

HISTORY
OF THE
PANAMA CANAL

ITS CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDERS

Went
BY
IRA E. BENNETT

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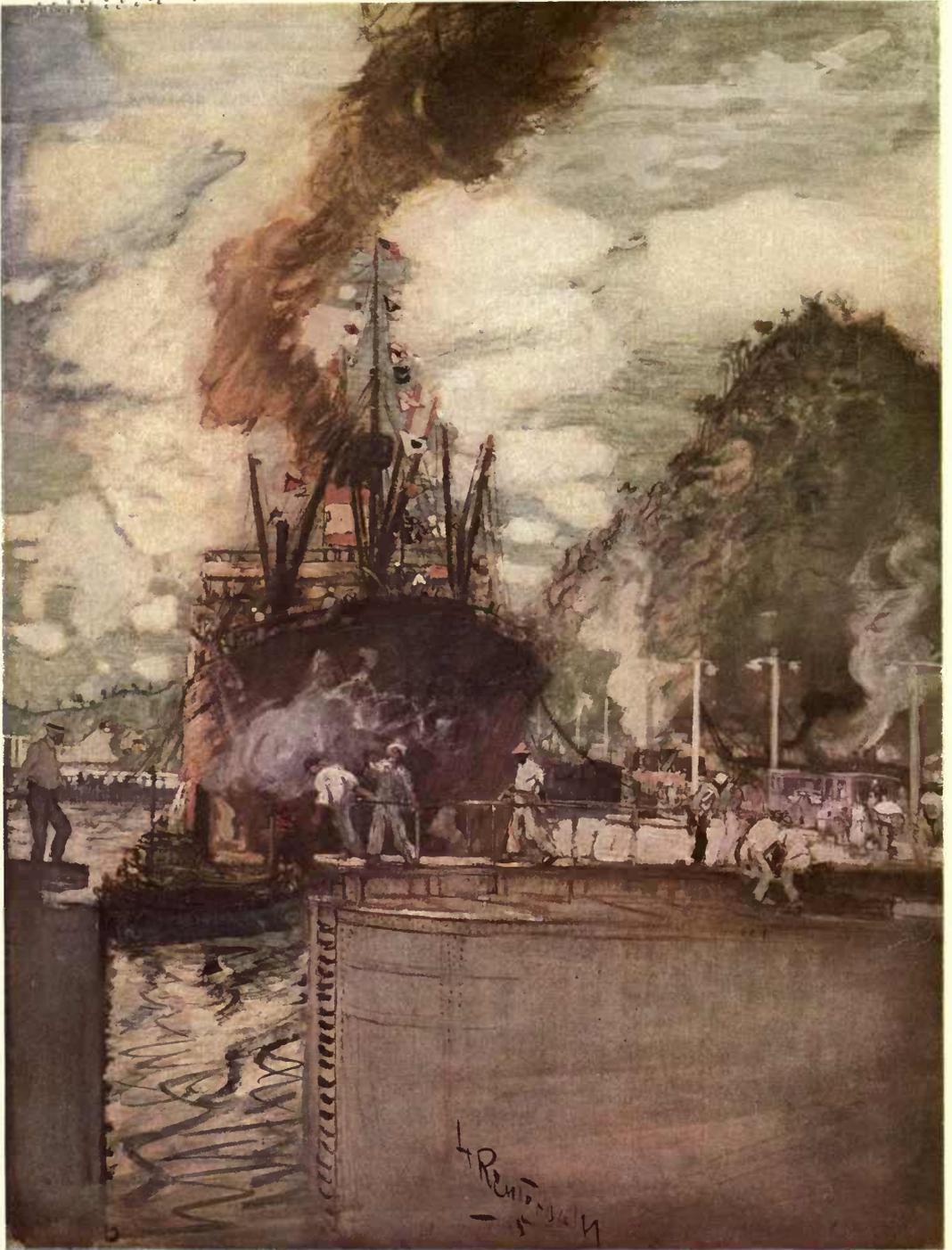
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TO THE
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Painted by Henry Reuter Dahl for the History of the Panama Canal.

FROM SEA TO SEA

The S. S. *Ancon* passing through the Pedro Miguel lock—the first steamer through the canal.

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Washington, D. C.

PREFACE

IN THE ensuing pages an effort has been made to tell the plain, unvarnished story of Panama and the Panama Canal. The information contained herein has been gathered from many publications and from public and private persons. The records of the Government have been available at all times, to the writer, thanks to the courtesy of the authorities at Washington and of Major-General Goethals. Special acknowledgments are due to the Hon. William H. Taft, who, as Secretary of War and President of the United States, from 1904 to 1913, directed the affairs of the Panama Canal from its beginning to its virtual completion. In 1912 President Taft wrote to the author as follows:

THE WHITE HOUSE, Washington, March 25, 1912

MY DEAR MR. BENNETT:

I am very glad to hear from you that you contemplate publishing a history of the construction of the Panama Canal. There is a great deal of detail connected with it which is forgotten and yet which is interesting to know with respect to the great work. There are a good many facts, indeed, that have never been brought to the public attention, that are of record and ought properly to be put in an historical form.

I shall be very glad myself to furnish you with all the data that I have in my correspondence, which covers the whole life of the Canal from the very day that the Canal Zone was turned over by the Republic of Panama to the United States.

I am glad that such an enterprise is on foot.

Sincerely yours,

WM. H. TAFT.

Cordial encouragement was extended, also, by the Hon. Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, and Col. George W. Goethals, Chairman and Chief Engineer of the Isthmian Canal Commission. Mr. Stimson wrote: "I think it is very important that a full and careful history of the construction of the Panama Canal should be written while people are still alive in whose memories many of the most important events will rest, and I am very glad to hear that you are contemplating publishing such a history. I should be glad to put at your disposal all the data that I properly can while in office here in the Department which has had supervision to a certain extent over the work."

Col. Goethals wrote: "I am very glad to hear from you that you contemplate publishing a history of the construction of the Panama Canal. To facilitate you in the enterprise I will take pleasure in authorizing you to collect information from any reliable source and give you access to the records for verification of such information or any additional data that may be available."

The author is indebted to Prof. Patrick J. Lennox, Professor of English Language and Literature at the Catholic University of America, for valuable assistance in preparing the history of the Isthmus of Panama. A master of the subject, his aid in critical researches through an extensive bibliog-

raphy served to bring out what is believed to be a clear and concise account of the romantic developments that followed the discovery of Tierra Firme.

Equally important was the assistance rendered by Mr. William Joseph Showalter in the preparation of the history of canal construction. In conversation with the writer, Col. Goethals expressed his pleasure upon being informed that Mr. Showalter was engaged in this task, and he added: "Mr. Showalter knows more about the Panama Canal than any other man except myself. I wish some of my engineers knew as much."

No doubt many details of canal history cannot be ascertained or accurately weighed at this time; but it has been deemed wise to obtain from some of the makers of this history their own version of their activities, for the information of future historians. In this regard the chapters contributed by Messrs. John F. Wallace and John F. Stevens, respectively chief engineers of the Canal, are especially notable.

To the Associate Editors, contributors, and numerous American engineers, contractors, and industrial corporations cordial thanks are extended for co-operation and advice.

Although care has been taken to insure the accuracy of technical descriptions of equipment, machinery, and operations, it is hoped that the reader will bear in mind, when errors are noted, that the construction of the Panama Canal involved the energies of almost all branches of American industry, and that a review of these operations is almost equivalent to a description of a ten years' war.

Happily, however, the campaign conducted at Panama was constructive, not destructive; for the benefit of mankind, not for the killing of men and the conquest of nations; and more permanent glory was won by the gallant soldier who lost his life in the struggle at Panama than by those who count their triumphs in the number of men slaughtered in Europe. The name of the late Lieutenant-Colonel David DuBose Gaillard is perpetuated, not only by the renaming of Culebra Cut, but by the record of his own devotion, which will endure even if Gaillard Cut should be swept away.

The Panama Canal was completed at a time when war enveloped Europe. The story of its construction is offered in the hope that it will aid in reminding the world that

"Peace hath her victories,
No less renowned than war."

WASHINGTON,

May, 1915.

HISTORY OF THE PANAMA CANAL

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CHAPTER I

THE DISCOVERY OF PANAMA

DISCOVERIES OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS—OTHER EXPEDITIONS: OJEDA, NIÑO, PINZON, LEPE, AND BASTIDAS—DISCOVERY OF PANAMA BY BASTIDAS—COLUMBUS'S THIRD AND FOURTH VOYAGES—DISCOVERY OF SOUTH AMERICA—SEARCH FOR THE STRAIT—DISCOVERY OF WESTERN PANAMA—EXPLORATION OF VERAGUA—ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COLONY OF BELEN—ITS ABANDONMENT—RETURN OF COLUMBUS TO SPAIN—HIS DEATH.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS'S discovery of previously unknown lands lying in the western sea, on his celebrated first voyage in 1492, naturally attracted the attention of adventurous spirits to the glorious possibilities of fame and fortune which the New World seemed to offer. Hence we find that expedition after expedition was fitted out in rapid succession to explore and exploit the territory which the intrepid admiral from Genoa had added to the dominions of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. Most interest was at first taken in the islands of which Columbus had actually acquired possession, and in the surrounding islands; but soon wider vistas opened before the gaze of the navigators, when what was at first vague, if hopeful, impression deepened into the certainty that a great continent was at hand for the enrichment and aggrandisement of courageous explorers.

Already while Columbus was absent from Spain on his second voyage (1493-1496), there was issued, on April 10, 1495, a royal proclamation giving Spaniards permission to settle in Hispaniola, and allowing private voyages elsewhere for discovery, exploration, and barter. Under licenses granted in accordance with this proclamation five different expeditions left Spain for the new lands during 1499 and 1500.

The first of these was led by Alonso de Ojeda, who had been with Columbus on his second voyage. With Ojeda there went at least two men of note. One was Juan de la Cosa, the celebrated pilot, who, accom-

panying Columbus in 1493, made the earliest map of the western world. The other, a native of Florence, was Amerigo Vespucci, from whom, by a strange freak of fortune, all America was destined to take its name. Ojeda had four ships, and setting sail from Santa María, near Cadiz, on May 20, 1499, he reached the coast of South America, some two hundred leagues east and south of the river Orinoco. He then skirted the coast in a north-westerly direction until he reached Cape de la Vela, from which point he appears to have left the mainland and steered for Hispaniola. A claim is sometimes made for Ojeda that he was the first to sight the country now known as Panama. This claim rests on the assumption that his coasting cruise did not stop at Cape de la Vela, but that he continued his course as far as Cabo Tiburon in Darien; but this opinion is not now generally held. He returned to Spain in June, 1500, arriving at Cadiz with a great number of Indian slaves.

