

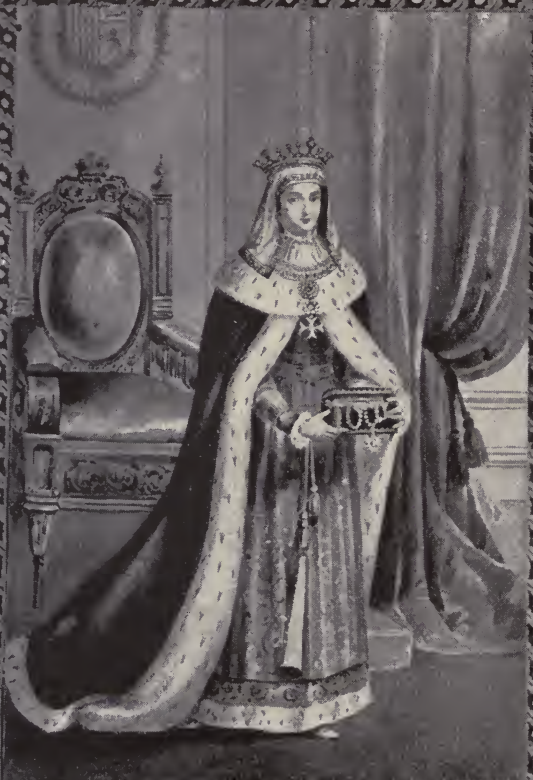
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ISABELLA THE CATHOLIC
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OF COLUMBUS

THE LIFE OF
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

BY FRANCESCO TARDUCCI,

AFTER THE LATEST DOCUMENTS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN

BY HENRY F. BROWNSON

VOLUME II.



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THE LIFE OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BOOK FIRST.

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Succors of men and victuals brought by Torres.—Columbus introduces slavery into the New World.—Accusations and excuses.—Agreement with Portugal on a line of division (1494-95).

THE four vessels of Torres mentioned above, arrived at Isabella February 24th, 1495. On board were a physician and a pharmacist, whose aid proved valuable to the many sick in the colony; and, what was even more useful and urgent, a good supply of fresh laborers and artisans. The wonderful fertility of the land around Isabella, on the first sowing of European seed, had shown that with little labor the Spaniards, in a short time, could have supplied themselves with an abundance of their own food; but directing their whole attention to the search for gold, the tillage of the land was neglected, and they were in danger of starvation in one of the most fertile countries of the world. Now, the new workmen, fresh in strength, and not spoilt by the bad example of the others, applying their labor to the first and most necessary wealth of the country, which was agriculture, would restore new life to the colony. The admiral was not more cheered by supplies of provisions and men than by the proofs which Torres brought him of the continued esteem and confidence of the king and queen. In one of their letters, dated August 16th, 1494, they acknowledge that every thing in his discoveries had justified his predictions and their hopes; they declared that they greatly enjoyed his letters, in which he narrated all

the occurrences of this second voyage, and they proposed to establish a monthly correspondence between Spain and Isabella, in order to enjoy more frequently and regularly the accounts from the colony, in whose increase and prosperity they took the greatest interest. They confirmed all the appointments he had made in the different offices of the colony; they granted all that he had proposed and asked for, and as a mark of their entire satisfaction, they wrote: "If we had been present, we should have taken your advice."* Only in one instance did they show any disapproval of his views and proposals, and that was on the subject of the Caribs, among whom he wanted to establish slavery, and already, as a beginning, had sent some of them as prisoners to Spain. Their Majesties desired him to suspend his decision for the present. Finally, they informed him that in order to put an end to the disputes which had arisen with Portugal about his discovery, they had come to the determination to change the line of division fixed by Alexander VI, and, therefore, wished him to return to Europe to assist them with his knowledge and counsel; or if he should not think it best to quit the Indies, to send his brother Bartholomew, or any one whom he preferred, with his charts and maps.† In another letter, addressed to all the colonists in general, and more especially to those who were destined to accompany the admiral on his discoveries, they again commanded that all should obey him as the sovereigns themselves, under pain of loss of favor and of a fine of 10,000 maravedis. And to Father Boil, who had written that his presence was of no use in those parts, and therefore asking his recall to Spain, the queen replied urging him to renew his courage and zeal in carrying out the religious mission entrusted to him.‡

But the comfort which Columbus received from these assurances of affection and confidence, could not relieve him of serious apprehension for the future. Those assurances were sent from Spain before the arrival of the two rebels, Margarita and Boil. What effect would their arrival produce, and the calumnies which for their own exculpation they would spread concerning the admiral and his administration? The appearance of things might, unfortunately, give a coloring of truth to their words, since the reality was far enough

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. lxxix, lxxx.

† Herrera, dec. i, lib. ii, cap. xvii.

‡ Muñoz, *Hist. del N. Mundo*, lib. v, § xxiv.

from answering his hopes, and the results of that second voyage had not fulfilled his promises. True, the principal blame belonged to those who now accused and calumniated him, but no one in Spain knew how things were, and his accusers were Spaniards and had powerful adherents, friends, and relatives; and with such influence they might easily gain support for their calumnies against him, a foreigner, and absent. He hastened the departure of the ships, intending to leave with them, apparently out of obedience to their Majesties' invitation, but in reality, in order to be present to meet the attacks of the two rebels. But as the time of leaving approached, it became evident that his health would not bear the fatigue of the long voyage. Don Bartholomew, who, by his tact, experience, and resolution, would have been most fit to replace him and to meet the two traitors, was needed for restoring order in the colony and on the island. He was forced, therefore, to content himself with sending his good, but weak, brother Don Diego, and leaving to him his defence against the assaults of powerful enemies. Besides the little gold that he was able to get together, and specimens of rare and precious plants found in Hispaniola or along the coasts of Cuba and Jamaica, the ships carried to Spain more than 500 Indian prisoners, who, the admiral wrote, might be sold as slaves at Seville.

In relating this, Irving declares that he is pained to find the brilliant renown of Columbus sullied by so foul a stain, and the glory of his undertaking eclipsed by such open violation of all the rights of humanity.* And I believe every reader of this history must feel the same sad impression, the fact is so contrary to the rest of the conduct of Christopher Columbus, always full of zeal and love for his Indians.

Certainly this was not his first idea, but was suggested to him by the sad circumstances which surrounded him. It is necessary to recall the illusions and enthusiasm with which he came back with a large fleet after the discovery of Hispaniola, and remember how fearfully those illusions were afterwards dispelled, to be able to imagine his distress at being forced to send back a part of his fleet with such unfavorable reports. Of all the hopes he had excited, and promises he had given, not one had been fulfilled! And instead of sending to Spain the heaps of promised gold, he saw himself forced to ask

* *Columbus*, bk. viii, ch. v.

the government to incur further expense to prevent failure at the very beginning of his attempt to found the first colony of the New World. Constrained by the need of fulfilling his promises and the hopes of Spain with something more positive than specimens of gold and rare and precious plants, which they were discovering in the New World, he turned his thoughts towards slavery. But from the first, he intended only a partial and temporary provision. His plan was to hunt and capture the Caribs, and send them to be sold as slaves at Seville. He would thereby free the other Indians from the constant danger of falling into the hands of those savages; he would weaken their power; and, transported to a strange country, away from the occasion and the temptation of following their bloody instinct, and surrounded by civilization and religion, they would gradually lose their cruelty, and habituate themselves to new ideas and sentiments. As they were a hardy race, expert navigators, familiar with all those seas and islands, and the most intelligent of all the nations of the New World, he might, by such change, obtain excellent interpreters, teachers, and apostles among the Indians. It was with this view that he proposed to their Majesties, through Torres, to hunt them and send them to be sold as slaves at Seville, in order to buy sumpter beasts and other cattle for the use of the colony. It is horrible to tell, but after the first step the second follows easily enough; and now he sends to Spain a great cargo of slaves, taken not from the Caribs alone, but from all the Indians found with arms in their hands, or guilty of serious offence against the Spaniards.

But it is not by the standard of our own times that we must judge this deed, for that would unfairly aggravate the fault of Christopher Columbus; we should regard the ideas and customs of his age, when the trade in human flesh shocked nobody; and it was the general opinion that the Christian was the absolute master of the property and life of the infidel. The selling of human beings had long been carried on by the Spaniards and Portuguese in their possessions in Africa, where the slave traffic was a great source of profit. And without going out of Europe, in Spain itself, in the presence of the sovereigns and persons of eminent dignity and learning, both secular and ecclesiastic, Columbus had seen repeated instances of how infidels ought to be treated. During the war against the Moors, it was always the practice to make sudden raids

into their land, and to carry off human creatures as well as beasts, and not only warriors taken with arms in their hands, but quiet peasants, simple villagers, helpless women and children, who were dragged to the markets of Seville and other large cities, and there sold as slaves. The taking of Malaga had presented a memorable instance. To punish a long and noble resistance, which their very enemies ought to have admired, 11,000 individuals of both sexes, of every condition and age, were suddenly dragged from their houses, separated from each other, and reduced to the vilest slavery, after the half of the ransom had been paid. Las Casas, the holy bishop of the Indians, who never loses a chance to inveigh with true apostolic freedom against the infamy of slavery, is indulgent towards Columbus. "If," he says, "those learned and pious persons whom the sovereigns had chosen as guides and counsellors, were so blind to the injustice of the practice, we must not wonder if the admiral, who had not studied so much as they, fell into the error."*

But the example of Las Casas himself is more to our purpose than that of the government, to show how deeply rooted in that age was the opinion that Christians had the full right to make slaves of infidels. In 1517, he came to Europe to relate the sufferings of the poor Indians, and to plead their cause. After much discussion, he agreed that to lighten their labors, permission should be given to capture as many Moors, male and female, as they could on the coast of Africa, and take them to the New World as slaves.† What a miserable condition of the human mind, when such manifest contradictions can gain the mastery over cultured and kind-hearted persons!

The new arrangement with Portugal, for which the Spanish sovereigns called for the advice of Christopher Columbus, or whomsoever he should send in his place, deserves a brief mention here, although not directly involved in our story.

Two months before the departure of Columbus on his second voyage, Portugal sent the court of Castile a protest against the bull of the 3rd and 4th of May, 1493, which, she claimed, attacked the rights she had previously enjoyed.‡ The court of Castile, desirous of preserving its good relations with its Portuguese ally, care-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, tom. i, cap. cxxii.

† Herrera, *Historia*, dec. ii, lib. ii, cap. xvi, xx.

‡ Ferreras, *Hist. Gén. d'Espagne*, xi partie, tom. viii, p. 150.

fully examined the claim, and on the 30th of June, 1494, Isabella convoked the best astronomers and geographers of the University of Salamanca, and the most renowned mariners of her kingdom, to examine into the matter.* Among others, Jayme Ferrer, the Jeweler, regarded as the most able geographer in all Spain, and of which we shall speak more at length further on, was especially invited to come with his maps and mathematical instruments.† At the same time that Portugal sent her protest to Spain, she exerted all her influence at Rome to have the Bull of Division, as it was termed, either withdrawn, or, at least, suspended; and Spain, which at that moment greatly desired to keep on good terms with Portugal, in the hope of marrying the eldest daughter of Queen Isabella to the presumptive heir of that kingdom, not only made no opposition, but even joined her influence to induce the Supreme Pontiff to make the change asked for; but Alexander VI. remained unmoved, or rather, under date of September 26th, 1494, he published another bull, not only confirming the rights settled in the first, but still further extending them; and hence that bull is called the *Bull of Extension*.

Then Spain and Portugal took the whole matter into their own hands, and agreed to appoint a commission, to consist of an equal number of Castilians and Portuguese, to make a new division in place of that settled by the Pope.‡ The commission agreed to move the Pope's line 250 leagues to the west. Being merely an agreement between the two states, the matter was little thought of at the time; but its importance was seen later on, when it was found that the Pope's line cut the entire terrestrial globe from pole to pole, with marvellous precision, without even touching land, thus assigning the whole New World to Spain; the other line, passing through Cape St. Augustine in South America, cut off from the new continent a vast zone, depriving Spain of the immense region now known as the Empire of Brazil.

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Supl. i, No. xvii.

† *Col. Dipl.*, No. lxxviii

‡ *Ib.* Doc. lxxv.

§ Herrera, *Hist. Gen.*, dec. i, l. ii, ch. x.—Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. lxxv.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Subjugation of all the Indians, and imposition of tribute.—The end of Guacanàgari (1495).

AFTER the battle of the Vega, without giving the Indians time to recover, the Spaniards, separating into groups, spread terror through all the island in order to reduce it to obedience. Their mere appearance or the announcement of their approach generally caused the most populous villages to yield ; and where there was the least show of resistance, at the first explosion of fire-arms the savages disappeared. In this subjugation of the island, Ojeda, with his horsemen, became the special terror of the simple natives. With his usual intrepidity, or rather, rashness of character, regardless of difficulty or danger, he hunted them through dense forests, forded swollen rivers, crossed mountain chasms, and suddenly burst like a clap of thunder in the midst of populations whom his sudden appearance and the sight of his horses almost deprived of their breath. The fame of the sudden appearances of this White Man with his monsters, soon spread to all the provinces, and between fear and the conviction that it was impossible to withstand the supernatural power of the White Men, all bent with resignation under the cruel necessity which oppressed them.

The first to submit was Guarionex, cacique of the Vega, of a peaceful and timid character, who had been reluctantly and almost forcibly drawn into the league, and who was the most exposed to the furious attacks of the Spaniards. But the other caciques also, even Manicaotex, brother of Caonabo, the author and soul of the insurrection, begged for peace and bowed their necks for the yoke. Behechio alone, the lord of Xaragua, gave no sign of submission, feeling safe on account of the great distance of his lands from the Spanish settlement.

Meanwhile, Columbus was ever thinking of the calumnies which he imagined his enemies would invent against him in Spain ; and

he saw clearly that the only means to meet and overcome them was to send gold to make good the outlay already expended, and as an earnest of what would in the future be obtained from the Indies. Now, since the revolt of the caciques and their forced submission gave him possession of the island as a conqueror, he hoped, in his need, to draw profit from his rights as conqueror.* He ordered, therefore, that in the Vega Real, in the province of Cibao, and wherever there were gold-mines, each inhabitant above the age of fourteen years should pay a large bell-full of gold-dust every three months; and in the other states where there were no gold-mines, each individual should pay twenty-five pounds of cotton every three months. To show who had paid this tax, each one upon payment was given a copper or brass medal to hang around his neck; and whoever was found without such medal, was known not to have paid, and was liable to punishment.† The caciques were taxed much higher, according to the quality and wealth of their states. Manicaotex, for instance, was required to pour into the hands of the Spaniards half-a-pumpkin-full of gold-dust.

