

River May on the mission of a sudden attack upon the Spaniards. Laudonniere remained at Fort Caroline.

Ribault's fleet soon arrived off St. Augustine, having been joined by the *Trinity* in the meantime. While the decks were being cleared for action the wind died down into a complete calm—it was the calm before a hurricane. When the wind came again it grew rapidly into a gale from the northeast and Ribault's ships were driven southward and scattered down the coast.

Spaniards Plan Attack

Rumors of a French settlement in Florida reached Spain through the court of France. These rumors were verified by a report from Havana in an account of the mutineers from Fort Caroline that were captured, who in order to save themselves divulged the secrets of the French fort on the River May.

* Spain claimed Florida by right of discovery and exploration and she seems to have had a good title to it through Ponce de Leon, Narvaez, De Soto and other voyagers. This settlement on the River May incensed the Spanish king as a foreign settlement within his dominions and he determined to get rid of it. France and Spain at that time were not at war. Religion furnished a good pretext and a safety-valve for the Spanish king to act and still keep official peace with France.

A royal decree was granted Pedro Menendez to fit out, mostly at his own initial expense, an expedition designed to destroy the French colony or drive the Frenchmen from the shores of Florida. Such an expedition could not have been placed in better hands for its success, as Menendez had shown before that he was fully capable of performing the acts with which he was charged—the brutality that the spirit of the age in which he lived characterized as the highest order of heroism and religious duty.

It was a peculiar coincidence that Menendez arrived in sight of the Florida coast on the same day that Ribault's fleet dropped anchor at the mouth of the River May, and the same day, too, that Laudonniere was hoisting sail to leave the shores of Florida. Menendez sailed along the coast and anchored off what is now St. Augustine. Here he learned from the Indians of the situation of the French; but to satisfy himself he went with five of his ships up the coast