

CHAPTER III.

THE FAMOUS CONTRACT.—SECOND EXPEDITION.—RUIZ EXPLORES THE COAST.—PIZARRO'S SUFFERINGS IN THE FORESTS.—ARRIVAL OF NEW RECRUITS.—FRESH DISCOVERIES AND DISASTERS.—PIZARRO ON THE ISLE OF GALLO.

1526-1527.

ON his arrival at Panamá, Almagro found that events had taken a turn less favorable to his views than he had anticipated. Pedrarias, the governor, was preparing to lead an expedition in person against a rebellious officer in Nicaragua; and his temper, naturally not the most amiable, was still further soured by this defection of his lieutenant, and the necessity it imposed on him of a long and perilous march. When, therefore, Almagro appeared before him with the request that he might be permitted to raise further levies to prosecute his enterprise, the governor received him with obvious dissatisfaction, listened coldly to the narrative of his losses, turned an incredulous ear to his magnificent promises for the future, and bluntly demanded an account of the lives, which had been sacrificed by Pizarro's obstinacy, but which, had they been spared, might have stood him in good stead in his present expedition to Nicaragua. He positively declined to countenance the rash schemes of the two adventurers any longer, and the conquest of Peru would have been crushed in the bud, but for the efficient interposition of the remaining associate, Fernando de Luque.

This sagacious ecclesiastic had received a very different impression from Almagro's narrative, from that which had been made on the mind of the irritable governor. The

actual results of the enterprise in gold and silver, thus far, indeed, had been small,—forming a mortifying contrast to the magnitude of their expectations. But, in another point of view, they were of the last importance; since the intelligence which the adventurers had gained in every successive stage of their progress confirmed, in the strongest manner, the previous accounts, received from Andagoya and others, of a rich Indian empire at the south, which might repay the trouble of conquering it as well as Mexico had repaid the enterprise of Cortés. Fully entering, therefore, into the feelings of his military associates, he used all his influence with the governor to incline him to a more favorable view of Almagro's petition; and no one in the little community of Panamá exercised greater influence over the councils of the executive than Father Luque, for which he was indebted no less to his discretion and acknowledged sagacity than to his professional station.

But while Pedrarias, overcome by the arguments or importunity of the churchman, yielded a reluctant assent to the application, he took care to testify his displeasure with Pizarro, on whom he particularly charged the loss of his followers, by naming Almagro as his equal in command in the proposed expedition. This mortification sunk deep into Pizarro's mind. He suspected his comrade, with what reason does not appear, of soliciting this boon from the governor. A temporary coldness arose between them, which subsided, in outward show, at least, on Pizarro's reflecting that it was better to have this authority conferred on a friend than on a stranger, perhaps an enemy. But the seeds of permanent distrust were left in his bosom, and lay waiting for the due season to ripen into a fruitful harvest of discord.¹

Pedrarias had been originally interested in the enter-

¹ Xerez, Conq. del Peru, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 180.—Montesinos, Annales, MS., año 1526.—Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 3, lib. 8, cap. 12.

prise, at least, so far as to stipulate for a share of the gains, though he had not contributed, as it appears, a single ducat towards the expenses. He was at length, however, induced to relinquish all right to a share of the contingent profits. But, in his manner of doing so, he showed a mercenary spirit, better becoming a petty trader than a high officer of the Crown. He stipulated that the associates should secure to him the sum of one thousand *pesos de oro* in requital of his good-will, and they eagerly closed with his proposal, rather than be encumbered with his pretensions. For so paltry a consideration did he resign his portion of the rich spoil of the Incas!² But the governor was not gifted with the eye of a prophet. His avarice was of that short-sighted kind which defeats itself. He had sacrificed the chivalrous Balboa just as that officer was opening to him the conquest of Peru, and he would now have quenched the spirit of enterprise, that was taking the same direction, in Pizarro and his associates.

