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✓ I: Sails from the South'ard

In command was a certain Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, a Portuguese by birth and a skilled mariner.

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-- Charles E. Chapman

On September 28, 1542, the Portuguese navigator João Rodríguez Cabrilho stumbled into San Diego Bay while, hopefully, looking for China, and thus became the first white man to set foot on the coast of what we now call California. He named ^{the Bay} San Miguel.

Possibly because he was sailing in the employ of the Spanish government, Cabrilho's name has been altered to the Spanish form of Juan Rodríguez Cabrilho -- and that was not all that he suffered at the hands of the name-changers. He went on, far up the California coast, and returned to winter quarters at San Miguel Island, where he died early in January of 1543, from an injury received while landing through the surf. And so far as Spain was concerned, nothing was done about the newly discovered port for sixty years.

It is quite possible, however, that another Portuguese navigator sailing for Spain, Sebastian Cermenho, may have visited San Diego Bay late in 1595 while ^{coming} sailing down the coast ^{in a home-made sailing launch} -- after losing his ship, a Manila galleon, at Drake's Bay. Cermenho, regrettably, ~~had~~ incurred the enmity of the merchants of Acapulco by losing that galleon, which was full of goodies from Manila, ^(what may well have been) for the January sales at Acapulco. And the merchants had the ear of the Viceroy. Although ^{Cermenho} ~~he~~ had been ordered to survey the coast on the way home, he caught hell for losing his ship, ^{even though the launch was} clumsy and wholly unsuited for surveying. ^{And instead of publishing them,} ~~and~~ the Viceroy gun-decked his reports; they have never been found.

Before rising to command of a galleon, Cermenho had been pilot on one of them -- the Santa Ana or, as they liked to call her "The Great St. Ann." ^{And one of his shipmates in that hapless craft was a cheerful extrovert named Sebastian Vizcaino.} That was in 1587, and it was her hard luck to run afoul of Thomas Cavendish, who back in England was known as a "Gentleman adventurer" but was known elsewhere, and more realistically, as a pirate. He was decent enough to put her people ashore before looting and burning her, and while most of