The second expedition was in command of Pedro Alonso Niño, who had also been with Columbus on his second voyage. With Niño, there also went Cristobal Guerra. With only one small caravel of fifty tons, and thirty-three men, they sailed from Palos on or about June 1, 1499, and, like Ojeda, successfully made the South American coast. Niño also sailed in a north-westerly direction, trading as he went for guanin and pearls. He returned to Spain in April, 1500, with a goodly number of pearls; but, on a charge

of not fully accounting for his treasure, he was cast into prison, from which he was not freed for some time.

The next to try his fortune was Vicente Yañez Pinzon, who had been captain of the *Niña* on Columbus's first voyage. Sailing from Palos in December, 1499, Pinzon had four caravels, with which he reached the coast of Brazil, at a point now known as Cape St. Augustine, on January 20, 1500. He took possession of the country in the prescribed form for Spain, giving it the name of Santa María de la Consolacion, but, as we shall see later, this act of his was of no avail, and Brazil was subsequently ceded to Portugal. To Pinzon belongs the distinction of being the first to cross the equator in the western part of the Atlantic. He, like the others who had preceded him, sailed north and west and discovered the Amazon. In the Gulf of Paría he landed and cut a cargo of Brazil-wood. On the way home he had the misfortune to lose two of his vessels and many of his men, so that when he arrived back at Palos his welcome was none too cordial.

A fellow townsman of Pinzon's, Diego de Lepe, sailed from Palos early in 1500 with two vessels. He went farther south along the American coast than any of his predecessors, and in this respect set up a record that stood for more than ten years.

In 1500 Cristobal Guerra made a second voyage to the Pearl Coast, which had some financial success. He was back in Spain before November 1, 1501.

From the point of view of this history the most important of the five expeditions was the last. Its leader was Rodrigo de Bastidas, a notary of Triana, a suburb of Seville. He was a man of position and education, and in character formed a strong contrast to most of the explorers who had preceded him, or were to come after him. Taking with him Juan de la Cosa, who had just returned with Ojeda, and accompanied also by Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, of whom we shall hear more presently, Bastidas set out from Cadiz in two ships in October, 1500. He reached that portion of

South America which is now known as Venezuela, and, steering westward, he passed Cape de la Vela, explored the Gulf of Darien and the mouth of the Atrato River, and sailed along the northern shore of the isthmus as far as El Retrete, perhaps even as far as the site of Nombre de Dios, and possibly as far as Porto Bello. To Bastidas, therefore, belongs the credit of the discovery of the country now called Panama. He had great success in trading for guanin, pearls, and gold, and he also took a number of the natives as slaves. His career of exploration was brought to an end by the leaky condition of his ships, caused by the ravages of the teredo. He accordingly proceeded to Hispaniola, intending to sail thence for Spain, but his two ships sank in the port of Jaraguá, and most of his slaves were drowned and some Brazil-wood, gold, and pearls were also lost. He managed to save the most precious and portable part of his cargo, and, placing it on the backs of the surviving slaves, he started to march for Santo Domingo, which was about seventy leagues distant in an easterly direction. Arrived there, he was seized and thrown into prison by the governor of Hispaniola on the charge of illicit trading with the Indians. Francisco de Bobadilla, the retiring governor, who had recently been superseded by Don Nicolás de Ovando, was about to return to Spain with the large fleet that had brought out his successor. Accordingly, Bastidas was ordered to accompany him thither to have his case tried. Those who are familiar with the career of Columbus will remember that he was just then in the vicinity of Santo Domingo, on his fourth voyage. His former experience enabled him to predict a hurricane, and he begged of Ovando not to allow the fleet to start on the homeward voyage for at least eight days. He was laughed to scorn for his pains, and the fleet set out (July, 1502), but it had no sooner cleared the island than a fierce storm broke, which sank more than twenty of the ships. Among those lost was Bobadilla, who, in

1500, had sent Columbus home to Spain in chains. The Admiral's own little fleet of four vessels, being handled with superior seamanship, managed to ride out the storm. It is a curious fact that only one vessel of Bobadilla's fleet, and that the worst, *La Aguja*, with gold and other goods belonging to Columbus aboard, survived the hurricane in sufficiently good shape to proceed onward to Spain. All the circumstances considered, it is no wonder that the ordinary seamen believed that their Admiral had used "art magic" to confound and destroy his enemies and at the same time save himself, his ships and crews, and his possessions.

Out of the great Ovando-Bobadilla fleet a few badly battered vessels crawled back to Santo Domingo, and on one of them was Bastidas. When he ultimately reached Spain, he had no trouble in establishing his innocence before Ferdinand and Isabella. From the salvage he had made when his two vessels sank in Jaraguá Harbour, he paid a goodly royalty into the Spanish treasury, and he and Cosa were each granted a yearly pension of 50,000 maravedis, Cosa, in addition, receiving the appointment of alguacil mayor of Urabá. As an inducement to other intending explorers, three chests of gold and pearls, which Bastidas had collected, were displayed by royal order in all the towns through which he passed.

While these smaller men were thus engaged, the great high admiral himself was making his third and fourth voyages. On his third expedition he discovered the mainland of South America on August 1, 1498, and, in the belief that it was an island, he named it La Isla Santa, or Holy Island. A few days later he explored the land around the cape and gulf of Paria and, still in the same belief, called it Isla de Gracia, or Island of Grace. A coasting cruise of about 150 miles westwardly along the northern coast of Paria at length convinced him that he was dealing, not with an island, but with a Tierra Firme or continent. He had now, as he thought,

discovered two continents: Cuba on the north with its western coast extending indefinitely to the south, and Paria on the south with its shores extending indefinitely to the west. The object of his fourth voyage therefore was to discover a narrow water-passage, running between these two mainlands, through which, as he imagined, the waters of the Atlantic flowed into the Indian Ocean. This strait once discovered, he could sail around the world and get back to Spain by way of the Cape of Good Hope.

Accordingly, armed with credentials to the eastern potentates whom he hoped to encounter, carrying interpreters versed in Arabic, with provisions for two years, and trinkets and other goods to barter with the Indians for gold, Columbus sailed, on his fourth and last voyage, from Cadiz on May 11, 1502. His little fleet consisted of four ships, ranging from 70 to 50 tons. His brother Bartolomé, the Adelantado, was captain of one of them, and the crews numbered, all told, one hundred and fifty. Among them was Columbus's second son, Fernando, then not quite fourteen years old, who in later years wrote a life of his father, in which he gave a detailed account of this fourth voyage. After putting in at Arcila on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, at the Canaries, at Martinio (which is perhaps Martinique), at Santo Domingo and other ports of Hispaniola, at the Morant Keys off Jamaica, and at the Queen's Gardens off the southern shore of Cuba, they steered south-south-west in the direction of the supposed strait, which Columbus felt confident was about Veragua and Nombre de Dios, as those places came subsequently to be known.

Towards the end of July they arrived at an island called Guanaja (the modern Bonacao or Bonacca). Near this island they captured two large canoes, the property of a cacique, evidently out on a trading voyage, for they contained an assortment of articles the like of which no Spaniard had previously seen in those parts. There were cups, bells, and hatchets made of

copper, cloaks and tunics of dyed cotton beautifully worked, knives of obsidian, wooden swords edged with flint, bread and beer, and cacao or chocolate beans. The men and women wore clothing, and were evidently more highly civilized than any Indians Columbus had previously seen. He began to think that at last he was about to get into touch with the strange races of the East. By using signs and the native dialect of Hispaniola, the Spaniards learned that their captives had come from a westerly land distant several days' journey, and that there gold, pearls, and spices were to be found in plenty. On learning this intelligence Columbus allowed them all to go, except one old man whom he kept for a guide.

From Guanaja the admiral continued his southerly course and found a cape, which he named Caxinas, and which is now known as Cape Honduras. Here the land ran east and west, and when Guimba, as the guide was called, was asked from which direction the gold came, he lied like a gentleman and pointed to the east. That gesture changed the history of the western world. Had he pointed the other way, where Yucatan, his own country, lay, Mexico would probably have had a more merciful conqueror than Cortés, and the Isthmus of Panama might never have become, as it subsequently did, the great entrepôt for the commerce of the east and the west. Guimba was dismissed with presents, and the fleet proceeded, in the direction he had indicated, along the coast of Honduras, meeting with the most terrible storms, until they reached a narrow point, from which the land turned south, and the weather improved. To this point they gave the appropriate name of Gracias á Dios, or Thanks to God. They then sailed along the coast of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, stopping at various points to barter with the natives, and on October 6 dropped anchor in Almirante Bay within the confines of the modern Panama. Thus Bastidas, sailing from South America to the west, and Columbus, sailing from Honduras

to the east and south, discovered at different times different parts of Panama.

Columbus continued eastward past Chiriqui and Veragua until he reached Puerto Bello, to which he gave that name, as his son tells us, because it was "large, well peopled, and encompassed by a well-cultivated country." On November 24 he reached his farthest easterly harbor, to which he gave the name of El Retrete. Unable to contend any longer against the fierce easterly and north-easterly winds, he decided to turn back to Veragua to see for himself whether its mines were as rich as report made them. It was on December 5 that the start of the journey back to Veragua was made. He now encountered fierce westerly winds, and it was not until January 6, 1503, the feast of the Epiphany, that he anchored in Veragua, at a place to which he gave the name of Nuestra Señora de Belen, or Our Lady of Bethlehem, because that was the anniversary of the day on which the Wise Men reached Bethlehem of Judaea. In this vicinity there appeared so many evidences of mineral wealth that Columbus decided to leave a garrison to hold the country, and to go back himself to Spain to bring out reinforcements. To Ferdinand and Isabella he wrote in the following July a most glowing account of the gold in Veragua and of the fertility of its soil and the timidity of its inhabitants. The little garrison or colony was to consist of eighty men under the command of the Adelantado, and one of the ships, the *Gallego*, with all her stores, was to be left for their use. A storehouse was erected and huts of timber roofed with palm leaves were built. But the Quibian, or chief man of the district, not liking these proceedings, began to show signs of hostility. He and several of his warriors were therefore seized, the intention being to bring them to Spain and hold them as hostages for the good behavior of the rest. But the Quibian escaped, and at a time when nearly all the garrison was engaged with the getting out of the Admiral's ships, and only about twenty men were at Belen with

the Adelantado, an attack was made, which it took all the undaunted courage of Don Bartolomé to repel. Another attack forced the handful of Spaniards to abandon their settlement, which was exposed to enemies concealed in the jungle, and to entrench themselves on a piece of open beach, where they were out of reach of arrows from the woods. Luckily for them the admiral had not yet sailed, and after considerable difficulty all the men and stores were safely taken aboard, the dismantled and worm-eaten hulk of the *Gallego* being the only thing left behind. Thus ended the first attempt to colonize or garrison Panama.

