

at the village of Apalachee, where, instead of a splendid town, filled with immense treasure, as they had anticipated, they found only about 40 Indian wigwams. When they visited one Indian town its inhabitants would get rid of them by telling them of another, where their wants would be gratified. Such was the manner in which Narvaez and his companions rambled over 800 miles of country, in about six months' time, at a vast expense of men and necessaries which they carried with them; for the Indians annoyed them at every pass, not only cutting off many of the men, but seizing on their baggage upon every occasion which offered. Being now arrived upon the coast, in a wretched condition, they constructed some miserable barks corresponding with their means, in which none but men in such extremities would embark. In these they coasted toward New Spain. When they came near the mouths of the Mississippi they were cast away in a storm, and all but 15 of their number perished. Out of these 15, 4 only lived to reach Mexico, and these after 8 years wholly spent in wanderings from place to place, enduring incredible hardships and miseries.

The next year after the end of Narvaez's expedition, the intelligence of his disaster having reached his wife, whom he left in Cuba, she fitted out a small company, consisting of 20 or 30 men, who sailed in a brigantine to search after him, hoping some fortuitous circumstance might have prolonged his existence upon the coast, and that he might be found. Of this number was John Ortiz, the subject of this narrative.

On their arrival there, they sought an opportunity to have an interview with the first Indians they should meet. Opportunity immediately offered, and as soon as Indians were discovered, the Spaniards advanced towards them in their boats, while the Indians came down to the shore. These wily people practised a stratagem upon this occasion, which to this day seems a mysterious one, and we have no means of explaining it.

Three or four Indians came near the shore, and setting a stick in the ground, placed in a cleft in its top a letter, and withdrawing a little distance, made signs to the Spaniards to come and take it. All the company, except John Ortiz and one more, refused to go out for the letter, rightly judging it to be used only to ensnare them; but Ortiz, presuming it was from Narvaez, and containing some account of himself, would not be persuaded from venturing on shore to bring it, although all the rest but the one who accompanied him strenuously argued against it.

Now there was an Indian village very near this place, and