

and settlement of Florida; that to his knowledge, those immense regions enjoyed a very healthy climate and a most fertile soil; but even if there were no solid advantage to be derived by the State from the possession of this beautiful country, it was inhabited by tribes sunk in the deepest shades of heathendom; that his majesty was bound in conscience, as lawful sovereign of all Florida, to afford them a knowledge of the true God, since it was on this condition that the Sovereign Pontiffs had given his ancestors the domain of the New World. "For myself, sire," he added, "the blindness of so many thousands of idolaters has touched me so sensibly, that of all employments with which your majesty could honor me, there is not one to which I would not prefer that of conquering Florida, and peopling it with true Christians."¹

1565.

The king praised his zeal and accepted his offers. It was arranged that he was to convey to Florida five hundred men, with provisions for a year, at his own expense, without his majesty or his successors being held to make him any return; that he was to conquer Florida, and make an exact chart of all the coasts, within three years; that besides the five hundred men intended to settle Florida, which number was to comprise one hundred husbandmen and four Jesuit priests, he should carry over horses and mares, and all kinds of domestic animals, large and small; that he should establish a royal audience² there, of which he was to be alguazil mayor; that he should found two or three towns, each of a hundred settlers, to be defended by good forts; that he should be at liberty to go at pleasure to Hispaniola, Porto Rico, Cuba, and even come to Spain, without paying duties, either on provisions, supplies, or merchandise, except gold, silver, and precious stones; that during six years he might fit out two galleons of five or six hundred tons, and two pataches of one hundred and fifty or two hundred; that all the prizes he

Conditions
on which he
treats with
the king.

¹ Barcia, *Ensayo Cronolog.*, p. 65.

² Ib., p. 66.