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## Letter to the King of Spain from Officers in De Soto's Army

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LETTER TO THE KING OF SPAIN FROM  
OFFICERS AT HAVANA IN THE  
ARMY OF DE SOTO

(On envelope is written : -)

To THE S. I. C. MAJESTY  
OF THE  
H. I. C. M<sup>y</sup>

We gave relation to Your Majesty from Saint Jago de Cuba of the favourable beginning of our expedition, which, it appears, the Adelantado Hernando de Soto brought with his good fortune, wherewith to serve in the manner of which he comes in control. Suffice it to say, that he has thought best to look both into the state of the Island and the population, as Your Majesty is informed; but with great toil and cost to himself, as he wished to travel throughout, visiting the towns, which had much need of attention. As well has he been detained, at great expense with his soldiers, longer than he wished, while providing himself, without loss of time, in every particular useful for his conquest, managing aptly in all matters, and setting everything in complete order.

We inform Your Majesty, that today, on the eve of departure, he has large vessels in port, two caravels and two brigantines, in all nine sail, having lost two since our arrival. He carries in them two hundred and thirty-seven horses, besides some of relief; three hundred and thirty foot, as well as those mounted in all, five hundred and thirteen men, without the sailors. With these go more abundant subsistence than could have been gotten out of Spain for an armada. There are three thousand loads of cacabi, twenty-five hundred shoulders

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Note-The original of this letter is in Archivo General de Indias, Seville. The translation is by Buchingham Smith, and is reprinted from the Bradford Club edition of his Narratives. . . . (New York, 1866)

of bacon, and twenty-five hundred hanegas of maize moreover, there are beasts on hoof for the settlement, and for the butcher, to be in readiness on the return of the vessels, through which we are to receive large supplies. With this object, the Adelantado has bought many grazing farms, at the cost of much money, to be employed solely in affording us sustenance.

In order that Your Majesty may entertain good hopes of that country of Florida, we report, that directly upon our arrival here, in order that Juan de Anasco might go with fifty men to look for some port on the coast, he was elected to be the royal Comptroller; and although he passed through many hardships, because of the winter, he found the most convenient place that could be desired very near, only some seventy-five or eighty leagues from this land, inhabited and very secure. He brought four of the Indians, as interpreters, who are so intelligent that they already understand us, after a manner, and grand expectations of that country, so much so, that all depart joyfully and contented.

The bearer of this letter is the Captain Hernan Ponce de Leon, companion of the Adelantado, who has been a witness to all this, and is a person of whom Your Majesty can be informed in whatsoever may most interest you.

We will say no more at present, save that on arriving in the land of Florida, we will, by Divine pleasure, take particular care to give a very long relation of all that shall hereafter occur.

Our Lord guard and increase the S. I. C. life of Your Majesty with augmentation of more and greater kingdoms and lordships, as the servants of Y. M. desire.

From the town of San X<sup>o</sup> bal of the Havana, the  
eighteenth day of May, of the year 1539.

From Y. S. I. C. My's

Servants, who your imperial feet kiss.

JUAN  
GAYTAN  
*Rubrica*

JNO. DE AN  
Asco  
*Rubrica*

LUIS FERNANDEZ  
DE BIEDMA  
*Rubrica*