



**VOYAGES AND
DISCOVERIES OF
THE COMPANIONS
OF COLUMBUS**

**WASHINGTON IRVING
COMPLETE ANNOTATED EDITION**

Voyages And Discoveries Of The Companions Of Columbus

Washington Irving

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*Voyages And Discoveries Of The Companions Of Columbus,
W. Irving*

*Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck
86450 Altenmünster, Loschberg 9
Germany*

ISBN: 9783849642068

Edited and revised by Juergen Beck.

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Washington Irving - A Biographical Primer

Washington Irving (1783-1859), American man of letters, was born at New York on the 3rd of April 1783. Both his parents were immigrants from Great Britain, his father, originally an officer in the merchant service, but at the time of Irving's birth a considerable merchant, having come from the Orkneys, and his mother from Falmouth. Irving was intended for the legal profession, but his studies were interrupted by an illness necessitating a voyage to Europe, in the course of which he proceeded as far as Rome, and made the acquaintance of Washington Allston. He was called to the bar upon his return, but made little effort to

practice, preferring to amuse himself with literary ventures. The first of these of any importance, a satirical miscellany entitled *Salmagundi, or the Whim-Whams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff and others*, written in conjunction with his brother William and J. K. Paulding, gave ample proof of his talents as a humorist. These were still more conspicuously displayed in his next attempt, *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*, by "Diedrich Knickerbocker" (2 vols., New York, 1809). The satire of *Salmagundi* had been principally local, and the original design of "Knickerbocker's" History was only to burlesque a pretentious disquisition on the history of the city in a guidebook by Dr Samuel Mitchell. The idea expanded as Irving proceeded, and he ended by not merely satirizing the pedantry of local antiquaries, but by creating a distinct literary type out of the solid Dutch burgher whose phlegm had long been an object of ridicule to the mercurial Americans. Though far from the most finished of Irving's productions, "Knickerbocker" manifests the most original power, and is the most genuinely national in its quaintness and drollery. The very tardiness and prolixity of the story are skillfully made to heighten the humorous effect.

Upon the death of his father, Irving had become a sleeping partner in his brother's commercial house, a branch of which was established at Liverpool. This, combined with the restoration of peace, induced him to visit England in 1815, when he found the stability of the firm seriously compromised. After some years of ineffectual struggle it became bankrupt. This misfortune compelled Irving to resume his pen as a means of subsistence. His reputation had preceded him to England, and the curiosity naturally excited by the then unwonted apparition of a successful American author procured him admission into the highest literary circles, where his popularity was ensured by his

amiable temper and polished manners. As an American, moreover, he stood aloof from the political and literary disputes which then divided England. Campbell, Jeffrey, Moore, Scott, were counted among his friends, and the last-named zealously recommended him to the publisher Murray, who, after at first refusing, consented (1820) to bring out *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (7 pts., New York, 1819-1820). The most interesting part of this work is the description of an English Christmas, which displays a delicate humor not unworthy of the writer's evident model Addison. Some stories and sketches on American themes contribute to give it variety; of these Rip van Winkle is the most remarkable. It speedily obtained the greatest success on both sides of the Atlantic. *Bracebridge Hall, or the Humourists* (2 vols., New York), a work purely English in subject, followed in 1822, and showed to what account the American observer had turned his experience of English country life. The humor is, nevertheless, much more English than American. *Tales of a Traveller* (4 pts.) appeared in 1824 at Philadelphia, and Irving, now in comfortable circumstances, determined to enlarge his sphere of observation by a journey on the continent. After a long course of travel he settled down at Madrid in the house of the American consul Rich. His intention at the time was to translate the *Coleccion de los Viajes y Descubrimientos* (Madrid, 1825-1837) of Martin Fernandez de Navarrete; finding, however, that this was rather a collection of valuable materials than a systematic biography, he determined to compose a biography of his own by its assistance, supplemented by independent researches in the Spanish archives. His *History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (London, 4 vols.) appeared in 1828, and obtained a merited success. *The Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus* (Philadelphia, 1831) followed; and a prolonged residence in the south of Spain gave Irving materials for two highly

picturesque books, *A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada from the MSS. of [an imaginary] Fray Antonio Agapida* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1829), and *The Alhambra: a series of tales and sketches of the Moors and Spaniards* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1832). Previous to their appearance he had been appointed secretary to the embassy at London, an office as purely complimentary to his literary ability as the legal degree which he about the same time received from the university of Oxford.

