colonize Coquibacoa, which he had discovered on his first voyage and named the Gulf of Venezuela (Little Venice), because on its eastern shore was an Indian village, of twenty large bell-shaped houses, built on piles driven into the bottom of the gulf. On his first voyage, Ojeda had met with English adventurers in this region, and King Ferdinand wanted a bold and quarrelsome commander who would hold the country for Spain. Ojeda, with his associates, Juan de Vergara and Garcia de Campos, sailed by Paria and came to Cumaná, where they robbed the natives and carried off such of the women as pleased their fancy. Arriving at the Gulf of



A. Bonque: B. Cisne: C. Youana: D. Garzas: E. Garza Real: F. Guacamayo: G. Loxo: H. Pavamontesa: I. Pausi: K. Culebras de dos Cabezas: L. Monos como pasan el Rio:

From Ulloa, *Relacion Historica*, tom. 1.

ASCENDING THE CHAGRES RIVER.

vice-regal court in the New World, where but a few years before the naked red man roamed in barbarian freedom. Governor Colon was much aggrieved that he was not given the vice-royalty in succession to his father, with dominion over Tierra Firme. He opposed the recruiting of Spaniards and Indians in Hispaniola by Ojeda and Nicuesa; and resented the allotment to them of the island of Jamaica as a place to obtain provisions. Instead of simply protesting to the King, Colon despatched Juan de Esquivel, with seventy men, to take possession of that island, and to hold it subject to his command. Before sailing, Ojeda heard of this movement, and swore that if he ever found Esquivel on Jamaica he would strike off his head.

Among the lawyers at St. Domingo, was the Bachiller Martin Fernandez de Encisco, who had already accumulated two thousand castellanos from his practice; "for it would appear that the spirit of litigation was one of the first fruits of civilized life transplanted to the New World, and flourished surprisingly among the Spanish colonists." Ojeda promised to make him Alcalde Mayor, or chief judge of his province; and the speculative bachelor of law put all his savings in the expedition. They agreed that Ojeda should go ahead to Nueva Andalucia, while the Bachiller would remain in St. Domingo to secure recruits and supplies, and follow his chief in a vessel purchased by himself.

Ojeda was the first of the rival governors to get away. He sailed from St. Domingo on the 10th of November, 1509, with two ships, two brigantines, 300 men, and 12 brood-mares. Among the adventurers who embarked with Ojeda was an illiterate soldier, by name Francisco Pizarro, who became famous as the conqueror of Peru. Another native of Estremadura, Hernando Cortés, was also in St. Domingo at this time, and intended to accompany Nicuesa; but was forced to remain in Hispaniola by reason of an abscess in the thigh of the right leg. In 1511, Cortés went with Diego Velasquez to Cuba; from whence, in 1519, he departed for the conquest of Mexico.

Nicuesa, having a larger expedition, and the rich Veragua in his province, attracted more followers than Ojeda. He selected Lope de Olano, an associate of Roldan in his rebellion against Columbus, to be his captain general. Nicuesa was lavish in his expenditures, and before his departure was besieged by creditors. When stepping in the boat to go aboard his ship, he was arrested for a debt of five hundred ducats and carried before the alcalde. Nicuesa did not have the money and was in a condition of despair; when a public notary, touched by his distress,

refuge in a shack, the roof of which they threw off, lest the enemy should set it on fire. Here they defended themselves until only La Cosa and one other were left alive. Feeling himself dying from the subtle poison in his wounds, the brave La Cosa said to his companion: "Brother, since God hath protected thee from harm, sally forth and fly; and if ever thou shouldst see Alonso de Ojeda, tell him of my fate."

Thus perished Juan de la Cosa, from the effects of those envenomed weapons against which he had ineffectually warned his commander. Aside from his eminence as a navigator, he will be remembered for his honesty, faithfulness, and generous traits of character. La Cosa is one of the few among the Conquistadores who win our affection as well as our admiration. The Spaniard who told the story of his death was the sole survivor of seventy or more men who went with their governor.

As for Ojeda, being small and active, as well as powerful, he was able to protect himself with his buckler from the deadly arrows, and succeeded in cutting his way through the Indians, and escaped in the darkness. When day broke, he concealed himself in the jungle, and that night wandered back towards his ships. After some days, a searching party from the fleet found Ojeda, exhausted and speechless, lying upon some matted mangrove roots by the margin of the sea. His sword was in his hand, and his buckler, still attached to his shoulders, bore the marks of three hundred arrows. They warmed his body by a fire, and gave him wine and food, so that he was soon able to tell his story. As usual, he had received no wound, and he considered his miraculous escape as another proof of the special protection of the Virgin.

