

1565. French in Florida as he did, only by the influence of the chief ministers of the French court, who informed him of Ribaut's departure, that he might pursue and attack them. The recent historian of Florida proves clearly enough the falsity of this assertion; but if the French in Florida were not disavowed by their own sovereign,—if Messieurs de Ribaut and de Laudonniere had commissions from that prince to build forts and found settlements in that part of America, where Spain had never had any,—how justify the manner in which they were treated in time of peace, even according to the account given by Doctor Solis de las Meras, whose sister had married Don Pedro Menendez, and who accompanied that general on his expedition? It is on the testimony of this doctor, who speaks as an eye-witness, and who has been copied by Don André Gonzalez de Barcia, that I am going to give the second version of the close of that tragedy, the scene of which is transported from San Matheo to St. Augustine.

Spanish
version.

While Peter Menendez was engaged in fortifying the latter place, for fear that de Ribaut should come to assail him, some Indians informed him that there were a number of Christians four leagues off, greatly embarrassed to cross a bay, which was, however, merely the quite narrow mouth of a small river.¹ On this news, the adelantado took with him forty soldiers, to go and see to what country these Christians belonged; but as he set out quite late, it was night when he reached the place announced to him, and he encamped a short distance from the river.

The next morning he posted his detachment in a way not to be perceived. He then climbed a tree, from which he could see a large force on the other side of the bay, and he even observed that they had flags. He got down, and approached the river. As soon as he appeared,² a Gascon

¹ Probably Matanzas Inlet.

the deception, he may have given

² Mendoza (Memoir, p. 230) says, his name as Villemande, according to the French version.