Returning to the United States in 1832, after seventeen years' absence, he found his name a household word, and himself universally honored as the first American who had won for his country recognition on equal terms in the literary republic. After the rush of fêtes and public compliments had subsided, he undertook a tour in the western prairies, and returning to the neighborhood of New York built for himself a delightful retreat on the Hudson, to which he gave the name of "Sunnyside." His acquaintance with the New York millionaire John Jacob Astor prompted his next important work — *Astoria* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1836), a history of the fur-trading settlement founded by Astor in Oregon, deduced with singular literary ability from dry commercial records, and, without labored attempts at word-painting, evincing a remarkable faculty for bringing scenes and incidents vividly before the eye. *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (London and Philadelphia, 1837), based upon the unpublished memoirs of a veteran explorer, was another work of the same class. In 1842 Irving was appointed ambassador to Spain. He spent four years in the country, without this time turning his residence to literary account; and it was not until two years after his return that Forster's life of Goldsmith, by reminding him of a slight essay of his own which he now thought too imperfect by comparison to be included among his collected writings, stimulated him to the production of

his *Life of Oliver Goldsmith, with Selections from his Writings* (2 vols., New York, 1849). Without pretensions to original research, the book displays an admirable talent for employing existing material to the best effect. The same may be said of *The Lives of Mahomet and his Successors* (New York, 2 vols., 1840-1850). Here as elsewhere Irving correctly discriminated the biographer's province from the historian's, and leaving the philosophical investigation of cause and effect to writers of Gibbon's caliber, applied himself to represent the picturesque features of the age as embodied in the actions and utterances of its most characteristic representatives. His last days were devoted to his *Life of George Washington* (5 vols., 1855-1859, New York and London), undertaken in an enthusiastic spirit, but which the author found exhausting and his readers tame. His genius required a more poetical theme, and indeed the biographer of Washington must be at least a potential soldier and statesman. Irving just lived to complete this work, dying of heart disease at Sunnyside, on the 28th of November 1859.

Although one of the chief ornaments of American literature, Irving is not characteristically American. But he is one of the few authors of his period who really manifest traces of a vein of national peculiarity which might under other circumstances have been productive. "Knickerbocker's" *History of New York*, although the air of mock solemnity which constitutes the staple of its humor is peculiar to no literature, manifests nevertheless a power of reproducing a distinct national type. Had circumstances taken Irving to the West, and placed him amid a society teeming with quaint and genial eccentricity, he might possibly have been the first Western humorist, and his humor might have gained in depth and richness. In England, on the other hand, everything encouraged his natural fastidiousness; he became a refined writer, but by no means a robust one. His

biographies bear the stamp of genuine artistic intelligence, equally remote from compilation and disquisition. In execution they are almost faultless; the narrative is easy, the style pellucid, and the writer's judgment nearly always in accordance with the general verdict of history. Without ostentation or affectation, he was exquisite in all things, a mirror of loyalty, courtesy and good taste in all his literary connexions, and exemplary in all the relations of domestic life. He never married, remaining true to the memory of an early attachment blighted by death.

The principal edition of Irving's works is the "Geoffrey Crayon," published at New York in 1880 in 26 vols. His *Life and Letters* was published by his nephew Pierre M. Irving (London, 1862-1864, 4 vols.; German abridgment by Adolf Laun, Berlin, 1870, 2 vols.) There is a good deal of miscellaneous information in a compilation entitled *Irvingiana* (New York, 1860); and W. C. Bryant's memorial oration, though somewhat too uniformly laudatory, may be consulted with advantage. It was republished in *Studies of Irvine* (1880) along with C. Dudley Warner's introduction to the "Geoffrey Crayon" edition, and Mr. G. P. Putnam's personal reminiscences of Irving, which originally appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. See also *Washington Irving* (1881), by C. D. Warner, in the "American Men of Letters" series; H. R. Haweis, *American Humourists* (London, 1883).

Voyages And Discoveries Of The Companions Of Columbus

INTRODUCTION

The first discovery of the western hemisphere has already been related by the author in his History of Columbus. It is proposed by him, in the present work, to narrate the enterprises of certain of the companions and disciples of the admiral, who, enkindled by his zeal, and instructed by

his example, sallied forth separately in the vast region of adventure to which he had led the way. Many of them sought merely to skirt the continent which he had partially visited, and to secure the first fruits of the pearl fisheries of Paria and Cubaga, or to explore the coast of Veragua, which he had represented as the Aurea Chersonesus of the Ancients. Others aspired to accomplish a grand discovery which he had meditated toward the close of his career. In the course of his expeditions along the coast of Terra Firma, Columbus had repeatedly received information of the existence of a vast sea to the south. He supposed it to be the great Indian Ocean, the region of the Oriental spice islands, and that it must communicate by a strait with the Caribbean Sea. His last and most disastrous voyage was made for the express purpose of discovering that imaginary strait, and making his way into this Southern Ocean. The illustrious navigator, however, was doomed to die, as it were, upon the threshold of his discoveries. It was reserved for one of his followers, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, to obtain the first view of the promised ocean, from the lofty mountains of Darien, some years after the eyes of the venerable admiral had been closed in death.