While the Spaniards were yet on shore nursing their commander back to life and strength, the ships of Nicuesa entered the harbor. Ojeda was ashamed to be seen in his sad plight, and feared that his rival would call upon him to defend his challenge; so begged his men to leave him alone on the shore, and to tell Nicuesa that he was on an expedition into the country. Nicuesa, however, heard the true account of what had happened, and was indignant that they should even imagine that he could take advantage of his present superiority to revenge himself for past disputes. When they met, Nicuesa received Ojeda with open arms. "It is not," said he, "for Hidalgos, like men of vulgar souls, to remember past differences when they behold one another in distress. Henceforth, let all that has occurred between us be forgotten. Command

me as a brother. Myself and my men are at your orders, to follow you wherever you please, until the death of Juan de la Cosa and his conrades are revenged."

The two governors united their forces, and landed four hundred men and several horses; proclaiming that no quarter should be given the Indians. They came upon Turbaco at night, and, though the parrots in the woods made a prodigious clamor, took the people by surprise. The houses were set on fire, and the men, women and children slain as they ran out. When the flying women, with children in their arms, beheld the horses and armor-clad Spaniards, they shrieked with terror, and rushed back into the flames. The body of the unfortunate Juan de la Cosa was found tied to a tree. It was so horribly swollen and discolored that his countrymen would not remain at that place over night. The ruins of the village were searched and the dead Indians robbed of their ornaments, with the result that considerable booty was obtained; the share of Nicuesa and his men amounting to seven thousand *castellanos.* Well satisfied with their work, the reconciled governors parted in great amity; and Nicuesa sailed away for the rich Veragua and his Golden Castile.

All too late, Ojeda took the advice of his dead lieutenant, and gave up all thoughts of colonizing at Calamar. Steering westward along the shore, and capturing Indians for slaves, he entered the gulf of Urabá. He sought the river of Darien (Atrato), discovered early in 1501 by Bastidas and La Cosa, because it was the western limit of his domain, and was famed among the Indians as abounding in gold. The river was not found, probably because it empties itself not at the head of the gulf, but by a number of mouths on the west shore.

Failing to find the Darien river, Ojeda disembarked his expedition on the east side of the gulf, and erected, on an elevation, a wooden fortress and houses, surrounding the whole with a stockade. He named his embryo capital *San Sebastian,* in honor of the arrow-martyred saint whose protection he craved from the venomous darts of the natives. This was the third attempt at settlement on the Tierra-firme; the first being Santa Cruz on Bahia Honda, and the second that of Belen in Veragua. Ojeda sent a ship to Santo Domingo, with his slaves and stolen gold; and by it, a letter to his *alcalde mayor,* the Bachiller Encisco, urging him to hasten on with recruits and provisions.

When the governor had completed his new town, he started out with an armed force to visit a neighboring cacique; a courtesy that was instigated largely by the reputed wealth of the

chieftain. The latter had heard of these friendly visits by the white men, and resolved that they should not reach his village. He placed his warriors along the trail, and assailed the Spaniards with such flights of arrows that they retreated in confusion, leaving many of their number to die in the jungle. So great was their dread of the poisoned arrows that Ojeda found great difficulty in getting his men to leave the protection of the stockade. At night they heard the screams of tigers and other beasts about San Sebastian; and when they ventured out into the thickets they encountered the deadly darts of the natives, or large and venomous serpents. Herrera relates that an enormous alligator seized one of their horses by the leg and dragged the animal beneath the water.

It took the Spaniards some time to realize that the natives of Tierra Firme differed materially from the timid Arawaks of Hispaniola. These Indians were altogether or partly of Carib stock, and, whether on sea or land, were the fiercest fighters in the Americas. They ambuscaded all foraging parties and actually besieged the garrison. The sentinel of San Sebastian was often found dead at his post in the morning. Provisions were nearly all consumed, and the colonists were dying of wounds and disease. When the dusky warriors surrounded the settlement and brandished their weapons in defiance, the governor was always the first to sally forth; and it is said that he slew more Indians with his single arm than all his followers together. The quick-witted natives saw that Ojeda was the head and front of the invaders, and planned an ambush to discover if he really bore a charmed life, as they had heard. A number of warriors advanced on San Sebastian, sounding their conchs and drums, and uttering yells of defiance. When Ojeda rushed out, they retreated to the place where four of their best bowmen were concealed. Three arrows struck his shield and glanced harmlessly off, but the fourth pierced his thigh.

