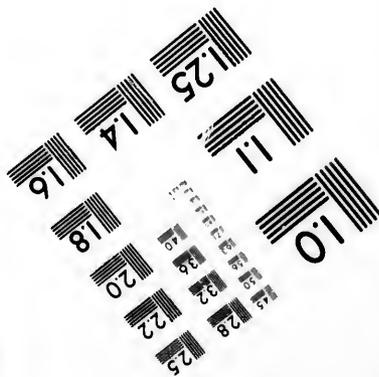
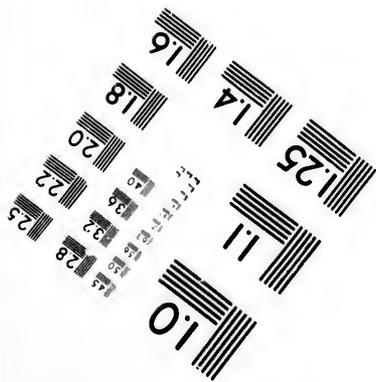
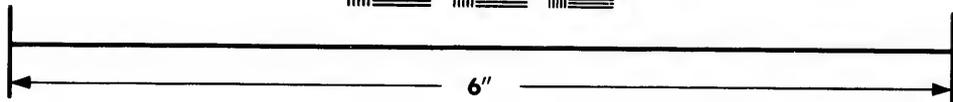
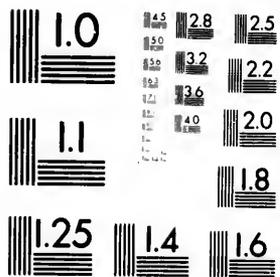
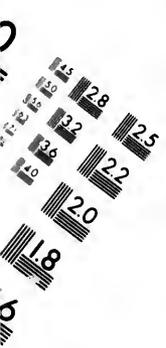


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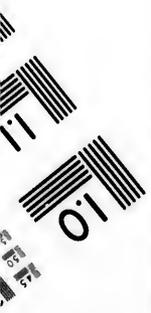