The expeditions herein narrated, therefore, may be considered as springing immediately out of the voyages of Columbus, and fulfilling some of his grand designs. They may be compared to the attempts of adventurous knights errant to achieve the enterprise left unfinished by some illustrious predecessor. Neither is this comparison entirely fanciful. On the contrary, it is a curious fact, well worthy of notice, that the spirit of chivalry entered largely into the early expeditions of the Spanish discoverers, giving them a character wholly distinct from similar enterprises undertaken by other nations. It will not, perhaps, be considered far sought, if we trace the cause of this

peculiarity to the domestic history of the Spaniards during the middle ages.

Eight centuries of incessant warfare with the Moorish usurpers of the peninsula produced a deep and lasting effect upon the Spanish character and manners. The war being ever close at home, mingled itself with the domestic habits and concerns of the Spaniard. He was born a soldier. The wild and predatory nature of the war, also, made him a kind of chivalrous marauder. His horse and weapon were always ready for the field. His delight was in roving incursions and extravagant exploits, and no gain was so glorious in his eyes as the cavalgada of spoils and captives, driven home in triumph from a plundered province. Religion, which has ever held great empire in the Spanish mind, lent its aid to sanctify these roving and ravaging propensities, and the Castilian cavalier, as he sacked the towns and laid waste the fields of his Moslem neighbour, piously believed he was doing God service.

The conquest of Granada put an end to the peninsular wars between christian and infidel; the spirit of Spanish chivalry was thus suddenly deprived of its wonted sphere of action; but it had been too long fostered and excited to be as suddenly appeased. The youth of the nation, bred up to daring adventure and heroic achievement, could not brook the tranquil and regular pursuits of common life, but panted for some new field of romantic enterprise.

It was at this juncture that the grand project of Columbus was carried into effect. His treaty with the sovereigns was, in a manner, signed with the same pen that had subscribed the capitulation of the Moorish capital, and his first expedition may almost be said to have departed from beneath the walls of Granada. Many of the youthful cavaliers who had fleshed their swords in that memorable

war, crowded the ships of the discoverers, thinking a new career of arms was to be opened to them — a kind of crusade into splendid and unknown regions of infidels. The very weapons and armor that had been used against the Moors, were drawn from the arsenals to equip the discoverers, and some of the most noted of the early commanders in the new world will be found to have made their first essay in arms under the banner of Ferdinand and Isabella, in their romantic campaigns among the mountains of Andalusia.

To these circumstances may, in a great measure, be ascribed that swelling chivalrous spirit which will be found continually mingling, or rather warring, with the technical habits of the seaman, and the sordid schemes of the mercenary adventurer; in these early Spanish discoveries, chivalry had left the land and launched upon the deep. The Spanish cavalier had embarked in the Caravel of the discoverer; he carried among the trackless wildernesses of the new world, the same contempt of danger and fortitude under suffering, the same restless roaming spirit, the same passion for inroad and ravage, and vain-glorious exploit, and the same fervent, and often bigoted, zeal for the propagation of his faith that had distinguished him during his warfare with the Moors. Instances in point will be found in the extravagant career of the daring Ojeda, particularly in his adventures along the coast of Terra Firma and the wild shores of Cuba. In the sad story of the "unfortunate Nicuesa;" graced as it is with occasional touches of high-bred courtesy; in the singular cruise of that brave, but credulous, old cavalier, Juan Ponce de Leon, who fell upon the flowery coast of Florida, in his search after an imaginary fountain of youth; and above all in the chequered fortunes of Vasco Nunez de Balboa, whose discovery of the Pacific ocean, forms one of the most beautiful and striking incidents in the history of the new world, and whose fate

might furnish a theme of wonderful interest for a poem or a drama. The extraordinary actions and adventures of these men, while they rival the exploits recorded in chivalric tale, have the additional interest of verity. They leave us in admiration of the bold and heroic qualities inherent in the Spanish character, which led that nation to so high a pitch of power and glory, and which are still discernible in the great mass of that gallant people, by those who have an opportunity of judging of them rightly.

Before concluding these prefatory remarks, the author would acknowledge how much he has been indebted to the third volume of the invaluable Historical collection of Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete, wherein he has exhibited his usual industry, accuracy and critical acumen. He has likewise profited greatly by the second volume of Oviedo's general history, which only exists in manuscript, and a copy of which he found in the Columbian library of the Cathedral of Seville.

