

**A TRUE ACCOUNT OF THE PROVINCE
OF CUZCO, CALLED NEW CASTILLE,
CONQUERED BY FRANCISCO
PIZARRO, CAPTAIN TO HIS MAJESTY
THE EMPEROR, OUR MASTER**

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A True Account of the Province of Cuzco, Called New Castille, Conquered by Francisco Pizarro, Captain to His Majesty the Emperor, Our Master by Francisco Xerez

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FRANCISCO XEREZ

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A TRUE ACCOUNT
OF THE PROVINCE
OF CUZCO,

Called New Castille, conquered by *Francisco Pizarro*,
captain to His Majesty the Emperor,
our Master.

Dedicated to His Majesty the Emperor by

FRANCISCO XERES,

Native of the most noble and most loyal town of Seville, Secretary
to the said Captain in all the Provinces and Countries
conquered in New Castille, and one of the first
conquerors of that country.



NARRATIVE OF THE CONQUEST OF PERU.

BY

FRANCISCO XERES.

BECAUSE the Divine Providence; and the fortune of Cæsar; and the prudence, fortitude, military discipline, labours, perilous navigations, and battles of the Spaniards, vassals of the most invincible Emperor of the Roman Empire, our natural King and Lord, will cause joy to the faithful and terror to the infidels; for the glory of God our Lord and for the service of the Catholic Imperial Majesty; it has seemed good to me to write this narrative, and to send it to your Majesty, that all may have a knowledge of what is here related. It will be to the glory of God, because they have conquered and brought to our holy Catholic Faith so vast a number of heathens, aided by His holy guidance. It will be to the honour of our Emperor because, by reason of his great power and good fortune, such events happened in his time. It will give joy to the faithful that such battles have been won, such provinces discovered and conquered, such riches brought home for the King and for themselves; and that such terror has been spread among the infidels, such admiration excited in all mankind.

For when, either in ancient or modern times, have such great exploits been achieved by so few against so many; over so many climes, across so many seas, over such distances by land, to subdue the unseen and unknown? Whose deeds can be compared with those of Spain? Not surely those of the Jews, nor of the Greeks, nor even of the

Romans, of whom more is written than of any other people. For though the Romans subjugated so many provinces, yet they did so with an equal number of troops or but slightly less in number, and the lands were known, and well supplied with provisions, and their captains and armies were paid. But our Spaniards, being few in number, never having more than two hundred or three hundred men together, and sometimes only a hundred and even fewer (only once, and that twenty years ago, with the Captain Pedrarias, was there the larger number of fifteen hundred men); and those who have come at different times being neither paid nor pressed, but serving of their own free wills and at their own costs, have, in our times, conquered more territory than has ever been known before, or than all the faithful and infidel princes possessed. Moreover, they supported themselves on the savage food of the people, who had no knowledge of bread or wine, suffering on a diet of herbs, fruits, and roots. Yet they have made conquests which are now known to all the world. I will only write, at present, of what befell in the conquest of New Castille; and I will not write much, in order to avoid prolixity.

The South Sea having been discovered, and the inhabitants of Tierra Firme having been conquered and pacified, the Governor Pedrarias de Avila founded and settled the cities of Panama and of Nata, and the town of Nombre de Dios. At this time the Captain Francisco Pizarro, son of the Captain Gonzalo Pizarro, a knight of the city of Truxillo, was living in the city of Panama; possessing his house, his farm, and his Indians, as one of the principal people of the land, which indeed he always was, having distinguished himself in the conquest and settling, and in the service of his Majesty. Being at rest and in repose, but full of zeal to continue his labours and to perform other more distinguished services for the royal crown, he sought permission from Pedrarias to discover that coast of the South Sea to

the eastward. He spent a large part of his fortune on a good ship which he built, and on necessary supplies for the voyage, and he set out from the city of Panama on the 14th day of the month of November, in the year 1524.¹ He had a hundred and twelve Spaniards in his company, besides some Indian servants. He commenced a voyage in which they suffered many hardships, the season being winter and unpropitious. I shall omit many things that happened which might be tedious, and will only relate the notable events, and those that are most to the purpose.

Seventy days after leaving Panama they landed at a port which was afterwards named Port Famine. They had previously landed at many ports, but had abandoned them because there were no inhabitants. The captain and eighty men remained in this port (the remainder having died); and because their provisions had come to an end, and there were none in that land, he sent the ship, with the sailors and an officer,² to the Isle of Pearls (which is in the jurisdiction of Panama) to obtain supplies, thinking that, at the end of ten or twelve days, they would return with succour. But Fortune is always, or generally, adverse; and the ship never returned for forty-seven days, during which time the captain and his companions subsisted on a sea-weed that they found on the shore, collecting it with much trouble. Some of them, being sorely weakened, died. They also fed on some very bitter palm fruits. During the absence of the ship, in going and returning, more than twenty men died. When the ship returned with supplies, the captain and mariners related how, when the supplies did not come, they had eaten a tanned cow-hide which had been used to cover the pump. They boiled it and divided it amongst themselves. The survivors were refreshed with the supplies brought by the ship, consisting of maize and pigs; and

¹ Herrera gives the same date. Cieza de Leon and Garcilasso de la Vega have 1525.