Columbus now beat up the coast eastward, past the Chagres River and Limon Bay, until he again reached Puerto Bello, where one of his three remaining ships, the *Biscaina*, had to be abandoned on account of her extremely leaky condition. He still continued eastward for about ten leagues, and then, on May 1, 1503, from Marmora, as his son Fernando calls it, stood out to the north for Hispaniola. The identification of Marmora is difficult. Some are of opinion that Columbus went as far as Cape Tiburon and saw the Gulf of Urabá or Darien; a more probable opinion is that the most easterly point he reached in Panama was Punta Mosquito. When he headed for Hispaniola his ships were practically unseaworthy, and only the most strenuous bailing with pumps and kettles prevented them from being entirely swamped. Contrary winds and currents carried him far out of his course, and considering that he could never make Hispaniola, he steered for Jamaica, where, at

Puerto Bono, he arrived on June 24. Next day he moved into another more easterly harbor, into which he had once before put during his second voyage in 1494, and to which he had then given the name of Santa Gloria. Here he ran his two worn-out vessels aground, shored them up so that they could not move, and built sheds on them for the protection of himself and his men. In July two of his lieutenants put off for Hispaniola in canoes, and after a long delay returned with two ships. In the meantime there had been a mutiny against Columbus by fifty of his men, which was put down by the bravery of the Adelantado and fifty of his staunch supporters.

On the two ships brought from Hispaniola Columbus and the survivors set out, on June 28, 1504, for Santo Domingo, but met with such adverse winds that they did not arrive at that city until August 13. The admiral started on his last voyage from the West Indies for Spain on September 12, and, after a stormy passage, dropped anchor in the harbor of San Lúcar on November 7, 1504. Here ended the active life of the high admiral of the ocean sea.

Less than two years later, on Ascension Day, May 20, 1506, with the chains in which he had once returned to Spain hanging over his bed in an inn at Valladolid, Christopher Columbus, worn out with disease and heart-broken with disappointment and ingratitude, received the last sacraments of the Church of which he was so loyal a son, and with the pious expression of faith, *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*, on his lips, brought to an end his wonderful and glorious career.

CHAPTER II

EARLY SETTLEMENTS

TIERRA FIRME: ITS MEANING—TIERRA FIRME DIVIDED INTO TWO PROVINCES—OJEDA APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF NUEVA ANDALUCÍA—NICUESA APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF CASTILLA DEL ORO—DEATH OF JUAN DE LA COSA—OJEDA AND NICUESA JOIN FORCES TO ATTACK THE INDIANS—FOUNDATION OF THE COLONY OF SAN SEBASTIAN—SAD PLIGHT OF THE SETTLERS—ADVENTURES OF OJEDA—HIS DEATH—PIZARRO IN COMMAND AT SAN SEBASTIAN—ARRIVAL OF ENCISO—BALBOA EMBARKS AS A STOWAWAY—FOUNDATION OF THE COLONY OF SANTA MARIA DE LA ANTIGUA DEL DARIEN—DEPOSITION OF ENCISO—BALBOA AND ZAMUDIO APPOINTED ALCALDES—ARRIVAL OF COLMENARES—WANDERINGS AND SUFFERINGS OF NICUESA—HE FOUNDS THE COLONY OF NOMBRE DE DIOS—HE GOES TO ANTIGUA BY INVITATION AND IS REFUSED ADMISSION—HIS SAD FATE.

TIERRA FIRME, or continent, was at first a general term applied to the whole of a vaguely known mainland which Columbus had discovered; but gradually that phrase received a narrower and more definite meaning by being applied particularly to the land which lay between Cape de la Vela on the east and Cape Gracias á Dios on the west. The report made by Columbus of the fertility and mineral wealth of Veragua, and the pearls and gold found by Bastidas in a more easterly direction, as well as the fact that no one had yet discovered a limit to the continent, helped King Ferdinand to realize more clearly the riches and magnitude of the country which the recent explorations had added to his dominions. He resolved therefore not to revive the office of Viceroy of the Indies vacant on Columbus's death, and to treat all his western dependencies as an appanage of the crown to be administered by governors or other officials appointed directly by himself. In 1509, in accordance with this policy, he divided Tierra Firme, in its narrower sense, into two provinces, to one of which was given the name of Nueva Andalucía, or New Andalusia, and to the other that of Castilla del Oro, or Golden Castile. Nueva Andalucía occupied the east, and Castilla del Oro the west, of Tierra Firme. Alonso de

Ojeda, who had sailed with Columbus in 1493 and had undertaken two other western voyages on his own account in 1499 and 1502, was appointed governor of Nueva Andalucía. The government of Castilla del Oro was given to Diego de Nicuesa, a favorite at court, who had accompanied Nicolás de Ovando when the latter went out to supersede Bobadilla as governor and judge of Hispaniola in 1502. In this way Ferdinand hoped to colonize and develop a section of territory that promised so well.

At Santo Domingo, in Hispaniola, where the two governors met before making a final start for their respective provinces, it was agreed, mainly on the arbitration of the pilot and cartographer Juan de la Cosa, but not without much antecedent friction, that the dividing line between the two governments should be the middle of the Gulf of Darien and the Atrato River.

Ojeda sailed from Santo Domingo on November 10, 1509, with three hundred men and twelve brood mares on two ships and two brigantines. Among those who accompanied him was Francisco Pizarro, destined in after years to become famous by his conquest of Peru. An associate of Ojeda's, Martin Fernandez de Enciso, remained behind to follow after the interval necessary to secure more recruits and additional supplies. About ten days later than



SPANISH EXPLORERS

- 1. Pedrarias Dávila
- 3. Alonso de Ojeda
- 6. Hernando de Soto

- 4. Vasco Nuñez de Balboa
- 8. Bartolomé Colon

- 2. Rodrigo de Bastidas
- 5. Christopher Columbus
- 7. Francisco Pizarro

Ojeda, Nicuesa sailed with seven vessels, eight hundred men, and six horses.

Ojeda was unfortunate from the first. Contrary to the advice of the sage and experienced Juan de la Cosa, who sailed with him as his lieutenant and alguacil mayor, he went ashore from what is now Cartagena Bay with seventy men, all of whom save himself and one other were killed by the warlike natives. Among those slain was the veteran Juan de la Cosa. Ojeda owed his safety to his bulldog courage, his swiftness of foot, and his smallness of stature, which enabled him to keep well behind his shield. The shield bore the marks of three hundred arrows after the engagement. The two survivors made their way back to the ships, and there they were found by Nicuesa, who put into the same harbor, and gladly joined his forces to those of Ojeda to avenge the fall of their fellow-countrymen. With about four hundred men they attacked the Indians at night and slew great numbers of them. They also secured plenty of booty, of which Nicuesa and his followers received a goodly portion, said to amount to 7,000 castellanos, as their share. Nicuesa then took his departure for Castilla del Oro.

Moving further west, Ojeda set up a fortress and a few houses surrounded by a stockade to be the nucleus of his capital, to which he gave the name of San Sebastian. He wished thus to commemorate his own escape from death by arrows, as the third century martyr of that name survived the shots of the Emperor Diocletian's archers. San Sebastian was the second attempt at establishing a colony on Tierra Firme, or the third, if we count a former somewhat doubtful experiment of Ojeda's at Santa Cruz, in the vicinity of Cape de la Vela and Bahía Honda, in 1502. The other was Columbus's ill-starred fortress at Belen. The situation of the colonists at San Sebastian was far from being an enviable one, for they were surrounded by hostile and very warlike natives, who used poisoned arrows and lost no opportunity of attack-

ing the invaders. In addition, their stores quickly ran out, and there was no means of getting more. When they were reduced to great extremities, however, a ship, stolen by a gang of pirates headed by one Bernardino de Talavera, came opportunely into port with a supply of provisions, and these the colonists purchased with some of the gold they had picked up during their raid on the Indians. Enciso was still looked for in vain, and at length Ojeda decided to go back on the pirates' ship to Santo Domingo and thence bring out relief. He appointed Pizarro his lieutenant in his absence. Before starting he made an agreement that, if he did not return in fifty days, or if Enciso did not arrive within the same period, Pizarro and the other colonists were to be free to take the brigantines and go to Hispaniola or anywhere else they chose.

On the way back to Santo Domingo Ojeda was so domineering that Talavera placed him in chains; but, a storm coming up, he was released on condition that he would pilot the vessel. In spite, however, of his undoubted skill as a navigator, they were shipwrecked on the south coast of Cuba. All the men escaped, and, with Ojeda in command, proceeded to march to the eastern part of the island, in the hope that thence they might find a means of crossing to Hispaniola. They were unfortunate enough to wander into a great morass through which, if we are to believe what has come down to us, they struggled for thirty days, being often up to their armpits in mire. The only place where they could find rest was on the roots of mangrove trees, which grew here and there in the oozy mud. Out of seventy men who floundered into the swamp only thirty-five lived to emerge. These survivors at length came upon a village of friendly Indians, who treated them with great hospitality and kindness, and helped them to reach Cape de la Cruz. From this point they sent a canoe to Jamaica to ask Juan de Esquivel, the governor of that island, for assistance. The position was sufficiently awkward, for in

his heyday Ojeda had once threatened to strike off that official's head. Esquivel, however, like a Christian and a gentleman, responded promptly to the call of humanity, despatched a vessel for the castaways, lavished attentions on Ojeda, and sent him and his attendants faithfully to Santo Domingo. The pirates were in another category, and with them it went harder. Columbus's son, Diego, then governor of Hispaniola with jurisdiction over Jamaica, caused them to be sent in chains to Santo Domingo, where they were convicted on a charge of piracy, and in 1511 Talavera and the ringleaders were hanged.

Enciso having already left for Tierra Firme, Ojeda was now in doleful case. His sun had set. He was without money, friends, or influence, all his attempts to raise another force resulted in failure, and the first governor of Nueva Andalucía never saw his province again. He lingered on in Santo Domingo for some years, and then died. It is believed that, very shortly before the end, he became a Franciscan monk.

