

**NARRATIVES OF THE
CAREER OF
HERNANDO DE SOTO, IN
TWO VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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Narratives of the career of Hernando de Soto, in two volumes, Vol. I by Edward Gaylord Bourne

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EDWARD GAYLORD BOURNE

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TWO VOLUMES, VOL. I**

NARRATIVES *of the career*
of HERNANDO DE SOTO
VOLUME I



J. G. de Potos

Narratives of the career of
Hernando de Soto

in the Conquest of Florida,
as told by a Knight of Elvas
and in a relation by Luys
Hernandez de Biedma, fac-
tor of the Expedition

TRANSLATED BY BUCKINGHAM SMITH
together with an account of
DE SOTO'S EXPEDITION

Based on the Diary of
RODRIGO RANJEL, his Private Secretary
translated from Oviedo's *Historia General
y Natural de las Indias*

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
Edward Gaylord Bourne
Professor of History in Yale University

ILLUSTRATED

IN TWO VOLUMES
Volume I

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE expeditions of De Soto and Coronado were the most elaborate efforts made by the Spaniards to explore the interior of North America, and in some respects they have never been surpassed in the later history of the country. Between them they nearly spanned the continent from Georgia to the Gulf of California. Of the two, that of De Soto excited the most interest at the time, and this distinction it still retains. It was the first extensive exploration of at least six of our Southern States, and their written history opens with the narratives which tell its story; these same narratives contain the earliest descriptions which we possess of the life and manners of the southern Indians so famous in literature and history—the Choctaws, the Cherokees, the Creeks, and the Seminoles; these narratives also record the discovery of the Mississippi River and the story of the first voyage upon it by Europeans.

Nor are these narratives less interesting in literary history. One of them—that accorded the first place in this edition—is the only considerable contribution in the Portu-

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guese language, and by a Portuguese, to the early history of the United States. In making another, a descendant of the Incas of Peru transmuted the tale of hardships and meetings with the Indians, friendly and hostile, into an old romance of chivalry,—the first and certainly the most celebrated one dealing with an American theme,—in which a groundwork of fact is richly embroidered by the author's imagination with romantic details into a whole so full of charm as to have beguiled even professed historians. Finally, in contrast to this quaint compound of knight-errantry and Indian fighting, we have a plain, unvarnished account of what actually took place from day to day from the hand of De Soto's private secretary, Rodrigo Ranjel. This last is now made accessible, in English, for the first time in this edition.

The earliest narrative of De Soto's expedition to be published was drawn up by one of the Portuguese gentlemen who joined it from the town of Elvas, which lies just across the boundary from the Spanish city of Badajos, where De Soto was well known. The writer did not reveal his name, and his identity has never been discovered. His *True Relation*, as he entitled it, was published in Evora, Portugal, in 1557. It was brought to the attention of a wider public by the ever

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alert and energetic Richard Hakluyt, who, in 1609, to promote the interests of the newly founded Virginia colony, translated it into English under the title: *Virginia richly valued by the description of the maine land of Florida her next neighbour; out of foure yeeres continuall travell and discoverie for above one thousand miles east and west, of Don Ferdinando de Soto, and six hundred able men in his companie. Wherein are truly observed the riches and fertilitie of those parts abounding with things necessarie, pleasant, and profitable for the life of man; with the nature and dispositions of the inhabitants. Written by a Portugall gentleman of Elvas, employed in all the action, and translated out of Portuguese by Richard Hakluyt.* Two years later, with the same purpose in view, Hakluyt published a new edition of his version, changing the title to *The Discovery and Conquest of Terra Florida by Don Ferdinando de Soto and six hundred Spaniards his followers, etc.* This narrative, from its sobriety of tone, its nearness in time to the events which its author relates as an eye-witness, and the numerous indications that in its preparation he utilized memoranda made at the time, has generally been recognized by historians as the most trustworthy detailed account of De Soto's expedition that we have.