

## CHAPTER II.

FRANCISCO PIZARRO.—HIS EARLY HISTORY.—FIRST EXPEDITION TO THE SOUTH.—DISTRESSES OF THE VOYAGERS.—SHARP ENCOUNTERS.—RETURN TO PANAMA.—ALMAGRO'S EXPEDITION.

1524-1525.

FRANCISCO PIZARRO was born at Truxillo, a city of Estremadura, in Spain. The period of his birth is uncertain; but probably it was not far from 1471.<sup>1</sup> He was an illegitimate child, and that his parents should not have taken pains to perpetuate the date of his birth is not surprising. Few care to make a particular record of their transgressions. His father, Gonzalo Pizarro, was a colonel of infantry, and served with some distinction in the Italian

<sup>1</sup> The few writers who venture to assign the date of Pizarro's birth do it in so vague and contradictory a manner as to inspire us with but little confidence in their accounts. Herrera, it is true, says positively, that he was sixty-three years old at the time of his death, in 1541. (*Hist. General*, dec. 6, lib. 10, cap. 6.) This would carry back the date of his birth only to 1478. But Garcilasso de la Vega affirms that he was more than fifty years old in 1525. (*Com. Real.*, Parte 2, lib. 1, cap. 1.) This would place his birth before 1475. Pizarro y Orellana, who, as a kinsman of the Conqueror, may be supposed to have had better means of information, says he was fifty-four years of age at the same date of 1525. (*Varones Ilustres del Nuevo Mundo*, (Madrid, 1639,) p. 128.) But at the period of his death he calls him nearly eighty years old! (p. 185.) Taking this latter as a round exaggeration for effect in the particular connection in which it is used, and admitting the accuracy of the former statement, the epoch of his birth will conform to that given in the text. This makes him somewhat late in life to set about the conquest of an empire. But Columbus, when he entered on his career, was still older.

campaigns under the Great Captain, and afterwards in the wars of Navarre. His mother, named Francisca Gonzales, was a person of humble condition in the town of Truxillo.<sup>2</sup>

But little is told of Francisco's early years, and that little not always deserving of credit. According to some, he was deserted by both his parents, and left as a foundling at the door of one of the principal churches of the city. It is even said that he would have perished, had he not been nursed by a sow.<sup>3</sup> This is a more discreditable fountain of supply than that assigned to the infant Romulus. The early history of men who have made their names famous by deeds in after-life, like the early history of nations, affords a fruitful field for invention.

It seems certain that the young Pizarro received little care from either of his parents, and was suffered to grow up as nature dictated. He was neither taught to read nor write, and his principal occupation was that of a swine-herd. But this torpid way of life did not suit the stirring spirit of Pizarro, as he grew older, and listened to the tales, widely circulated and so captivating to a youthful fancy, of the New World. He shared in the popular enthusiasm, and availed himself of a favorable moment to abandon his ignoble charge, and escape to Seville, the port where the Spanish adventurers embarked to seek their fortunes in the West. Few of them could have turned their backs on their native land with less cause for regret than Pizarro.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Xerez, *Conquista del Peru*, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 179.—Zarate, *Conq. del Peru*, lib. 1, cap. 1.—Pizarro y Orellana, *Varones Ilustres*, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> "Nació en Truxillo, i echaronlo à la puerta de la Iglesia, mamò una Puerca ciertos Dias, no se hallando quien le quisiese dár leche." Gomara, *Hist. de las Ind.*, cap. 144.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Comendador Pizarro y Orellana, Francis Pizarro served, while quite a stripling, with his father, in the Italian wars; and afterwards, under Columbus and other illustrious discoverers, in the New World, whose successes the author modestly

In what year this important change in his destiny took place we are not informed. The first we hear of him in the New World is at the island of Hispaniola, in 1510, where he took part in the expedition to Uraba in Terra Firma, under Alonzo de Ojeda, a cavalier whose character and achievements find no parallel but in the pages of Cervantes. Hernando Cortés, whose mother was a Pizarro, and related, it is said, to the father of Francis, was then in St. Domingo, and prepared to accompany Ojeda's expedition, but was prevented by a temporary lameness. Had he gone, the fall of the Aztec empire might have been postponed for some time longer, and the sceptre of Montezuma have descended in peace to his posterity. Pizarro shared in the disastrous fortunes of Ojeda's colony, and, by his discretion, obtained so far the confidence of his commander, as to be left in charge of the settlement, when the latter returned for supplies to the Islands. The lieutenant continued at his perilous post for nearly two months, waiting deliberately until death should have thinned off the colony sufficiently to allow the miserable remnant to be embarked in the single small vessel that remained to it.<sup>5</sup>

After this, we find him associated with Balboa, the discoverer of the Pacific, and coöperating with him in establishing the settlement at Darien. He had the glory of accompanying this gallant cavalier in his terrible march across the mountains, and of being among the first Europeans, therefore, whose eyes were greeted with the long-promised vision of the Southern Ocean.