In the meantime, Pizarro and his companions at the infant city of San Sebastian were in sorry plight. They were the victims alike of starvation, disease, and the arrows of the Indians. When the fifty days were up, and neither Ojeda nor Enciso appeared, they were by agreement free to leave. Only seventy of them were still alive, and the two remaining brigantines were unable to carry that number. With grim stoicism they waited until death had sufficiently reduced their ranks, and then sailed away for Hispaniola. On the way one of the brigantines suddenly foundered and all on board were lost. Pizarro was on the other vessel, and when he reached Cartagena Bay, he fell in with Enciso, who was engaged in a vain quest for the capital of the new province.

In accordance with the stipulation, though somewhat tardily, Enciso had departed from Santo Domingo. He had one hundred and fifty men, provisions, arms, gunpowder, horses, and dogs. With-

out his knowledge he had also with him as a stowaway, enclosed in a barrel or rolled up in a sail—it is not certain which—a remarkable man, to wit, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, who, as we have already seen, sailed with Bastidas to Darien in 1500 and with him had returned to Hispaniola, and who from the time we have now reached was destined to play for a few years an extremely important part in the affairs of Tierra Firme. When Balboa was discovered on board, Enciso threatened to maroon him, but thought better of it when he found that his strangely recruited follower was a really capable and useful man. Arrived at Cartagena, Enciso got on better with the natives than Ojeda had done, and when the remnant of the San Sebastian colonists found him, the Spaniards and the Indians were on friendly terms.

Already before leaving Santo Domingo in 1509 Ojeda had appointed Enciso *alcalde mayor*, or chief judge, of Nueva Andalucía, and in virtue of this position of authority he now assumed command of the united party. His first exercise of power was to insist, despite the protest of the new arrivals, that all hands should accompany him to San Sebastian. On the way thither, as they were about to enter the Gulf of Darien, their ship was dashed to pieces on the rocks, and all the stores and live stock it contained were lost. The men escaped and succeeded in making their way to San Sebastian, but when they arrived there they found that the whole of the little settlement had been burned down by the natives. Balboa's experience was now of value. He pointed out that he had formerly coasted this country with Bastidas, that on the western shore of the gulf the land was fertile and rich in gold, and that the natives of that district did not use poisoned arrows: therefore, let them cross the gulf. The advice was sound and was acted on, though what means of transportation they had is not apparent. It is likely, however, that Pizarro's brigantine and perhaps the boat of the wrecked ship were available. Things turned out

exactly as Balboa had said. The natives, under their chief Cemaco, were hostile, but for lack of poisoned arrows were easily defeated, and the invaders found great store of gold worked into handsome ornaments. On the site of the captured Indian village Enciso established a new settlement, to which, in fulfillment of a vow, he gave the name of Santa María de la Antigua del Darien, in memory of the great shrine of Santa María de la Antigua in Seville. This settlement is generally referred to simply as Antigua.

Enciso now proceeded to make and administer laws and regulations, but being a cast-iron sort of lawyer who interpreted too narrowly the royal commands from Spain, and wishing to assimilate in advance the conduct of his pioneer colony to that which prevailed in settled communities, he roused an ugly temper among his fellow citizens, and turned them entirely against him. His life even was in great danger; but once more Balboa's common sense and knowledge of geography came to the rescue. He pointed out that, being on the western side of the Gulf of Darien, they were in Nicuesa's territory, and that therefore Enciso had really no authority over them. This was an easy solution of the difficulty. Enciso was deposed, and the people elected from their own body two men, Balboa and Martin Zamudio, to be joint alcaldes, and appointed Valdivia to be one of the regidores. But further disputes soon arose, and a party favorable to Nicuesa was formed. At this juncture two ships with provisions arrived from Hispaniola under the command of a subordinate of Nicuesa's named Rodrigo Enriquez de Colmenares, who was in quest of the governor and province of Castilla del Oro. To the citizens of Antigua Colmenares distributed supplies, and behaved altogether so tactfully that, when he took his departure, they sent with him a deputation of two to invite Nicuesa to Antigua.

When Nicuesa had parted from Ojeda in the harbor of Cartagena, all went well with him for awhile, but he subsequently

met with great disasters. He landed in his province at a point to which he gave the name of Puerto de Misas, because Mass was there and then celebrated. Leaving the bulk of his ships and force at Misas in charge of one Cueto, who was a relative of his, Nicuesa continued his western route in search of Veragua and its reputed golden store. He took only a caravel with sixty men and a brigantine with thirty. During a storm which sprang up while they were off the coast of Veragua, the brigantine, commanded by Lope de Olano, disappeared, and Nicuesa, believing that it had perished, still followed the westward track. When, later, he tried to land, his caravel was broken to pieces, but all the crew except one got safely ashore. From the wreck they managed to save the boat and a small supply of provisions, and then set out to march along the shore, the boat in charge of Diego de Ribero and three men going along simultaneously by water, and ferrying the land party at need across unfordable streams or inlets of the sea: Ribero had been with Columbus in 1502 when the admiral discovered this territory, and assured Nicuesa that they had already passed the old settlement of Belen in Veragua. Nicuesa, relying on a chart in his possession made by the Adelantado, Don Bartolomé Colon, refused to believe this, and still continued westward. The result of this conflict of opinion was that Ribero, having brought the whole party on to an island situated probably at the entrance to Chiriqui Bay, left them there, and then turned back eastward in search of Belen. This point he duly made, and there found Olano, who after all had not been lost in the storm, as well as Cueto, who had come up from Misas with the other ships. On the site of the dismantled Belen they had already started to build a new settlement, and they were also searching for gold in the surrounding country; but the circumstances were unpropitious, and they had begun to suffer greatly from floods, disease, and lack of food.

On the arrival of Ribero with intelli-

gence of the whereabouts of Nicuesa, a caravel was at once dispatched to bring him and his companions off. They were in a pitiable condition and had practically abandoned hope, when the welcome sight of the caravel greeted their gaze. Arrived at Belen, Nicuesa immediately threw Olano into chains as a deserter, and then, with not more than half his original force, set sail in an easterly direction and entered the harbor of Puerto Bello. Here several of his men were killed by Indians, and, frightened at the prospect, the harassed mariners still continued eastward in a search of a place to settle. At length they entered a harbor, from which the country seemed fertile and the coast suitable for a fort, and Nicuesa exclaimed: "*Paremos aquí, en el nombre de Dios.*" ("Let us stay here, in the name of God.") The words seemed of good augury: Nombre de Dios they called their settlement, and Nombre de Dios it is to this day. Huts and a blockhouse were quickly run up, and thus was founded the first permanent Spanish settlement in Tierra Firme. But disease lurked there too, deaths were frequent, provisions were scarce, and the remnant of the colony vented their discontent in murmurings and reproaches directed against Nicuesa.

This was the condition of affairs when Colmenares and the ambassadors from Enciso's colony arrived at Nombre de Dios, and invited Nicuesa to go to Antigua to rule.

Nicuesa was none too diplomatic, or perhaps his sufferings had made him forgetful of the requirements of ordinary prudence, and thus, instead of expressions of gratitude for the honor done him and the deference and attention paid him, his talk was all of driving the Ojeda colonists out of Antigua, of deposing their officers, and of forcing them to disgorge their gold. These sentiments, reported in advance at Antigua by the self-same ambassadors who had gone forth with the invitation, caused a complete revulsion of feeling there; and the colonists decided not to receive the governor. Balboa, who was the first to propose this course, appears to have done his best afterwards to save him; but the obstinacy and folly of Nicuesa proved his own undoing. With seventeen of his adherents, the governor of Castilla del Oro was turned adrift in a crazy and leaky ship on March 1, 1511, and from that day he disappears from the page of history forever. What was his ultimate fate, whether he perished by land or sea, or, as was once reported, was eaten by Indians, no one has yet been able with certainty to tell.

CHAPTER III

DISCOVERY OF THE SOUTH SEA

BALBOA IN COMMAND—ENCISO AND ZAMUDIO GO TO SPAIN—BALBOA SUBJUGATES THE SURROUNDING NATIVES—PANCIACO TELLS HIM ABOUT PERU AND THE SOUTH SEA—BALBOA APPOINTED LIEUTENANT IN TIERRA FIRME—DEATH OF VALDIVIA—BALBOA SEEKS THE GOLDEN TEMPLE OF DABAIBA—DEFEATS A CONFEDERATION OF NATIVE CHIEFTAINS—SENDS COLMENARES AND CAICEDO TO SPAIN—HEARS DISQUIETING RUMORS FROM SPAIN—SETS OUT ON HIS MARCH TO THE PACIFIC—OPPOSED BY NATIVE CHIEFTAINS—DISCOVERS THE SOUTH SEA—WADES INTO IT TO TAKE POSSESSION—RETURNS TO ANTIGUA—REPORTS HIS GREAT DISCOVERY TO KING FERDINAND—PROSPERITY OF ANTIGUA.

THE dominant spirit on Tierra Firme was now Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. He made his position more secure, or at least seemed to do so, by allowing Enciso to depart for Spain and inducing Zamudio, his fellow *alcalde*, to accompany him so as to be on the spot to give the necessary corrective to whatever stories Enciso should tell regarding affairs in the western world. At the same time, Valdivia, the *regidor*, was sent to Hispaniola to procure much needed supplies for the colony at Antigua, and, by the judicious use of large quantities of gold entrusted to his care, to curry favor for Balboa with Governor Diego Colon, and with Pasamonte, treasurer of the Spanish king at Santo Domingo. The remnant of Nicuesa's garrison at Nombre de Dios was also invited to come to Antigua and settle there, and Colmenares with two brigantines went and fetched them.

Having thus, at the age of about thirty-five, become sole commander and *de facto* governor of Castilla del Oro, Balboa proceeded to reduce the surrounding natives to subjection, and at the same time to collect from them all the gold and treasure he could. For such an enterprise he was well fitted, and he certainly did wonders. Cemaco, whose village the Spaniards were then occupying, was first attacked, and after he and his four hundred men had sustained a severe defeat, he fled from the onslaught of the dreaded white men. The next important chieftain the Spaniards went against

was Careta, cacique of Cueva, or Coiba, a district about twenty leagues to the westward of Antigua. Careta received his visitors in a friendly manner, but refused to supply them with a large quantity of maize, on the plea that he had not been able to sow any because of a war in which he had been engaged with Ponca, a neighboring chieftain. They pretended to accept his explanation and apparently took their departure. They returned that night, however, attacked the village, slaughtered many of the inhabitants, took Careta and his family prisoners, and carried them back to Antigua. Balboa knew how to fascinate as well as to conquer. He soothed the ruffled feelings of the captive chieftain so effectually that there and then there was formed between them an offensive and defensive alliance, which was cemented by a union made, according to native usage but not after the Spanish fashion, between Balboa and Careta's beautiful daughter. In accordance with the terms of the treaty, Balboa went with eighty or ninety men to join Careta in an expedition against Ponca, who fled and left his lands to be devastated. On his side, Careta caused corn to be planted, in order to supply his new allies with food.

