

New Mexico and to the ancient kingdom of Leon. Now-a-days, this vast territory is divided into several States: viz., Texas, to the west, from the Rio del Norte up to the Sabine; Louisiana, properly so called, in the centre, from the latter stream as far as Pearl River; and the Mississippi, at the east, from Pearl River till some distance from the bay of Mobile; the interspace remaining, as far as that bay, forms a part of Alabama. To the north of these States, there are besides those of Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, &c. At the epoch we have now reached in this History, all these countries were almost unknown. Ferdinand de Soto, a Spanish voyager, once a companion of Pizarro, traversed, but did not explore this region in 1539-40, when in search of a new Perou. Having set out from Holy-Spirit bay in Florida, with fully 1000 soldiers, he proceeded northward as far as the Apalachians; thence turning westward, he followed the lower line of that mountain range in a southerly direction, and arrived at and crossed the river Tombeckbee, near its junction with the Alabama. Afterwards he turned to the north-west, and crossed the Mississippi above the Arkansas. Turning again to the south, he crossed the Red River; which became the term of his course, as he died in 1542, near thereto, without having found what he sought. Moscoso, his lieutenant, heading the expedition, directed it towards Mexico, but, stopped by the intervening heights, he retraced his steps, and proceeded to the sea, on which he re-embarked with about 350 men, all that remained alive.* Of this enterprise, and of other voyages undertaken at wide intervals, by Spanish adventurers, to the northern coasts of the Gulf, only vague accounts have reached us.†

We have already noticed the gracious reception of La Sale by Louis XIV in 1683, when he returned to France and reported his discovery of the embouchure of the Mississippi. La Sale proposed to the king that the territory through which that great river flows should be appropriated as a part of New France; the suggestion was adopted, and La Sale himself commissioned to begin a colonization

* Jared Sparks: *Amer. Biog.* xi.

† *Carte de la Louisiane*, &c., 1782, by G. Delisle, in the *Itinéraire de la Louisiane*; GARCILASSO DE LA VEGA; *History of the Conquest of Florida*, by Ferdinand de Soto.