The savages, accustomed to pay their caciques very light tribute, mourned over the burden the admiral had imposed; and the caciques were equally grieved. Guarionex wanted to show the absolute impossibility of satisfying the tribute, because, although the mountains surrounding his rich valley contained gold-mines, and the streams brought down some grains into the sand, still, his subjects, unaccustomed to seek it, did not know how to pick it out; he offered, instead, to cultivate a large tract of his territory, the produce of which, says Las Casas, would have supplied all Castile with bread for ten years. But Columbus needed and would have gold.‡

The better to secure the tranquillity of the island, and submission to the tribute, Columbus put the two forts of Isabella and St. Thomas in a better state of defence, and built three others, which he named Catalina, Magdalen, and Concepcion. Where the first was is unknown; the other two were in the Vega Real. Fort Concepcion was the most important of all in size and position.

The difficulties in which Columbus found himself were certainly serious, and it was necessary for him to make some provision against

* Irving, *Columbus*, bk. viii, ch. vii.

† Fernando Colombo, cap. lx.

‡ Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. cv.

the dangers threatening him from Spain. His present need naturally led him to reject the offer of Guarionex, which would have resulted in immense utility to the Spaniards and to the whole island. But how much soever we may concede to the necessity of circumstances, it is impossible entirely to free Columbus from the charge of excessive rigor in imposing a tax on those poor savages, which must oblige them, in many places, young and old, to pass the whole day fishing in the sand for a grain or two of gold. He was himself soon convinced that the burden laid upon their unfortunate shoulders was beyond the endurance of most of them, and reduced the quantity of gold-dust imposed as a tax to half-a-bell. Poor savages! They had shown such delight when first presented with a bell by the White Men, and now the bell is turned into the measure of the first labors and sufferings the White Man imposes on them!

Despair seized the natives on finding themselves forced to work at fixed times and at short intervals. Washington Irving has given a splendid description of the profound dejection they had fallen into, and I cannot do better than copy it entire. "Weak and indolent by nature," he says, "unused to labor of any kind, and brought up in the untasked idleness of their soft climate and their fruitful groves, death itself seemed preferable to a life of toil and anxiety. They saw no end to this harassing evil, which had so suddenly fallen upon them; no escape from its all-pervading influence; no prospect of return to that roving independence and ample leisure, so dear to the wild inhabitants of the forest. The pleasant life of the island was at an end: the dream in the shade by day; the slumber during the sultry noontide heat by the fountain or the stream, or under the spreading palm-tree; and the song, the dance, and the game, in the mellow evening, when summoned to their simple amusements by the rude Indian drum. They were now obliged to grope day by day, with bending body and anxious eye, along the borders of their rivers, sifting the sands for the grains of gold which every day grew more scanty; or to labor in their fields beneath the fervor of a tropical sun, to raise food for their task-masters, or to produce the vegetable tribute imposed upon them. At night, they sank to sleep weary and exhausted, with the certainty that the next day was but to be a repetition of the same toil and suffering. Or if they occasionally indulged in their national dances, the ballads to which they kept time were of a melancholy and plaintive character. They spoke of the

times that were past, before the White Men had introduced sorrow, and slavery, and weary labor among them; and they rehearsed pretended prophecies, handed down from their ancestors, foretelling the invasion of the Spaniards, that strangers should come into the island, clothed in apparel, with swords capable of cleaving a man asunder at a blow, under whose yoke their posterity should be subdued."*

For a while they found comfort in the hope that one day or another the strangers would return whence they came; and they often asked, with ingenuous simplicity, when they were going to return to *turey* (heaven); but even this comfort soon failed them as they saw the dwellings and forts built here and there on the island, plainly showing by their solid construction, so different from their own light cottages, that their stay would be permanent.†

It was not a life that they could endure; but what could they do to remove from their backs the weight that was crushing them? Experience had shown them there was no possibility of contending against the men descended from heaven. Despair suggested a new expedient, terrible, in the first instance, for themselves, but which, they hoped, would in the end free them from that intolerable oppression. Seeing the White Men continually suffering from want of provisions from their own country, and having no other means of subsistence than what was produced on the island, they agreed among themselves to stop the cultivation of fruits, roots, and maize, which furnished their principal food, and to destroy all that was already growing, in the hope that famine would drive those invincible strangers from the island. They, accordingly, destroyed the fruits and standing corn, and ran to hide themselves in the mountains, living on herbs and roots, and comforting themselves in their present sufferings with the hope of regaining their former liberty. But it turned out otherwise than they expected; for the Spaniards, frightened at the danger which threatened them, suddenly set themselves to work with diligence, to apply the remedy, planting a part of the grain brought in the ships of Torres; and as the soil had that wonderful fertility we have seen, in a very short time, broad fields of grain were soon growing yellow, making abundant provision for their

* Irving, *Columbus*, lib. viii, ch. vii.—Peter Martyr, dec. iii, lib. ix.—Fr. Roman, cap. xxv.

† Las Casas. *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, c. cvi.

wants. And thus, the whole evil fell on the miserable savages, not only from the sufferings they had to undergo among the mountains from the scarcity and quality of their food, and from their unquiet and painful life among the precipices and cliffs ; but much more from the Spaniards, who, as soon as they had escaped from the danger that threatened them, started like bloodhounds in pursuit to force them back to work. At the sight of the Spaniards, the unfortunate Indians fled from cliff to cliff, from a dry and desert mountain to another still more sterile and naked, the men carrying on their shoulders the aged and the sick, the women and the children. Tormented by hunger, and a prey to constant anguish, they listened for the slightest noise in the forest or on the mountain, which seemed to announce their pursuers, and they ran to hide themselves at the bottom of damp caves, or on steep cliffs where it was hardly possible to cling with hands and feet ; and there, pale and trembling, they hung on top of each other hour after hour, with the image of the White Men ever before their eyes. Hunger devoured them, but fear prevented them from issuing from their hiding-places to catch a few fish in the streams, or seek nourishing roots and vegetables on the sides of the mountains ; and all the food they had for their raging hunger was the few unwholesome herbs pulled out of the rocks, or found in the moist mould of the caves. The constant anxiety of mind, with the scant and unfit food, the want of rest, and the cold that on these mountain-tops was most severe on their naked bodies, soon produced the most dire effects : hundreds fell sick daily ; and more, abandoned by their companions in their sudden flights, were left to die in despair, without any help or comfort, or cast themselves headlong from the cliffs and precipices. The hunt did not last long : weakness, hunger, disease, and death, did the work for the Spaniards ; and the few surviving savages, reduced to skin and bone, and dulled by physical and mental pain, let themselves be taken and led back to do whatever their masters desired.* They came to have such fear of the White Men, that a Spaniard might safely cross the island, alone and unarmed, by day or night, wherever he pleased, and none would think of harming him ; at his mere command, without a murmur, they bent their backs and carried him on their shoulders whithersoever he wished.†

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, c. cvi. † Fernando Colombo, cap. lx.

Here, in connection with the sad lot of the rest of his nation, is the proper place to tell the fate of Guacanagari, whose name will not again appear in our story. The many proofs of friendship and true affection he had given the Spaniards, abandoning his own people and making common cause with them, could not save him from the weight of disaster which the coming of the White Men brought upon the Indians. Columbus loved him, and would have been able to defend him; but he left Isabella soon after, and his new voyages and his misfortunes kept them always afterwards apart; and the rest were not persons to remember or care for the hospitality and services of a savage. And whilst the Spaniards bore down on him no less heavily than they did on the rest, the other caciques looked upon him with deep hatred, as the principal cause of the evils of their country; and the complaints and murmurs of his subjects, formerly so contented and happy, now so unfortunate, struck constantly on his ears, blaming him for all their misfortune. Unable to bear any longer the continual complaints of the other caciques, and the ever-increasing misery of his own people, despised and heart-broken, blaming himself for his country's oppression, he retired to the mountains, and there died in misery and obscurity.*

CHAPTER XXXV.

Intrigues at the Spanish court against Columbus.—Aguado is sent to examine into affairs at Hispaniola.—Encroachments on the rights and privileges of Columbus.—Fonseca's evil disposition (1495).

WHILE Columbus was trying to repair the evils caused by the shameful conduct of Margarita and his band, that perfidious officer and his worthy companion, Father Boil, were striving with all their might in Spain to ruin his reputation at court. They charged him with deceiving the sovereigns and the nation with the grossly exaggerated accounts of the richness and value of his discoveries. So far from fulfilling the promises he had made, Hispaniola, they said,

* Charlevoix, *Hist. de Saint-Domingue*, liv. ii.

would be a constant source of expense, and, what was worse, with its climate and the pestilential vapors rising from every part of its immense prairies and impenetrable forests, it threatened to become the tomb of all that went there. Nearly all had been attacked by stubborn fevers; a great number had fallen victims, and those that survived counted their escape as a miracle. And whereas the causes of disease and death required prudent and paternal government, the admiral had been tyrannically harsh, and thereby increased the evil. He had imposed excessive labors on all the colonists, however weak and sick, diminishing, and under the flimsiest pretext wholly cutting off, their rations, to the serious injury of the health of those unfortunate enough to receive such punishment; he had forced young cavaliers and hidalgos to take the pick and spade, and sent them under a burning sun, to work the ground, dig ditches, and build walls; and arbitrarily condemned persons of the lower class to the severest bodily labors. For several months the admiral had been absent from Isabella, and no news having been received of him, it was thought he had perished in one of his new explorations. In the mean while the affairs of the colony, entrusted to the weak hands of his brother Diego, had come to the worst possible pass, and if a remedy were not soon applied, the evil would be past cure. It is unnecessary to say that the two false traitors took good care not to tell to what a sad state the colony was reduced, and what cruel necessity had compelled the admiral to lay his hand so heavily on them all; still less did they relate the horrors perpetrated by Margarita and his soldiers. The rank of the persons who spread these calumnies left no doubt as to their truth, as it could not be supposed that a gentleman of the court like Margarita, a distinguished officer, a great friend of the admiral, who had proposed him for the honors and rewards of the royal munificence on account of his merits, would dishonor himself by a barefaced lie; and still less a Father Boil, whose reputation as an able diplomat, religious habit, episcopal character, and dignity of vicar apostolic, placed him above suspicion. The cavaliers and hidalgos, also, who had followed them in their flight,—with their families, friends, and relatives, all cried out against the injury done to the honor of Spanish gentlemen; and loudest of all were the cries for justice and vengeance of the families whose dear ones had perished and been buried in those distant lands through that foreigner's deceitful reports and pitiless oppression.

All who had opposed the projected enterprise, and after the discovery had hidden themselves in silence and shame, dazzled by the flash of his glory,—now boldly raised their heads, and were joined by the envious, the malicious, and the foolish crowd of those who always agree with the last speaker.

It appears, from a letter of Sebastian de Alano, collector of customs, written to the Catholic king and queen under date of February 14th, 1495, that an attempt was even made to cast doubt on Columbus's honesty. He says therein that the admiral, so far from authorizing him to release the merchandise and take gold in exchange, in the absence of the delegate and comptroller general, had expressly forbidden his doing so.* But this must have been too flagrantly false; for no further mention is made of the matter.

Accusations brought with such unanimity, and by persons of such influence, would have had an effect on any government, and especially on one so distrustful and jealous as King Ferdinand's. Fonseca, the superintendent of Indian affairs, was ordered to get four caravels ready as quickly as possible for the relief of the tottering colony.† It was decided to send with them some trustworthy person to take charge of the government of the island, in case Columbus should not yet have returned; and in case of his return, to examine into the alleged abuses, and adopt such measures as he should find necessary. Diego Carillo was chosen for this delicate duty, but as he was not ready when the fleet was about to sail, the sovereigns wrote to Fonseca, leaving with him the choice of the person to be sent in place of Carillo.

It was this commissioner's duty to take charge of the provisions with which the vessels were laden, and distribute them to the colonists, but under the supervision of the admiral, or, in his absence, of the authorities established by him. He was to collect information concerning the manner in which the island was governed, the conduct of the persons in office, the causes and authors of the evils complained of, and the measures that should be adopted to remedy them. Having collected this information, he was to return to Spain and report to the sovereigns, after disposing of the most urgent cases; but if he found the admiral on the island, he had orders to leave every thing subject to his authority.‡

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. lxxxi.

† *Col. Dipl.*, No. lxxxv.

‡ *Ib.* No. lxxxii.

After these charges and calumnies, the popularity of Columbus set, never to rise again ; and the confidence of the court in him was deeply shaken, although in the arrangements made to repair the alleged grievances of the colony, there was great parade of especial care to leave his authority unimpaired. But in reality a mortal blow was immediately afterwards struck at the rights and privileges which had been solemnly granted him and confirmed by the royal promise. A proclamation was issued April 10th, 1495, by which, under certain conditions, any subject of the kingdom was permitted to settle in Hispaniola, and to undertake voyages of discovery and commerce to the New World. The conditions were " that every vessel should sail exclusively from the port of Cadiz, and under the inspection of officers appointed by the crown ; that all who left for Hispaniola at their own expense and without pay, should receive on their arrival land, and provisions for one year, and should have the right to retain the land and the buildings they might erect thereon ; of the gold collected, they might keep one-third, remitting the other two-thirds to the crown ; on the other revenues from the island they were to pay the state only a tenth ; their settlements were to be made in the presence of officers appointed by the sovereigns, and the duties paid into the hands of the royal receiver. Every vessel freighted by individuals had to take on board one or two commissioners appointed by the king's officers at Cadiz ; the tenth part of the tonnage of every ship was for the use of the crown, free of all expense, and the tenth part of all that the vessels brought from the newly-discovered lands, was to be covered into the royal treasury on their return."*

This general license for voyages of discovery was granted at the earnest instance of Vicente Yañez Pinzon and other intrepid navigators, most of whom had sailed before with Columbus. They offered to fit out expeditions at their sole cost and risk, reserving to the crown a large share of the profits that might accrue. The proposal came in very good season for the government, which was badly enough off for money, and the expeditions of Columbus had been very costly, with no immediate return to show for the expense. It was, therefore, quickly accepted, and the permission granted, without consulting the admiral. Columbus complained loudly of the vio-

* *Codice Diplom. Colombo-Americano*, Doc. ix.

lation of his privileges, which would also prove an undoubted source of disorder and anarchy, since, instead of pursuing the regular course of honorable discovery, the adventurers, regarding only their own interest, would betake themselves to robbery and pillage. The result was as he foretold, and it is certain that much of the odium attached to the Spanish discoveries in the New World, was caused by the insatiable cupidity of private navigators, who threw themselves on those virgin countries like swarms of wasps.