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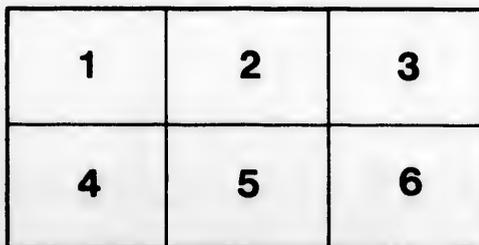
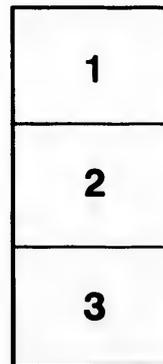
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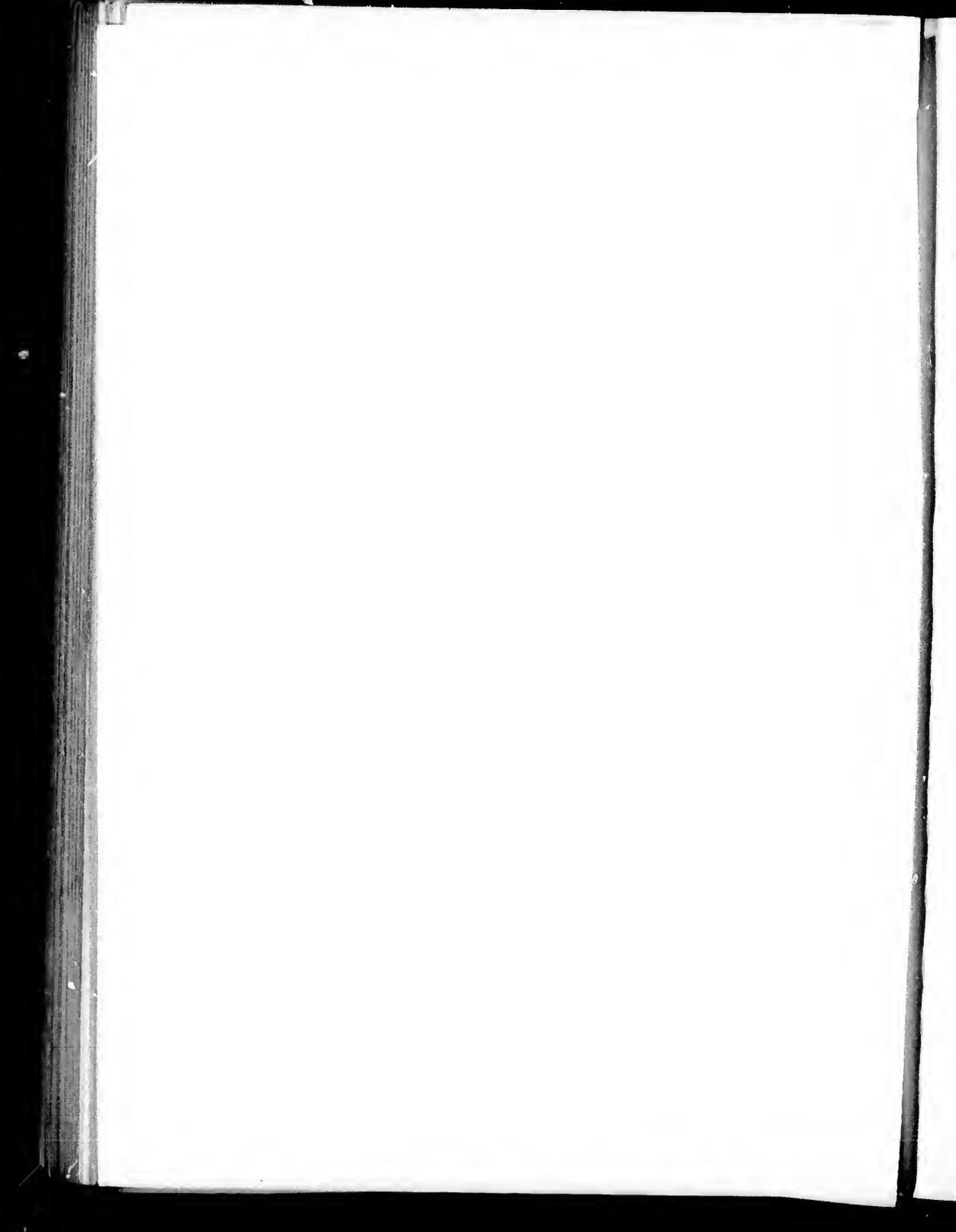
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## The Death of De Soto.

FROM THE "NARRATIVE OF THE GENTLEMAN OF ELVAS."

The next day being Wednesday, the 29<sup>th</sup> of March [1542], the Governor came to *Nitico*; he lodged with all his men in the cacique's town, which stood in a plain field, which was inhabited for the space of a quarter of a league: and within a league and half a league were other very great towns, wherein was great store of maize, of French beans, of walnuts, and prunes. This was the best inhabited country that was seen in *Florida*, and had most store of maize, except *Coça* and *Apalache*. There came to the camp an Indian accompanied with others, and in the cacique's name gave the Governor a mantle of martens' skins, and a cordon of pearls. The Governor gave him a few small margarites, which are certain beads much esteemed in *Peru*, and other things, wherewith he was very well contented. He promised to return within two days, but never came again: but on the contrary the Indians came by night in canoes, and carried away all the maize they could, and made them cabins on the other side of the river in the thickest of the wood, because they might flee if we should go to seek them. The Governor, seeing he came not at the time appointed, commanded an ambush to be laid about certain store-houses near the lake, whither the Indians came for maize: where they took two Indians, who told the Governor, that he which came to visit him was not the cacique, but was sent by him under pretence to spy whether the Christians were careless, and whether they determined to settle in that country or to go forward. Presently the Governor sent a captain with footmen and horsemen over the river; and in their passage they were descried of the Indians, and therefore he could take but ten or twelve men and women, with whom he returned to the camp. This river, which passed by *Nitico*, was that which passed by *Cayas* and *Autiamque*, and fell into *Rio*