Comagre, cacique of a district about forty leagues still further west from Antigua, who was reputed to be very wealthy and who ruled over about 10,000 persons and could put 3,000 warriors in the field, was the next

to whom attention was devoted. A friendly meeting was arranged, and Balboa visited the princeling in his palace, which was so large and so well built and had ceilings of wood so beautifully carved as to astonish the white men, who had never before seen anything like it in the Indies. Comagre presented his visitors with 4,000 ounces of gold, and as they were weighing it out, with much wrangling, for distribution between the king of Spain and themselves, Panciaco, the chieftain's eldest son, scornfully dashed down the scales and told them of a country of unbounded wealth, with large cities, in which the people ate and drank out of vessels of gold. This country, he said, was in the south, and was to be reached by sailing over an ocean sea, not more than six days' march distant, on which floated large ships with sails and oars like unto the Spaniards' own. This speech, containing so plain a reference to Peru and the South Sea, of both of which the Spaniards now heard for the first time, was destined to have important results. Comagre and many of his people were baptized as Christians, the chieftain receiving the name of Don Fernando, and the white men returned to Antigua well satisfied with the results of their mission and supplied with something new to ponder.

At Antigua they found that Valdivia, true to his trust, had returned from Hispaniola with a cargo of provisions and a commission to Balboa from Governor Diego Colon appointing him his lieutenant in Tierra Firme and governor of Antigua. Towards the close of the year (1511) Valdivia was sent back to Hispaniola for more provisions, and with him also went the king's proportion of the gold so far collected, amounting to 15,000 pesos, but the ship, carried out of her course, was wrecked near Yucatan, the gold was lost, and Valdivia and nineteen men barely managed to escape in the boat without sails, oars, or food. In this helpless condition they were tossed about for thirteen days, during which seven of them died in agony from thirst, and the remaining thirteen were

cast ashore in Yucatan, where Valdivia and four others were fattened, roasted, and either sacrificed to idols or eaten. The others escaped to Jamancana, but only two of them survived until 1519, when Cortés, on his way to the conquest of Mexico, took one of them, named Gerónimo de Aguilar, with him to act as interpreter. The other, Gonzalo Guerrero, had in the meantime become a leader among the natives, had conformed to their usages and customs even to the extent of having his nose and ears bored for the reception of rings, had married an Indian princess, and therefore politely declined the invitation of Cortés to accompany him.

Ignorant of the fate of Valdivia and of the loss of the king's gold, Balboa was meditating much on the information given him by Panciaco regarding the rich land to the south, and the sea by which it was to be reached. His attention was diverted from this subject for awhile, however, by reports which reached him of the great gold-lined temple of Dabaiba, supposed to be distant thirty leagues to the south of Antigua and to be located on the bank of the Atrato River. To sack a building which promised such valuable loot, he led out, early in 1512, a force of one hundred and fifty men. He discovered no temple, however; but on the way he devastated the territories of two chieftains, Albenameche and Abraiba, and of a third, Abibeiba, whose people dwelt in the tops of trees of immense girth, and returned to Antigua. The three aggrieved chieftains and the lord of the land where the golden temple was supposed to be, goaded on by insult and wrong and actual or threatened invasion, and instigated by the restless Cemaco, cacique of Darien, who had old scores of his own to pay off, formed a great confederation, and placed five thousand men in the field to wipe out once and for all the hated strangers. Their plan, which was to attack Antigua secretly and at night, was well laid, but it was foiled because a brave warned his sister, who was a mistress of Balboa, to be out of the town by a certain

night. The infatuated girl, who had the classic name of Fulvia, told her lover, and Balboa, having received details of the projected assault and of the rendezvous of the hostile forces, became the attacker instead of the attacked, and wrought fell destruction among his foes. Many were killed, many made prisoners, and of the latter, several caciques were hanged. The Darien Indians were thus subjugated.

Uneasy at not having heard from or of Valdivia, Balboa thought of going to Spain to put his case before the king in his own way, but the outcry against the project was so great that he abandoned it. Instead he sent Colmenares and Caicedo, two men in whom he had confidence, and, to aid their eloquence on his behalf, he gave into their charge the king's share of the gold taken since the departure of Valdivia, and commissioned them to be careful to report all that they had heard about the South Sea and the rich country to which it gave access. As it was arranged that the two deputies should call at Santo Domingo on the way to Spain, a handsome present of gold was sent to Pasamonte and a diplomatic letter begging his favor and patronage. It was in October, 1512, that this important embassy started from Antigua.

A feud among his own people, which at first threatened serious consequences, having been put down, Balboa at length felt free to take up in earnest the project of the discovery of the South Sea. He had just now a strong motive to do something extremely notable, for by two vessels which, early in 1513, arrived from Hispaniola bearing provisions, a reinforcement of one hundred and fifty men, and a commission to Balboa as Captain-General of the colony from Pasamonte, there also came letters from Zamudio from Spain conveying disquieting intelligence as to the results of Enciso's reports to the Spanish sovereign. The letters told of the rumored recall of Balboa and the appointment of a new governor of Darien. Some splendid exploit, some signal service, some wonderful discovery, Balboa felt, was now the only thing that

could confound his enemies and save him with King Ferdinand. Above all, he must not allow himself to be forestalled by any one else in his enterprise. Whatever he was to do must be done before he was superseded.

Accordingly, on September 1, 1513, he started from Antigua with one hundred and ninety picked men, about 1,000 natives, and a pack of dogs. Going by sea, he landed in Careta's country, and leaving his brigantines and canoes there, he set out on the 6th from the north coast on his march to the Pacific. He made friends with Ponca, and in return received plenty of gold and much valuable information as to easy passes and quickest routes. He was also given a number of reliable guides. Porque, the next chieftain encountered, who was an enemy of Ponca's, ruled in Quarequá, and offered resistance, but the muskets of the Spaniards, their native allies, and, though last not least, the dogs, made short work of the 1,000 warriors of Quarequá. The chieftain and six hundred of his men were killed, many were taken prisoners, and gold in abundance was found alike on the living and on the dead. Ponca's guides were here sent home, and the Quarequá prisoners were pressed into the service. That was on the 24th.

On September 25, Balboa resumed his march, and came to the base of a mountain, from the summit of which the guides assured him a view of the sought-for sea could be obtained. At ten o'clock in the morning he ascended, alone; and when he reached the top, there, before him, lay the South Sea, which he was the first European to behold. His first act was to fall on his knees and thank God for the favor thus vouchsafed him. He then made a signal to his companions, who rushed up the mountain, and saw for themselves the wondrous sight. Then they all joined in singing the *Te Deum*, and Balboa, in the prescribed form, took possession of the sea itself, and all the lands that lay in it, or whose shores it washed, for the crown of Castile. A notary made a written record of the proceedings, and appended to it the names of all the Spaniards present.

Coming down from the mountain and proceeding seaward, Balboa found his passage barred by a cacique named Chiapes; but the muskets, the allies, and the dogs again proved victorious. Chiapes himself escaped, and Balboa, sending after him and using all the charm of manner for which he was noted, made him a firm friend, and received from him a large amount of gold.

On September 29, Balboa, with Chiapes and twenty-six of his own men and a number of Indians, reached the shore. When the incoming tide had covered the sand, Balboa, bearing a banner with a representation of the Virgin and Child on one side and of the arms of Leon and Castile on the other, waded into the sea until it covered his thighs, and in the name of Don Ferdinand and Doña Juana, sovereigns of Castile, of Leon, and of Aragon, took everlasting possession—"until the universal judgment of all mankind"—of those waters and of every shore they touched. It being the feast of St. Michael, he called the nearest water the Gulf of San Miguel, a name it has ever since borne.

From Cocura and Tumaco, local chieftains, Balboa took a heavy toll of gold and pearls. Tumaco and others told him that the land extended indefinitely southward and northward, and that in the south there was a great wealthy nation—the second intimation he received of the existence and riches of Peru. On October 29 he had himself rowed far out into the Gulf of Panama, of which he once more took formal possession in set phrase. To a group of islands where fine pearls were found he gave the name of *Islas de las Perlas*.

He then decided to return by another

route, and after subduing various chieftains on the way and taking heavy booty from them, he arrived in triumph, without the loss of a single man, at Antigua, on January 19, 1514. The feat which he had accomplished, from whatever point of view it is regarded—whether from the smallness of the force, the difficulties surmounted, the shortness of the time, or the results achieved—must be classed as one of the greatest performances of man.

The gold accumulated on this expedition amounted to 40,000 pesos and, after the legal twenty per cent. had been deducted for the king, the rest was fairly divided not only among all the Spanish participants in the march but also those who had remained at Antigua. There were, besides, pearls and cotton cloth. Two hundred and fifty of the purest pearls, in addition to the number required by law, were set aside as a special present to King Ferdinand. In a letter to the monarch written on March 4, 1514, Balboa told of his great exploit. He asked, as was natural enough, that he should be appointed governor of the territory he had discovered, and suggested that ample means should be supplied to him to continue his exploration of the South Sea. The gold, the pearls, the cloth, and the letter were dispatched to Spain about a week after in charge of Pedro de Arbolancha, who arrived at his destination in the following April.

Affairs were now in a fairly settled and peaceful condition in Darien; the natives were either friendly or utterly subdued; and Antigua grew into a prosperous and thriving town. The prospect seemed fair, but it was soon to be disastrously clouded.

CHAPTER IV

BALBOA'S FALL

ENCISO DENOUNCES BALBOA TO THE COUNCIL OF THE INDIES—PEDRO ARIAS DE ÁVILA APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF CASTILLA DEL ORO—HE EASILY FINDS RECRUITS—HE SAILS FOR TIERRA FIRME, 1514—ARRIVAL OF ARBOLANCHA IN SPAIN—CHANGE OF KING FERDINAND'S OPINION OF BALBOA—BALBOA REGARDED IN SPAIN AS A HERO—INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO THE NEW GOVERNOR—RECEPTION OF THE NEW GOVERNOR AT ANTIGUA—LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST BALBOA—HE IS FINED AND IMPRISONED—SUFFERINGS OF THE NEWCOMERS—BALBOA RELEASED—AYORA'S CAMPAIGN—ESTABLISHES SANTA CRUZ—HURTADO SENT IN QUEST OF AYORA—BECERRA'S RAIDS—HIS DEATH—DESTRUCTION OF SANTA CRUZ—ATTEMPTS TO REACH DABAIBA—THEIR FAILURE—GUZMAN FINDS PANAMA—EXPEDITION OF MORALES AND PIZARRO—UNSUCCESSFUL GOLD-HUNT OF BADAJOZ—PEDRARIAS TAKES THE FIELD—FOUNDS THE FORT OF ACLA—ESPINOSA CROSSES THE ISTHMUS—DEFEATS PARIS, BUT FAILS TO CAPTURE THE TREASURE—ESTABLISHES A STATION AT PANAMA—BALBOA APPOINTED ADELANTADO OF THE SOUTH SEA—HIS DESIGNS THWARTED BY PEDRARIAS—RECONCILIATION—BALBOA SETS OUT TO FIND THE SOUTHERN LAND OF GOLD—CROSSES THE ISTHMUS—SAILS SOUTHWARD TWENTY LEAGUES—IS BETRAYED BY GERABITO—BALBOA'S ARREST—TRIAL—EXECUTION—CHARACTER.