While the affairs of Columbus were taking this bad turn in Spain, the ships of Torres returned in good condition from Hispaniola. They brought the news of the admiral's safe return to that island, and of his voyage along the southern coast of Cuba, together with the evidence which he had collected that this coast was the extremity of the continent of Asia, and that he had reached the borders of the richest countries of the East. Their arrival was most timely. The supposed discovery of the rich coasts of Asia cast a new brilliancy on the expeditions of Columbus, restored the splendor of his name, and again awakened the gratitude of the sovereigns. The effect of this change was at once seen in the steps taken to remove the evils complained of in the colony. The appointment of the commissioner, for instance, had at first been left to the discretion of Fonseca, the superintendent; now their Highnesses themselves appointed to that office Juan Aguado, who had been with the admiral in Hispaniola, and had been warmly commended by him to the royal favor on account of his valuable services.* They thought they could not better show their regard for the admiral than by choosing for that delicate office one of whom he had spoken so highly, and who must be bound to him by the strongest ties of gratitude. Fonseca, by virtue of his power as superintendent of Indian affairs, and probably to gratify his growing hatred of Columbus, learning that his brother Don Diego had brought a small quantity of gold on his own account, confiscated it. The matter coming to the ears of the queen, she wrote at once, on the 5th of May, to Fonseca, ordering him to return the gold to Don Diego immediately, with satisfactory explanations, and also to write to the admiral in terms fitted to soothe the resentment he would naturally feel at such action. He was ordered, likewise, to consult those who had returned from Hispaniola as to

* In the memorial sent their Majesties through Torres. See ch. xxvii

what should be done to satisfy the admiral, and to follow their advice. The same injunctions were repeated in a second letter, of June 1st, with the order that Don Diego should be left free to go or stay where he pleased.* For a mind as proud as Fonseca's, there could be no greater humiliation than to be obliged to ask pardon of his enemy for exceeding his authority. He burnt with rage, and, unable to resist his sovereigns, who imposed the humiliation on him, he turned against the admiral, on whose account it had been inflicted. His old grudge against Columbus was carried to the full measure of hatred of which he was capable, and from that time he waged against him an unremitting warfare, in which, by using all the secret or open means his high position gave him, he was only too well able to gratify his insatiable thirst for vengeance. The fatal influence of this man on the history and misfortunes of Christopher Columbus, renders a short account of his person and character proper for a full understanding of what follows.

Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca was of a noble family, and his two brothers, Alonzo and Antonio, were lords of Coca and Alacyos; the latter also had the office of Inspector General of Castile. The nobility of his birth opened to Juan Rodriguez, at an early age, the path to honors, and powerful talents carried him rapidly to the highest dignities. When King Ferdinand was looking for some one with special fitness to direct the first organization of affairs in the Indies, his eyes fell on Fonseca, although he was an ecclesiastic, and the office he wished to entrust him with was purely secular. At that time, Fonseca was archdeacon of Seville, but he was soon after promoted successively to the bishoprics of Badajoz, of Cordova, of Burgos, to the archbishopric of Rosano, and lastly to the patriarchate of the Indies. But he had little of the churchman besides the dress; all his life was intent on worldly affairs; in all his changes of episcopal sees, he considered only the greater rank and revenue of the new diocese; and except on the day he took possession of his rich benefice, his face was seldom seen by the flock confided to his charge. In the high office of general superintendent of the affairs of the Indies, he managed so cleverly that the king and queen saw only through his eyes, in that branch of the public administration, and for more than thirty years he exercised almost absolute power in that office.

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. xciii, xciv.

The qualities of his heart were very different from those of his mind, and his name is odious, not in the story of Christopher Columbus alone, but in the life of almost every great navigator who had any thing to do with him. Proud and vindictive in the extreme, he used with fearful implacability every open or secret means which his office and his extraordinary power furnished him with, against such of them as had the misfortune to incur his hatred; and not satisfied with filling their cup with bitterness and gall, he did not hesitate, in the satisfaction of his revenge, to delay and sometimes prevent, their undertakings, to the serious injury of the crown. Strong in the boundless confidence he had gained from the sovereigns, his life ran on unterrified, and he was feared as much as he was hated. Contemporary historians, like the good Curate of Los Palacios, and the excellent Bishop Las Casas, often allude to Bishop Fonseca's perfidy, but in very covert terms, clearly showing that they were afraid to express their thoughts, lest they should draw on themselves the wrath and hatred of that implacable and powerful enemy.

The sovereigns ordered the Indian prisoners brought to Europe in the ships of Torres, to be sold in the markets of Andalusia, as had been done with the negroes taken on the coast of Africa, and with Moors that fell into the hands of the Spaniards in the war against Granada. The reader will wonder that the Spanish monarchs so easily accepted the cargo of 500 slaves, after the order they had given the admiral, suspending all arrangements for the enslavement of the Caribs. But the difference consists in the fact that Columbus proposed to make a regular hunt after the Caribs, whilst the slaves now to be sold were persons taken in rebellion, prisoners of war. But Isabella soon after revoked the order for their sale. The discovery of the New World having been undertaken under her immediate auspices, she looked upon those people as her children, entrusted to her special care, all the dearer and more deserving of her affection, for their wonderful gentleness of disposition, their generosity, and their innocence. It seemed unmerited and blamable to make merchandise of those whom she had only thought and labored to regenerate in the faith of Christ. Scruples arising in her mind, five days after the permission to sell them, she wrote another letter to Fonseca, ordering him to suspend the sale, until she learnt for what reason they had been taken prisoners; and in the mean time she consulted the

most learned and pious theologians, to know whether the sale could be justified in the sight of God.* The theologians were divided in opinion, so the queen decided the case for herself, provisorily, as her conscience and Christian charity dictated, and ordered those unfortunates returned to their native land, recommending, instead of severity, the use of all mild means to conciliate the good-will of the islanders.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Arrival of Aguado at Isabella.—His arrogant conduct.—A fearful hurricane (1495).

THE commissioner Aguado left Spain towards the end of August, 1495, with four caravels laden with every kind of provisions for the colony. Besides Don Diego Columbus, who was returning to his brother after the completion of his errand, there were on board the engineer Pablo Belvis, (sent out to replace the conceited Firmin Cado), a man of real science and experience in mining, who carried with him all the machinery and instruments needed for opening mines, and assaying and purifying metals; and a number of ecclesiastics, who were on the way to the post shamefully deserted by Father Boil and the most of his companions. Aguado bore a letter from their Majesties to the admiral, pointing out certain measures to be taken to secure the future tranquillity of the colony. The letter was apparently full of regard for Columbus, but it clearly showed that the charges of Boil and Margarita against him had left an impression on their Majesties. They advised the reduction of the number of colonists to 500, as a greater number was of no use in the service of the island, but exceedingly expensive to the crown; and full permission for any one to return to Europe as his private affairs should require. To prevent any dispute as to the distribution of the provisions, they decided that provisions should be issued every five days, and that the

* Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viajes*, lib. ii, Doc. scil.

punishment of stopping or reducing the ration should not be inflicted for any crime not punishable by death ; because the colonists were in need of good and sufficient food to strengthen them against the diseases incident to a strange climate.*

Aguado arrived at Isabella in October, but did not find the admiral, as he had gone to the interior of the island. He was bound, as we have said, by the ties of gratitude to Columbus, who shortly before, distinguishing him from his companions, had recommended him in a special manner to the king and queen. But Aguado was one of those weak men whose heads are turned by the least elevation, and was puffed up by a little temporary power. He lost sight not merely of the respect and gratitude he owed the admiral, but of the nature and extent of his own commission.† He had scarcely landed before he assumed a tone of superiority over every thing and everybody, such as would hardly have been justified if the admiral had been removed, and the whole authority transferred to himself. He intruded himself into public affairs, arrested a number of persons, ordered the officers appointed by Columbus to render him account of their administration, and took no more notice of Don Bartholomew, who commanded the colony in the absence of Columbus, than if he had no existence.‡ The matter went so far that Don Bartholomew demanded sight of his commission. At first, Aguado answered defiantly that he would show it to the admiral and to no one else ; but afterwards, suspecting that his refusal might beget in the people some doubt of his rights and of the extent of his powers, he caused his letter of credentials to be proclaimed at the call of the trumpet. It was contained in these few words : “ Cavaliers, squires, and you all who are in the Indies by our order : We send you Juan Aguado, our gentleman of the chamber, who will speak to you on our part. We command you to listen to his words.”

Credentials entrusting one with a most delicate and important commission, expressed in such vague terms, must undoubtedly hide some secret thought. The enemies of Christopher Columbus, powerful by their number, and still more so by their rank and position, would naturally exert every effort to arrange matters in such way that the result of the commissioner's mission should be favorable to their

* Navarrete, *Doc. Dipl.*, No. xxvii. † Irving, *Columbus*, bk. viii, ch. ix.
 ‡ Herrera, *Hist. Ind. Occid.*, dec. i, lib. ii, cap. xviii.

charges and their wishes. But the affection for, and unbounded confidence in, the admiral shown by the queen, and most eloquently proved by the nomination as commissioner of one he protected and recommended, was an insurmountable obstacle in their way ; and seeing themselves cut off from the straight road, they followed the crooked. This was to get Aguado's credentials expressed in general terms that mean every thing or nothing, restricting the real nature and limits of the charge entrusted to him, to verbal orders and instructions ; by which they were equally sure of accomplishing their aim. The hypocritical character of all those malicious enemies of Columbus, coupled with their treachery to him on every occasion, makes this very probable ; it is in conformity with the deep and cunning policy of King Ferdinand's government ; and it is rendered more than probable by the way that charge was carried out. As to Ferdinand, he was easily won by a prospect of his own interest ; and Isabella was sure to be persuaded by the affection and esteem Columbus had for Aguado, and the latter's gratitude for the recommendation and the favors bestowed on him ; and leaving Aguado full discretion to act according to circumstances, she would be taking the safest way of preventing any injury to the admiral from that extraordinary mission.

Aguado was one of those men who, born of a good family and bred with all the care of a refined education,—with elegance of manner, and ease and force of speech, are able to hide the emptiness of their mind and heart. Filled with vanity and a desire to be observed and spoken of, they always attach themselves to persons in the highest position, who, overestimating their slight services, on account of the lustre of their birth and of their manners, almost always make up for their inefficiency. Whoever looks only at the bark, and does not see the pith, is easily deceived in their regard, and judges them men of weight. Christopher Columbus wanted that penetrating sight to discern and weigh justly the value of men, and his judgments were guided more by his goodness of heart than his acuteness of mind, and, consequently, he often met with the basest ingratitude from those he had benefitted. It was so in the case of Aguado. The principal, and perhaps the only, motive of his zeal in the admiral's service being vanity, when this was blown by a stronger wind to the other side, the lightness of his heart and of his mind suffered him to be borne without resistance on the new path that was opened to

him. Fonseca and the rest, knowing his character, and how easily his vanity and conceit were puffed up, soon drew him to their side, and made him an obedient instrument of their revenge. In this way, the choice which the good Isabella had intended solely for the benefit of Columbus, was turned to his injury and ruin by the cunning perfidy of his enemies. If Aguado failed to do all the harm expected by the admiral's enemies, it was because they were too far away to direct him in all the circumstances that arose, and his own little head enlarging their advice and suggestions in carrying them out, the very excess of the evil left a way of escape for Columbus.

The news that a royal commissioner was on his way, with full authority to inquire into the complaints and repair the evils of the admiral's government, was a source of triumph to all who had any complaint to make, or had suffered punishment; and even the most notorious criminals surrounded Aguado, and besieged him with their complaints, representing themselves as victims and martyrs. There, no doubt, were many abuses in the colony, and, in the nature of human affairs, it could not be otherwise, especially with the difficulties that are met with in planting a new colony like that, with men whom Margarita and others had rendered insubordinate; and it was likewise true that the admiral was often obliged to resort to measures which, under other circumstances, would be regarded as unauthorized or unjust. A great outcry was made to the commissioner on this account, and all the old charges against Christopher Columbus and his brothers were brought up again, and principally, that they were foreigners, seeking their own aggrandizement at the expense of the labors and sufferings of Spaniards. Aguado had not discrimination enough to see what was exaggerated or falsified by malice; but prejudiced, as he was, against Columbus, and only wanting grounds for condemning him, saw evidences of his guilt in their hostility. Exulting over the happy result of his inquiries, he suspected that the admiral was keeping away from Isabella through fear of investigation, and, in the fulness of his presumption, even threatened him with severe chastisements on the part of the court, and actually sent a detachment of cavalry in pursuit of him.* Aguado naturally assigned to this duty his most zealous followers, who everywhere boasted of their master's power, and spread the strangest tales of the

* Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, lib. v. § xxxv.

punishment he intended to inflict on Columbus. The rumor soon spread all over the island that a new admiral had arrived to govern the colony, and the former admiral was to be put to death. In the mean time, Christopher Columbus, who was in the interior of the island, hearing of Aguado's arrival and his insolent bearing, set out of his own accord and without other invitation to return to Isabella and meet Aguado. Knowing the noble pride of Christopher Columbus, his high sense of his services to Spain, and his care to make his authority respected, every one expected a violent scene at the meeting. The commissioner himself expected it; but he was so far from regretting it, that he calculated to use it for the furtherance of his plan. Columbus, however, had learnt, from long-suffering and self-denial, to govern, when necessary, his anger and the impetuosity of his nature; and his own self-respect kept him, on this occasion, from descending to bandy words with a vain braggart like Aguado; his great reverence for his sovereigns made him respectful to their representative; and prudence, showing him the treacherous hand of his enemies under this man's boasting, warned him to act altogether contrary to their expectations, if he would baffle their plots. Adapting himself, therefore, to the time and circumstances, he received the commissioner with unruffled calmness. Aguado, on the contrary, was as arrogant and insolent as possible, and the more to weaken the admiral's authority, repeated the empty ceremony of proclaiming the order appointing him, with sound of trumpet, in presence of the multitude. Columbus listened quietly to the reading, and calmly said he would do whatever was their Majesties' pleasure. The commissioner was greatly disconcerted by his unexpected impassibility; for he had hoped that in the heat of the moment the admiral might say or do something which could be represented as a want of respect for, or an offence against the authority of, the sovereigns, and he had calculated on deriving great profit from his intemperance of acts or words.