Not long after this, in the following year, he was succeeded in his government by Don Pedro de los Rios, a cavalier of Cordova. It was the policy of the Castilian

² Such is Oviedo's account, who was present at the interview between the governor and Almagro, when the terms of compensation were discussed. The dialogue, which is amusing enough, and well told by the old Chronicler, may be found translated in *Appendix, No. 5*. Another version of the affair is given in the *Relacion*, often quoted by me, of one of the Peruvian conquerors, in which Pedrarias is said to have gone out of the partnership voluntarily, from his disgust at the unpromising state of affairs. "Vuelos con la dicha gente á Panamá, destrozados y gastados que ya no tenían haciendas para tornar con provisiones y gentes que todo lo habían gastado, el dicho Pedrarias de Avila les dijo, que ya el no quería mas hacer compañía con ellos en los gastos de la armada, que si ellos querían volver á su costa, que lo hiciesen; y así como gente que había perdido todo lo que tenía y tanto había trabajado, acordaron de tornar á proseguir su jornada y dar fin á las vidas y haciendas que les quedaba, ó descubrir aquella tierra, y ciertamente ellos tubieron grande constancia y animo." *Relacion del Primer. Descub., MS.*

Crown to allow no one of the great colonial officers to occupy the same station so long as to render himself formidable by his authority.³ It had, moreover, many particular causes of disgust with Pedrarias. The functionary they sent out to succeed him was fortified with ample instructions for the good of the colony, and especially of the natives, whose religious conversion was urged as a capital object, and whose personal freedom was unequivocally asserted, as loyal vassals of the Crown. It is but justice to the Spanish government to admit that its provisions were generally guided by a humane and considerate policy, which was as regularly frustrated by the cupidity of the colonist, and the capricious cruelty of the conqueror. The few remaining years of Pedrarias were spent in petty squabbles, both of a personal and official nature; for he was still continued in office, though in one of less consideration than that which he had hitherto filled. He survived but a few years, leaving behind him a reputation not to be envied, of one who united a pusillanimous spirit with uncontrollable passions; who displayed, notwithstanding, a certain energy of character, or, to speak more correctly, an impetuosity of purpose, which might have led to good results had it taken a right direction. Unfortunately, his lack of discretion was such, that the direction he took was rarely of service to his country or to himself.

Having settled their difficulties with the governor, and

³ This policy is noticed by the sagacious Martyr. "De mutandis namque plerisque gubernatoribus, ne longa nimis imperii assuetudine insolentant, cogitatur, qui præcipue non fuerint provinciarum domitores, de hisce ducibus namque alia ratio ponderatur." (*De Orbe Novo*, (Parisii, 1587,) p. 498.) One cannot but regret that the philosopher, who took so keen an interest in the successive revelations of the different portions of the New world, should have died before the empire of the Incas was disclosed to Europeans. He lived to learn and to record the wonders of

⁴ "Rich Mexico, the seat of Montezuma;
Not Cuzco in Peru, the richer seat of Atabalipa."

obtained his sanction to their enterprise, the confederates lost no time in making the requisite preparations for it. Their first step was to execute the memorable contract which served as the basis of their future arrangements; and, as Pizarro's name appears in this, it seems probable that that chief had crossed over to Panamá so soon as the favorable disposition of Pedrarias had been secured.⁴ The instrument, after invoking in the most solemn manner the names of the Holy Trinity and Our Lady the Blessed Virgin, sets forth, that whereas the parties have full authority to discover and subdue the countries and provinces lying south of the Gulf, belonging to the empire of Peru, and as Fernando de Luque had advanced the funds for the enterprise in bars of gold of the value of twenty thousand *pesos*, they mutually bind themselves to divide equally among them the whole of the conquered territory. This stipulation is reiterated over and over again, particularly with reference to Luque, who, it is declared, is to be entitled to one third of all lands, *repartimientos*, treasures of every kind, gold, silver, and precious stones,—to one third even of all vassals, rents, and emoluments arising from such grants as may be conferred by the Crown on either of his military associates, to be held for his own use, or for that of his heirs, assigns, or legal representative.