He has had some assistance also from the documents of the law case between Don Diego Columbus and the Crown, which exists in the archives of the Indies; and for an inspection of which he is much indebted to the permission of the Spanish Government and the kind attentions of Don Josef de La Higuera Lara, the keeper of the archives. These, with the historical works of Las Casas, Herrera Gomera, and Peter Martyr, have been his authorities for the facts contained in the following work; though he has not thought proper to refer to them continually at the bottom of his page.

While his work was going through the press he received a volume of Spanish Biography, written with great elegance and accuracy, by Don Manuel Josef Quintana, and containing a life of Vasco Nunez de Balboa. He was

gratified to find that his arrangement of facts were generally corroborated by this work; though he was enabled to correct his dates in several instances, and to make a few other emendations from the volume of Senor Quintana, whose position in Spain gave him the means of attaining superior exactness on these points.

**ALONZO DE OJEDA - HIS FIRST VOYAGE,
*IN WHICH HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY AMERIGO
VESPUCCI.***

CHAPTER I.

Those who have read the History of Columbus will, doubtless, remember the character and exploits of Alonzo de Ojeda; as some of the readers of the following pages, however, may not have perused that work, and as it is proposed at present to trace the subsequent fortunes of this youthful adventurer, a brief sketch of him may not be deemed superfluous.

Alonzo de Ojeda was a native of Cuenca, in New Castile, and of a respectable family. He was brought up as a page or esquire, in the service of Don Luis de Cerda, Duke of Medina Celi, one of the most powerful nobles of Spain; the same who for some time patronized Columbus during his application to the Spanish court.

In those warlike days, when the peninsula was distracted by contests between the christian kingdoms, by feuds between the nobles and the crown, and by the incessant

and marauding warfare with the Moors, the household of a Spanish nobleman was a complete school of arms, where the youth of the country were sent to be trained up in all kinds of hardy exercises, and to be led to battle under an illustrious banner. Such was especially the case with the service of the Duke of Medina Celi, who possessed princely domains, whose household was a petty court, who led legions of armed retainers to the field, and who appeared in splendid state and with an immense retinue, more as an ally of Ferdinand and Isabella, than as a subject. He engaged in many of the roughest expeditions of the memorable war of Granada, always insisting on leading his own troops in person, when the service was of peculiar difficulty and danger. Alonzo de Ojeda was formed to signalize himself in such a school. Though small of stature, he was well made, and of wonderful force and activity, with a towering spirit and a daring eye that seemed to make up for deficiency of height. He was a bold and graceful horseman, an excellent foot soldier, dexterous with every weapon, and noted for his extraordinary skill and adroitness in all feats of strength and agility.

He must have been quite young when he followed the duke of Medina Celi, as page, to the Moorish wars; for he was but about twenty-one years of age when he accompanied Columbus in his second voyage; he had already, however, distinguished himself by his enterprising spirit and headlong valor; and his exploits during that voyage contributed to enhance his reputation. He returned to Spain with Columbus, but did not accompany him in his third voyage, in the spring of 1498. He was probably impatient of subordination, and ambitious of a separate employment or command which the influence of his connexions gave him a great chance of obtaining. He had a cousin german of his own name, the reverend Padre Alonzo de Ojeda, a Dominican friar, who was one of the first

inquisitors of Spain, and a great favorite with the Catholic sovereigns. This father inquisitor was, moreover, an intimate friend of the bishop Don Juan Rodriguez Fonseca, who had the chief management of the affairs of the Indies, under which general name were comprehended all the countries discovered in the new world. Through the good offices of his cousin inquisitor, therefore, Ojeda had been introduced to the notice of the bishop, who took him into his especial favour and patronage. Mention has already been made, in the History of Columbus, of a present made by the bishop to Ojeda of a small Flemish painting of the Holy Virgin. This the young adventurer carried about with him as a protecting relic, invoking it at all times of peril, whether by sea or land; and to the special care of the Virgin he attributed the remarkable circumstance that he had never been wounded in any of the innumerable brawls and battles into which he was continually betrayed by his rash and fiery temperament.

