Ribault's Second Voyage

The settlement on the River May had not been forgotten by Coligny. At the first opportunity, during a lull in the civil war in France, he secured a royal commission for Captain Ribault to command an expedition to America. The full quota of soldiers and volunteers was quickly brought together. Some of the men embarked with their wives and children. The total number of emigrants was about six hundred.

The fleet of seven vessels sailed from Dieppe in May, 1565. Experiencing adverse weather it put into several ports and was delayed in reaching the River May until August 28th, the day that Laudonniere was preparing to leave. Three of the vessels entered the river and proceeded to the fort, but the four largest could not cross the bar and remained at anchor outside. All of the colonists had landed and the disembarking of supplies had been in progress several days, when at night five Spanish ships came up from the south and anchored near the four French ships at the mouth of the river. The Spaniards claimed to be friendly, but the French trusting nothing, made ready for sailing. Their suspicions were soon verified and they cut their cables and sailed for the open sea, with the Spanish ships in pursuit. The chase continued until after sunrise, but the French out-sailed their pursuers, who turned back and were in turn followed by a French ship. Observing that the Spaniards were landing soldiers and provisions (at St. Augustine), the French vessel hastened to the River May to notify Ribault, who was at Fort Caroline while all of this was going on.

When the facts were related, Ribault immediately held a council of war. He favored attacking the Spaniards by sea immediately, but Laudonniere opposed the plan on the ground that it was the season of sudden storms and he thought it would be wiser to repair the fort and await an attack by the Spaniards. Most of the officers agreed with Laudonniere. Ribault, however, held to his decision and ordered the ships prepared for battle. The largest ship, the Trinity, flagship of the fleet, having outsailed the rest had not yet returned to the river and the attack was to be made without her. All of the fighting men that had just arrived together with the able-bodied of Laudonniere's force were ordered aboard. On September 10th, the fleet sailed from the