Some months after, he tried to extort from the public notaries who attended that meeting, an account suited to his purpose. But the admiral's calmness had been so clearly unruffled, and his deference for the credentials of their Majesties so respectful, that there was no disputing them, and all the reports were favorable to him.*

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. ii, cap. xviii.

Columbus retained the same imperturbability the following days, although Aguado, in open disregard of his authority, interfered incessantly in matters of administration. But the colonists, not perceiving the deep reason of this prudent conduct on the admiral's part, interpreted his meekness and patience as a proof of his decline; and many who had no special cause of complaint against him, came and worshipped the rising star of Aguado, and joined the accusers and calumniators of the admiral, knowing that the more evil they said against him, the more they would advance in the commissioner's good graces. Even the poor Indians, groaning under the dominion of the White Men, seeing that the blame of all their sufferings was cast on the admiral, were consoled at the prospect of a change of masters, from which they hoped for some diminution of evils; and a number of caciques assembled at the house of Manicaotex, and blaming the admiral for all that the Spaniards had made them suffer, joined in a general complaint to the commissioner.

It these accusations, Aguado seemed to have more than sufficient to prove the bad government of the admiral and his brothers, and to procure their ruin. He, therefore, determined to return to Spain and render an account of his mission. Columbus, seeing that this new list of accusations and calumnies would encourage and strengthen his enemies, especially as they were authenticated by Aguado's character as representing the sovereigns, judged that it would be imprudent and dangerous to leave them a free field, and determined to return with Aguado, to confute the accusations and calumnies in person, and restore the old harmony between himself and the Spanish crown, by explaining to the king and queen the true state of affairs, and the causes that had delayed or lessened the expected profit from his discovery. The vessels were ready to sail, when a frightful storm burst over the island. It was one of those horrid whirlwinds, common to the tropics, which the Indians called *hurricanes*,—and the word has passed into our language,—to denote an extraordinary and fearful breaking loose of the elements. The sky, about noon, grew suddenly dark with thick vapors and clouds in the east and west, and the wind burst furiously from both points. The two winds seemed to run against each other, and drawing after them a train of black clouds, they met with a violent shock over the city of Isabella. The clouds, now yielding to the shock of one wind,

now urged with greater force by the other, were driven like a compact body hither and thither, at one time seeming to mount to the sky, and at another, as if falling to the ground. It was dark as night, save when the lightning, followed by the frightful rolling of the thunder, darting in every direction, pierced the obscurity with streaks of flame, and at the fearful crack of the thunder seemed to split the earth. Wherever the whirlwind passed, every thing it met was broken down and destroyed. Whole forests, where the whirlwind passed, presented a spectacle like that of a field of grain after a tempest; the taller and stronger the trees, the greater was the ruin worked by the fury of the storm. Beautiful groves, that gave delightful shade on the slopes of mountains, were torn up by their roots, and carried to an incredible distance; enormous rocks, snatched from beds where for ages they had resisted the rage of every season, were precipitated with frightful crash into the chasms beneath. The mass of stones and dirt which they drew after them in many places, formed a dam, and stopped the rush of the water, till, increasing in quantity and violence, it opened itself a way, and poured down on the plain, adding ruin to ruin, and ended by destroying whatever had escaped the fury of the whirlwind. All the while, there was a constant shower of stones, and dirt, and branches and trunks of trees, which were taken up by the wind and dropped at a great distance off. The tempest that raged on the water was equal to the storm on the land. It seemed as though all nature's laws were broken. The water rose to such a height that in some places the land was overflowed to the distance of four miles. Of the vessels in the harbor, three, at the first breaking of the storm, dragged their cables and went to the bottom, with all on board; the rest, beating against one another and against the shore, were broken to pieces. The storm lasted three hours, and when at last the Spaniards, recovering from their fright, went out to examine the ruin caused by the breaking loose of the elements, of all the fleet they found only the caravel *Niña*, which could barely float, and a few fragments of the other vessels, lying in the water, or cast on the shore by the fury of the storm. Even the Indians were astounded, never having heard of so fierce and tremendous an inversion of nature, and, in their simplicity, regarded it as a chastisement sent by God for the crimes of the White Men; the most simple and ingenuous suspected it was all the work of the White Men themselves, who, not satisfied with the evils they had heaped on them, had called

the heavens and the earth and the sea to add losses on losses, and desolate their unfortunate island.*

The Niña, which survived all its companions, was the same caravel which had saved the admiral on his first voyage, after the shipwreck on the coast of Nativity, and had carried him back safe to Spain. Later, under the name of the Santa Clara, it had borne him on his exploration of the southern coast of Cuba, and his discovery of Jamaica, coming out badly damaged by the innumerable islets, rocks, and shoals of the Gardens of the Queen; and now, old, with its seams open and leaking, was ready again to receive the afflicted admiral and convey him safely to the Old World. They went to work to repair it and put it in a condition to stand the voyage, and began constructing another caravel out of such fragments of the other vessels as they could find on the shore or fish out of the water.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The adventure of Miguel Diaz, and discovery of the Hayna mines (1496).

WHILE they were waiting for the two vessels to be got ready, news came of the discovery of rich gold-mines in the interior. It was the greatest comfort the admiral could have received in his present distress. According to the account we have of it, this discovery was due to a singularly romantic adventure.

A young man from Aragon, named Miguel Diaz, belonging to the household of Bartholomew Columbus, had had, some months before, a fierce duel with one of his comrades, whom he had left half-dead on the ground, in a pool of blood. Aware of the extreme severity of Don Bartholomew, who was then in command during the admiral's absence, neither Diaz nor the witnesses of the duel dared to make their appearance in Isabella, but to hide, if possible, from the search of the government, they fled from the colony to the mouth of the river Ozema. There they found an Indian village, in which they took refuge. The government of the village and of the surrounding

* Ramusio, G. B., *Delle Navig. e Viag. Raccolta*, vol. iii, p. 7.—Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. iv.

country for quite a distance, was in the hands of an Indian maiden, who was quickly struck with an ardent affection for Diaz, and as he was not long insensible to her love, they came to an understanding, and became husband and wife. The beautiful Indian was happy, and proud of her husband, and Diaz, at first, was pleased with his fortune. Then his thoughts began to turn to his friends and companions, to the parents he had left in Spain, and to the country he would never see again, and he became melancholy, seeking solitude, and by frequent sighs betrayed his internal grief. The loving eye of his affectionate wife was not long in discovering the cause of his sadness. Fearing that some day or another her husband's longing for what he had left might become stronger than his love for her, and anxious to remove the danger that threatened, and knowing that the White Men everywhere they went were looking for gold, she determined to invite them into her territory, in the hope that their society would put an end to her husband's thought of abandoning her. She, therefore, revealed to him that there were abundant mines of gold in the neighborhood, and suggested to him to invite his companions, promising to receive them kindly, and to help them in every way in her power. At this announcement, the eyes of Diaz gleamed with joy, for he beheld his salvation in that discovery; and he hastened to make sure of its reality. Finding the place even richer than his wife had given him to expect, he took leave of her, and, in company with his five companions, and a few natives to serve as guides, he set out for Isabella, about fifty leagues distant, to carry the tidings to his superiors. Still fearing the hand of justice, he entered secretly, to find out first how the governor would receive him. Every thing had turned out better than he expected; for his adversary, whom he left for dead, after a long sickness, had completely recovered. Then he went boldly and presented himself to the adelantado, and, as was expected, there was the greatest joy at the news he brought. And, in truth, nothing could have happened more seasonably to relieve the admiral's distress, because if he could go back to Spain with sure proof of having discovered a rich gold-mine, he would have at hand the strongest argument to silence all the accusations and calumnies of his enemies. The adelantado lost no time in visiting the places in person, escorted by a strong body of well-armed cavaliers, accompanied by Miguel Diaz and several who had a knowledge of metals and mining. Arriving at the place indicated by Diaz, they found

themselves on a large and beautiful river, called the Hayna, and on its eastern bank, about eight leagues above where it empties into the sea, they discovered lumps of gold in greater plenty and of larger size than had been found before on the island, not excepting the famous province of Cibao. They set to work at once to explore the ground and try the gold, and, for a distance of more than six miles, all the proofs were entirely satisfactory. The soil was so mixed with particles of gold that a common laborer might easily gather three drams in a day.* In many places they noticed deep excavations in the shape of wells, as if the mines had been worked before, at which the Spaniards were much astonished, and formed various conjectures; for the Indians had no conception of that kind of work, and contented themselves with picking up the particles of gold they found on the surface of the soil, or in the beds of rivers. The hospitality and friendliness of the inhabitants carrying out fully the promises of Diaz, his story was confirmed in every particular. He was, therefore, not only pardoned for his fault, but received into great favor by the Spaniards, and afterwards held various positions of trust on the island, in all which he was distinguished for his zeal and activity. He remained ever true to the young Indian, who, baptized by the name of Catalina (Catherine), became his lawful wife, and made him the father of two sons.† The joyful news and the specimens of gold which the adelantado brought back with him, filled the admiral's heart with inexpressible consolation, and he ordered that a fort should be begun at once on the banks of the Hayna, and as soon as it was built, that the excavations should commence. The new fort was named Saint Christopher.

The supposed marks of former excavations in those places opened the way for a new flight of imagination on the part of Christopher Columbus. He had already conjectured that Hayti might be the famous island of Ophir, whence Solomon's fleet had fetched great quantities of gold for the building of the Temple of Jerusalem.‡ And now not only were his conjectures confirmed, but he was convinced he had found the very mines from which that gold was drawn. He supposed that Solomon's ships crossed the Persian Gulf, and, rounding Taprobana, landed at the island of Ophir. There is

* Oviedo, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xiii

† Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. ii, cap. xviii.—Peter Martyr, dec i, lib. iv.

‡ *Ib.* dec. i, lib. iv.

nothing strange or unlikely in the supposition, if we consider that he felt sure he was on an island off the east coast of Asia, and remember that the ancient Ophir was somewhere in the eastern regions of Asia, its exact position not being determined.

Aguado's insolence increased daily, and behind that was the arrogant impudence of the factious and discontented. As soon, therefore, as the two vessels were in condition to sail, the admiral gave the order to embark. The sovereigns had ordered the return of all who were not strictly needed for the service of the colony. To these were added a few others, desirous of returning to Spain to visit their families, and in this way, the number of passengers cooped up on the two ships amounted to 225. Besides these, there were thirty Indian prisoners, and among them Caonabo, his brother, and nephew. The Curate of Los Palacios says the admiral had promised the Indians to bring them back and restore them to power, after exhibiting them to the king and queen of Castile.* From this, Irving concludes that Columbus hoped by showing them the wonders of Spain and the grandeur of the sovereigns, and treating them with kindness, to overcome their animosity for the Spaniards, and convert them into important instruments towards gaining a secure and peaceable dominion over the island.

The admiral left the government of the island in the hands of his brother Don Bartholomew, with the title of Adelantado, already conferred on him, and in case of his death, his other brother, Don Diego, was to succeed him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Return of Columbus with Aguado to Spain.—Caonabo carried in chains on board to be transported to Europe.—Romantic affection of a Carib cacique for him.—Death of that savage hero.—Horrors of famine.—Proposal to eat the Indian slaves.—Arrival in Europe (1496).

THURSDAY, the 10th of March, 1496, the Niña and the new caravel, called the Santa Cruz, made sail at dawn, and started on the re-

* Los Palacios, cap. cxxxi.

turn voyage ; but not yet familiar with the laws governing the winds, instead of turning to the north so as to fall in with favorable winds, they kept to the east as the direct course to Europe. The consequence was that they had to beat against the easterly winds that prevail between the tropics, and their voyage was a constant and toilsome struggle.* Their difficulties began as soon as they left the harbor of Isabella, and they were not out of sight of Hispaniola until the 22nd of March, and were still in the neighborhood of the Caribbee Islands on the 6th of April. The crews were disheartened, concluding from this beginning what the rest of the voyage would be like, rather than fatigued by the first month of navigation ; the provisions, too, calculated according to the wants of a voyage of the anticipated length, had been greatly diminished by the delay, and threatened to be insufficient for the needs of the voyage. The admiral, therefore, judged it prudent to incline to the southward and land at one of the Caribbee Islands, for a supply of fresh victuals and to give the men a little rest. Saturday, the 9th of April, he anchored in the deep water in front of Maria Galante, and the next day, contrary to his custom of never weighing anchor on Sunday when in port, he continued on, because the men were murmuring at so strict an observance of the festival, when in search of food.† As he approached the island of Guadaloupe, he ordered the small-boats to land with the men well armed ; but before they reached the shore, a number of women, with bows and arrows, and their heads decorated with bright feathers, came out of the woods and prepared to oppose a landing. On this account, and also because the sea was beginning to get rough, the men in the boats ceased rowing, and two of the Indians from Hispaniola swam ashore to explain to those bold warriors that the White Men came with no evil intentions, but only wanted a supply of food, in exchange for which they would give them the beautiful things they had brought from their own country. The women replied to this message that they could not receive them, but told them to go to the northern side of the island, where their husbands were, and come to an understanding with them.‡

The Spaniards accordingly went around to the north side, where they found numbers of fierce-looking savages, who received them

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxiii.

† Id. cap. lxi.

‡ Herrera, *Hist. Ind. Occid.*, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. i.—Fernando Colombo, l. c.

with frightful yells, shooting their arrows at them from a distance, for the purpose of frightening them. When they saw that in spite of this the White Men kept on approaching the shore, they vanished in a forest hard by, and then suddenly, as the Spaniards stepped ashore, they drew out, and raising a savage yell, rushed at the Europeans. But the ships that had come up to protect the landing, saluted their appearance with a discharge of mortars, and at the report, and the flash and smoke, they all disappeared in a twinkling, and not one was seen again. The Spaniards, going into the deserted cabins, looked around and collected what little Indian food was kept there, and kneading cassava-flour, they made enough bread to last them a score of days; they carried off whatever they pleased, and destroyed the rest, contrary to the admiral's express order. Whilst some collected a supply of wood, water, and food, a detachment of forty well-armed soldiers was sent to the interior of the island, which brought back ten women and three children as prisoners. These were all the men could capture, as every one took to flight upon their appearance.