While Ojeda was lingering about the court, letters were received from Columbus, giving an account of the events of his third voyage, especially of his discovery of the coast of Paria, which he described as abounding with drugs and spices, with gold and silver, and precious stones, and, above all, with oriental pearls, and which he supposed to be the borders of that vast and unknown region of the East, wherein, according to certain learned theorists, was situated the terrestrial paradise. Specimens of the pearls, procured in considerable quantities from the natives, accompanied his epistle, together with charts descriptive of his route. These tidings caused a great sensation among the maritime adventurers of Spain; but no one was more excited by them than Alonzo de Ojeda, who, from his intimacy with the bishop, had full access to the charts and correspondence of Columbus. He immediately conceived the project of making a voyage in the route thus marked

out by the admiral, and of seizing upon the first fruits of discovery which he had left ungathered. His scheme met with ready encouragement from Fonseca, who, as has heretofore been shown, was an implacable enemy to Columbus, and willing to promote any measure that might injure or molest him. The bishop accordingly granted a commission to Ojeda, authorizing him to fit out an armament and proceed on a voyage of discovery, with the proviso merely that he should not visit any territories appertaining to Portugal, or any of the lands discovered in the name of Spain previous to the year 1495. The latter part of this provision appears to have been craftily worded by the bishop, so as to leave the coast of Paria and its pearl fisheries open to Ojeda, they having been recently discovered by Columbus in 1498.

The commission was signed by Fonseca alone, in virtue of general powers vested in him for such purposes, but the signature of the sovereigns did not appear on the instrument, and it is doubtful whether their sanction was sought on the occasion. He knew that Columbus had recently remonstrated against a royal mandate issued in 1495, permitting voyages of discovery, by private adventurers, and that the sovereigns had in consequence revoked their mandate wherever it might be deemed prejudicial to the stipulated privileges of the admiral. It is probable, therefore, that the bishop avoided raising any question that might impede the enterprise; being confident of the ultimate approbation of Ferdinand, who would be well pleased to have his dominions in the new world extended by the discoveries of private adventurers, undertaken at their own expense. It was stipulated in this, as well as in subsequent licenses for private expeditions, that a certain proportion of the profits, generally a fourth or fifth, should be reserved for the crown.

Having thus obtained permission to make the voyage, the next consideration with Ojeda was to find the means. He was a young adventurer, a mere soldier of fortune, and destitute of wealth; but he had a high reputation for courage and enterprise, and with these, it was thought, would soon make his way to the richest parts of the newly discovered lands, and have the wealth of the Indies at his disposal. He had no difficulty, therefore, in finding monied associates among the rich merchants of Seville, who, in that age of discovery, were ever ready to stake their property upon the schemes of roving navigators. With such assistance he soon equipped a squadron of four vessels at Port St. Mary, opposite Cadiz. Among the seamen who engaged with him were several who had just returned from accompanying Columbus in his voyage to this very coast of Paria. The principal associate of Ojeda, and one on whom he placed great reliance, was Juan de la Cosa; who accompanied him as first mate, or, as it was termed, chief pilot. This was a bold Biscayan, who may be regarded as a disciple of Columbus, with whom he had sailed in his second voyage, when he coasted Cuba and Jamaica, and he had since accompanied Rodrigo de Bastides, in an expedition along the coast of Terra Firma. The hardy veteran was looked up to by his contemporaries as an oracle of the seas, and was pronounced one of the most able mariners of the day; he may be excused, therefore, if in his harmless vanity, he considered himself on a par even with Columbus.

Another conspicuous associate of Ojeda, in this voyage, was Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine merchant, induced by broken fortunes and a rambling disposition to seek adventures in the new world. Whether he had any pecuniary interest in the expedition, and in what capacity he sailed, does not appear. His importance has entirely arisen from subsequent circumstances; from his having

written and published a narrative of his voyages, and from his name having eventually been given to the new world.

CHAPTER II.

Ojeda sailed from Port St. Mary on the 20th of May, 1499, and, having touched for supplies at the Canaries, took a departure from Gomera, pursuing the route of Columbus, in his third voyage, being guided by the chart he had sent home, as well as by the mariners who had accompanied him on that occasion. At the end of twenty-four days he reached the continent of the new world, about two hundred leagues farther south than the part discovered by Columbus, being, as it is supposed, the coast of Surinam.

From hence he ran along the coast of the Gulf of Paria, passing the mouths of many rivers, but especially those of the Esquivo and the Oronoko. These, to the astonishment of the Spaniards, unaccustomed as yet to the mighty rivers of the new world, poured forth such a prodigious volume of water, as to freshen the sea for a great extent. They beheld none of the natives until they arrived at the Island of Trinidad, on which island they met with traces of the recent visit of Columbus.

Vespucci, in his letters, gives a long description of the people of this island and of the coast of Paria, who were of the Carib race, tall, well made and vigorous, and expert with the bow, the lance and the buckler. His description, in general, resembles those which have frequently been given of the Aborigines of the new world; there are two or three particulars, however, worthy of citation.