The two captains solemnly engage to devote themselves exclusively to the present undertaking until it is accomplished; and, in case of failure in their part of the covenant, they pledge themselves to reimburse Luque for his advances, for which all the property they possess shall be held responsible, and this declaration is to be a sufficient

⁴ In opposition to most authorities,—but not to the judicious Quintana,—I have conformed to Montesinos, in placing the execution of the contract at the commencement of the second, instead of the first, expedition. This arrangement coincides with the date of the instrument itself, which, moreover, is reported *in extenso* by no ancient writer whom I have consulted except Montesinos.

warrant for the execution of judgment against them, in the same manner as if it had proceeded from the decree of a court of justice.

The commanders, Pizarro and Almagro, made oath, in the name of God and the Holy Evangelists, sacredly to keep this covenant, swearing it on the missal, on which they traced with their own hands the sacred emblem of the cross. To give still greater efficacy to the compact, Father Luque administered the sacrament to the parties, dividing the consecrated wafer into three portions, of which each one of them partook; while the by-standers, says an historian, were affected to tears by this spectacle of the solemn ceremonial with which these men voluntarily devoted themselves to a sacrifice that seemed little short of insanity.⁵

The instrument, which was dated March 10, 1526, was subscribed by Luque, and attested by three respectable citizens of Panamá, one of whom signed on behalf of Pizarro, and the other for Almagro; since neither of these parties, according to the avowal of the instrument, was able to subscribe his own name.⁶

Such was the singular compact by which three obscure individuals coolly carved out and partitioned among themselves, an empire of whose extent, power, and resources, of whose situation, of whose existence, even, they had no sure or precise knowledge. The positive and unhesitating manner in which they speak of the grandeur of this empire, of its stores of wealth, so conformable to the event, but of which they could have really known so little, forms a striking contrast with the general skepticism and indifference manifested by nearly every

⁵ This singular instrument is given at length by Montesinos. (*Anales*, MS., año 1526.) It may be found in the original in *Appendix*, No. 6.

⁶ For some investigation of the fact, which has been disputed by more than one, of Pizarro's ignorance of the art of writing, see Book 4, chap. 5, of this History.

other person, high and low, in the community of Panamá.⁷

The religious tone of the instrument is not the least remarkable feature in it, especially when we contrast this with the relentless policy, pursued by the very men who were parties to it, in their conquest of the country. "In the name of the Prince of Peace," says the illustrious historian of America, "they ratified a contract of which plunder and bloodshed were the objects."⁸ The reflection seems reasonable. Yet, in criticizing what is done, as well as what is written, we must take into account the spirit of the times.⁹ The invocation of Heaven was natural, where the object of the undertaking was, in part, a religious one. Religion entered, more or less, into the theory, at least, of the Spanish conquests in the New World. That motives of a baser sort mingled largely with these higher ones, and in different proportions according to the character of the individual, no one will deny. And few are they that have proposed to themselves a long career of action without the intermixture of some vulgar personal motive,—fame, honors, or emolument. Yet that religion furnishes a key to the American crusades, however rudely they may have been conducted, is evident from the history of their origin; from the sanction openly given to them by the Head of the Church; from the throng of self-devoted

⁷ The epithet of *loco* or "madman" was punningly bestowed on Father Luque, for his spirited exertions in behalf of the enterprise; *Padre Luque ò loco*, says Oviedo of him, as if it were synonymous. *Historia de las Indias Islas e Tierra Firme del Mar Oceano*, MS., Parte 3, lib. 8, cap. 1.

⁸ Robertson, *America*, vol. III. p. 5.