*Grande*, or the Great River, which passed by *Pachaha* and *Aquixo* near unto the province of *Guachoya*: and the lord thereof came up the river in canoes to make war with him of *Nilco*. On his behalf there came an Indian to the Governor, and said unto him that he was his servant, and prayed him so to hold him, and that within two days he would come to kiss his lordship's hands: and at the time appointed he came with some of his principal Indians, which accompanied him, and with words of great offers and courtesy he gave the Governor a present of many mantles and deers' skins. The Governor gave him some other things in recompense, and honored him much. He asked what towns there were down the river. He answered that he knew none other but his own: and on the other side of the river the province of a cacique called *Quigalta*. So he took his leave of the Governor and went to his own town. Within a few days the Governor determined to go to *Guachoya*, to learn there whether the sea were near, or whether there were any habitation near, where he might relieve his company, while the brigantines were making, which he meant to send to the land of the Christians. As he passed the river *Nilco*, there came in canoes Indians of *Guachoya* up the stream, and when they saw him, supposing that he came to seek them to do them some hurt, they returned down the river, and informed the cacique thereof: who with all his people, spoiling the town of all that they could carry away, passed that night over to the other side of the *Río Grande*, or the Great River. The Governor sent a captain with fifty men in six canoes down the river, and went himself by land with the rest. He came to *Guachoya* upon Sunday, the 17th of April. He lodged in the town of the cacique, which was enclosed about, and seated a crossbow shot distant from the river. Here the river is called *Tumaliseu*, and in *Nilco* *Tapatu*, and in *Coça Mico*, and in the port or mouth *Ri*.

As soon as the Governor came to *Guachoya*, he sent *John Danusco* with as many men as could go in the canoes up the river. For when they came down from *Nilco*, they saw on the other side of the river new cabins made. *John Danusco* went and brought the canoes laden with maize, French beans, prunes, and many loaves made of the substance of prunes. That day came an Indian to the Governor from the Cacique of *Guachoya*, and said that his lord would come the next day. The next day they saw many canoes come up the river, and on the other side of the Great River they assembled together in the space of an hour. They consulted whether they should come or not; and at length concluded to come, and crossed the river. In them

came the Cacique of *Guachoya*, and brought with him many Indians, with great store of fish, dogs, deers' skins, and mantles; and as soon as they landed, they went to the lodging of the Governor, and presented him their gifts, and the cacique uttered these words:—

“Mighty and excellent lord, I beseech your lordship to pardon me the error which I committed in absenting myself, and not tarrying in this town to have received and served your lordship; since, to obtain this opportunity of time was, and is as much as a great victory to me. But I feared that which I needed not to have feared, and so did that which was not reason to do. But as haste maketh waste, and I removed without deliberation; so, as soon as I thought on it, I determined not to follow the opinion of the foolish, which is to continue in their error; but to imitate the wise and discreet, in changing my counsel, and so I came to see what your lordship will command me to do, that I may serve you in all things that are in my power.”

The Governor received him with much joy, and gave him thanks for his present and offer. He asked him, whether he had any notice of the sea. He answered no, nor of any towns down the river on that side; save that two leagues from thence was one town of a principal Indian, a subject of his; and on the other side of the river, three days' journey from thence down the river, was the province of *Quigalta*, which was the greatest lord that was in that country! The Governor thought that the cacique lied unto him, to rid him out of his own towns, and sent *John Danusco* with eight horsemen down the river, to see what habitation there was, and to inform himself, if there were any notice of the sea. He travelled eight days, and at his return he said, that in all that time he was not able to go above fourteen or fifteen leagues, because of the great creeks that came out of the river, and groves of canes, and thick woods that were along the banks of the river, and that he had found no habitation. The Governor fell into great dumps to see how hard it was to get to the sea; and worse, because his men and horses every day diminished, being without succor to sustain themselves in the country; and with that thought he fell sick. But before he took his bed he sent an Indian to the Cacique of *Quigalta* to tell him that he was the child of the sun, and that all the way that he came all men obeyed and served him, that he requested him to accept of his friendship and come unto him, for he would be very glad to see him; and in sign of love and obedience to bring something

with him of that which in his country was most esteemed. The cacique answered by the same Indian :

“That whereas he said he was the child of the sun, if he would dry up the river he would believe him ; and touching the rest, that he was wont to visit none ; but rather that all those of whom he had notice did visit him, served, obeyed, and paid him tributes willingly or perforce ; therefore, if he desired to see him, it were best he should come thither ; that if he came in peace, he would receive him with special good will ; and if in war, in like manner he would attend him in the town where he was, and that for him or any other he would not shrink one foot back.”