They appeared, he said, to believe in no religious creed, to have no place of worship, and to make no prayers or sacrifices; but, he adds, from the voluptuousness of their

lives, they might be considered Epicureans. Their habitations were built in the shape of bells; of the trunks of trees, thatched with palm leaves, and were proof against wind and weather. They appeared to be in common, and some of them were of such magnitude as to contain six hundred persons: in one place there were eight principal houses capable of sheltering nearly ten thousand inhabitants. Every seven or eight years the natives were obliged to change their residence, from the maladies engendered by the heat of the climate in their crowded habitations.

Their riches consisted in beads and ornaments made from the bones of fishes; in small white and green stones strung like rosaries, with which they adorned their persons, and in the beautiful plumes of various colors for which the tropical birds are noted.

The Spaniards smiled at their simplicity in attaching an extraordinary value to such worthless trifles; while the savages, in all probability, were equally surprised at beholding the strangers so eager after gold, and pearls and precious stones, which to themselves were objects of indifference.

Their manner of treating the dead was similar to that observed among the natives of some of the islands.

Having deposited the corpse in a cavern or sepulchre, they placed a jar of water and a few eatables at its head, and then abandoned it without moan or lamentation. In some parts of the coast when a person was considered near his end, his nearest relatives bore him to the woods and laid him in a hammock suspended to the trees. They then danced round him until evening, when, having left within his reach sufficient meat and drink to sustain him for four

days, they repaired to their habitations. If he recovered and returned home, he was received with much ceremony and rejoicing; if he died of his malady or of famine, nothing more was thought of him.

Their mode of treating a fever is also worthy of mention. In the height of the malady they plunged the patient in a bath of the coldest water, after which they obliged him to make many evolutions round a great fire, until he was in a violent heat, when they put him to bed, that he might sleep: a treatment, adds Amerigo Vespucci, by which we saw many cured.

CHAPTER III.

After touching at various parts of Trinidad and the Gulf of Paria, Ojeda passed through the strait of the Boca del Drago, or Dragon's Mouth, which Columbus had found so formidable, and then steered his course along the coast of Terra Firma, landing occasionally until he arrived at Curiana, or the Gulf of Pearls. From hence he stood to the opposite island of Margarita, previously discovered by Columbus, and since renowned for its pearl fishery. This, as well as several adjacent islands, he visited and explored; after which he returned to the main land, and touched at Cumana and Maracapana, where he found the rivers infested with alligators resembling the crocodiles of the Nile.

Finding a convenient harbor at Maracapana he unloaded and careened his vessels there, and built a small brigantine. The natives came to him in great numbers, bringing abundance of venison, fish, and cassava bread, and aiding the seamen in their labors. Their hospitality was not certainly disinterested, for they sought to gain the protection of the Spaniards, whom they revered as

superhuman beings. When they thought they had sufficiently secured their favour, they represented to Ojeda that their coast was subject to invasion from a distant island, the inhabitants of which were cannibals, and carried their people into captivity, to be devoured at their unnatural banquets. They besought Ojeda, therefore, to avenge them upon these ferocious enemies.

The request was gratifying to the fighting propensities of Alonzo de Ojeda, and to his love of adventure, and was readily granted. Taking seven of the natives on board of his vessels, therefore, as guides, he set sail in quest of the cannibals. After sailing for seven days he came to a chain of islands, some of which were peopled, others uninhabited, and which are supposed to have been the Caribbean islands. One of these was pointed, out by his guides as the habitation of their foes. On running near the shore he beheld it thronged, with savage warriors, decorated with coronets of gaudy plumes, their bodies painted with a variety of colors. They were armed with bows and arrows, with darts, lances, and bucklers, and seemed prepared to defend their island from invasion.

This show of war was calculated to rouse the martial spirit of Ojeda. He brought his ships to anchor, ordered out his boats, and provided each with a paterero or small cannon. Beside the oarsmen, each boat contained a number of soldiers, who were told to crouch out of sight in the bottom. The boats then pulled in steadily for the shore. As they approached the Indians let fly a cloud of arrows, but without much effect. Seeing the boats continue to advance, the savages threw themselves into the sea, and brandished their lances to prevent their landing. Upon this, the soldiers sprang up in the boats and discharged the patereroes. At the sound and smoke of these unknown weapons the savages abandoned the water in affright,

while Ojeda and his men leaped on shore and pursued them. The Carib warriors rallied off the banks, and fought for a long time with that courage peculiar to their race, but were at length driven to the woods, at the edge of the sword, leaving many killed and wounded on the field of battle.