It has already been said that plumpness was greatly desired by Carib women, who endeavored to produce it by ligatures on the arms and legs.* Now, one of the prisoners, the wife of a cacique, had this beauty enormously developed, and a rich quantity of hair hung loose over her shoulders and fat naked body. But in spite of her corpulence, she fled with such swiftness before the Spaniards that she left them all far behind, and the only one who neared her heels, but without being able to lay his hand on her, was a very swift and bold native of the Canaries, who had voluntarily followed the admiral. She would have escaped him also, had she not, when she saw that he was her sole pursuer, turned upon him, hoping to take him and drag him after her. In the hand-to-hand struggle which ensued, the Canarian, though a very powerful man, was overcome and thrown to the ground; and she, getting on top of him and choking him, would certainly have strangled him, but for the coming up of the rest, who were close behind, and pulled her off like a hawk off its prey. But afterwards, the admiral, considering that Guadeloupe was the most important of the Caribbee Islands, and the key, as it were, to the control of those seas, made many presents to the captured women and children, and put them ashore, in the hope that such unexpected kindness might some day improve the relations of

* See ch. xxv.

the Spaniards with those fierce savages. The faces of the women shone with delight on being told that they could return to the freedom of their native forests; the look of the cacique's wife alone was clouded, and she refused to land, and all the pleadings and prayers of her companions were unable to move her from her resolve. She bade them farewell, and holding her little daughter close, went and squatted in a corner of the vessel, silent and thoughtful. Among the prisoners, as was said, was Caonabo, loaded with chains, but ever filled with anger and proud scorn of his keepers; and the other prisoners kept always near him, showing in their looks and acts their reverence and almost veneration for him.

The haughty bearing of the captured hero made a strong impression on the cacique's fierce wife, and the story of his prowess, and of his gigantic struggle against the White Men, and his fall through treachery, awoke in her breast first admiration and sympathy, and soon afterwards the warmest love. She forgot her country, her husband, her honored position at home, perhaps even her children, and went a voluntary prisoner to another world, to lighten, by her care and affection, the sorrows of the fallen brave.*

But death saved the brave Carib from becoming a spectacle for the eager curiosity of Spain. Depression of mind overcame the strength of his iron constitution, and he died on the voyage.† Thus perished this extraordinary man, who, had he lived in civilized times and countries, under circumstances favorable for the development of his virtues, would certainly have won a name and place among the most famous heroes; but because he was born in the woods, and lived naked among naked savages, the historians of his fortunate enemies did not deign to notice him, except in so far as his wild soul was a cause of danger to the Spaniards; and when they beheld him fall a victim to treachery, they turned their gaze from him, and only a word, escaping them almost by stealth, records his end and the indomitable fierceness which he retained unto death. Leaving his native island a simple warrior, he reached the rank of supreme cacique in Hayti, and by his valor forced the other caciques to acknowledge him not as their equal only, but almost as their head. He was the only one to foresee danger from the coming of the Spaniards, and

* Muñoz, *Hist. del N. Mundo*, lib. v, § xxxviii.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxiii.

† Cura de Los Palacios, cap. cxxxi.—Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. iv.

the only one who dared to oppose them, and to organize a general resistance of the whole island. He failed in his bold enterprise, because neither his troops nor his allies responded to his intrepidity of character, and because his means were too inferior to those of his enemies. And thus, his figure towers above all the rest in the feeble struggle of the poor savages in defence of their freedom and independence against the superiority of the invaders and the power of civilization.

What became of the noble heroine who gave up all to follow him in his misfortune? Historians have not deigned to utter a word as to her fate. Who can tell in whose hands she perished as a slave in Spain? Who can tell the tears she paid for her love for the unfortunate cacique?

After a stay of ten days, they left Guadaloupe, on April 20th; but, on resuming their course to the eastward, they had again to fight against the trades; and when they had gained a short truce from these, a calm set in that stayed their progress: and thus, the voyage being slow, and the people many, on the 20th of May they began to suffer from shortness of provisions, and the admiral was obliged to reduce the rations to six ounces of bread with a little water without wine.* Day by day the scarcity became more pinching, and, what was worst of all, no one knew where they were. There were several pilots on board, but, like those on the first voyage, they were accustomed to sailing over the contracted space of the Mediterranean, or perhaps along the Atlantic coast; but now on the vast immensity of the Ocean, after all the changes the vessels had made in their course, they lost all calculation, and there were as many opinions as heads. The admiral assured them they must be 100 leagues or a little more to the west of the Azores; but no one believed him, not seeing on what he could base his judgment with such confidence. He based it, however, on his usual perspicacity and care in noting every new object he met on the voyage. He had observed in going that after passing the Azores about 100 leagues, the Flemish needles inclined a quarter to the north-east, and the Genoese, which usually agreed with them, inclined much less. Observing the same disagreement at present, he drew the correct conclusion that they must be again in the same place.† In the beginning of June, their

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxiii.

† Ib. cap. lxiii.—The admiral explained the difference of the two needles at place by the difference of the magnets by which they had been tempered.

hunger had become so insupportable by their long fast, and their ignorance of their position seeming to their terrified fancy even more dreadful than the danger of dying of starvation,—in the height of their suffering and dread, they made the desperate proposal of killing the Indian prisoners, and with their flesh supplying the want of victuals. Others less inhuman, or rather unequal to that revolting repast, would be satisfied with throwing them overboard to lessen the number of mouths for the little food that still remained.*

When we remember that in those days Christians made no greater account of infidels than of beasts now, we can readily understand how the second proposal should meet with favor from men reduced by hunger to the extremity of despair. But the admiral, with all the force of his will and his authority, opposed the injustice, showing them that every reason of humanity and of religion ought to convince them what a horrid infamy it would be to give way to the thought, and encouraged them to hope for relief, for they would soon reach the end of their troubles. His words were received by all with a smile of scornful incredulousness. But he, being sure of his position, early in the night of Wednesday to Thursday, June 8th, ordered them to shorten sail for fear of being cast against the shore in the darkness, saying they were now near Cape St. Vincent. This raised no jeering laugh now, but murmurs and complaints, because one of the pilots said that they were in the channel of Flanders; another, near England; another, in the gulf of Galicia; but all agreed that the admiral's decision was foolish when they were on the point of dying with starvation, unless they had the good fortune soon to touch land. When the day broke, their eyes beheld the very land the admiral had spoken of the night before. He was, consequently, says Fernando, looked upon by the sailors as preternaturally wise in matters of navigation.† On the 11th of June, the two vessels cast anchor in the bay of Cadiz, which, by the proclamation of the 10th of April, 1495, was designated as the only port from which vessels could sail for the New World, or to which they could return.

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxiii.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. i.

† Fernando Colombo, l. c.—Muñoz, *Hist. del N. Mundo*, lib. v, § xxxix.

THE LIFE OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BOOK SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

Wane of Columbus's reputation in Spain.—His reception by the sovereigns.—He proposes a third expedition.—Marriage of Queen Isabella's two children.—The queen's concern for Columbus.—Distrust of the Indies in public opinion, and necessity of drawing colonists from the prisons and galleys.—Columbus makes a will and establishes an entail (1497-98).

COMING into the harbor of Cadiz, Columbus found there three caravels ready to weigh anchor at any moment, laden with provisions of every kind, which Pedro Alonzo Niño, his pilot on the first voyage, was to transport to Hispaniola. It was now nearly a year since any supply of the sort had reached there, the four caravels sent the January previous having been wrecked off the Spanish coast.* After Columbus had read the royal letters which Niño had been charged to deliver to him, he wrote to his brother the adelantado, modifying, in conformity with them, the instructions he had left him, and, above all, urging him again in the strongest manner to hasten the works at the Hayna mines. Niño sailed the 17th of June.

Thirty-three months and a half had elapsed since the admiral left Cadiz, at the head of a superb fleet of seventeen sail, and the shore was crowded with people looking with envious eyes on the lot of every one who had found any position whatever on one of the vessels to

* Muñoz, *Hist. del N. Mundo*, lib. vii.

go with him. Of the envied voyagers of that day, hardly a handful ever saw their native land again; and these few who may be called the most fortunate, reduced to mere skin and bone, by disease in the colony, starvation, and the sufferings of the home voyage, were distressing to look at, as they wearily dragged themselves along the road, hardly able to keep their feet. "Their sallow looks," says an old author, "represented the mocking color of the gold which was their only object of search; whilst they brought from the New World nothing but tales of their sorrows and sufferings."

Las Casas relates that while Columbus was waiting their Majesties' orders in answer to the announcement he had sent them of his arrival, he met him in the streets of Seville dressed almost like a Franciscan friar; and the Curate of Los Palacios, telling of the honor he had of entertaining him in his house at that time, says he wore at his waist the cord of St. Francis, and a habit like that of the religious of the Observance in cut and color.* But they are silent as to the cause of this strange dress. Oviedo says it was on account of his disgust with the world for its injustice to him.† But if that had been so, he would have done something more than simply change his dress for a few days; and to suppose that he recovered from his mental prostration and returned to his former resolve to struggle indefatigably to carry his plans to completion, is to ignore his courage, which never failed him under any circumstances, and to deny the wonderful tenacity of his character. The only reasonable explanation, consistent with the times and the person, is to see in this fact the fulfilment of some vow. The danger of starvation, from which he and all with him had lately escaped, would have been more than cause enough for making such a vow, if there had been no other; and besides, we know not all the details of that voyage.

Their Majesties' answer was received July 12th, 1496. It was written in courteous and affectionate language, and after congratulating the admiral on his safe return, urged him to repair to court as soon as rested from the fatigue of the voyage.‡ Columbus was relieved by the royal letter from the fear he had felt, after Aguado's mission, of having lost favor with the sovereigns; and soon set out for Burgos, where the court then was.

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. cii.—Cura de Los Palacios, cap. vii.

† Oviedo, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xiii. ‡ Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. ci.

To check the increasing distrust in his discoveries, and strengthen the former hopes of great benefit to be derived from them, he took pains, in the principal places he passed through, and especially in the city of Burgos, in sight of the court, to make as much show as possible of the treasures and curiosities he had brought from the New World, such as arms, masks, instruments, idols, necklaces, bracelets, anklets, gold crowns, and spoils of vanquished caciques.

The part of the spectacle which most struck the fancy of the spectators, were the Indian prisoners, dressed in the style of their own country, and richly adorned with all their gold ornaments. Among them were the brother and nephew of Caonabo, the former near thirty, and the other scarce ten years of age. Whenever they passed through a city of any size, Columbus made Caonabo's brother wear an enormous gold chain as cacique of the Cibao gold mountains. The Curate of Los Palacios, in whose house the admiral and his prisoners spent several days, says that he handled this chain and that it weighed 600 castellanos, which in our money would give about 3,200 dollars, with the difference in the price of gold then and now.* His reception by the sovereigns was even more friendly than their letter had led him to expect; not a word was said to the admiral of the charges made by Margarita and Boil against him, or of the judicial inquiry instituted by Aguado; whether it was that his presence, recalling to mind his great services to Spain, prevented any manifestation of the slightly unfavorable impression produced by his enemies, or that the fresh promises he brought from the New World, by creating greater hopes of the future, caused them to overlook past errors, which they saw were in great part owing to the difficulties which surrounded him. We possess a letter of Christopher Columbus, in which, by request of the Spanish sovereigns, he gives his advice as to the mode of peopling Hispaniola, and distinctly sets forth the means and rules for its government.† It is undated, but as most of the suggestions correspond with the measures taken by the sovereigns under date of April 23rd, 1497, there seems no doubt that it was written at this time, after his return from his second

* Cura de Los Palacios, cap. cxxxi.

† It was part of a volume published by the Spanish ministry of Fomento under the title of *Cartas de las Indias*. It has been translated and published with two other letters, one of Columbus and one of Amerigo Vespucci, by Sr. Augusto Zeri, Rome. 1881.

voyage, either in the last half of 1496, or in the beginning of 1497.*

Finding that the sovereigns still retained their esteem and goodwill, Columbus began at once to think again of the Ocean and of his voyages, and proposed a third expedition, to continue the discoveries along the continent, of which he supposed Cuba was a part, promising to add still larger and richer countries to the crown of Castile. For this new voyage he asked six ships; but in the mean time he urged most strongly the sending of at least two ships well supplied with provisions, to relieve the present wants of the colony.† The sovereigns approved his proposal and promised to comply with his request; and it certainly was their intention to keep their promise; but the state of the treasury and the force of events threw Columbus back again into the worry of perpetual expectation and delay.

The policy of Ferdinand, by wars and marriages, was preparing for the Spanish crown that glorious future which shone with its greatest glory and power in Charles V, his grandson and successor. At this time, he was supporting a powerful army in the kingdom of Naples to expel the French and restore the dethroned king, Ferdinand II, and was gathering another on the frontiers, to withstand a threatened invasion from France. He was obliged to keep two fleets constantly manned, in the Mediterranean and on the Atlantic, to protect the coast; and, at the same time, he was sending to Flanders another fleet of 100 vessels with upwards of 20,000 men, to convoy the Princess Juana, his and Isabella's daughter, who was to be married to the Archduke Philip of Austria; and to bring back Philip's sister, the Archduchess Margaret, Prince Juan's intended bride.

These varied and extensive undertakings employing the entire land and naval forces of the nation, exhausted the public treasury, and engrossed the thoughts of the sovereigns. The enemies of Columbus did not fail to take advantage of the empty condition of the treasury, and insinuate that his expeditions had so far been only an expense to the country, and would be still more so in the future. The king was only too willing to listen to their complaint. "What, in the ambitious eyes of Ferdinand," asks Irving, "was the acquisition of a number of wild, uncultivated, and distant islands, to that of the brilliant domain of Naples; or the intercourse with naked and barbarous princes, to that of an alliance with the most potent sovereigns of

* See note ii, in the translation, p. 33. † Fernando Colombo, cap. lxiv.