After the untimely death of his commander, Pizarro attached himself to the fortunes of Pedrarias, and was employed by that governor in several military expeditions,

attributes to his kinsman's valor, as a principal cause! Varones Ilustres, p. 187.

<sup>5</sup> Pizarro y Orellana, Varones Ilustres, pp. 121, 128.—Herrera, Hist. Gen., Dec. 1, lib. 7, cap. 14.—Montesinos, Annales, MS., año 1510.

which, if they afforded nothing else, gave him the requisite training for the perils and privations that lay in the path of the future Conqueror of Peru.

In 1515, he was selected, with another cavalier named Morales, to cross the Isthmus and traffic with the natives on the shores of the Pacific. And there, while engaged in collecting his booty of gold and pearls from the neighboring islands, as his eye ranged along the shadowy line of coast till it faded in the distance, his imagination may have been first fired with the idea of, one day, attempting the conquest of the mysterious regions beyond the mountains. On the removal of the seat of government across the Isthmus to Panamá, Pizarro accompanied Pedrarias, and his name became conspicuous among the cavaliers who extended the line of conquest to the north over the martial tribes of Veragua. But all these expeditions, whatever glory they may have brought him, were productive of very little gold; and, at the age of fifty, the captain Pizarro found himself in possession only of a tract of unhealthy land in the neighborhood of the capital, and of such *repartimientos* of the natives as were deemed suited to his military services.<sup>6</sup> The New World was a lottery, where the great prizes were so few that the odds were much against the player; yet in the game he was content to stake health, fortune, and, too often, his fair fame.

Such was Pizarro's situation when, in 1522, Andagoya returned from his unfinished enterprise to the south of Panamá, bringing back with him more copious accounts than any hitherto received of the opulence and grandeur of the countries that lay beyond.<sup>7</sup> It was at this time, too,

<sup>6</sup> "Teniendo su casa, i Hacienda, i Repartimiento de Indios como uno de los Principales de la Tierra; porque siempre lo fue." Xerez, Conq. del Peru, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> Andagoya says that he obtained, while at Birú, very minute accounts of the empire of the Incas, from certain itinerant traders who frequented that country. "En esta provincia supe y hube relacion, así de los señores como de mercaderes é intérpretes que

that the splendid achievements of Cortés made their impression on the public mind, and gave a new impulse to the spirit of adventure. The southern expeditions became a common topic of speculation among the colonists of Panamá. But the region of gold, as it lay behind the mighty curtain of the Cordilleras, was still veiled in obscurity. No idea could be formed of its actual distance; and the hardships and difficulties encountered by the few navigators who had sailed in that direction gave a gloomy character to the undertaking, which had hitherto deterred the most daring from embarking in it. There is no evidence that Pizarro showed any particular alacrity in the cause. Nor were his own funds such as to warrant any expectation of success without great assistance from others. He found this in two individuals of the colony, who took too important a part in the subsequent transactions not to be particularly noticed.

One of them, Diego de Almagro, was a soldier of fortune, somewhat older, it seems probable, than Pizarro; though little is known of his birth, and even the place of it is disputed. It is supposed to have been the town of Almagro in New Castile, whence his own name, for want of a better source, was derived; for, like Pizarro, he was a foundling.<sup>8</sup> Few particulars are known of him till the

ellos tenían, de toda la costa de todo lo que despues se ha visto hasta el Cuzco, particularmente de cada provincia la manera y gente della, porque estos alcanzaban por via de mercaderia mucha tierra." Navarrete, Coleccion, tom. III. No. 7.

<sup>8</sup> "Decía el que hera de *Almagro*," says Pedro Pizarro, who knew him well. *Relacion del Descubrimiento y Conquista de los Reynos del Peru*, MS.—See also Zarate, *Conq. del Peru*, lib. 1, cap. 1.—Gomara, *Hist. de las Ind.*, cap. 141.—Pizarro y Orellana, *Varones Ilustres*, p. 211.