⁹ "A perfect judge will read each work of wit,
With the same spirit that its author writ,"

says the great bard of Reason. A fair criticism will apply the same rule to action as to writing, and, in the moral estimate of conduct, will take largely into account the spirit of the age which prompted it.

missionaries, who followed in the track of the conquerors to garner up the rich harvest of souls; from the reiterated instructions of the Crown, the great object of which was the conversion of the natives; from those superstitious acts of the iron-hearted soldiery themselves, which, however they may be set down to fanaticism, were clearly too much in earnest to leave any ground for the charge of hypocrisy. It was indeed a fiery cross, that was borne over the devoted land, scathing and consuming it in its terrible progress; but it was still the cross, the sign of man's salvation, the only sign by which generations and generations yet unborn were to be rescued from eternal perdition.

It is a remarkable fact, which has hitherto escaped the notice of the historian, that Luque was not the real party to this contract. He represented another, who placed in his hands the funds required for the undertaking. This appears from an instrument signed by Luque himself and certified before the same notary that prepared the original contract. The instrument declares that the whole sum of twenty thousand *pesos* advanced for the expedition was furnished by the Licentiate Gaspar de Espinosa, then at Panamá; that the vicar acted only as his agent and by his authority; and that, in consequence, the said Espinosa and no other was entitled to a third of all the profits and acquisitions resulting from the conquest of Peru. This instrument, attested by three persons, one of them the same who had witnessed the original contract, was dated on the 6th of August, 1531.¹⁰ The Licentiate Espinosa was a respectable functionary, who had filled the office of principal *alcalde* in Darien, and

¹⁰ The instrument making this extraordinary disclosure is cited at length in a manuscript entitled *Noticia General del Perú, Tierra Firme y Chili*, by Francisco Lopez de Caravantes, a fiscal officer in these colonies. The MS., formerly preserved in the library of the great college of Cuença at Salamanca, is now to be found in her Majesty's library at Madrid. The passage is extracted by Quintana, *Españoles Célebres*, tom. II. Apen. No. 2, nota.

since taken a conspicuous part in the conquest and settlement of Tierra Firme. He enjoyed much consideration for his personal character and station; and it is remarkable that so little should be known of the manner in which the covenant, so solemnly made, was executed in reference to him. As in the case of Columbus, it is probable that the unexpected magnitude of the results was such as to prevent a faithful adherence to the original stipulation; and yet, from the same consideration, one can hardly doubt that the twenty thousand *pesos* of the bold speculator must have brought him a magnificent return. Nor did the worthy vicar of Panamá, as the history will show hereafter, go without his reward.

Having completed these preliminary arrangements, the three associates lost no time in making preparations for the voyage. Two vessels were purchased, larger and every way better than those employed on the former occasion. Stores were laid in, as experience dictated, on a larger scale than before, and proclamation was made of "an expedition to Peru." But the call was not readily answered by the skeptical citizens of Panamá. Of nearly two hundred men who had embarked on the former cruise, not more than three fourths now remained.¹¹ This dismal mortality, and the emaciated, poverty-stricken aspect of the survivors, spoke more eloquently than the braggart promises and magnificent prospects held out by the adventurers. Still there were men in the community of such desperate circumstances, that any change seemed like a chance of bettering their condition. Most of the former company also, strange to say, felt more pleased to follow up the adventure to the end than to abandon it, as they saw the light of a

¹¹ "Con ciento i diez Hombres saliò de Panamá, i fue donde estaba el Capitan Piçarro con otros cinquenta de los primeros ciento i diez, que con èl salieron, i de los setenta, que el Capitan Almagro llevò, quando le fue à buscar, que los ciento i treinta ià eran muertos." Xerez, Conq. del Peru, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 180.

better day dawning upon them. From these sources the two captains succeeded in mustering about one hundred and sixty men, making altogether a very inadequate force for the conquest of an empire. A few horses were also purchased, and a better supply of ammunition and military stores than before, though still on a very limited scale. Considering their funds, the only way of accounting for this must be by the difficulty of obtaining supplies at Panamá, which, recently founded, and on the remote coast of the Pacific, could be approached only by crossing the rugged barrier of mountains, which made the transportation of bulky articles extremely difficult. Even such scanty stock of materials as it possessed was probably laid under heavy contribution, at the present juncture, by the governor's preparations for his own expedition to the north.