Christendom? Columbus had the mortification, therefore, to see armies levied and squadrons employed in idle contests about a little point of territory in Europe, and a vast armada of upwards of 100 sail destined to the ostentatious service of convoying a royal bride; while he vainly solicited a few caravels to prosecute his discovery of a world.”*

At length, in the autumn, a royal order was issued to furnish the admiral of the Indies 6,000,000 maravedis for the equipment of the promised squadron.† But just as that sum was about to be paid over, a letter was received from Pedro Alonzo Niño, who had arrived at Cadiz with his three caravels on his return from the New World. Instead of proceeding at once to court to give an account of his voyage, or at least forwarding the adelantado's dispatches, he had gone to visit his family at Huelva, taking the dispatches with him, merely writing, in a boasting manner, that he had a great quantity of gold on board of his ships.‡ Columbus was triumphant at the news, and talked with renewed enthusiasm of the wealth of Ophir and of the mines which he had discovered, referring to those at Hayna. King Ferdinand was in pressing want of money to restore the castle of Salza, in Roussillon, which the French had sacked, and hearing of all this gold from the New World, appropriated for that purpose the 6,000,000 maravedis intended for Columbus, ordering him to be paid that amount out of the gold brought by Niño. When, however, Niño arrived at court, towards the close of December, and delivered the dispatches of the adelantado, all his hopes founded on the cargo of gold fell to the ground, and the admiral's affairs were in a worse state than ever. The heaps of gold which he had so vauntingly announced on his arrival, were only a wretched figure of speech, and meant the money that would be realized from the sale of the 300 Indian prisoners on board.

It is not possible to imagine the sad effects of that absurd hyperbole for Columbus. His enemies were jubilant, and his few friends and supporters abashed and confounded. Nor was there any comfort in the further reports; for Niño and his crew represented the colony as in a disastrous condition, and the adelantado's letter urged

* *Columbus*, bk. ix, ch. ii.

† Six million maravedis would be about \$ 24,515; but the difference in the value of money must always be taken into account.

‡ Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. cxxiii.



the immediate dispatch of supplies to the island. Every thing favored the enemies of Columbus, and increased their number and influence.

The account which Columbus afterwards wrote on his third voyage, describes his vexation in those days. He saw and heard much himself; much was reported to him by others who were apparently zealous for his success, but at bottom were hypocrites enjoying his distress; and he imagined still more concealed behind his back. He was so disheartened, concerning his undertaking, that he thought proper to mention it openly to their Majesties. The account concludes with these words: "I have said all this," meaning the arguments he had used to show the advantage to Spain, of the discovery of the New World, "not because I doubt the willingness of Your Highnesses to continue the enterprize as long as you live, for I regard the answer as decisive which you gave me when we talked of the matter; nor because I have discovered any change in Your Highnesses, but from fear of what I have heard asserted by others, since the constant dropping of water from the eaves will at last wear away a stone. Your Highnesses answered me, with your well-known magnanimity, that I must listen to nothing of the sort, for it was the intention of Your Highnesses to continue this undertaking, though you should obtain nothing but rocks and sand by it, and that you would bear the sacrifice of whatever it might cost; that you often spent more on things of little importance; that you considered the money already spent and to be spent for the future, as well employed, for you believed that our holy faith would be spread thereby, the possessions of the crown extended, and that those who spoke ill of the undertaking were not friends to Your Highnesses' crown." Columbus puts this reply in the mouth of both sovereigns, to whom his account is addressed, but there can be no doubt that its enthusiasm and religious tone belong wholly to Isabella, and Ferdinand's only share is the coupling of his name with Isabella's.

But the mother's heart at that time was too full of the joy and anxiety attending the marriage of her two children, to permit her to devote much thought to other matters. Her daughter had already left and arrived at her destination, but there remained the marriage of the infante Don Juan, which was of greater importance, not so much because he was heir apparent to the throne, as because under his sceptre all Spain would be united for the first time, it not being

strictly united under Ferdinand and Isabella, since, although the two sovereigns acted always in perfect accord, still in law and in fact the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon were separated politically and in administration. Spain, consequently, was prepared to celebrate, with feasts and rejoicings worthy of the event, the marriage of the first king and queen of all Spain. The dispatching of a fleet of 100 ships with 20,000 men, among them the first nobles of Spain, to convoy the bride, sufficiently indicates with what magnificence the event would be celebrated.*

The fleet which sailed from Spain on the 22nd of August, 1496, after a fatiguing voyage, safely landed one bride at Middleburgh on the 11th of September, and waited to receive the other on board. The departure was put off from day to day on account of the weather, till the winter season was upon them; and then the voyage had to be postponed till the next year, and it was near the end of March when they touched the shore of Spain. The nuptials were celebrated the 4th of April, in the city of Burgos, the capital of Old Castile, in the presence of all the Spanish grandees, and the high dignitaries of the kingdom, and the ambassadors of the principal monarchs of Christendom. The feasting was kept up for many days with the greatest magnificence, and every other town in Spain imitated, according to its ability, the festivities of the court and nobility at Burgos.† All this time Isabella, engaged, as was natural, with her thoughts and cares as a mother, was unable to give the admiral any relief except in words and hope. But as soon as she was free, she turned with all the more ardor to the concerns of the New World, on account of the low esteem and danger they had incurred from the unfortunate accident of Niño. To her zeal and solicitude are due the several measures adopted at this time in the admiral's favor; for Ferdinand, shaken in his hopes of drawing great wealth from those parts, and influenced by the ill-will of his advisers, had begun to regard Columbus with coldness and indifference. These measures seem to have been taken opportunely, and perhaps intentionally, to overcome the discouragement generally existing in the nation about the discovery of the New World, and to

* The admiral wrote to the queen his advice as to the course the fleet should take to reach the Flemish coast; and the queen replied from the port of Laredo, under date of August 18th, thanking him for his thoughtfulness, with expressions of friendly courtesy.—Navarrete, *Supl. i, Doc. xxxiv.*

† Ferreras, *Hist. Générale d'Espagne*, t. viii, p. 183.

strengthen the confidence in the discovery by the example of the court, which confirmed and extended the privileges and rewards of the discoverer, as agreed on in the treaty of Santa Fé.* And as the obligation he had assumed of contributing one-eighth of the expense of the expeditions resulted in a loss to him, since the returns had never yet equalled the expenses, he was dispensed from that clause for three years, and also from paying the amount in arrears, except the sum already paid for the first voyage, but at the same time lost all claim to the eighth part of the exports from the island up to that date. In exchange, he was allowed one-eighth of the gross product of each voyage, and then one-tenth of what remained after deducting the expenses, for the period of three years, after which the original terms were to be resumed.† Recognizing the justice of his complaint of the decree of April 10th, 1495, which authorized all persons indiscriminately to make voyages of discovery to the New World,‡ by a new decree of June 2nd, 1497, so much of the first was revoked as was injurious or contrary to his interests and privileges. "It never was our intention," says the new decree, "to interfere in any way with the rights of the said Christopher Columbus, or to permit any one to violate the convention, or usurp the privileges which have been granted to him, but rather to confer on him additional favors."§

King Ferdinand, extremely jealous of every thing that touched what he thought the royal prerogatives, had been much displeased at the admiral's appointment of his brother Bartholomew as adelantado, on his own authority, without asking the permission of the Spanish sovereigns, as the appointment to so high an office appeared to exceed his powers. To avoid offending the admiral by revoking the appointment, and at the same time to save the prerogative of the crown, a decree was published on the 22nd of June, raising Don Bartholomew to the rank of Adelantado of the Indies, without any mention of his having already held that office, as though his appointment was the spontaneous result of the good-will of the sovereigns.

In addition to these favors, the admiral was empowered to establish an entail in his family to perpetuate the glory he had brought to it, and was offered an estate in Hispaniola, fifty leagues in length

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. No. cix.

† See bk. i, ch. xxxv.

‡ *Id. Col. Dipl.*, Doc. No. cxiv.

§ *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. No. cxiv.

and twenty-five in width, to be selected by himself and erected as he chose, into a dukedom or a marquisate. The exquisite delicacy and forethought of Isabella was shown in this offer, which, while nobly and richly providing for his elder son Diego by the entail, by the seigniory founded a noble and rich appanage for his other son, Fernando. We shall treat more fully hereafter of the entail; as to the offer of the seigniory, Columbus nobly declined it, giving as his reason that it would excite the envy and rage of his enemies, who would not fail to charge him with caring more for the lands and interests of his seigniory than for those of the colony at large.

By these provisions, the magnanimous queen exalted the admiral's reputation and authority; by others, she corrected and improved the affairs of the New World, and prepared the third expedition of Columbus. On the 23rd of April, as soon as the festivities attending the marriage of her son were over, she ordered the purchase, at reasonable and current prices, of all the objects intended for the Indies;* and by other decrees she authorized the admiral to raise, at the state's expense, 300 persons of various trades, to be taken out to the Indies. The number was soon afterwards increased to 500, if the admiral should think proper, but the additional expense should be charged against the products of the colony. He was also authorized to grant lands to those who would plant vines, sugar-cane, or any thing of the sort, on condition of residing on the island four years from the date of the grant, and reserving for the exclusive use of the crown all Brazil-wood and precious metals found on their lands. All cargoes from Europe to the Indies and from the Indies to Europe, were exempt from tariff. As Magarita, Boil, and many Aragonese cavaliers, to excuse their want of discipline and of obedience towards the admiral, had pretended that as citizens of Aragon they were not subject in Hispaniola to any authority emanating from the kingdom of Castile; to guard against similar pretences in the future, it was prohibited for any one thenceforth to take part in such voyages, who was not a subject of Castile. The odium of this prohibition rested on Columbus, as was to be expected.† With regard to the poor Indians, the queen, fol-

* Las Casas, lib. i, cap. cxxiii.—Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii. cap. ix.—Charlevoix, *Saint-Domingue*, liv. iii, p. 160.

† Oviedo, lib. iii, cap. vii.

lowing her generous impulses, rejected all the sophisms advanced to persuade her that their enslavement was justified by human and divine law ; and she could hardly be brought to consent that those taken in battle with arms in their hands, should be sold as slaves. With the affection of a mother, she ordered every care taken to instruct the rest in religion, that they should be treated with all humanity and gentleness, and that, above all, the tasks imposed should be made for them as easy as possible. She recommended generally to the admiral that as well Spaniards as Indians should be treated always gently, and recourse should be had to harsh and severe measures only in case it was absolutely necessary for the public safety. This recommendation is a proof that the sovereigns did not think all the complaints of his excessive severity false or exaggerated, and requested him, in an indirect way, to mitigate his extreme rigor.

Though the sovereigns were well disposed, and facilities and rewards were offered, no one was willing to enlist for the third expedition. The cause of this unanimous repugnance is explained by an eye-witness : " Because," he says, " those who had previously accompanied the admiral. . . . came back sick, undone, and so pale as to look more dead than alive, this land of the Indies had gained such evil repute that no one could be found willing to go there. . . ." This witness, a page to King Ferdinand at the time, adds this ingenuous confession : " In truth, I have seen several returning to Castile so undone, that if the king had offered me the Indies on condition of becoming reduced to the same state, I am sure I should have refused to go."*

The impossibility of providing crews and ships for this new expedition in the regular way, made it again necessary for the royal power to intervene, and the officials of the kingdom were authorized to seize such vessels as they thought best suited for the voyage, to compel the pilots and masters to go in them, and to fix the amount of indemnity that should be paid for their services. As to the men needed for the mines, the proposition of Columbus was accepted, which was, for want of a better, that they should be taken from the outlaws, galley-slaves, and other criminals. A decree was accordingly issued, offering all criminals to commute their punishment

* Oviedo, lib. iii, cap. iv.

to a few years' service in Hispaniola, at the end of which they could return to Spain in full freedom.

Ten years' service was exacted of those sentenced to perpetual exile ; from the rest, one-half the period of their sentence. To those who had not yet fallen into the hands of justice, because they could not be found or taken, if they presented themselves of their own accord for the purpose, full pardon was offered after two year's service, if their crime was capital, and after one year's service, if punishable in the galleys for life or a term of years.* From this pardon were excepted those guilty of certain specified crimes, as heresy, high treason, counterfeiting the coin, and a few others. This prodigality of pardon granted to all sorts of evil-doers, is the best proof possible of the general discredit and detestation which had overtaken the affairs of the New World.

After these strong measures, the preparations for the third expedition were going on rapidly, in spite of the general opposition, when a fresh cause of delay occurred in the death of the infante Don Juan. He, whose nuptials were celebrated with such splendor a few months previously, and on whom rested the hopes of Spain, was taken suddenly ill at Salamanca, and a few days after, on the 4th of October, 1497, expired, universally deplored, whilst the unhappy mother, unconscious of her loss, was engaged in preparations for her youngest daughter's marriage. Who can imagine the feelings of Isabella when the blow was announced to her ? He was her only son, in the flower of his years, hardly six months married, joyfully called by the people to the most glorious throne then in Europe, loved, blessed, envied by all ; and they told her that the cold hand of death had touched that face beaming with youth and life, that she had for ever lost her only son ! But even in her intense grief she remembered the discoverer of the New World, and knowing that his sons Diego and Fernando were now unprovided for, in less than a month after her son's death, she appointed them to the same office of pages in her own household, which they had held with her son.†

For some time Columbus would not intrude on her sacred grief, and tried to look after the wants of the expedition himself ; but owing to the deep aversion of every one for that new expedition, and the silent hostility inspired and maintained by Fonseca, the difficulties in-

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. No. cxx.

† Fernando Colombo, cap. lxiv.

creased, and provisions became so scarce, that, as his only hope of succeeding, he turned to the queen, requesting the help of her name and authority. Although oppressed with the weight of her own trouble, she came to his aid with her usual zeal and energy. One of the gravest difficulties in providing what was needed for his departure was the exorbitant price asked by merchants for all kinds of provisions, and it was also difficult to find any one to take charge of furnishing them. To remedy this, the sovereigns, by their note of December 23rd, 1497, authorized the admiral jointly with Fonseca to fix the price of such provisions as were needed, and in the absence of the purveyors, to order them directly from the merchants.* Even then things proceeded but poorly, and twice, in the account which he afterwards wrote on his third voyage to the Catholic sovereigns, he complains of the labor and pains he underwent at this time in provisioning his ships. His greatest anxiety was for the colony, to which no aid of this sort had been sent for more than a year; and knowing the state in which he had left the colonists, he could imagine how they suffered from want and disease. As he saw no present way of victualling the entire fleet, he restricted his care to supplying two caravels to be sent at once with food for the colony, leaving the rest for future action. The queen approved his proposal, and furnished the means of fitting them out from the funds intended as the dowry of her youngest daughter Isabella, then betrothed to Emanuel, king of Portugal. The two vessels sailed in February, 1498, under command of Pedro Fernandez Coronel.