The last writer admits that Almagro's parentage is unknown; but adds that the character of his early exploits infers an illustrious descent.—This would scarcely pass for evidence with the College of Heralds.

present period of our history; for he was one of those whom the working of turbulent times first throws upon the surface,—less fortunate, perhaps, than if left in their original obscurity. In his military career, Almagro had earned the reputation of a gallant soldier. He was frank and liberal in his disposition, somewhat hasty and ungovernable in his passions, but, like men of a sanguine temperament, after the first sallies had passed away, not difficult to be appeased. He had, in short, the good qualities and the defects incident to an honest nature, not improved by the discipline of early education or self-control.

The other member of the confederacy was Hernando de Luque, a Spanish ecclesiastic, who exercised the functions of vicar at Panamá, and had formerly filled the office of schoolmaster in the Cathedral of Darien. He seems to have been a man of singular prudence and knowledge of the world; and by his respectable qualities had acquired considerable influence in the little community to which he belonged, as well as the control of funds, which made his coöperation essential to the success of the present enterprise.

It was arranged among the three associates, that the two cavaliers should contribute their little stock towards defraying the expenses of the armament, but by far the greater part of the funds was to be furnished by Luque. Pizarro was to take command of the expedition, and the business of victualling and equipping the vessels was assigned to Almagro. The associates found no difficulty in obtaining the consent of the governor to their undertaking. After the return of Andagoya, he had projected another expedition, but the officer to whom it was to be intrusted died. Why he did not prosecute his original purpose, and commit the affair to an experienced captain like Pizarro, does not appear. He was probably not displeased that the burden of the enterprise should be borne by others, so long

as a good share of the profits went into his own coffers. This he did not overlook in his stipulations.<sup>9</sup>

Thus fortified with the funds of Luque, and the consent of the governor, Almagro was not slow to make preparations for the voyage. Two small vessels were purchased, the larger of which had been originally built by Balboa, for himself, with a view to this same expedition. Since his death, it had lain dismantled in the harbor of Panamá. It was now refitted as well as circumstances would permit, and put in order for sea, while the stores and provisions were got on board with an alacrity which did more credit, as the event proved, to Almagro's zeal than to his forecast.

There was more difficulty in obtaining the necessary complement of hands; for a general feeling of distrust had gathered round expeditions in this direction, which could not readily be overcome. But there were many idle hangers-on in the colony, who had come out to mend their fortunes, and were willing to take their chance of doing so, however desperate. From such materials as these, Almagro assembled a body of somewhat more than a hundred men;<sup>10</sup> and every thing being ready, Pizarro assumed the

<sup>9</sup> "Asi que estos tres compañeros ya dichos Acordaron de yr á conquistar esta provincia ya dicha. Pues consultandolo con Pedro Arias de Avila que a la sazón hera governador en tierra firme. Vino en ello haziendo compañía con los dichos compañeros con condición que Pedro Arias no havia de contribuir entonces con ningun dinero ni otra cosa sino de lo que se hallase en la tierra de lo que á el le cupiese por virtud de la compañía de allí se pagasen los gastos que á el le cupiesen. Los tres compañeros vinieron en ello por aver esta licencia porque de otra manera no la alcanzaran." (Pedro Pizarro, Descub. y Conq., MS.) Andagoya, however, affirms that the governor was interested equally with the other associates in the adventure, each taking a fourth part on himself. (Navarrete, Colección, tom. III. No. 7.) But whatever was the original interest of Pedrarias, it mattered little, as it was surrendered before any profits were realized from the expedition.

<sup>10</sup> Herrera, the most popular historian of these transactions, estimates the number of Pizarro's followers only at eighty. But every

command, and, weighing anchor, took his departure from the little port of Panamá, about the middle of November, 1524. Almagro was to follow in a second vessel of inferior size, as soon as it could be fitted out.<sup>11</sup>

The time of year was the most unsuitable that could have been selected for the voyage; for it was the rainy season, when the navigation to the south, impeded by contrary winds, is made doubly dangerous by the tempests that sweep over the coast. But this was not understood by the adventurers. After touching at the Isle of Pearls, the frequent resort of navigators, at a few leagues' distance from Panamá, Pizarro held his way across the Gulf of St. Michael, and steered almost due south for the Puerto de Piñas, a headland in the province of Biruquete, which marked the limit of Andagoya's voyage. Before his departure, Pizarro had obtained all the information which he could derive from that officer in respect to the country, and the route he was to follow. But the cavalier's own experience had been too limited to enable him to be of much assistance.

