

killed. After four days' sail we came in sight of the land of Florida, and what happened to us there I will tell next.

CHAPTER VI.

How twenty of us soldiers went ashore in the Bay of Florida, in company with the Pilot Alaminos, to look for water, and the attack that the natives of the land made on us, and what else happened before we returned to Havana.

WHEN we reached Florida it was arranged that twenty of the soldiers, those whose wounds were best healed, should go ashore. I went with them, and also the Pilot, Anton de Alaminos, and we carried with us such vessels as we still possessed, and hoes, and our crossbows and guns. As the Captain was very badly wounded, and much weakened by the great thirst he had endured, he prayed us on no account to fail in bringing back fresh water as he was parching and dying of thirst, for, as I have already said, the water we had on board was salt and not fit to drink.

We landed near a creek which opened towards the sea, and the Pilot Alaminos carefully examined the coast and said that he had been at this very spot when he came on a voyage of discovery with Juan Ponce de Leon and that the Indians of the country had attacked them and had killed many soldiers, and that it behoved us to keep a very sharp look out. We at once posted two soldiers as sentinels while we dug deep holes on a broad beach where we thought we should find fresh water, for at that hour the tide had ebbed. It pleased God that we should come on very good water, and so overjoyed were we that what with satiating our thirst, and washing out cloths with which to bind up wounds, we must have stayed there an hour. When, at last, very well satisfied, we wished to go

on board with the water, we saw one of the soldiers whom we had placed on guard coming towards us crying out, "to arms, to arms! many Indian warriors are coming on foot and others down the creek in canoes." The soldier who came shouting, and the Indians reached us nearly at the same time.

These Indians carried very long bows and good arrows and lances, and some weapons like swords, and they were clad in deerskins and were very big men. They came straight on and let fly their arrows and at once wounded six of us, and to me they dealt a slight arrow wound. However, we fell on them with such rapidity of cut and thrust of sword and so plied the crossbows and guns that they left us to ourselves and set off to the sea and the creek to help their companions who had come in the canoes and were fighting hand to hand with the sailors, whose boat was already captured and was being towed by the canoes up the creek, four of the sailors being wounded, and the Pilot Alaminos badly hurt in the throat. Then we fell upon them, with the water above our waists, and at the point of the sword, we made them abandon the boat. Twenty of the Indians lay dead on the shore or in the water, and three who were slightly wounded we took prisoners, but they died on board ship.

As soon as the skirmish was over we asked the soldier who had been placed on guard what had become of his companion Berrio (for so he was named). He replied that he had seen him go off with an axe in his hand to cut down a small palm tree, and that he went towards the creek, whence the Indian warriors had approached us, that he then heard cries in Spanish, and on that account he had hurried towards us to give us warning, and it was then that his companion must have been killed.

The soldier who had disappeared was the only man who had escaped unwounded from the fight at Potonchan¹ and it was his fate to come on here to die. We at once set to work to search for our soldier along the trail made by the Indians who had attacked us. We found a palm tree partly cut through, and near by the ground was much trampled by footsteps more than in other parts, and as there was no trace of blood we took it for certain that they had carried him off alive. We searched and shouted all round about for more than an hour, but finding no trace of him we got into the boats and carried the fresh water to the ship, at which the soldiers were as overjoyed as though we had given them their lives. One soldier jumped from the ship into the boat, so great was his thirst, and clasping a jar of water to his chest drank so much water that he swelled up and died within two days.

As soon as we had got the water on board and had hauled up the boats, we set sail for Havana, and during the next day and night the weather was fair and we were near some Islands called *Los Martires* among the shoals called the shoals of the Martyrs. Our deepest soundings gave four fathoms, and the flagship struck the ground when going between the Islands and made water fast, and with all of us soldiers working at the pumps we were not able to check it, and we were in fear of foundering.

We had some Levantine sailors on board with us, and we called to them, "Comrades, come and help to work the pump, for you can see that we are all badly wounded and weary from working day and night." And the Levantines answered, "Do it yourselves, for we do not get any pay as you do, but only hunger and thirst, toil and wounds." So then we made them help us with the work.

¹ Chanpoton.