This was the first wound that Alonso de Ojeda had ever received in battle, and he was not only alarmed at the poisonous nature of it, but felt despondent that the Holy Virgin had withdrawn her protection from him. Nevertheless, he did not lose his courage, but proceeded to apply heroic treatment. A prominent symptom of these poisoned wounds was a feeling of cold in the part affected, so Ojeda caused two iron plates to be made red hot, and ordered his surgeon to apply one to each orifice of the wound. The surgeon shuddered and refused, saying he did not wish to murder his general. Ojeda swore that his general would hang him unless he obeyed; and the

doctor, to avoid the gallows, applied the glowing plates. According to the good Bishop Las Casas, the cold poison was consumed by the vivid fire, and the governor recovered from his wound; but the cauterization induced such a fever that they had to wrap him in sheets steeped in vinegar, using an entire barrel of it for this purpose.

When the early Spaniards could not force food and labor from the Indians, they generally starved. Afraid to rob the natives, eating herbs and roots for sustenance, and much depressed at the disability of their commander, the miserable colony at San Sebastian waited the coming of Encisco. One day a ship came to anchor in the gulf, but it was not that of the Bachiller Encisco. The vessel was commanded by Bernardino de Talavera, a renegade debtor from Hispaniola. He was at St. Domingo when Ojeda's ship returned with the slaves and gold, tangible evidence of the richness of the colony. Understanding Ojeda to be in need of recruits, Talavera gathered together a band of worthless adventurers, like himself, and watched for an opportunity to go to San Sebastian. Fortune often favors knaves for a time, as if to lure them on to destruction. At Cape Tiburon, Hispaniola, was a vessel, belonging to some Genoese, loading with bacon and *cassava* bread. Talavera's gang, about seventy in number, made their way secretly to Cape Tiburon, overpowered the crew of the ship, and more by luck than seamanship, arrived at San Sebastian. Father Charlevoix thinks it was a special providence which guided this shipload of food to the colonists just when they were on the brink of starvation.

Talavera demanded gold for his provisions, to which Ojeda acceded, glad to get them at any price. The governor dealt out the new supplies so sparingly that his companions murmured, and even accused their leader of reserving an undue share for himself. The ancient chroniclers think there may have been some truth in this charge, as Ojeda was haunted by a presentiment that he should eventually die of hunger.

When these supplies were exhausted, and no Encisco had appeared, the discontented colonists plotted to seize one of the vessels in the harbor and sail for Hispaniola. The governor heard of this plan and resolved to go himself; and such was their belief in his ability, that they felt sure relief would be forthcoming. Ojeda made an agreement with his people that, if within fifty days they did not hear from him, they were at liberty to abandon the place, and embark in the remaining vessels for Hispaniola or elsewhere. The governor appointed as

his lieutenant, to command until the arrival of Encisco, Francisco Pizarro, a name now first appearing in history. With a few attendants, Ojeda departed on the ship of Talavera and his crew, who preferred the risk of returning to Hispaniola to the famine and poisoned arrows of Tierra Firme.

The domineering governor assumed the command as a matter of course, while Talavera, who had stolen the ship, maintained his claim with equal stubborness; with the result that Ojeda found himself again returning to Hispaniola in chains. When a storm arose, the ruffianly land-lubbers took off his irons on condition that he would pilot the vessel. In spite of his skill as a mariner, the equatorial currents bore them west of Hispaniola, and the vessel ran aground on the south coast of Cuba, near the port of Xagua. All hands landed in safety, and started for the eastern end of the island, from which they hoped to cross over to Haiti (Hispaniola).

Cuba (now called Juana) was not yet colonized by the whites. Many fugitive Indians sought refuge here from their cruel taskmasters on Hispaniola, and these excited the Cubans to hostilities against the Spaniards. The cut-throat gang now looked to Ojeda as their commander, and he led them away from the villages, through which they had to fight their way, and sought a passage through the lowlands. They wandered into an immense swamp, said to be thirty leagues in extent, through which the party waded and floundered for thirty days. The water about them was briny, their scant supply of food spoiled, and at night they slept on the twisted roots of the mangroves, which grew in clusters throughout the morass. Ojeda still carried his little image of the Virgin Mary, which he would often hang upon the bushes, and kneel before in prayer. When their condition seemed hopeless, he made a vow to erect a shrine and leave the image at the first Indian village they came to, if the Virgin would conduct them out of their peril.

After losing about thirty-five of his seventy men, from exhaustion and drowning, Ojeda arrived at the village of Cueyba, or Cuebás, where the Indians washed them, supplied meat and drink, and exhibited the kindest humanity. True to his vow, Ojeda built a little hermitage in the hamlet, and placed his precious image over the altar, explaining to the cacique, as best he could, the story of the Mother of Christ, while the Spaniards recuperated at Cueyba. Las Casas tells us that the natives almost worshipped them, "as if they had been angels;" very good evidence that none of their countrymen had preceded them to this place.