Thus indifferently provided, the two captains, each in his own vessel, again took their departure from Panamá, under the direction of Bartholomew Ruiz, a sagacious and resolute pilot, well experienced in the navigation of the Southern Ocean. He was a native of Moguer, in Andalusia, that little nursery of nautical enterprise, which furnished so many seamen for the first voyages of Columbus. Without touching at the intervening points of the coast, which offered no attraction to the voyagers, they stood farther out to sea, steering direct for the Rio de San Juan, the utmost limit reached by Almagro. The season was better selected than on the former occasion, and they were borne along by favorable breezes to the place of their destination, which they reached without accident in a few days. Entering the mouth of the river, they saw the banks well lined with Indian habitations; and Pizarro, disembarking, at the head of a party of soldiers, succeeded in surprising a small village and carrying off a considerable booty of gold ornaments found in the dwellings, together with a few of the natives.¹²

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 181.—Naharro, *Relacion Sumaria*, MS.—Zarate,

Flushed with their success, the two chiefs were confident that the sight of the rich spoil so speedily obtained could not fail to draw adventurers to their standard in Panamá; and, as they felt more than ever the necessity of a stronger force to cope with the thickening population of the country which they were now to penetrate, it was decided that Almagro should return with the treasure and beat up for reinforcements, while the pilot Ruiz, in the other vessel, should reconnoitre the country towards the south, and obtain such information as might determine their future movements. Pizarro, with the rest of the force, would remain in the neighborhood of the river, as he was assured by the Indian prisoners, that not far in the interior was an open reach of country, where he and his men could find comfortable quarters. This arrangement was instantly put in execution. We will first accompany the intrepid pilot in his cruise towards the south.

Coasting along the great continent, with his canvas still spread to favorable winds, the first place at which Ruiz cast anchor was off the little island of Gallo, about two degrees north. The inhabitants, who were not numerous, were prepared to give him a hostile reception,—for tidings of the invaders had preceded them along the country, and even reached this insulated spot. As the object of Ruiz was to explore, not to conquer, he did not care to entangle himself in hostilities with the natives; so, changing his purpose of landing, he weighed anchor, and ran down the coast as far as what is now called the Bay of St. Matthew. The country, which, as he advanced, continued to exhibit evidence of a better culture as well as of a more dense population than the parts hitherto seen, was crowded, along the shores, with spectators, who gave no signs of fear or hostility. They stood gazing on the vessel of the white men as it glided smoothly into the crystal waters of the Conq. del Peru, lib. 1, cap. 1.—Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 3, lib. 8, cap. 13.

bay, fancying it, says an old writer, some mysterious being descended from the skies.

Without staying long enough on this friendly coast to undeceive the simple people, Ruiz, standing off shore, struck out into the deep sea; but he had not sailed far in that direction, when he was surprised by the sight of a vessel, seeming in the distance like a caravel of considerable size, traversed by a large sail that carried it sluggishly over the waters. The old navigator was not a little perplexed by this phenomenon, as he was confident no European bark could have been before him in these latitudes, and no Indian nation, yet discovered, not even the civilized Mexican, was acquainted with the use of sails in navigation. As he drew near, he found it was a large vessel, or rather raft, called *balsa* by the natives, consisting of a number of huge timbers of a light, porous wood, tightly lashed together, with a frail flooring of reeds raised on them by way of deck. Two masts or sturdy poles, erected in the middle of the vessel, sustained a large square-sail of cotton, while a rude kind of rudder and a movable keel, made of plank inserted between the logs, enabled the mariner to give a direction to the floating fabric, which held on its course without the aid of oar or paddle.¹³ The simple architecture of this craft was sufficient for the purposes of the natives, and indeed has continued to answer them to the present day; for the *balsa*, surmounted by small thatched huts or cabins, still supplies the most commodious means for the transportation of passengers and luggage on the streams and along the shores of this part of the South American continent.

