

towards the forest-clad mountain that towered over the valley. "Up there," he said, "is the city of Boies. None of our people were ever there, but they say there dwells on the mountain-top a race as clever as the white men and beautiful as the sun. They dress in cloth of gold, and have strange palaces and temples full of gems, and great orchards of orange trees."

When this tale was told to Hernando Vaca, the wild adventurous leader of the band, he exclaimed, "Here is a chance for adventure! Let us show these Indians what Spaniards can do." At once the others became enthusiastic over the idea of exploring the mountain.

A few days later an expedition set out, accompanied by a band of Indians to cut their way through the tangled thickets of the mountain side. In a few hours they gave up the attempt to reach the summit in this way, and after some discussion, entered the gorge of the turbulent little river that cut its way down the steep slope. Wading upwards through the icy water, happily at that time of year shallow though rapid, was disagreeable work, but at least preferable to the almost impossible task of hacking a path through the jungle-like thickets. As they advanced one of the Indians found a piece of wood curiously carved, floating in the current; and when one of the guides reported to have seen a man clad in gold with a feathered head dress, creeping from rock to rock along the river, it was all Hernando could do to prevent them from fleeing down the mountain.

Towards night the forest on the upper slopes became thinner and they saw great tiers of cliffs rising high and impassible before them. The river crashed over the cliffs in a huge cataract which made further advance by the gorge out of the question. Beside the river was an enormous round rock, a solitary monster as high as a house, standing alone like an awful guardian of the secrets of the mountain-top. When they climbed out of the gorge, Hernando examined the rock carefully, noticing its peculiarly small base. "I have seen something like that before," he said, "that could easily be moved. Here, you dogs, set your backs to that, and roll it down the mountain."

Obediently the Indians pushed at the rock, but for a long time their efforts were in vain. "Let the poor Indians alone, Hernando," said one of the Spaniards. "What good is there in moving that mass anyway?" But with threats and cuffs Hernando kept them at the task, and finally by using a lever, they moved the rock slightly. The sweat stood out on their foreheads, but still they heaved; and finally the rock moved and turned and fell with a roar down the mountain-side, bearing trees and bushes before it. The thunder of its course came up to the Spaniards as they stood spell-bound. On and on it crashed down the steep incline till the noise died away in the distance. The