

the expedition sailed, high in courage, splendid in aspect, boundless in expectation. They landed on the coast of Florida, and began their march into the wilderness. They had fetters for the Indians whom they meant to take captive. They had bloodhounds, lest these captives should escape. The camp swarmed with priests, and as they marched the festivals and processions enjoined by the Church were devoutly observed.

From the outset it was a toilsome and perilous enterprise; but to the Spaniard of that time danger was a joy. The Indians were warlike, and generally hostile. De Soto had pitched battles to fight and heavy losses to bear. Always he was victorious, but he could ill afford the cost of many such victories. The captive Indians amused him with tales of regions where gold abounded. They had learned that ignorance on that subject was very hazardous. De Soto had stimulated their knowledge by burning to death some who denied the existence of gold in that country. The Spaniards wandered slowly northwards. They looked eagerly for some great city, the plunder of whose palaces and temples would enrich them all. They found nothing better than occasionally an Indian town, composed of a few miserable huts. It was all they could do to get needful food. At length they came to a magnificent river. European eyes had seen no such river till now. It was about a mile in breadth, and its mass of water swept downward to the sea with a current of amazing strength. It was the Mississippi. The Spaniards built vessels and ferried themselves to the western bank.

There they resumed their wanderings. De Soto would not yet admit that he had failed. He still hoped that the plunder of a rich city would reward his toils. For many months the Spaniards strayed among the swamps and dense forests of that dreary region. The natives showed at first some disposition to be helpful. But the Spaniards, in their disappointment, were pitiless and savage. They amused themselves by inflicting pain upon the prisoners. They cut off their hands; they hunted

them with Indians be claiming to palpable. to eat?" as De Soto had dition would home. Bro died. His trunk for the bury their remains. I in the Miss beneath its make their dant. They Indians for to reinforce to float then disheartened whose hopes much envied