IT was most unfortunate for Balboa that Valdivia's ship, which sailed from Antigua late in 1511 with the gold for the king on board, was wrecked and all the cargo lost. Had the gold reached its destination, and the reports of the existence of a great sea and a wealthy nation to the south been received in time, King Ferdinand might have been less willing to listen favorably to the stories detrimental to Balboa which he had already heard and was subsequently to hear from Enciso. Worse still for Balboa was his delay in sending to Spain the news of his actual discovery of the South Sea, and of the confirmation of the rumors as to the rich country to which it gave access. It will be remembered that he arrived back at Antigua from his trans-isthmian march on January 19, 1514, and that it was not until some days after March 4 that Pedro de Arbolancha was dispatched to Spain with the letter containing Balboa's report and the gold, pearls, and cloth for King Ferdinand. Balboa had such strong mo-

tives for haste that this delay seems inexplicable. The most plausible theory that can be advanced to account for it is that Balboa, who, during his return from his great discovery, had contracted a fever from hardships and exposure and was actually borne on a litter to the territory of the friendly chief, Comagre, had, after reaching Antigua, a prolonged illness, which prevented him from acting with his usual promptitude. Whatever the explanation, the truth of the adage that delays are dangerous scarcely ever received a more striking illustration. To the dilatoriness in this case may be probably attributed not only Balboa's untimely death but also many of the woes of which Tierra Firme and Peru were subsequently the victims.

Enciso, who, with Zamudio, had gone to Spain in 1511, was violent in his denunciations both of Balboa and of Zamudio to the Council of the Indies, and either Zamudio was lukewarm in the defense of his fellow alcalde, or else, which is probable enough, he had not the ability to make head for an

absent man against the lawyer-like eloquence and powers of presentation of the Bachiller. At all events, the complaints had their effect, for proceedings in the courts were instituted against Balboa, and he was ordered to pay damages to Enciso; and King Ferdinand was so greatly incensed against him that he determined to supersede him by appointing another governor. The arrival of Colmenares and Caicedo in Spain in May, 1513, might be expected to put a different complexion on affairs; but it must be remembered that, while they brought with them gold for the king, they brought only unconfirmed rumors regarding a strange sea, to reach which, through hostile territory, would require a force of a thousand men. This was very different from conveying the news of its actual discovery; and the king's decision remained therefore unaltered. Accordingly on July 27, 1513, he commissioned Pedro Arias de Ávila as the new governor. The territory assigned to him embraced all Ojeda's province of Nueva Andalucía and that portion of Nicuesa's Castilla del Oro which extended westward as far as Veragua. To the united province thus formed was given the name of Castilla Aurífica, a designation, however, which never came into popular use.

Pedro Arias de Ávila, who is sometimes spoken of as Dávila but more generally as Pedrarias, was a soldier with the rank of colonel. He had served with distinction in the African war in 1509, when Spain made her short-lived conquests in Oran. He had led a gay life as a young man and had been a noted tilter in the ring, whence he derived the titles of *El Galan*, or The Gallant, and *El Justador*, or The Jousting. He was now some seventy years of age, but set about his new undertaking with all the ardor of a man in the prime of life.

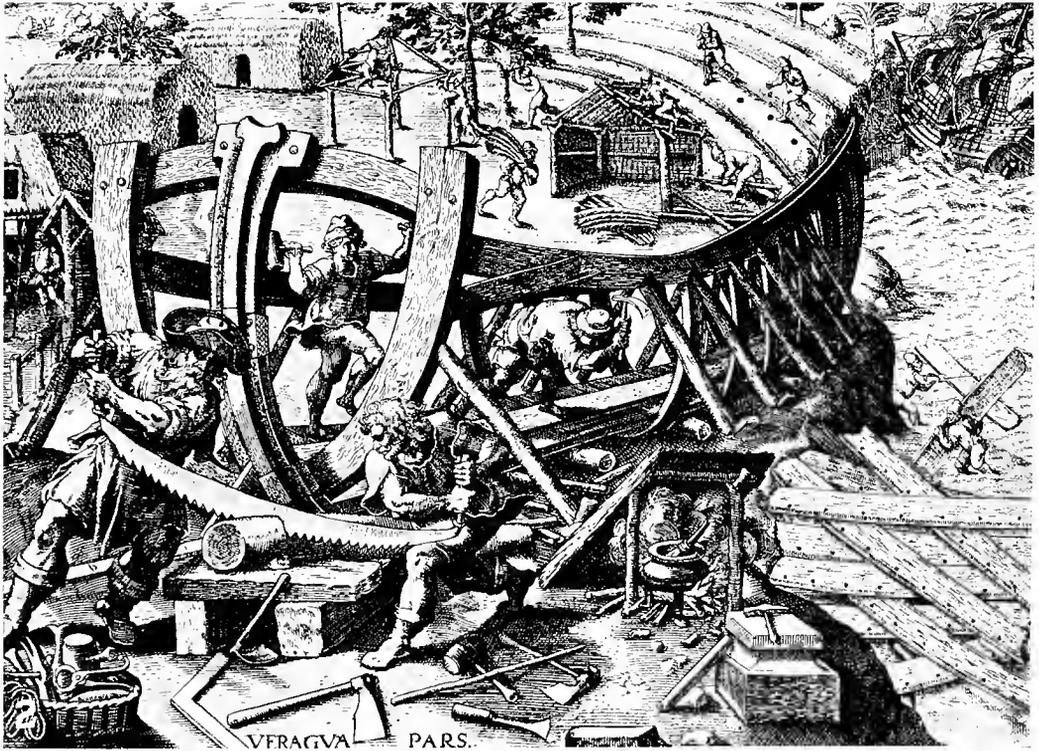
The persistent attachment of mankind to a numerical figure, once it has been quoted, is very remarkable. We now know of course that Balboa had had only 190 Spaniards with him on his expedition, but the size of the force reported by Colmenares

and Caicedo, on the mere estimate of Panciaco, as being necessary to fight its way to the South Sea was accepted as a kind of minimum standard, and caused the number for Pedrarias's undertaking to be fixed at 1,200. On the principle of throwing a sprat to catch a salmon, Ferdinand, despite, or in one sense because of, his love of money, spent 50,000 ducats on the equipment and outfitting of the expedition.

There was no difficulty in finding recruits. The promises of free grants of lands, of distribution of Indian slaves to work them, of ten years' mining privileges subject to a twenty per cent. royalty to the crown, and of free trade in other products, were of themselves sufficiently enticing. To those solid inducements were added the tales told by Balboa's envoys, especially one about a river wherein the natives were wont to fish for gold with nets. No wonder that men saw vistas of conquest and sudden wealth opening out before them. About this time, too, the abandonment by Ferdinand of an expedition to Naples threw thousands of adventurers out of employment, and most of those would have gladly gone with Pedrarias to seek their fortune in the new countries of the west. The result of this combination of circumstances was a rush of volunteers. Pedrarias enrolled three hundred men more than his commission authorized, and still left thousands behind him in sorrowful mood because they were not lucky enough to be selected. After a grand review held on the plaza of Seville, the fleet of eighteen vessels conveying the governor and his men sailed from San Lúcar on April 11, 1514. With him went the licenciado, Gaspar de Espinosa, as *alcalde mayor*; Juan de Quevedo, as the first bishop of Antigua and Castilla del Oro, accompanied by a band of Franciscan friars; Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdés, as *veedor* and *escribano general*; Alonso de la Puente, as treasurer; Diego Marquez, as *contador*; Juan de Tabira, as factor; the Bachiller Enciso, as *alguacil mayor*; Juan de Ayora as governor's lieutenant; several captains; and a number of



1. Panciaco tells Balboa of the South Sea—From De Bry, "India Occidentalis," 1594.
2. Balboa takes possession of the Pacific Ocean.



1. Pizarro, Almagro, and Luques at Panama, planning for the Conquest of Peru.
2. Nicuesa rebuilding his Caravel at Veragua—from De Bry, 1594.

others destined to varying degrees of fame, like Hernando de Soto; Pascual de Andagoya; Bernal Díaz del Castillo; and, though last not least, Diego de Almagro, one of the future conquerors of Peru. In the words of one of its members, Pascual de Andagoya, it was the best equipped company that had ever left Spain.

Not many days afterwards Arbolancha's ship came in—but it was too late. When the king saw the rich cotton stuffs, the gold, and the large and lustrous pearls which Balboa had sent him, and when he heard that the western ocean had been already discovered, that it gave access to new territory for profitable exploitation in the south, and that through it the way was now open to the markets of the east, from which by Pope Alexander's line and the treaty of Tordesillas he had been hitherto barred, his feelings towards Balboa naturally underwent a change, and he deeply regretted the large sum he had unnecessarily expended on the equipment of the expedition of Pedrarias. All such regrets were then, however, vain, for Pedrarias was beyond immediate recall, and was well on his way to his distant province. As for Balboa, he became a hero in Spain, where his discoveries were ranked as being almost equal in importance to those of Columbus himself.

The Council of the Indies, guided by the experience it had had of the dealings of earlier conquistadores, had laid down certain very precise and laudable regulations for the guidance of Pedrarias. He was to have always in view the salvation of the Indians and the spread of the Christian religion; to look well after the conduct of his own people, so that they might be to the natives a fruitful example of the good works inspired by faith; to forbid gambling; to visit with condign punishment blasphemy, theft, and murder; and to be himself gentle, honest, and truthful in all his relations with the aborigines. The precept was splendid: the practice, as we shall see, was something very different.

