

1565. proach; but it is only at God's tribunal that the testimony of conscience gives perfect assurance; and this conduct in a man with whom he had always maintained a good understanding, left him no room to doubt that he had been misrepresented to the admiral, or the king himself. He soon learned from Mr. de Ribaut's lips, that his fear was not unfounded; for on asking him privately for a frank explanation, that commander detailed to him at length all that had been said and written to the court against him.

Heads of accusation against Laudonniere.

The principal charges were, that he so acted the monarch, and governed so tyrannically, that there was no longer any one in Florida willing to serve under him; that he regarded the country as his conquest and domain; that no time was to be lost, if they wished to hold it for the king; that it would require even then a considerable force; and that the least thing to be feared, in case his majesty deferred these steps, was, that the French in Florida would right themselves, as they did at Charles Fort, under Captain Albert, and then seek impunity for their crime in revolt, by giving themselves to some other power. In fine, his very loyalty was assailed.¹

These were, in fact, the reasons which induced the king to fit out seven ships under the Sieur de Ribaut. The reputation raised for Florida in France, the report of the large expedition, and confidence in the commander, had caused a real eagerness to join it, more especially as peace left a great many gentlemen and officers unemployed, who were delighted to find this opportunity of reaping the fruit of their past services. It will be seen, too, in the sequel, that Admiral Coligny was not so attentive this time to exclude Catholics as in his other expeditions, at least among the soldiers and sailors.

Perils of the fleet before reaching Florida.

The expedition was not, at the outset, fortunate: while at anchor at the roadstead of Dieppe,² the fleet experienced such a gale, that it was forced to run before the wind, and

¹ Laudonniere, pp. 181-7.

² May 22.