Doubling the Puerto de Piñas, the little vessel entered the river Birú, the misapplication of which name is supposed by some to have given rise to that of the empire of other authority which I have consulted raises them to over a hundred. Father Naharro, a contemporary, and resident at Lima, even allows a hundred and twenty-nine. *Relacion sumaria de la entrada de los Españoles en el Peru*, MS.

<sup>11</sup> There is the usual discrepancy among authors about the date of this expedition. Most fix it at 1525. I have conformed to Xerez, Pizarro's secretary, whose narrative was published ten years after the voyage, and who could hardly have forgotten the date of so memorable an event, in so short an interval of time. (See his *Conquista del Peru*, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 179.)

The year seems to be settled by Pizarro's *Capitulacion* with the Crown, which I had not examined till after the above was written. This instrument, dated July, 1529, speaks of his first expedition as having taken place about five years previous. (See *Appendix*, No. VII.)

the Incas.<sup>12</sup> After sailing up this stream for a couple of leagues, Pizarro came to anchor, and disembarking his whole force except the sailors, proceeded at the head of it to explore the country. The land spread out into a vast swamp, where the heavy rains had settled in pools of stagnant water, and the muddy soil afforded no footing to the traveller. This dismal morass was fringed with woods, through whose thick and tangled undergrowth they found it difficult to penetrate; and emerging from them, they came out on a hilly country, so rough and rocky in its character, that their feet were cut to the bone, and the weary soldier, encumbered with his heavy mail or thick-padded doublet of cotton, found it difficult to drag one foot after the other. The heat at times was oppressive; and, fainting with toil and famished for want of food, they sank down on the earth from mere exhaustion. Such was the ominous commencement of the expedition to Peru.

Pizarro, however, did not lose heart. He endeavored to revive the spirits of his men, and besought them not to be discouraged by difficulties which a brave heart would be sure to overcome, reminding them of the golden prize which awaited those who persevered. Yet it was obvious that nothing was to be gained by remaining longer in this desolate region. Returning to their vessel, therefore, it was suffered to drop down the river and proceed along its southern course on the great ocean.

After coasting a few leagues, Pizarro anchored off a place not very inviting in its appearance, where he took in a supply of wood and water. Then, stretching more towards the open sea, he held on in the same direction towards the south. But in this he was baffled by a succession of heavy tempests, accompanied with such tremendous peals of thunder and floods of rain as are found only in the terrible storms of the tropics. The sea was lashed into fury,

<sup>12</sup> Zarate, *Conq. del Peru*, lib. 1, cap. 1.—Herrera, *Hist. General*, dec. 3, lib. 6, cap. 13.

and, swelling into mountain billows, threatened every moment to overwhelm the crazy little bark, which opened at every seam. For ten days the unfortunate voyagers were tossed about by the pitiless elements, and it was only by incessant exertions—the exertions of despair—that they preserved the ship from foundering. To add to their calamities, their provisions began to fail, and they were short of water, of which they had been furnished only with a small number of casks; for Almagro had counted on their recruiting their scanty supplies, from time to time, from the shore. Their meat was wholly consumed, and they were reduced to the wretched allowance of two ears of Indian corn a day for each man.

Thus harassed by hunger and the elements, the battered voyagers were too happy to retrace their course and regain the port where they had last taken in supplies of wood and water. Yet nothing could be more unpromising than the aspect of the country. It had the same character of low, swampy soil, that distinguished the former landing-place; while thick-matted forests, of a depth which the eye could not penetrate, stretched along the coast to an interminable length. It was in vain that the wearied Spaniards endeavored to thread the mazes of this tangled thicket, where the creepers and flowering vines, that shoot up luxuriant in a hot and humid atmosphere, had twined themselves round the huge trunks of the forest-trees, and made a network that could be opened only with the axe. The rain, in the mean time, rarely slackened, and the ground, strewn with leaves and saturated with moisture, seemed to slip away beneath their feet.

Nothing could be more dreary and disheartening than the aspect of these funeral forests; where the exhalations from the overcharged surface of the ground poisoned the air, and seemed to allow no life, except that, indeed, of myriads of insects, whose enamelled wings glanced to and fro, like sparks of fire, in every opening of the woods.