By that time the Indian returned with this answer, the Governor had betaken himself to bed, being evil handled with fevers, and was much aggrieved that he was not in case to pass presently the river and to seek him, to see if he could abate that pride of his, considering the river went now very strongly in those parts ; for it was near half a league broad, and sixteen fathoms deep, and very furious, and ran with a great current ; and on both sides there were many Indians, and his power was not now so great, but that he had need to help himself rather by slights than by force. The Indians of *Guachoya* came every day with fish in such numbers, that the town was full of them. The cacique said, that on a certain night he of *Quigalla* would come to give battle to the Governor. Which the Governor imagined that he had devised, to drive him out of his country, and commanded him to be put in hold : and that night and all the rest, there was good watch kept. He asked him wherefore *Quigalla* came not ? He said that he came, but that he saw him prepared, and therefore durst not give the attempt : and he was earnest with him to send his captains over the river, and that he would aid him with many men to set upon *Quigalla*. The Governor told him that as soon as he was recovered, himself would seek him out. And seeing how many Indians came daily to the town, and what store of people was in that country, fearing they should all conspire together and plot some treason against him ; and because the town had some open gaps which were not made an end of inclosing, besides the gates which they went in and out by : because the Indians should not think he feared them, he let them all alone unrepaired ; and commanded the horsemen to be appointed to them, and to the gates : and all night the horsemen went the round ; and two and two of every squadron rode about, and visited the scouts that were without the town in their standings by the passages, and the crossbow-

men that kept the canoes in the river. And because the Indians should stand in fear of them, he determined to send a captain to *Nilco*, for those of *Guachoya* had told him that it was inhabited; that by using them cruelly, neither the one nor the other should presume to assail him; and he sent *Nuñez de Touar* with fifteen horsemen, and *John de Guzman* captain of the footmen, with his company in canoes up the river. The Cacique of *Guachoya* sent for many canoes and many warlike Indians to go with the Christians; and the captain of the Christians, called *Nuñez de Touar*, went by land with his horsemen, and two leagues before he came to *Nilco* he stayed for *John de Guzman*, and in that place they passed the river by night: the horsemen came first, and in the morning by break of day in sight of the town they lighted upon a spy; which as soon as he perceived the Christians, crying out amain fled to the town to give warning. *Nuñez de Touar* and his company made such speed, that before the Indians of the town could fully come out, they were upon them: it was champaign ground that was inhabited, which was about a quarter of a league. There were about five or six thousand people in the town; and, as many people came out of the houses, and fled from one house to another, and many Indians came flocking together from all parts, there was never a horseman that was not alone among many. The captain had commanded that they should not spare the life of any male. Their disorder was so great, that there was no Indian that shot an arrow at any Christian. The shrieks of women and children were so great, that they made the ears deaf of those that followed them. There were slain a hundred Indians, little more or less: and many were wounded with great wounds, whom they suffered to escape to strike a terror in the rest that were not there. There were some so cruel and butcherlike, that they killed old and young, and all that they met, though they made no resistance; and those which presumed of themselves for their valor, and were taken for such, broke through the Indians, bearing down many with their stirrups and breasts of their horses; and some they wounded with their lances, and so let them go: and when they saw any youth or woman they took them, and delivered them to the footmen. These men's sins by God's permission lighted on their own heads; who, because they would seem valiant, became cruel; showing themselves extreme cowards in the sight of all men when as most need of valor was required, and afterwards they came to a shameful death. Of the Indians of *Nilco* were taken prisoners fourscore women and children, and much spoil. The Indians

of *Guachoya* kept back before they came at the town, and stayed without, beholding the success of the Christians with the men of *Nilco*. And when they saw them put to flight, and the horsemen busy in killing of them, they hastened to the houses to rob, and filled their canoes with the spoil of the goods; and returned to *Guachoya* before the Christians; and wondering much at the sharp dealing which they had seen them use toward the Indians of *Nilco*, they told their cacique all that had passed with great astonishment.