On the following day the savages were seen on the shore in still greater numbers, armed and painted, and decorated with war plumes, and sounding defiance with their conchs and drums. Ojeda again landed with fifty-seven men, whom he separated into four companies, and ordered them to charge the enemy from different directions. The Caribs fought for a time hand to hand, displaying great dexterity in covering themselves with their bucklers, but were at length entirely routed and driven, with great slaughter, to the forests. The Spaniards had but one man killed and twenty-one wounded in these combats, — such superior advantage did their armor give them over the naked savages. Having plundered and set fire to the houses they returned triumphantly to their ships, with a number of Carib captives; and made sail for the main land. Ojeda bestowed a part of the spoil upon the seven Indians who had accompanied him as guides, and sent them exulting to their homes, to relate to their countrymen the signal vengeance that had been wreaked upon their foes. He then anchored in a bay where he remained for twenty days, until his men had recovered from their wounds

CHAPTER IV.

His crew being refreshed and the wounded sufficiently recovered, Ojeda made sail, and touched at the island of Curazao, which, according to the accounts of Vespucci, was inhabited by a race of giants, " every woman appearing a

Penthesilea, and every man an Antaeus." As Vespucci was a scholar, and as he supposed himself exploring the regions of the extreme East, the ancient realm of fable, it is probable, his imagination deceived him, and construed the formidable accounts given by the Indians of their cannibal neighbours of the islands, into something according with his recollections of classic fable. Certain it is, that the reports of subsequent voyagers proved the inhabitants of the island to be of the ordinary size.

Proceeding along the coast, he arrived at a vast deep gulf, resembling a tranquil lake; entering which, he beheld on the eastern side a village, the construction of which struck him with surprise. It consisted of twenty large houses, shaped like bells, and built on piles driven into the bottom of the lake, which, in this part was limpid and of but little depth. Each house was provided with a drawbridge, and with canoes by which the communication was carried on. From these resemblances to the Italian city, Ojeda gave to the bay the name of the Gulf of Venice: and it is called at the present day Venezuela, or little Venice; the Indian name was Coquibacoa.

When the inhabitants beheld the ships standing into the bay, looking like wonderful and unknown apparitions from the deep, they fled with terror to their houses, and raised the drawbridges. The Spaniards remained for a time gazing with admiration at this amphibious village, when a squadron of canoes entered the harbor from the sea. On beholding the ships they paused in mute amazement, and on the Spaniards attempting to approach them, paddled swiftly to shore, and plunged into the forest. They soon returned with sixteen young girls, whom they conveyed in their canoes to the ships, distributing four on board of each, either as peace-offerings or as tokens of amity and confidence. The best of understanding now seemed to be

established; and the inhabitants of the village came swarming about the ships in their canoes, and others swimming in great numbers from the shores.

The friendship of the savages, however, was all delusive. On a sudden several old women at the doors of the houses uttered loud shrieks, tearing their hair in fury. It appeared to be a signal for hostility. The sixteen nymphs plunged into the sea and made for shore; the Indians in the canoes caught up their bows and discharged a flight of arrows, and even those who were swimming brandished darts and lances, which they had hitherto concealed beneath the water.

Ojeda was for a moment surprised at seeing war thus starting up on every side, and the very sea bristling with weapons. Manning his boats, he immediately charged amongst the thickest of the enemy, shattered and sunk several of their canoes, killed twenty Indians and wounded many more, and spread such a panic among them, that most of the survivors flung themselves into the sea and swam to shore. Three of them were taken prisoners, and two of the fugitive girls, and were conveyed on board of the ships, where the men were put in irons. One of them, however, and the two girls, succeeded in dexterously escaping the same night.

Ojeda had but five men wounded in the affray; all of whom recovered. He visited the houses, but found them abandoned and destitute of booty; notwithstanding the unprovoked hostility of the inhabitants, he spared the buildings, that he might not cause useless irritation along the coast.

Continuing to explore this gulf, Ojeda penetrated to a port or harbor, to which he gave the name of St. Bartholomew,

but which is supposed to be the same at present known by the original Indian name of Maracaibo. Here, in compliance with the entreaties of the natives, he sent a detachment of twenty-seven Spaniards on a visit to the interior. For nine days they were conducted from town to town, and feasted and almost idolized by the Indians, who regarded them as angelic beings, performing their national dances and games, and chanting their traditional ballads for their entertainment.

The natives of this part were distinguished for the symmetry of their forms; the females in particular appeared to the Spaniards to surpass all others that they had yet beheld in the new world for grace and beauty; neither did the men evince, in the least degree, that jealousy which prevailed in other parts of the coast; but, on the contrary, permitted the most frank and intimate intercourse with their wives and daughters.

By the time the Spaniards set out on their return to the ship, the whole country was aroused, pouring forth its population, male and female, to do them honor. Some bore them in litters or hammocks, that they might not be fatigued with the journey, and happy was the Indian who had the honor of hearing a Spaniard on his shoulders across a river. Others loaded themselves with the presents that had been bestowed on their guests, consisting of rich plumes, weapons of various kinds, and tropical birds and animals. In this way they returned in triumphant procession to the ships, the woods and shores resounding with their songs and shouts.