Ill and wounded as we were we managed to trim the sails and work the pump until our Lord carried us into the Port of Carenas,¹ where now stands the city of Havana, but it used to be called *Puerto de Carenas*, and when we got to land we gave thanks to God.

I must remember to say that when we got to Havana, a Portuguese diver who happened to be in that port soon got the water out of the flagship.

We wrote in great haste to the Governor of the Island, Diego Velásquez, telling him that we had discovered thickly-peopled countries, with masonry houses, and people who covered their persons and went about clothed in cotton garments, and who possessed gold and who cultivated maize fields, and other matters which I have forgotten.

From Havana our Captain Francisco Hernández went by land to the town of Santispíritus, for so it is called, of which he was a citizen, and where he had his Indians ; but he was so badly wounded that he died within ten days.

Three soldiers died of their wounds in Havana, and all the rest of us dispersed and went some to one and some to other parts of the Island. The ships went on to Santiago where the Governor was living, and the two Indians whom we captured at Cape Catoche, whom we named Melchorejo and Julianillo were sent on shore, as were also the little chest with the diadems and the ducks and little fish and other articles of gold and the many idols. These showed such skilful workmanship that the fame of them travelled throughout the Islands including Santo Domingo and Jamaica and even reached Spain. It was said that better lands had never been discovered in the world ; and when the pottery idols with so many different

¹ The Havana of to-day.

shapes were seen, it was said that they belonged to the Gentiles, and others said that they were the work of the Jews whom Titus and Vespasian had turned out of Jerusalem and sent to sea in certain ships which had carried them to this land which as Peru was as yet undiscovered (indeed it was not discovered for another twenty years) was held in high estimation.

There was another matter about which Diego Velásquez questioned these Indians, whether there were gold mines in their country, and to all his questions they answered by signs "Yes." They were shown gold dust, and they said that there was much of it in their land, and they did not speak the truth, for it is clear that neither at Cape Catoche nor in all Yucatan are there any mines either of gold or of silver. These Indians were also shown the mounds of earth in which the plants are set, from the roots of which Cassava bread is made. This plant is called *Yuca* in the Island of Cuba and the Indians said that it grew in their country, and they said *Tlati* for so they call the ground in which the roots are planted; and, because *Yuca* and *Tlati* would make *Yucatan* the Spaniards who had joined in the conversation between Diego Velásquez and the Indians, said, "Señor, these Indians say that their country is called *Yucutlan*"; so it kept that name, but in their own language they do not call it by that name.

I must leave this subject and say that all of us soldiers who went on that voyage of discovery spent the little we possessed on it and we returned to Cuba wounded and in debt. So each soldier went his own way, and soon afterwards our captain died, and we were a long time recovering from our wounds, and according to our count, fifty-seven soldiers died, and this was all the profit we gained by that expedition and discovery. But Diego Velásquez wrote to the Lords Councillors who were at that time managing the Royal Council of the Indies, to say that he had made

the discovery, and had expended on the expedition a great number of gold dollars, and so it was stated and published by Don Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos and Archbishop of Rosano (for thus he was called) who was President of the Council of the Indies, and he wrote to that effect to His Majesty in Flanders, giving much credit in his letters to Diego Velásquez, and he made no mention of us who made the discovery. Now I must stop, and I will tell later about the hardships which befel me and three other soldiers.

CHAPTER VII.

About the hardships I endured on the way to a town called
Trinidad.

I HAVE already said that some of us soldiers who had not yet recovered from our wounds remained in Havana, and when we had got better three of us soldiers wished to go to the town of Trinidad, and we arranged to go with a certain Pedro de Ávila, a resident in Havana who was going to make the voyage in a canoe along the southern coast.¹ The canoe was laden with cotton shirts which Pedro de Ávila intended to sell at the town of Trinidad.

I have already said that the canoes are made like hollow troughs, and in these countries they are used for paddling along the coasts.

The arrangement we made with Avila was that we should give him ten gold dollars to take us in his canoe. So we set out along the coast, sometimes rowing and sometimes sailing, and after eleven days travelling, when near a village of friendly Indians, called Canarreo, which

¹ Bernal Díaz crossed overland to San Cristóval de Havana—the Havana of that time—situated on the south coast (on the river Onicaxinal, see *Orozco y Berra*, vol. iv., p. 71), and thence took canoe to Trinidad.