At Antigua, on the rumors of a change of

government, men's minds were stirred and rendered extremely uneasy. There were some four hundred and fifty Spaniards in residence there, and it was not beyond the bounds of feasibility for them to resist and prevent the landing of the newcomers; and such a policy found many earnest advocates. But Balboa, who was always loyal to properly constituted authority, lent his voice and powerful influence to councils of peace; and the outcome was that it was decided to extend a hearty welcome to Pedrarias and his fifteen hundred. A gorgeously appressed advance envoy from the fleet found Balboa in negligé attire, superintending the thatching of a house by natives. Through this envoy a pleasant message was conveyed to those who sent him, and on June 30, 1514, Pedrarias, disembarking at some distance from Antigua, headed a procession to the town. He had on one side his wife, Doña Isabel, and on the other Juan de Quevedo, the bishop, and he was followed by his alcalde mayor, his veedor and escribano general, his treasurer, and other functionaries in order of precedence and rank. The friars chanted the *Te Deum*. The gay garb and fresh complexions of the visitors formed a strong contrast to the well-worn clothes and sun-tanned faces of the older colonists. The meeting of Balboa and Pedrarias left nothing to be desired in point of cordiality. Balboa's manner was, as usual, perfect, and the new governor, dissembling his real feelings, complimented the discoverer of the South Sea on his successes; and all seemed well.

The formal preliminaries of installation over, Pedrarias asked Balboa for a written report of his experiences and performances and of the possibilities of the country. With this request Balboa gladly complied. He devoted two whole days to the drawing up of the document, and with rare single-mindedness omitted nothing that could serve for the future guidance of his chief.

Then, with the needed information in his possession, Pedrarias made a sudden change of front. Suit was entered against Balboa for damages done to Enciso, Nicuesa, and

others, and he was condemned both to fine and imprisonment. More drastic punishment still might have been inflicted but for two reasons: first, both the *alcalde mayor* and the bishop were friendly to Balboa and used their influence, which was powerful, to save him from the effects of the jealousy of Pedrarias; and, secondly, it seemed probable that the time was not far distant when Balboa's experience and personality would once more prove useful to his compatriots, for the newcomers soon found themselves in a miserable plight. The climate played havoc with their health, a great portion of the provisions they had brought was spoiled and rendered unfit for use, and the influx of so large a body of colonists to a settlement where food was already scanty enough caused a dearth, from which resulted the loss of many lives. Disease and famine combined produced, it is said, the almost incredible number of seven hundred deaths inside of the first three or four months. About a hundred of the colonists, taking alarm, left for Cuba under Bernal Díaz del Castillo and afterwards had a share in the conquest of Mexico. Pedrarias himself sickened and had to retire for a period from Antigua to a more salubrious locality. Things were thus in a very unsatisfactory condition, when a command came from King Ferdinand that posts were to be established across the isthmus from ocean to ocean, that a new settlement was to be established on the Gulf of San Miguel, and that a small fleet was to be equipped and to proceed immediately to explore the South Sea. It was obviously no time to keep a practical man of affairs in captivity, and Balboa was accordingly released in consideration of past and future services.

To Juan de Ayora, the governor's lieutenant, with four hundred men, was entrusted at the outset the duty of setting up the line of posts. The first one was duly erected in the territory of the chief Pocorosa, and was called Santa Cruz. Thereafter, however, Ayora thought more of enriching himself at the expense of the natives than of going on with the business on which

he had been sent. Terrible tales were told of his treatment of the Indians. He tortured the caciques in order to extract information regarding their treasures; he hanged them, roasted them alive, threw them living to his dogs, and devised all sorts of torments for them. He did not spare even the chiefs of whom Balboa had previously made friends. Having devastated the country in all directions for several months, he left a garrison of eighty men in Santa Cruz, and proceeded to establish a second post in the territory of Tubanamá. Leaving a garrison there also, he abandoned his task, and hastened back to Antigua with the gold and slaves he had accumulated. To prevent too nice an inquiry into his proceedings, he presented the slaves to those in authority, and then he and his intimates seized a ship, made off with their ill-gotten gold, and Ayora never set foot in Darien again.

Sometime before Ayora's reappearance at Antigua, the governor, alarmed at his protracted absence, sent out Bartolomé Hurtado to find him. Hurtado did discover the missing lieutenant, and then proceeded to organize a campaign of plunder on his own account. He used such effective and prompt measures that he acquired a quantity of gold, brought in a hundred Indians as slaves, and was back in Antigua before the man he went out to seek. He, too, made presents of some of his slaves in the right quarter, and, after the king's proportion of the spoil was taken out, Hurtado and his associates were allowed to keep the remainder.

Another raider of renown was Francisco Becerra. He brought in so much gold and so many captives, and distributed his spoils so lavishly and with such sound judgment, that he was placed in command of a troop of 180 men and sent to Cenú, to avenge the deaths of forty-eight Spaniards who had been cut off there some short time previously. It was a fatal honor. The Indians attacked his party with poisoned arrows, and killed them to a man as they were fording a stream, a native servant of Becerra's being the only one to escape to tell the tale.

The Indians throughout Darien, goaded to madness by the cruelties to which they were subjected and encouraged by their scattered successes, were now very aggressive against the white men. The garrison at Santa Cruz had great difficulty in maintaining its supply of provisions, for every time foraging parties ventured forth they were waylaid and had to fight their way back. When a Spaniard was unfortunate enough to be taken prisoner, the Indians, acting as the Parthian general Surena had done with Marcus Licinius Crassus, put him to death by pouring melted gold down his throat, at the same time shouting, "Eat the gold, Christian! Take your fill of gold!" At length, about six months after its establishment, Pocosora, aided, if we are to believe Oviedo, by the hitherto friendly Panciaco, attacked and captured Santa Cruz, and put its defenders to death. Not more than five, if so many, escaped.

But despite the dangers by which they were surrounded, the Spaniards did not think of desisting from their quest for gold. In particular, they found the tales of the Golden Temple of Dabaiba an irresistible lure. An expedition of two hundred men under the joint command of Luis Carrillo and Vasco Nuñez de Balboa was sent in canoes up the river Atrato, in June, 1515, to locate this wondrous gold-hoard. The natives bided their time, and at a strategic point rowed out in their own canoes from the screen of foliage on the river bank, and, diving under the Spaniards' boats, overturned them. The attack was so sudden and so fierce that half of the invaders, including Carrillo himself, were drowned or otherwise killed. Balboa then abandoned the enterprise, and brought the survivors back to Antigua.

Another attempt was made on Dabaiba by Juan de Tabira, the factor, and Juan de Birues, the inspector, who took with them one hundred and sixty men in three brigantines and several canoes. Almost as a matter of course, they, too, were attacked by the natives, who used their former tactics; but the brigantines were too heavy

to be overturned, and the attack was repulsed. This did not mean ultimate success, however, for a great flood, suddenly rising, swamped some of the vessels, and the two leaders and many of their men were drowned. We now once more meet Francisco Pizarro. He was on this river expedition, and, on the death of the two commanders, was offered the leadership, if he would continue on to Dabaiba; but, thinking discretion the better part of valor, he prudently declined the dangerous honor, and the decimated and disappointed gold-seekers made their way back to Antigua as best they could. Other attempts were subsequently made to reach Dabaiba, but they all resulted in failure, and the Golden Temple, if it ever existed, was never found.

Notwithstanding all manifestations of hostility, however, or other preoccupations, it was the obvious duty of Pedrarias to take steps to complete the line of forts across the isthmus, and it was a duty that could not with impunity be shirked. Accordingly, for that purpose, Captain Antonio Tello de Guzman, at the head of a hundred men, was sent out from Antigua in November, 1515. He arrived at Ayora's second fort just in time to save it from the fate of Santa Cruz, for Meneses, the commander, and his little garrison were closely beleaguered by the enraged natives. Abandoning the fort and taking with him the men he had so opportunely rescued, Guzman continued his route towards the Pacific Ocean. During his progress he appears to have given more attention to collecting gold than to erecting forts. As he advanced, he kept hearing of a place called Panama, and concluded that it must be a town of some size and importance, where loot in plenty could be obtained. He was the first white man to visit the future site of Old Panama; but great was his disappointment when he found that it was only a small fishing village. As a matter of fact, Panama is an Indian word signifying "the place of fish" or "the place abounding in fish." This was the terminus of his journey; and after resting here, and sending

Diego de Albites and eighty men to exact tribute from the neighboring province of Chagre, he turned his steps back to headquarters at Antigua. He had great difficulty in getting there, for Pocosora, fresh from his sack of Santa Cruz, hung on his flanks and rear, his braves waving in the faces of their foes the blood-stained shirts of the Spaniards they had so recently slain.

Another expedition of eighty men, under Gaspar de Morales and Francisco Pizarro, was dispatched to the Pacific Coast in this same year, but its object was political and predatory rather than administrative. In recognition of Balboa's services, King Ferdinand had appointed him Adelantado of the South Sea and captain-general of the provinces of Coiba and Panama, but Pedrarias, to whom the formal document in the first instance came, being filled with envy of his subordinate and not wishing to see him raised to a rank nearly equal to his own, so arranged matters that the commission did not go into effect for a time. In sending out Morales he had in view the twofold object of belittling as far as he could Balboa's past performances, and of forestalling him in the matter of collecting pearls from the islands of the Pacific, and securing power on the shores of the South Sea. When Morales reached the Pacific Coast, he made war on Dites, who ruled over the Pearl Islands, and the fight would probably have been a prolonged one but for the intervention of two chieftains, who were friendly to the Spaniards, and who told Dites that it was impossible to resist the white men, and that it would be better policy for him to submit. Submit he accordingly did, and, in exchange for a few trinkets, he handed over a number of very large and beautiful pearls. He also became a Christian, and agreed to pay an annual tribute of one hundred marks of pearls. Morales performed the other part of his mission by once more taking possession of the South Sea for the King of Spain, and by changing the name given by Balboa to the principal island of the Pearl Island group from Isla Rica to Isla de Flores. He

succeeded in getting his men and treasure safely back to Antigua, but he had to fight hard all the way, and he left a trail of slaughter behind him. If records are to be credited, he on one occasion killed seven hundred Indians in one hour, and on another he caused eighteen chieftains, called to a friendly council, to be torn to pieces by his dogs.

Another expedition to the South Sea, consisting of one hundred and thirty men under Gonzalo de Badajoz, had at first great success in collecting gold and treasure. Among the chiefs who voluntarily or involuntarily contributed to his takings were Totonagua, Tataracherubi, Natá, Escoria, Biruquete, Taracuri, Panamomé, Tabor, Chirú, and Parizao Pariba, usually called Paris. Paris was wily as well as powerful, and, having by a ruse separated the Spaniards into two parties, he fell upon one of them with four thousand warriors and had almost cut it to pieces before the arrival of the other. The fight then waxed fiercer, but eventually the Spaniards, having lost more than half their number, were forced to abandon all their treasure and take to flight. The remnant reached the South Sea, rested for a month on one of the islands, and then returned by another route, empty-handed, to Antigua.