² Named Montenegro.

the captain set out to continue his voyage. He came to a town on the sea-shore, built in a strong position and surrounded by pallisades. Here he found provisions in abundance, but the inhabitants fled from the town. The next day a number of armed men came. They were warlike and well armed; while the Christians were reduced by hunger and their previous hardships. The Christians were defeated and their captain received seven wounds, the slightest of which was dangerous. The Indians, who had wounded him, left him because they thought he was dead. Seventeen other men were wounded with him, and five were killed. Seeing the result of this disaster, and the small chance of being able to cure and revive his people, the captain embarked and returned to the land of Panama, landing at an Indian village near the island of Pearls, called Chuchama.² Thence he sent the ship to Panama,³ for she had become unseaworthy by reason of the *teredo*; and all that had befallen was reported to Pedrarias, while the captain remained behind to refresh himself and his companions.

When the ship arrived at Panama it was found that, a few days before, the Captain Diego de Almagro had sailed in search of the Captain Pizarro, his companion, with another ship and seventy men. He sailed as far as the village where the Captain Pizarro was defeated, and the Captain Almagro had another encounter with the Indians of that place, and was also defeated. He lost an eye, and many Christians were wounded; but, nevertheless, the Indians abandoned the village, which was set on fire. They again set out, and followed the coast until they came to a great river, which they called San Juan⁴ because they arrived there on his day. They there found signs of gold, but there being

² The province of Chuchama was discovered by Pascual de Andagoya in 1522. See my translation of Andagoya, p. 40.

³ In command of his treasurer, Nicolas de Ribera.

⁴ A few miles north of the port of Buenaventura, in New Granada.

no traces of the Captain Pizarro, the Captain Almagro returned to Chuchama, where he found his comrade. They agreed that the Captain Almagro should go to Panama, repair the ships, collect more men to continue the enterprise, and defray the expenses, which amounted to more than ten thousand *castellanos*.⁵ At Panama much obstruction was caused by Pedrarias and others, who said that the voyage should not be persisted in, and that his Majesty would not be served by it. The Captain Almagro, with the authority given him by his comrade, was very constant in prosecuting the work he had commenced, and he required the Governor Pedrarias not to obstruct him, because he believed, with the help of God, that his Majesty would be well served by that voyage. Thus Pedrarias was forced to allow him to engage men. He set out from Panama with a hundred and ten men; and went to the place where Pizarro waited with another fifty of the first hundred and ten who sailed with him, and of the seventy who accompanied Almagro when he went in search. The other hundred and thirty were dead. The two captains, in their two ships, sailed with a hundred and sixty men, and coasted along the land.⁶ When they thought they saw signs of habitations, they went on shore in three canoes they had with them, rowed by sixty men, and so they sought for provisions.

They continued to sail in this way for three years, suffering great hardships from hunger and cold. The greater part of the crews died of hunger, insomuch that there were not fifty surviving, and during all those three years they discovered no good land. All was swamp and inundated country, without inhabitants. The good country they discovered was as far as the river San Juan, where the Captain

* The value of the *castellano* varied. At this time it was worth about eight shillings.

* Their experienced and resolute Pilot was Bartolomé Ruiz, a native of Moguer, in Andalusia.

Pizarro remained with the few survivors, sending a captain⁷ with the smaller ship to discover some good land further along the coast. He sent the other ship, with the Captain Diego de Almagro, to Panama to get more men, because with the two vessels together and so few men no discovery could be made, and the people died. The ship that was sent to discover, returned at the end of seventy days to the river of San Juan, where the Captain Pizarro remained with his people, and reported to him what had befallen. They had arrived at the village of Cancebi, which is on this coast, and before they reached it, the crew of the ship had seen other inhabited places, very rich in gold and silver, and inhabited by more intelligent people than they had previously met with. They brought six persons that they might learn the language of the Spaniards, together with gold, silver, and cloths.⁸ The Captain and his comrades received this news with so much joy, that they forgot all their former sufferings, and the expenses they had incurred, and conceived a strong desire to see that land which appeared to be so inviting. As soon as the Captain Almagro arrived from Panama with a ship laden with men and horses, the two ships, with their commanders and all their people, set out from the river San Juan, to go to that newly-discovered land. But the navigation was difficult, they were detained so long⁹ that the provisions were exhausted, and the people were obliged to go on shore in search of supplies. The

⁷ Ruiz, the Pilot.

⁸ Ruiz discovered the bay of San Mateo and the isle of Gallo, and encountered a native raft, laden with merchandise: vases and mirrors of silver, and cotton and woollen cloths. Some of the people on board were natives of Tumbez; and he took six into his vessel, intending to make them learn Spanish, and become interpreters. The furthest point reached by Ruiz was the Cape of Passaca, and he was thus the first European to cross the line in the Pacific Ocean.

⁹ They had constant northerly winds, with heavy squalls, and storms of thunder and lightning.