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Preface

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PREFACE

On that day between the 2nd and 8th of April, 1513, when Juan Ponce de Leon stepped from his landing boat upon the sandy shore of Florida he opened the positive history of the white man within the limits of the present United States. Since then, through the centuries, his name has been perpetuated by history and is better known today than any of the early explorers with the single exception of Columbus. But the circumstances of his discovery of Florida are seldom related with historical accuracy, while those of his second voyage to colonize Florida are scarcely known at all. This is due in large part, without doubt, to the inaccessibility of the original Spanish records and the dearth of English translations of them. The purpose of this work is to provide accurate translations of these source records in full, that the student of American history may have before him under one cover all that is known historically concerning Ponce de Leon's two voyages to Florida.

In presenting my conclusions I have in every case given my reasons therefor. They were derived from an extensive study of the subject for the sole purpose of finding the true story in the original records themselves as published herein. It differs in many respects from the popularly accepted version of Ponce de Leon's association with Florida, and hardship and disappointment supplant the customary picture of romance; but it is none the less interesting from a historical standpoint, because the courage of pathfinders is real, while historical romance is usually fiction.

I have derived both satisfaction and pleasure from this study, the former from having found a, virgin field for original research, the latter because of the sincere interest shown by many-the kind of encouragement that means much in any earnest effort. My gratitude is here expressed to all, and specifically to those who gave their time and talent as a contribution to this work, namely: C. L. Crow, James A. Robertson and Florence P. Spofford for their authoritative translations of source records ; Charles B. Reynolds, for valuable suggestions and the loan of rare material in his possession; Kenneth A. Friedman and T. Hurd Kooker for the well-drawn maps ; and Carl Bohnenberger, Emilio Carles, Alston Cockrell, Alexander J. Mitchell and Eugene M. Sanchez for help in various ways.

T. FREDERICK DAVIS.

Jacksonville, Florida
May 15, 1935.