

savages, and he landed with a considerable force, and several friars, who had been sent out to convert the natives, were ordered to read aloud a manifesto, which had been specially written by eminent divines and jurists in Spain. It was utterly thrown away on the savages, who immediately made demonstrations of the most warlike kind.

Cosa once more begged Ojeda to leave these unfriendly shores, but in vain, and the latter, offering up a short prayer to the Virgin, led on a furious charge. Juan de Cosa followed in the bravest manner, although the assault was contrary to his advice. The Indians were soon driven off, and a number killed or taken prisoners, on whose persons plates of gold were found. Flushed by this easy victory, he pursued them into the interior, followed as usual by his faithful, though unwilling lieutenant. Having penetrated deep into the forest, they came to a stronghold of the enemy, where they were warmly received. Ojeda led his men on with the old Castilian war-cry, "Santiago!" and in a few minutes the Indians took to flight. "Eight of their bravest warriors threw themselves into a cabin, and plied their bows and arrows so vigorously that the Spaniards were kept at bay. Ojeda cried shame upon his followers to be daunted by eight naked men. Stung by this reproach, an old Castilian soldier rushed through a shower of arrows and forced the door of the cabin, but received a shaft through the heart and fell dead on the threshold. Ojeda, furious at the sight, ordered fire to be set to the combustible edifice; in a moment it was in a blaze, and the eight warriors perished in the flames." Seventy prisoners were sent on board the ships. Ojeda, still against the strongly-expressed advice of Cosa, continued his pursuit, and he and his followers arrived at what appeared to be a deserted village. They had scattered in search of booty, when troops of savages, who had been concealed in the forest, surrounded them. The desperate valour and iron armour of the Spaniards availed little, for they were overwhelmed by numbers, and scattered into detached parties. Ojeda collected a few of his followers, and made a desperate resistance from the interior of a palisaded enclosure. "Here he was closely besieged and galled by flights of arrows. He threw himself on his knees, covered himself with his buckler, and being small and active, managed to protect himself from the deadly shower, but all his companions were slain by his side, some of them perishing in frightful agonies. At this fearful moment the veteran La Cosa, having heard of the peril of his commander, arrived with a few followers to his assistance. Stationing himself at the gate of the palisades, the brave Biscayan kept the savages at bay until most of his men were slain, and he himself was severely wounded. Just then Ojeda sprang forth like a tiger into the midst of the enemy, dealing his blows on every side. La Cosa would have seconded him, but was crippled by his wounds. He took refuge with the remnant of his men in an Indian cabin, the straw roof of which he aided them to throw off, lest the enemy should set it on fire. Here he defended himself until all his comrades but one were destroyed. The subtle poison of his wounds at length overpowered him, and he sank to the ground. Feeling death at hand, he called to his only surviving companion. 'Brother,' said he, 'since God hath protected thee from harm, sally forth and fly, and if thou shouldst see Alonzo de Ojeda, tell him of my fate!' Thus perished one of the ablest of the Spanish explorers, and one of the most loyal of friends, a true counsellor, and a warm-hearted partisan.

Meanwhile there was great alarm on the ships at the non-arrival of the seventy men