To this period is referred the will of Christopher Columbus, dated at Seville, the 22nd of February, 1498, in which he institutes an entail in his family. The study and dispute about that document leave no room to doubt its authenticity; but there is an error in transcribing the date, as the Prince Don Juan is mentioned in the will as still alive, whereas he died on the 4th of October previous, as we have seen. Most probably it should be 1497, instead of 1498.

The importance of this document, which reflects as a mirror the whole soul of the great Genoese, would justify its insertion in full, but its length prevents this. I shall confine myself, therefore, to a brief summary, but using, as far as possible, the very words of the will.† It begins in this way: "In the name of the Most Holy Trin-

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. No. cxxiv.

† See what was said of this will in book i, ch. i.

ity, who inspired in me the idea, and afterwards rendered it perfectly clear to me, that I might sail and reach the Indies from Spain, crossing the Ocean to the westward. . . ." and goes on relating his proposal to Ferdinand and Isabella, which they accepted, to assume that undertaking in the name of Spain, and the offices, titles, privileges, and rights he was to have for himself and his heirs, if he brought it to a good result. He next mentions his first discovery of 1492, and those that followed then and on his second voyage, both in those seas and along the coast of Cuba, which he supposed to be the continent of Asia, and relates his victory over the Indians of Hispaniola and the conquest of that island for the Spanish crown; and continues: "Hoping that before long, by the grace of God, a good, rich revenue will be derived from these islands and the continent, of which, for the reasons aforesaid, the tenth and eighth parts belong to me, with the salaries and emoluments specified above; and considering that we are mortal, and have now reached the period when every one ought to settle his affairs and to declare to his heirs or successors what property he possesses or has a right to: I have resolved to found an entail of the said eighth part, and of the lands, titles, and revenues in manner following." He next appoints his eldest son, Don Diego, his heir, to be succeeded by his other son, Fernando, in case of his death without issue. If neither should leave any male descendant, they should be succeeded by his brother Don Bartholomew and his eldest son, the next brother inheriting always when the eldest died without leaving a son. If Don Bartholomew also should die without male descendants, the succession should pass to the nearest relative of legitimate birth, bearing the surname of Columbus derived from his ancestors. Females were to be forever excluded from the succession, except in case no male heir could be found in Spain or elsewhere, of the real lineage of Columbus, whose surname, and that of his forefathers, had always been Columbus. On the extinction of the male line the female of legitimate birth nearest related to the last heir in possession, should succeed. Any heir lost his rights if he failed to perform any of the conditions imposed by the testator, and the next heir was to be substituted; such forfeiture was not to be incurred for trifling matters or unimportant disputes submitted to the courts, but only in important cases where the glory of God, or that of the admiral and his family, was concerned. And he begged the Supreme Pontiff and his successors to intervene with their authority in case of

need, by virtue of the obedience due them, and under pain of excommunication secure the execution of this his last will ; and reminding the Spanish sovereigns that being born in Genoa, he came over to Castile to serve them, and discovered the continent and islands of the Indies ; in consideration of his services, he prayed them to permit no part of his will or the creation of the entail to be annulled, but to sustain it in manner and form as he had executed it.

He ordered, in the first place, that his son Don Diego and all his other successors and descendants, as well as his brothers Bartholomew and Diego, should bear his arms as left by him, without any addition, and should have them engraved on their seal. The inheritor of the entail was required to adopt the same signature that he had used, which was this :

· S ·
· S · A · S ·
X M Y ;*

and whatever other titles the king might confer on him, he should sign only : *The Admiral*. Such was the value Columbus attached to this title, containing in one word the history of his services in the discovery of the New World ! He next directed in what manner his heir Don Diego should annually divide the revenues of his estate with his brother Bartholomew and his son Fernando, till the whole sum paid them should amount to a sufficient capital to yield an income of 1,000,000 maravedis to the former, and 2,000,000 to the latter. As to his second brother, Don Diego, who had become a religious, he charged the conscience of his heir with a single payment to him, sufficient to enable him to live decently, and in case of dispute, the matter was to be decided by arbitration. After satisfying the bequest in favor of Don Bartholomew, he directed Don Diego, or whoever might inherit in his stead, to employ the tenth part of the revenues of the entail in helping the poorest and most needy persons of their lineage, who were to be carefully and conscientiously sought after for this purpose, in whatever part of the world they might be, taking particular care to provide a dowry for the girls that needed it. He further directed that one member of the Columbus family should be perpetually supported in the city of Genoa, who should live there

* We shall explain this signature in the xvi chapter.

with his wife, and be allowed an income on which he could live respectably, as it became a relative of his to live and he should be a citizen, in order that in case of need the admiral's heir might find aid and support in the city where Columbus was born. He then directed the heir to lay aside, either in bills of exchange or otherwise, all that he could save from his revenues, and to purchase therewith shares in the Bank of St. George in Genoa, to be used in the manner and for the purpose he designated. As this clause was, as it were, the seal of his generous intentions and the holy ambition which animated all his thoughts and actions, I will give it entire: "Since it becomes every man of position and property to serve God either in person or by means of his wealth, and as the money deposited in the Bank of St. George is perfectly safe, Genoa being a noble and powerful city; and as at the time when I undertook to set out for the Indies, I had the intention of supplicating the King and Queen our Sovereigns, to devote to the conquest of Jerusalem whatever money should be drawn from the Indies themselves, and as I have made them this request: if they do so, it is well; otherwise, and in any event, the said Diego, or whoever may succeed him, shall collect all the money he can, and follow his lord the King, if he should go to conquer Jerusalem, or else go there himself with all the force he can raise; and executing this design, it will please the Most High to assist him to bring it to an end; and if he is not in condition to conquer the whole country, he is sure to conquer at least a part of it. Let him, therefore, collect all his wealth in the Bank of St. George in Genoa, and leave it there to multiply until he is able to do something in regard to the project concerning Jerusalem; for I firmly believe that their Highnesses, when they see this project in contemplation, will want to carry it out themselves, or at least will grant him, as their servant and vassal, the means of carrying it into effect."

He then requires his heir to employ his whole revenue, as well as his person and all the means in his power, in well and faithfully serving their Highnesses or their successors, even at the cost of life and property; since it was their Highnesses, after God, who gave him the means of making his discoveries and acquiring that property; although, he adds, to tell the truth, I came over to this realm to propose such an enterprise to them, and a long time elapsed before they began to make any provision for carrying it into execu-

tion ; which, however, ought not to be so surprising, because it was an undertaking, the scope of which was unknown to everybody, and in which no one had any confidence ; on which account I acknowledge the greater obligation to them, as also for the favor and promotion I have ever since received from them. If at any time any schism should occur in the church of God, or any person, of whatever class or condition, should attempt to despoil it of its property and honors, his heir should lay at the feet of the Supreme Pontiff his person, his power, and his wealth, to extinguish the schism and prevent any attempt on the property and honor of the church. He directs his heirs to have always in view, in every work and undertaking, the honor, prosperity, and aggrandizement of the city of Genoa, and to employ all their power and means in defending and enhancing the credit and welfare of that republic in all things not contrary to the service of the church of God, or the high dignity of the king and queen their sovereigns, and their successors. In due season they were to build a church on the island of Hispaniola, to be called St. Mary's of the Conception, and annex to it a hospital on the best plan possible, like those of Italy and Castile. They were also to build a chapel, where Mass would be celebrated for the repose of his soul and the souls of his ancestors and posterity. He ordered his heirs to spare no pains in getting and maintaining in Hispaniola four good professors of theology, making the end and aim of their studies and labors the conversion of the inhabitants of the Indies to our holy faith ; and, as their revenue increased, the number of Christians who were to strive, by their instruction, to make the natives of the country Christians, should be increased in proportion, in attaining which no expense should be thought too great. He concludes his testament by enjoining Don Diego or whosoever may enjoy the said property after him, every time he went to confession to show first this testament, or a copy of it, to the confessor, praying him to learn its contents, so that he may ascertain by questioning, whether the duties imposed have been faithfully performed.*

Any one that could charge Columbus with selfish greed in firmly refusing to abate any of the conditions he demanded from Spain for his discovery, must surely have forgotten this testament of his.†

In spite of the queen's open protection, a pitiless war of intrigue

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. cxxvi.

† See bk. i, ch. xii.

and evasion was carried on against him, every obstacle was put in his way, he was deceived in every thing, embarrassed in his contracts, and every effort was made to weary and discourage him in the fitting out of the vessels for the new expedition. Any one with less patience and force of character would have abandoned the struggle which Columbus was engaged in. Most of the officials and subaltern agents employed to look after the preparations, were creatures of the general superintendent, Fonseca, and knowing that they could do nothing more acceptable to him, than to create difficulties for the admiral, were most zealous in securing his good-will by such means. This suited the plan of that hypocrite wonderfully, as it enabled him to conceal his own share in the matter, and, at the same time, to effect more than he could have accomplished directly, because such shameless flatterers never place any limits to their zeal in discovering and carrying out the wishes of their masters. And they had a free course, for they were sure that the unseen hand of Fonseca would save them from every danger. Columbus, who saw who was the mover in their exertions against him, and felt the weakness of his position as a foreigner, without public esteem, and bitterly hated by many influential persons, for fear of something worse, and in the hope of carrying out his undertaking in some way, dissembled, suffered, got through the best he could. Still, matters dragged along till May, and even then he was obliged to sail with an insufficient number of seamen for the proper management of the vessels. Besides those already mentioned, there were sent out a physician, a surgeon, and a pharmacist, for the service of the sick; several ecclesiastics, to give a fresh impulse to the work of instructing and converting the natives; and a certain number of musicians, for the amusement and recreation of the colonists.

A serious scandal, which occurred in public, at the time of starting, shows how far the insolence of Fonseca's creatures towards the admiral had extended. One Ximeno de Breviesca had always distinguished himself among the most persistent defamers and insulters of Columbus. From some words of Las Casas, it has been inferred that he was one of those Jews or Moors who in the general expulsion from Spain, to which their co-religionists had been condemned, preferred giving in their adhesion to the national faith. He was Fonseca's treasurer, and as it was difficult to find a tongue more petulant and venomous than his, it is impossible to tell how impudently and

persistently he had persecuted Columbus in his speech, being certain of pleasing his master and of advancing in his favor. This venomous snake, on the day of sailing, wanted to take a last and complete satisfaction in venting his poison against Columbus; and when the admiral, in his splendid dress, surrounded by his officers and men, was giving the last orders for starting, that impudent creature of Fonseca's began to vent a load of insolence and reproach to his very face. The aged admiral, who had shown such Christian patience and magnanimous forbearance during so many years of secret and open hostility, seeing himself now attacked in the very sanctuary of his authority, and before his own people, felt his blood mounting to his head, and his veins swelling with the vigor of youth; and, overcome by anger, seized the rascal, threw him to the deck, and pounded and trampled on him.* It was certainly an excess to be deplored; but who can blame that old man, if at the grossness of the insult, he lost the control he had always maintained over the impetuosity of his nature? As soon as the sudden ebullition of wrath was over, he recognized what a great error he had committed, and bitterly lamented it; and foreseeing the complaint his enemies would make,—in a letter written soon afterwards to the Catholic sovereigns, he begs them not to form a bad opinion of him, and, with evident allusion to this act, reminds them that he is a foreigner, exposed to envy, and absent. And his foreboding was not without reason; for, according to Las Casas, the unfavorable impression made on the sovereigns by this act, was the principal cause of the humiliating measures they afterwards took against him. That scene of blind fury had occurred on Spanish territory, almost under the eyes of their Highnesses. What must occur in Hispaniola, his enemies exclaimed, when he was safe from their vigilance, and almost absolute master of men and affairs? If he treated a public officer, who was not under his authority, in this way, what must he not do to the simple colonists who were subject to him? What better proof was wanted of his violent and tyrannical character, and of the truth of the charge of oppression brought against him? Shall the safety and freedom of so many Spanish citizens be left in such a man's power? Fonseca was on fire at the maltreatment of one of his followers; others exaggerated the fact, and complained of the outrage to Breviesca;

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. cxxvi.

and the credulous and stupid multitude could not but regard the renegade Jew in the light of a martyr.

CHAPTER II.

Sailing of the third expedition.—Jayme Ferrer, jeweller and geographer.—Sufferings on the voyage.—Discovery of Trinidad.—First sight of the continent.—Crossing of the Gulf of Paria.—Arrival at Hispaniola (1498).