A few years later, when the Clerigo (as Las Casas calls himself) and Pamphilo de Narvaez came to Cueyba, they found the image left by Ojeda held in great reverence by the natives, who had constructed an ornamented chapel about it. The Indians composed native couplets, called *areitos,* in honor of the Virgin, which they sang to sweet melodies, accompanied by dancing. As the painting was also held in repute by the Spaniards, the Clerigo offered another picture of the Virgin in exchange for it; which so alarmed the cacique that he fled by night with the sacred image, and did not return until after the departure of the white men.

The kind cacique and his people helped the Spaniards to reach Cape de la Cruz, in the province of Macaca, a region visited by Columbus. From here, Ojeda sent Diego Ordaz in a canoe to Jamaica, to beg assistance of Juan de Esquivel, whose head he had threatened, with so much bluster, to strike off. Esquivel immediately despatched a vessel over to Cuba, commanded by Pamphilo de Narvaez, who thus courteously addressed the fallen governor: "Senor Ojeda, will your worship please to come hither; we have to take you on board." The unfortunate man replied with a proverb expressive of his changed condition, "*Mi remo no rema*"—my oar rows not. When Ojeda reached Jamaica he was tenderly cared for by Esquivel, and furnished transportation to St. Domingo. Governor Diego Colon despatched a party of soldiers to Jamaica to arrest Talavera and his gang, and bring them in chains to St. Domingo. They were tried for piracy, and, in 1511, Talavera and his principal accomplices were hanged.

Ojeda arrived at St. Domingo long after the fifty days set for his return to San Sebastian. Encisco had already left with supplies for the colony, and nothing had since been heard from him. Ojeda endeavored to enlist another force to go to his province, but the disasters attending his colonists were too well known. His name was no longer one to conjure with, and, very naturally, Diego Colon would not assist another to seize a province which he claimed as his own. One incident occurred which reminds one of the Ojeda of old. One night he was set upon by a lot of ruffians—probably some of the Talavera gang against whom he had testified at their trial—and he not only beat them off, but chased the miscreants through the streets of St. Domingo. In 1513, and again in 1515, Ojeda gave depositions in the case of Diego Colon against the Crown.

Broken in health, spirit, and fortune, Alonso de Ojeda soon died. Gomara, the historian of the Indies, affirms that a few

hours before his death he became a Franciscan monk, and died in the habit of that order. Being too poor to provide for his interment, Ojeda begged that his body might be buried just beyond the threshold of the church in the monastery of San Francisco, "that every one who entered might tread upon his grave."

"Never," says Charlevoix, in his history of St. Domingo, "was man more suited for a coup-de-main, or to achieve and suffer great things under the direction of another; none had a heart more lofty, or ambition more aspiring; none ever took less heed of fortune, or showed greater firmness of soul, or found more resources in his own courage; but none was less calculated to be commander-in-chief of a great enterprise. Good management and good fortune forever failed him."

Several daring feats are related of Alonso de Ojeda. One day when Queen Isabella was visiting the Giralda tower, at Seville, Ojeda, who was an officer of the guard, gave proof of his courage and strength in a singular manner. Armed as he was at the time, Ojeda walked out upon a beam which projected about twenty feet, near the top of the tower, and upon reaching the end of it, he stood on one leg, raising the other in the air. Then turning nimbly, the young cavalier walked back to the wall, and with one foot on the beam and the other placed against the tower, he drew an orange from his pocket and threw it over the figure of Giralda, on the summit of the building.

What would that old sea-dog, Juan de la Cosa, as well as Francis Drake, the Buccaneer Chiefs, and commanders of the *guarda-costas* think of the following, penned by a naval officer in 1871. After anchoring his warship near Isla del Muertos, in the Gulf of Urabá, the captain writes: "Ours was the first ship whose keel had ever plowed these waters, and thoughts could but arise whether this magnificent bay was destined ever to remain grand in solitude as well as proportions; or, would it one day be covered with sails from every clime? To the West stretched the great delta of the Atrato, covered with its dense vegetation, bounded by the blue outline of the Cordilleras; to the East were the high hills of the Antioquian range, rising from the very shores of the bay; while just visible above the horizon to the South were the tops of the trees that skirt the bottom of the bay. This bay, so magnificent in its dimensions, so uniform in its soundings, and tranquil as an inland sea, I named Columbia. Numerous small streams empty into it on the East side, and at the foot of the bay is the Leon river, the largest of them all, which rises in a spur of the Antioquia Mountains, and is said to be navigable many miles for steamboats. The small town of Pisisi, or Turbo, is the only habitable spot, containing about four hundred inhabitants."

Photo by the *Author.*

ISTHMIAN JUNGLE.