The Governor felt in himself that the hour approached wherein he was to leave this present life, and called for the king's officers, captains, and principal persons, to whom he made a speech, saying:—

“That now he was to go to give an account before the presence of God of all his life past: and since it pleased him to take him in such a time, and that the time was come that he knew his death, that he his most unworthy servant did yield him many thanks therefor; and desired all that were present and absent (whom he confessed himself to be much beholding unto for their singular virtues, love and loyalty, which himself had well tried in the travels which they had suffered, which always in his mind he did hope to satisfy and reward, when it should please God to give him rest, with more prosperity of his estate), that they would pray to God for him, that for his mercy he would forgive him his sins, and receive his soul into eternal glory: and that they would quit and free him of the charge which he had over them, and ought unto them all, and that they would pardon him for some wrongs which they might have received of him. And to avoid some division, which upon his death might fall out upon the choice of his successor, he requested them to elect a principal person, and able to govern, of whom all should like well; and when he was elected, they should swear before him to obey him: and that he would thank them very much in so doing; because the grief that he had would somewhat be assuaged, and the pain that he felt, because he left them in so great confusion, to wit, in leaving them in a strange country, where they knew not where they were.”

*Baltasar de Gallegos* answered in the name of all the rest. And first of all comforting him, he set before his eyes how short the life of this world was, and with how many troubles and miseries it is accompanied, and how God showed him a singular favor which soonest left it: telling him many other things fit for such a time. And for the last point, that since it pleased God to take him to himself, although his death did justly grieve

them much, yet as well he, as all the rest, ought of necessity to conform themselves to the will of God. And touching the Governor which he commanded they should elect, he besought him, that it would please his lordship to name him which he thought fit, and him they would obey. And presently he named *Luis de Moscoso de Alvarado*, his captain-general. And presently he was sworn by all that were present, and elected for governor. The next day being the 21st of May, 1542, departed out of this life, the valorous, virtuous, and valiant Captain, *Don Fernando de Soto*, Governor of *Cuba*, and Adelantado of *Florida*: whom fortune advanced, as it useth to do others, that he might have the higher fall. He departed in such a place, and at such a time, as in his sickness he had but little comfort: and the danger wherein all his people were of perishing in that country, which appeared before their eyes, was cause sufficient why every one of them had need of comfort, and why they did not visit nor accompany him as they ought to have done. *Luis de Moscoso* determined to conceal his death from the Indians, because *Ferdinando de Soto* had made them believe that the Christians were immortal; and also because they took him to be hardy, wise, and valiant: and if they should know that he was dead, they would be bold to set upon the Christians, though they lived peaceably by them. In regard of their disposition, and because they were nothing constant, and believed all that was told them, the Adelantado made them believe, that he knew some things that passed in secret among themselves, without their knowledge, how, or in what manner he came by them: and that the figure which appeared in a glass, which he showed them, did tell him whatsoever they practiced and went about: and therefore neither in word nor deed durst they attempt anything that might be prejudicial unto him.