Pedrarias at length took the field himself. With three hundred men he sailed first to the territory of Cenú, and directed Hurtado with a force of two hundred to effect a landing and burn the village. These orders were duly carried out, many natives were killed, and some taken prisoners. Sail was then set for the territory of Careta. Here was a port named Acla, or "Bones of Men," from which there started a rough trail across the country, and here Pedrarias, intending to erect a new line of posts to the Pacific, began the building of a fort to take the place of destroyed Santa Cruz. While the work was in progress Pedrarias was taken ill with a fever, and he had to be borne back in haste to Antigua.

The command then devolved on Gaspar

de Espinosa, the *alcalde mayor*, who, leaving Gabriel de Rojas with a small force to complete and garrison the fort, proceeded to cross the isthmus on his own account. He began his march by meting out severe punishment to those subjects of Pocosora who were thought to have had a hand in the destruction of Santa Cruz. Hanging them, burning them, and blowing them from the mouth of a cannon were the methods he adopted. He then crossed to Panama, collecting treasure as he went. Meeting the unfortunate Badajoz returning as a despoiled spoiler, he learned from him of all the treasure which had been abandoned to Paris, and thinking both that this was a matter worth seeing to and that Paris was likely to prove a formidable opponent, he wrote to Pedrarias urging him to send reinforcements without delay. In the meantime he raided the territories of Chirú and Natá, and secured much gold from both. From Natá he learned that Paris had kept for himself all the treasure which Badajoz had left behind in his headlong flight, and in July, 1516, Espinosa started to attack Paris. His coming was not unexpected, and the *alcalde mayor* found himself opposed by a powerful combination of native chieftains. A great battle was fought, in which, thanks mainly to their horses and dogs, the Spaniards were victorious. A number of caciques and hundreds of men were slain, but Paris escaped. The next day reinforcements numbering one hundred arrived from Antigua, and a chase after the missing chieftain was begun; but when they came to his village, the bird had flown. The village was in ashes, and Paris and his people, with the much-coveted treasure, had taken refuge in the hill country, where all efforts to locate him resulted in failure. Baffled in their quest, the Spaniards then gave their attention to extensive exploration by land and sea, accompanied of course by the collection of gold. Finally, in 1517, Espinosa having established at Panama the southern station of the line of posts that was to cross the isthmus, and having left

Hernando Ponce de Leon with a small garrison to defend it, returned to Antigua with 8,000 pesos of gold and 2,000 slaves.

While all these things were going on, Balboa, who had been made aware of his appointment as *Adelantado* of the South Sea, and who was anxious to be up and doing in that capacity, sent secretly to Cuba to secure men, arms, and provisions for an expedition. His messenger brought back seventy men and ample stores, and put into a small bay a few miles from Antigua. Pedrarias, hearing of the project, had Balboa arrested and confined in a large iron cage. Then Bishop Quevedo intervened and patched up a truce between the two. Balboa agreed to abate some of his pretensions as *Adelantado*, to put away his Indian wife, and to marry the eldest daughter of Pedrarias. This young lady was then in a convent in Spain, but the affair was arranged for her by her parents. Balboa was now free to set about the execution of his cherished design of the thorough exploration of the South Sea. He first (1516) went to Acla, where he found that the fort erected by Pedrarias had been destroyed by the Indians, and its commander and some of his men killed. Balboa immediately laid out a new settlement, and had already established there some form of civic government when Espinosa arrived on his return from his conquering raids. Balboa accompanied him to Antigua, and induced two hundred of the *alcalde mayor's* tried men to attach themselves to the force that he was raising. At Acla, in 1517, he collected materials for four brigantines to be used on the South Sea, and these materials he caused to be carried by an immense number of natives for twenty-two leagues to the headwaters of the Rio de las Balsas. It was a tremendous undertaking; every one was hard driven; provisions were scarce; and from 500 to 2,000 Indians are said to have perished in the unaccustomed work of transportation. When the parts came to be put together, it was found that much of the timber was worm-eaten and could not be used; a flood, which was so great that the

men had to climb trees to escape it, carried away more; and altogether it was possible to construct only two brigantines. In these, however, Balboa and his party sailed down the river into the Gulf of San Miguel and out into the Pacific.

It was a great feat, which one of the old chroniclers says no one but Balboa could have accomplished. For all that, we are inclined to wonder why at least the timber for the brigantines could not have been procured as easily on the shores of the Pacific as on the shores of the Atlantic, especially as we are told that, while the explorers were resting among the Pearl Islands, they constructed two more brigantines.

At all events, Balboa had now four vessels in the South Sea, and in them he set out with a hundred picked men to look for the country where the people ate and drank from vessels of gold. They had sailed about twenty leagues when they ran into a school of whales—an untoward incident that so frightened everybody that they incontinently put into a convenient harbor on the mainland. The cacique here, who was named Chuchaumá, was hostile, and made an attack on the Spaniards, but he and his men were beaten off with great loss. Balboa wished to continue his southward journey, but encountered winds so adverse that he was perforce obliged to return to the Pearl Islands.

Here he received disquieting intelligence. A rumor was afloat that in consequence of complaints made by Oviedo, the veedor and escribano general, who had gone to Spain in 1515, Pedrarias was to be superseded by a new governor. Such a change would fit in badly with Balboa's plans, as he was afraid that, under a new régime, he would not be allowed to continue his quest, and that thus the fruit of all his precedent labors would be lost. He said as much to his friends, Valderrábano, the notary, and Rodrigo Perez, a priest; and, unluckily, the conversation was partly overheard by a sentinel, who construed what reached him to mean that Balboa proposed to fight for his own hand, and to throw off allegiance to

Pedrarias or any other governor who might stand in the way of his great ambition.

There is no doubt that Balboa acted imprudently in talking as he did. Worse still was a stupid little plot which he concocted, and which eventually proved his undoing. As he needed some pitch and iron for his brigantines, he dispatched four men to Acla to fetch them, charging them at the same time to learn how the matter stood regarding the change of governors. If the new one had arrived, they were to return at once and hand him a forged commission, which he could use to induce his command to accompany him without fear or misgiving on the southward journey he had in contemplation. If Pedrarias were still in office, they were simply to secure the iron and pitch, and no document would be necessary. Now, one of those messengers, named Andrés Garabito, was jealous of the favors Balboa had received from Careta's beautiful daughter, and had already sent word to Pedrarias from the Rio de las Balsas that it was Balboa's intention, once he reached the South Sea, to act independently of the governor. To make the old man's resentment all the deeper, Garabito had added that the Adelantado was so smitten with the charms of his dusky mistress that he would never wed the governor's daughter. At Acla it was soon learned that, even if a new governor had been appointed, he had not yet arrived. Then Garabito saw his way plain to ruin the man who was his successful rival in love. In public he talked in a mysterious way and threw out sundry hints as to what Balboa and his friends, himself included, intended to do. This action led to his arrest, as he had planned, and he then told the whole story of the plot. Confirmation of a portion of it was soon obtained from the eavesdropping sentinel; and Pedrarias, with fate thus playing into his hands, determined that Balboa should die.

At this juncture he received a letter from Balboa asking for an extension of time, as the eighteen months allowed him had now elapsed. At the same time Balboa wrote

to one Fernando de Arguëllo, a notary, who had embarked some capital in his expedition, urging him to use his influence to secure the time extension asked for. To Arguëllo Pedrarias would make no promise, and the notary thereupon wrote to that effect to Balboa and simultaneously counselled him to sail at once for the rich south-land. This letter never reached its destination, for Pedrarias took care to intercept it and master its contents. Pedrarias then acted with great astuteness and deliberation. He first arrested Arguëllo and others of Balboa's friends. Then, to get the Adelantado away from his little army of three hundred, who might have made trouble, he wrote in a very friendly spirit a reply to his letter, and asked him to come to Acla for a conference. The unsuspecting Balboa at once complied with the request. Leaving Francisco Compañón in command at the Pearl Islands, he set out for Acla. On the way he was warned by the messengers who accompanied him of the danger that threatened him, but, with characteristic trust and, let it be added, obstinacy, he refused to credit their statements, and so went forward to his doom. When he had compassed more than half the journey, he was met by a force sent out to arrest him under the command of Francisco Pizarro. It was the irony of fate that this base-born and unlettered man should have been chosen to make prisoner of a hidalgo and conquistador of the standing of Balboa. "What is this, Francisco Pizarro?" said Balboa; "you were not wont to come out in this fashion to receive me." It was stern fact, however, and the discoverer and Adelantado of the South Sea was taken to Acla in irons by the subordinate who was destined to supplant his former commander in the glory of the discovery and conquest of Peru.

Balboa was speedily brought to trial. He was accused of being a traitor and of making usurpation on the rights of the crown, and the former accusations regarding Enciso and Nicuesa were also brought

up against him. His pleas of innocence were of no avail, and Espinosa, as alcalde mayor, found him guilty and liable to the penalty of death; but recommended him to mercy on account of his great public services. The recommendation, however, fell on deaf ears: Pedrarias was not to be balked of his prey. It was unfortunate for Balboa that at this time both Oviedo and Bishop Quevedo were in Spain, for the claim made by the condemned man to the right of appeal to the Council of the Indies and, failing that, to the Jeronimite Fathers at Santo Domingo, although strongly urged by Espinosa, was rejected by Pedrarias, who ordered an immediate execution. "Since he has sinned," said the hoary old reprobate, "let him die for it." Accordingly, on the plaza of Acla, Balboa and his four friends, Andrés de Valderrábano, Hernan Muñoz, Fernando de Arguëllo, and Luis Botello, after receiving the last rites of their church, were straightway beheaded on April 16, 1517. Pedrarias viewed the bloody spectacle from behind a screen of reeds. Balboa's head was stuck on a pole in the plaza and there allowed to wither away.

So perished, in his forty-second year, the noblest and perhaps the ablest of the Spanish conquistadores. He had proved his bravery on many a hard-fought field and his judgment in many a soul-trying crisis. His relations with the Indians of Tierra Firme, although sometimes harsh, yet showed that tact in dealing with men, and especially with conquered foes, which is one of the genuine marks of a great statesman. He had made mistakes, it is true; but they were mainly the mistakes to which a generous nature is liable. Whatever his mistakes, and whatever his vices—and they appear to have been few—they are forgotten in the glory of his positive achievements and in the tragic ending to a life apparently so full of the promise of greater things to come. On the page of history a bright halo must forever encircle the name of the famous but unfortunate Vasco Nuñez de Balboa.