On coming alongside, Ruiz found several Indians, both

¹³ "Traia sus manteles y antenas de muy fina madera y velas de algodón del mismo talle de manera que los nuestros navios." Relacion de los Primeros Descubrimientos de F. Pizarro, y Diego de Almagro, sacada del Codice, No. 120 de la Biblioteca Imperial de Vienna, MS.

men and women, on board, some with rich ornaments on their persons, besides several articles wrought with considerable skill in gold and silver, which they were carrying for purposes of traffic to the different places along the coast. But what most attracted his attention was the woollen cloth of which some of their dresses were made. It was of a fine texture, delicately embroidered with figures of birds and flowers, and dyed in brilliant colors. He also observed in the boat a pair of balances made to weigh the precious metals.¹⁴ His astonishment at these proofs of ingenuity and civilization, so much higher than any thing he had ever seen in the country, was heightened by the intelligence which he collected from some of these Indians. Two of them had come from Tumbez, a Peruvian port, some degrees to the south; and they gave him to understand, that in their neighborhood the fields were covered with large flocks of the animals from which the wool was obtained, and that gold and silver were almost as common as wood in the palaces of their monarch. The Spaniards listened greedily to reports which harmonized so well with their fond desires. Though half distrusting the exaggeration, Ruiz resolved to detain some of the Indians, including the natives of Tumbez, that they might repeat the wondrous tale to his commander, and at the same time, by learning

¹⁴ In a short notice of this expedition, written apparently at the time of it, or soon after, a minute specification is given of the several articles found in the *balsa*; among them are mentioned vases and mirrors of burnished silver, and curious fabrics both cotton and woollen. "Espejos guarnecidos de la dicha plata, y tasas y otras vasijas para beber, trahian muchas mantas de lana y de algodón, y camisas y aljubas y alcaçeres y alaremes y otras muchas ropas, todo lo mas de ello muy labrado de labores muy ricas de colores de grana y carmisi y azul y amarillo, y de todas otras colores de diversas maneras de labores y figuras de aves y animales, y Pescados, y arbolesas y trahian unos pesos chiquitos de pesar oro como hechura de Romana, y otras muchas cosas." *Relacion sacada de la Biblioteca Imperial de Vienna, MS.*

the Castilian, might hereafter serve as interpreters with their countrymen. The rest of the party he suffered to proceed without further interruption on their voyage. Then holding on his course, the prudent pilot, without touching at any other point of the coast, advanced as far as the Punta de Pasado, about half a degree south, having the glory of being the first European who, sailing in this direction on the Pacific, had crossed the equinoctial line. This was the limit of his discoveries; on reaching which he tacked about, and standing away to the north, succeeded, after an absence of several weeks, in regaining the spot where he had left Pizarro and his comrades.¹⁵

It was high time; for the spirits of that little band had been sorely tried by the perils they had encountered. On the departure of his vessels, Pizarro marched into the interior, in the hope of finding the pleasant champaign country which had been promised him by the natives. But at every step the forests seemed to grow denser and darker, and the trees towered to a height such as he had never seen, even in these fruitful regions, where Nature works on so gigantic a scale.¹⁶ Hill continued to rise above hill, as he advanced, rolling onward, as it were, by successive waves to join that colossal barrier of the Andes, whose frosty sides, far away above the clouds, spread out like a curtain of burnished silver, that seemed to connect the heavens with the earth.

¹⁵ Xerez, *Conq. del Peru*, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 181.—*Relacion sacada de la Biblioteca Imperial de Vienna, MS.*—Herrera, *Hist. General*, dec. 3, lib. 8, cap. 13.

One of the authorities speaks of his having been sixty days on this cruise. I regret not to be able to give precise dates of the events in these early expeditions. But chronology is a thing beneath the notice of these ancient chroniclers, who seem to think that the date of events, so fresh in their own memory, must be so in that of every one else.

¹⁶ "Todo era montañas, con arboles hasta el cielo!" Herrera, *Hist. General*, ubi supra.