As soon as he was dead, *Luis de Moscoso* commanded to put him secretly in the house, where he remained three days; and moving him from thence, commanded him to be buried in the night at one of the gates of the town within the wall. And as the Indians had seen him sick, and missed him, so did they suspect what might be. And passing by the place where he was buried, seeing the earth moved, they looked and spake one to another. *Luis de Moscoso* understanding of it, commanded him to be taken up by night, and to cast a great deal of sand into the mantles, wherein he was wound up, wherein he was carried in a canoe, and thrown into the midst of the river. The Cacique of *Guachoya* inquired for him, demanding what was become of his brother and lord, the Governor. *Luis de Moscoso* told him

that he was gone to heaven, as many other times he did : and because he was to stay there certain days he had left him in his place. The cacique thought with himself that he was dead ; and commanded two young and well-proportioned Indians to be brought thither ; and said, that the use of that country was, when any lord died, to kill Indians to wait upon him, and serve him by the way, and for that purpose by his commandment were those come thither : and prayed *Luys de Moscoso* to command them to be beheaded, that they might attend and serve his lord and brother. *Luys de Moscoso* told him, that the Governor was not dead, but gone to heaven, and that of his own Christian soldiers he had taken such as he needed to serve him, and prayed him to command those Indians to be loosed, and not to use any such bad custom from thenceforth : straight-way he commanded them to be loosed, and to get them home to their houses. And one of them would not go ; saying, that he would not serve him, that without desert had judged him to death, but that he would serve him as long as he lived, which had saved his life.

*Luys de Moscoso* caused all the goods of the Governor to be sold at an outcry : to wit, two men slaves and two women slaves, and three horses, and seven hundred hogs. For every slave or horse, they gave two or three thousand ducats : which were to be paid at the first melting of gold or silver, or at the division of their portion of inheritance. And they entered into bonds, though in the country there was not wherewith, to pay it within a year after, and put in sureties for the same. Such as in *Spain* had no goods to bind, gave two hundred ducats for a hog, giving assurance after the same manner. Those which had any goods in *Spain* bought with more fear, and bought the less. From that time forward, most of the company had swine, and brought them up, and fed upon them ; and observed Fridays and Saturdays, and the evenings of feasts, which before they did not. For some times in two or three months they did eat no flesh, and whensoever they could come by it, they did eat it.

Some were glad of the death of *Don Ferdinando de Soto*, holding for certain that *Luys de Moscoso* (which was given to his ease), would rather desire to be among the Christians at rest, than to continue the labors of the war in subduing and discovering of countries ; whereof they were already weary, seeing the small profit that ensued thereof. The Governor commanded the captains and principal persons to meet to consult and determine what they should do. And being informed what peopled

habitation was round about, he understood that to the west the country was most inhabited, and that down the river beyond *Quigalta* was uninhabited, and had little store of food. He desired them all, that every one would give his opinion in writing, and set his hand to it: that they might resolve by general consent, whether they should go down the river, or enter into the main land. All were of opinion, that it was best to go by land toward the west, because *Nueva España* was that way; holding the voyage by sea more dangerous, and of greater hazard, because they could make no ship of any strength to abide a storm, neither had they master, nor pilot, compass, nor chart, neither knew they how far the sea was off, nor had any notice of it; nor whether the river did make any great turning into the land, or had any great fall from the rocks, where all of them might be cast away. And some which had seen the sea-chart did find, that from the place where they were by the sea-coast to *Nueva España* might be four hundred leagues, little more or less; and said, that though they went somewhat about by land in seeking a peopled country, if some great wilderness which they could not pass did hinder them, by spending that summer in travel, finding provision to pass the winter in some peopled country, that the next summer after they might come to some Christian land, and that it might fortune in their travel by land to find some rich country, where they might do themselves good. The Governor, although he desired to get out of *Florida* in shorter time, seeing the inconveniences they laid before him, in travelling by sea, determined to follow that which seemed good to them all. On Monday, the fifth day of June, he departed from *Guachoya*. The cacique gave him a guide to *Chaguata*, and stayed at home in his own town. They passed through a province called *Catalte*: and having passed a wilderness of six days' journey, the twentieth day of the month he came to *Chaguata*. The cacique of this province had visited the Governor *Don Ferdinando de Soto* at *Autiamque*, whither he brought him presents of skins, and mantles, and salt. And a day before *Luis de Moscoso* came to his town, we lost a Christian that was sick; which he suspected that the Indians had slain. He sent the cacique word, that he should command his people to seek him up, and sent him unto him, and that he would hold him, as he did, for his friend; and if he did not, that neither he, nor his, should escape his hands, and that he would set his country on fire. Presently the cacique came unto him, and brought a great present of mantles and skins, and the Christian that was lost, and made this speech following:

“Right excellent lord, I would not deserve that conceit which you had of me, for all the treasure of the world. What enforced me to go to visit and serve the excellent Lord Governor your father in *Autiamque*, which you should have remembered, where I offered myself with all loyalty, faith and love, during my life to serve and obey him? What then could be the cause, I having received favors of him, and neither you nor he having done me any wrong, that should move me to do the thing which I ought not? Believe this of me, that neither wrong, nor any worldly interest, was able to make me to have done it, nor shall be able to blind me. But as in this life it is a natural course, that after one pleasure many sorrows do follow: so by your indignation, fortune would moderate the joy, which my heart conceiveth with your presence; and that I should err, where I thought surest to have hit the mark; in harboring this Christian which was lost, and using him in such manner, as he may tell himself, thinking that herein I did you service, with purpose to deliver him unto you in *Chaguata*, and to serve you to the uttermost of my power. If I deserve punishment for this, I will receive it at your hands, as from my lord, as if it were a favor. For the love which I did bear to the excellent Governor, and which I bear to you, hath no limit. And like as you give me chastisement, so will you also show me favor. And that which now I crave of you is this, to declare your will unto me, and those things wherein I may be able to do you the most and best service.”

The Governor answered him, that because he did not find him in that town, he was incensed against him, thinking he had absented himself, as others had done: but seeing he now knew his loyalty and love, he would always hold him as a brother, and favor him with all his affairs. The cacique went with him to the town where he resided, which was a day's journey from thence.

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The passage given in the present leaflet is taken from what is usually referred to in English as the *Narrative of the Gentleman of Elvas*. This is an account of the expedition of De Soto, written by one of the Spaniards who accompanied him, and first printed in 1557 at Evora. The Gentleman of Elvas is supposed by some to be Alvaro Fernandez; but this is a matter of doubt. The first English translation—which is that used for the present leaflet—was made by Hakluyt, who printed it in London in 1609, under the title *Virginia richly valued by the Description of the Mainland of Florida, her next Neighbor*, and again in 1611 as *The worthye and famous Historie of the Travailles, Discovery and Conquest of Terra Florida*. The 1611 edition was reprinted by the Hakluyt Society in 1851, edited by William B. Rye, and is

included in Force's *Tracts* (vol. iv.) and in French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana* (vol. ii.). In 1866 Mr. Buckingham Smith published translations of the narratives of the Gentleman of Elvas and of Biedma, in the fifth volume of the Bradford Club Series, under the title of *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto in the Conquest of Florida, as told by a Knight of Elvas and in a Relation* [presented 1544] by *Luys Hernandez de Biedma*.

This briefer original Spanish account by Biedma long remained in manuscript in the archives at Seville, and was first published in a French version in 1841; and from this William B. Rye translated it for the volume already referred to published by the Hakluyt Society in 1851, which included Hakluyt's version of the Elvas narrative. An abridgment of this also appears in French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana* (vol. ii.).

A third original account of De Soto's expedition is the *Florida del Yuca* of La Vega, written forty years after De Soto's death. It is based upon conversations with a Spanish noble who had accompanied De Soto, and the written reports of two common soldiers; but its spirit of exaggeration has brought it into discredit with many historical scholars. An English version of it is embodied in Bernard Shipp's *History of Hernando de Soto and Florida*.

Still another account of the expedition is the official report which Rodrigo Ranjel, the secretary of De Soto, based upon his diary kept on the march; but this account is incomplete, and there is no English version of it. There is a letter of De Soto, dated July 9, 1539, describing his voyage and landing, which was translated and published by Buckingham Smith in 1854. A version of this letter may also be found in French's *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, vol. ii.

Further information concerning the works upon De Soto and the other explorers of Florida may be found in the notes appended by John Gilmory Shea to his valuable chapter on *Ancient Florida*, in the *Narrative and Critical History of America*, vol. ii. The question of De Soto's route is here fully discussed, with the aid of valuable old maps.



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