Many of the Indians crowded into the boats that took the detachment to the ships; others put off in canoes, or swam from shore, so that in a little while the vessels were thronged with upwards of a thousand wondering natives.

While gazing and marveling at the strange objects around them, Ojeda ordered the cannon to be discharged, at the sound of which, says Vespucci, the Indians "plunged into the water like so many frogs from a bank." Perceiving, however, that it was done in harmless mirth, they returned on board, and passed the rest of the day in great festivity. The Spaniards brought away with them several of the beautiful and hospitable females from this place, one of whom, named by them Isabel, was much prized by Ojeda, and accompanied him in a subsequent voyage.

It is worthy of particular mention that Ojeda, in his report of his voyage to the Sovereigns, informed them of his having met with English voyagers in the vicinity of Coquibacoa, and that the Spanish government attached such importance to his information as to take measures to prevent any intrusion into those parts by the English. It is singular that no record should exist of this early and extensive expedition of English navigators. If it was undertaken in the service of the Crown, some document might be found concerning it among the archives of the reign of Henry VII. The English had already discovered the continent of North America. This had been done in 1497, by John Cabot, a Venetian, accompanied by his son Sebastian, who was born in Bristol. They sailed under a license of Henry VII., who was to have a fifth of the profits of the voyage. On the 24th June they discovered Newfoundland, and afterwards coasted the continent quite to Florida, bringing back to England a valuable cargo and several of the natives. This was the first discovery of the mainland of America. The success of this expedition may have prompted the one which Ojeda encountered in the neighborhood of Coquibacoa.

CHAPTER V.

Leaving the friendly port of Coquibacoa, Ojeda continued along the western shores of the gulf of Venezuela., and standing out to sea, and doubling Cape Maracaibo, he pursued his coasting voyage from port to port, and promontory to promontory, of this unknown continent, until he reached that long stretching headland called Cape de la Vela. There the state of his vessels, and perhaps the disappointment of his hopes at not meeting with abundant sources of immediate wealth, induced him to abandon all further voyaging along the coast, and changing his course, he stood across the Caribbean Sea for Hispaniola. The tenor of his commission forbade his visiting that island; but Ojeda was not a man to stand upon trifles when his interest or inclination prompted the contrary. He trusted to excuse the infraction of his orders by the alleged necessity of touching at the island to caulk and refit his vessels, and to procure provisions. His true object, however, is supposed to have been to cut dye-wood, which abounds in the western part of Hispaniola.

He accordingly anchored at Yaquimo in September, and landed with a large party of his men. Columbus at that time held command of the island, and, hearing of this unlicensed intrusion, dispatched Francesco Roldan, the quondam rebel, to call Ojeda to account. The contest of stratagem and management that took place between these two adroit and daring adventurers, has been already detailed in the History of Columbus. Roldan was eventually successful, and Ojeda, being obliged to leave Hispaniola, resumed his rambling voyage, visiting various islands, from whence he carried off numbers of the natives. He at length arrived at Cadiz in June 1500, with his ships crowded with captives, whom he sold as slaves. So meager, however, was the result of this expedition, that we are told, when all the expenses were deducted, but five hundred ducats remained to be divided between fifty-five adventurers. What made this

result the more mortifying was, that a petty armament which had sailed sometime after that of Ojeda, had returned two months before him, rich with the spoils of the New World. A brief account of this latter expedition is necessary to connect this series of minor discoveries.

PEDRO ALONZO NINO AND CHRISTOVAL GUERRA.

(1499.)

The permission granted by Bishop Fonseca to Alonzo de Ojeda, to undertake a private expedition to the New World, roused the emulation of others of the followers of Columbus. Among these was Pedro Alonzo Nino, a hardy seaman, native of Moguer in the vicinity of Palos, who had sailed with Columbus, as a pilot, in his first voyage, and also in his cruisings along the coasts of Cuba and Paria. He soon obtained from the bishop a similar license to that given to Ojeda, and like the latter, sought for some monied confederate among the rich merchants of Seville. One of these, named Luis Guerra, offered to fit out a caravel for the expedition; but on condition that his brother, Christoval Guerra, should have the command. The poverty of Nino compelled him to assent to the stipulations of the man of wealth, and he sailed as subaltern in his own enterprise; but his nautical skill and knowledge soon gained him the ascendancy, he became virtually the captain, and ultimately enjoyed the whole credit of the voyage.

The bark of these two adventurers was but of fifty tons burthen, and the crew thirty-three souls all told. With this slender armament they undertook to traverse unknown and dangerous seas, and to explore the barbarous shores of