WEDNESDAY, the 30th of May, 1498, the six caravels of Columbus weighed anchor in the harbor of San Lucar de Barameda, for his third expedition to the New World. It was not his object this time to look for islands and continue the discoveries he had commenced around the great land of Cuba, the supposed beginning of India; but launching anew on the unknown space of the Ocean, he hoped to sail directly to the continent, supposed to lie south of the countries already discovered. He had been led to this idea by the savages always hinting at a country and people towards the south, and by observing that the coast of Cuba, as he advanced, trended always in a southerly direction. Leaving then the course followed in his two former voyages, he sailed south, intending to make the Cape Verde Islands, and then to keep on to the equinoctial line, and after that, taking advantage of the trade-winds, to sail due west till he found land, or came to the meridian of Hispaniola.* He supposed that the closer he kept to the equator, extending his discoveries in climes subject to the more direct action of the sun, the greater would be the perfection and richness of the natural productions found, on account of the greater force of the sun's rays. He was strengthened in this opinion by a letter written him, at the queen's request, by Jayme Ferrer, regarded as the most skilful and experienced of all men in precious stones, and knowledge of the places and countries where they were found. He dealt in

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxvi.—Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. ix.—Muñoz, lib. vi, § xxiii.

precious stones, and having a passion for seeing new men and things, he had visited all the largest and most famous marts then known. In his wanderings on the slopes of the Levant, in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, at the famous bazaars of Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, and Bagdad, he had constant opportunities of conversing with merchants of all sorts,—Mussulmans, Jews, Greeks, Persians, Tartars, Ethiopians, and Indians. Being a man of broad and educated mind, he was led, by his genius and his curiosity, to acquire in those conversations a more extensive and exact knowledge than any had before possessed, of the remote lands washed by the Indian Ocean, and of their products.* Returning home, he was soon acknowledged as the most learned and profound geographer of Spain; and when it was desired to settle with Portugal the question of the dividing line marked by Pope Alexander VI, he was invited to come to the court with his charts and mathematical instruments. As no agreement was reached at the time, he wrote to the queen on the 27th of January of the following year, 1495, giving her his advice on the geographical means of smoothing over the difficulty. The queen replied, thanking him, and inviting him to visit the court in the following month. Ferrer was, then, by his geographical knowledge and his experience in travelling, better fitted than any one else to appreciate the greatness of the work performed by Columbus, whose discovery he called, “rather a divine than a human voyage.” In the letter to the queen just mentioned, he says of Columbus: “I believe that Providence has chosen him, in its high and mysterious plans, as its agent in this work, which seems to me as merely the introduction and preparation for what the same divine Providence has in store, and will make known to us, for its own glory and the salvation and well-being of the world.†

The queen, on hearing the opinion and proposals of Ferrer, told him to write to the Admiral of the Ocean, which he did at great length, under date of the 5th of August, 1495. That was the time when the intrigues of the enemies of Columbus succeeded in obtaining the appointment of Juan Aguado as royal commissioner in Hispaniola; and it was through his hands that the letter reached Co-

* He was a particular admirer of Dante, from whose works he compiled a book entitled, *Sentencias Católicas del Divino Poeta Dante*, printed at Barcelona in 1545.

† Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. lxxviii.

lumbus. And it is a relief, in the midst of the cries of anger and contempt which envy and ignorance raised against the discoverer of the New World, to see with what respect and almost veneration he is addressed by the greatest geographer Spain then possessed. The length of the letter prevents the insertion of the whole of it; and I will give only two sentences as a sample of it all. "Divine and infallible Providence sent the great Thomas (the Apostle) from the west into the east to promulgate our holy Catholic law in the Indies; and it has sent you, sir, in the opposite direction, from the east into the west, so that, by the divine will, you may reach the east at the extremity of Upper India, in order that the nations that have not heard Thomas, may learn the law of salvation, and the promise of the Prophet be fulfilled,—'Their sound hath gone forth into the whole earth.' I think I make no mistake, sir, in saying that you fill the office of an apostle, an *ambassador of God*, sent by divine decree to reveal his holy name to the lands still ignorant of the truth."*

History is silent as to the further relations of Columbus with Ferrer, but there can be no doubt but that while Columbus was detained at Burgos, the home of Ferrer, they drew closer the friendship commenced by letter, and that they talked long and profoundly of their voyages, and of the discoveries in the New World.

Ferrer, then, from his long experience, assured Columbus that the most rare and precious articles of commerce, like gold, gems, drugs, and spices, were mostly found in regions near the equator, where the natives were of a black or dark brown color; and until he found the people of such color, he would hardly find in any abundance the rich products he was in search of.†

From San Lucar avoiding a French squadron which was cruising in the latitude of Cape St. Vincent,‡ Columbus sailed for Porto Santo, where he arrived on Thursday, the 7th of June. Here he heard Mass, and remained all day, taking in wood and water. Leaving that night, he reached Madeira on Sunday the 10th, and was politely received by the captain at the head of the government, and remained till the following Saturday, supplying his ships with a number of articles that were needed. Tuesday, the 19th, he

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Apend. al. No. lxxviii.

† Id. tom. ii, Doc. lxxviii.

‡ *Relazione del terzo Viaggio*, in the Collection of Voyages compiled by F. C. Marmocchi. Prato, 1840.—Las Casas, cap. xxx

came to Gomera, and left there on the 21st. As he was now in the latitude of Ferro, he detached three of his ships, and sent them direct to Hispaniola, with aid for the colony. One was commanded by Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, a brave and fearless officer, whose name will appear with honor later in our story; another, by Pedro de Arana, brother of the mother of Fernando, the second son of Columbus, and a cousin of the Arana who was left in command of Fort Nativity on the first voyage, and slain by Caonabo; and the third was under the command of Juan Antonio Colombo, a relative of Christopher's, and a man of great ability in affairs of the sea.* Each of the three captains was to take the general command of the vessels in turn, for a week at a time. On their arrival at Hispaniola, they had orders to keep along the southern coast till they came to the new harbor, which Columbus thought would be established by this time at the mouth of the Ozema, according to the orders of their Majesties, sent to Don Bartholomew through Coronel. With the other three vessels, Columbus proceeded in the direction of the Cape Verde Islands. The effects of the tropical climate they had entered were soon felt, and the admiral was suddenly seized with a violent attack of gout, followed by a high fever for the next four days. He did not, however, give way, but continued to note with his usual care every change of weather, or whatever else he thought deserving of notice.† The 27th of June, he was among the Cape Verde Islands, and dropped anchor near one called *Bõa Vista*. The character of the island does not agree with its name; for, instead of a pleasing sight of freshness and verdure, it presents a sad spectacle of sterility. The ordinary food of its few inhabitants was the flesh of goats (eight of which had been brought from Europe, and had multiplied on those cliffs to a prodigious number), with fish and tortoise, which were very plentiful on the sandy coasts; and they went sometimes for four or five months with no other food.‡

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxv.

† Fernando Colombo, l. c.

‡ Those islands are, in fact, such as Columbus describes them, and receive their name from Cape Verde; they were named not from their appearance, but from being opposite to Cape Verde, 100 to 120 leagues away. The cape was so named by Diniz Fernandez, a Portuguese, who discovered it in 1445, because, after crossing the desert of Sabara, he was delighted at the sight of the green foliage of the trees crowning its summit.—The Cape Verde Islands were discovered, as related in the text, book i, ch. iii, by the Italians Usodimare and Cadamosto, who, after being furiously tossed about in a storm, suddenly

It had been the admiral's intention to take in fresh supplies of provisions for the ships, and some animals for breeding in Hispaniola; but finding that this would cause a serious delay, he concluded to leave without them, fearing that all the men would be taken sick in that atmosphere. While in the latitude of those islands, they saw neither star nor a strip of sky; and under the thick veil of clouds, the heat was wilting and stifling; and the number of sick and the pale aspect of all, showed what would be the result if they stayed there longer. Therefore, on the 4th of July, they weighed anchor and proceeded to the south-west, intending to keep that course till they came to the equator; but the currents towards the north and north-west so impeded their progress that after two days they were still in sight of the island of Fuego. The volcano at its summit, which at a distance resembles a church with a tall belfry at one side, was the last point they could distinguish of the Old World.*

Overcoming the obstacle of the currents, they continued to the south-west until the 13th of July, sailing a distance of about 120 leagues, under a sky still covered with clouds, the air heavy, and the heat suffocating. That day they all thought they would die. They had reached the 5th degree of north latitude, and were in what sailors call the calm latitudes, which extend to the tenth degree on either side of the equator, and in which the two winds from the north and the south-east, meeting near the equator, neutralize each other, and produce a perfect calm, both in the air and on the water. The surface of the sea becomes smooth as glass, the sails hang drooping, the ships scarce move; a burning sun darts its fiery rays perpendicularly on the head of the sailors; the air they breathe burns their throat, and a continual asthma affects their lungs, in some instances lasting for weeks. Such was the condition they found themselves in on the 13th of July. Up to that time there had always been a little breeze, and they had sailed at least a few leagues each day, and the thick vapors that hid the sky, were some protection against the sun's fierce rays. But on that day the sky became clear, the wind died out, and the sun began to dart its rays of intensest heat. The air was like a furnace: the pitch melted in the planks, the seams of the ships opened, the salt meat spoiled, the grain was parched as by a fire, the

beheld one of the islands of that group, and to perpetuate their joy on discovering it, called it *Buona Vista*.

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxv.

hoops of barrels and casks parted, the wine and the water leaked in quantities, and the heat was so intense in the hold that it was impossible to repair the damage.* Fortunately, on the following day, the sky was again cloudy, and a little rain fell, which mitigated the intolerable heat, preventing the complete ruin of every thing, and giving them a little rest. But the same invariable calm continued on the water and in the air for eight days, and the dampness and heat so prostrated them that not one was able to stand. The admiral suffered the most of all, on account of his gout, but his anxiety was too great to allow him to mind his sufferings; and he was busy, day and night, watching the appearance of the elements, and looking for signs of land, in hopes of finding some escape. As the heat continued intolerable, he determined to change his course with the first favorable wind, and steer to the west, hoping to find a milder temperature in that direction. He remembered that on his previous voyages he had always found a wonderful change in the elements as soon as he was about 100 leagues to the west of the Azores, the sea becoming smooth, the sky clear, and the air fresh and temperate. He supposed that there was a great extent of the sea running north and south, where a particular mildness prevailed, and which they suddenly entered on sailing from east to west, as though they were crossing a line.† On arriving in that delightful region it was his intention to resume the course to the south which he was now abandoning.

At the end of those eight terrible days, a light breeze sprang up from the east, and the ships were soon under way, and after a few days of suffocating heat under a sky constantly covered with clouds, they, at last, to their inexpressible joy, came upon a new sea and sky which seemed better than an Eden after the fears and sufferings they had lately passed through. But nothing further was thought of resuming the course to the south, because the excessive heat had injured the vessels to such extent that it was necessary to look for a harbor as soon as possible, where they could be repaired; and besides, the provisions were nearly all spoilt, and only a few drops of water were left. The admiral, therefore, continued to the west, as

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxx.—Muñoz, *Hist. del N. Mundo*, lib. vi.

† *Narrative of the Third Voyage*.—Helps thinks this was caused by entering one of those warm ocean streams which help to moderate the temperature, perhaps that running from the south of Africa across the Gulf of Mexico. (*Life of Columbus*, ch. ix, note.)

the flight of some birds, and other indications, seemed to promise that they would soon find land. But days passed without any thing being seen, and their fear was extreme when they found they were reduced to a single cask of water to each vessel. Knowing he was in the meridian of the Caribbee Islands, Columbus expected to see land at any moment, and all day Monday, the 30th of July, and the following night, he kept looking anxiously towards the west in the hope of seeing it; but when the sun rose on Tuesday, there was on all sides nothing to be seen but the same boundless expanse of sea.* Yielding, then, to the necessity that compelled him, and with a sadness of heart easily imagined, he gave orders to steer for the north, in order to make the Caribbee Islands, where he could get a fresh supply of food, repair the vessels, and rest the crews; and then, with empty hands, after all his hopes, and a hard voyage, sail direct for Hispaniola. They kept on the new course, for some hours, sad and disheartened, when, about noon, one Alfonso Perez Nizardo, a sailor from Huelva, in the special service of the admiral, happening to mount on the masthead, discovered, in the direction they had abandoned, about fifteen leagues away, three tops of mountains. Who can imagine the effect of that shout of *Land!* on all on board? They quickly altered their course from the north, and singing the *Salve Regina*, and other pious hymns, they resumed exultingly the direction of the three points visible in the west.†

Before leaving Spain, Columbus had made a vow to give the name of the Most Holy Trinity to the first land discovered on the third voyage. As he neared the land, he saw that the three mountains were united at the base, and formed a single mountain. He was struck beyond measure by the wonderful harmony of his vow and the first view of that land, and looked upon it as a signal favor of God, regarding the time, the manner, and the sight of the three points as miraculous.‡ At the hour of compline,§ they reached the

* *The Admiral's Narrative of his Third Voyage.*—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxvii.

† *The Admiral's Narrative.*—Fernando Colombo, l. c.—Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. vi.—Oviedo, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. iii, cap. iii.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, cap. vii.—Muñoz, *Hist. del N. Mundo*, lib. vi, § xxiii.

‡ *Ib.* *Hist. del N. Mundo*, lib. vii, § xxiii.

§ Columbus often indicated the time of the day by such expressions as the *hour of vespers, of compline, &c.* The reader should bear in mind his pious

eastern extremity of the new land, and called it Punta de la Galera, from a rock which, seen from a distance, had the appearance of a galley at full sail. They could see on the shore dwellings and inhabitants in large numbers, and the fertile lands as fair and verdant as the gardens of Valencia in spring-time;* but they found it necessary to coast along the southern shore five leagues further before they discovered a suitable spot to lie at anchor over night. The next morning, the 1st of August, continuing in the same direction, in search of a harbor, to repair the ships and take in supplies, they discovered other land about twenty-five leagues off, in a southerly direction. It was that low coast intersected by the different branches of the Orinoco. Columbus took it for another island, and named it *Isla Santa*,† without the slightest suspicion that it was part of the continent he so ardently wished to discover. Proceeding a few leagues further, they stopped at another cape, where they landed in small-boats, and filled a cask with water from a limpid stream they found there. But not a living soul was seen anywhere, although on the coast they had left behind they had seen many dwellings and people; but they found some fishing implements—a certain sign that some one had fled at their approach—and many tracks of animals which they supposed were goats, but which they afterwards ascertained to be deer, with which the island abounded. Anchoring here, they passed the night, as it was not prudent to venture in the dark along an unknown coast; and the next morning, the 2nd of August, they sailed to another point further on, which they called Punta Arenal, now known as the Point of the Icacos, the extreme south-western point of Trinidad. Just as they approached it, a canoe put out from the shore back of them, with twenty-five young men, and took the direction of the Spanish vessels. They were all of good stature, strong, and well-formed, and not so dark a red as the Indians they had seen further north; their hair was long and straight, cut like a Castilian's, and they wore colored handkerchiefs around the head, and also about the loins, reaching to the knee. They carried bows, and arrows with feathers, the point formed of a sharp bone, and they had a sort of shield on the arm—the first time the Spaniards

habit of reciting the canonical office punctually every day, and that will explain why he used those terms. See book i, ch. iv.

* *Narrative of Columbus*.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxviii.

† Fernando Colombo, l. c

had seen one in use by the inhabitants of the New World.* They came within a bow-shot from the ships, and then stopped, and said something in a loud voice to the Spaniards; but no one understood a syllable of their language. Repeatedly urged by signs to come near, they seemed at times to get over their timidity and rowed a little forward; and then, changing their mind, returned to their former position. Then some metal basins and other bright articles were shown them, in the hope of exciting their curiosity; but they only came a little nearer to obtain a better view of the dazzling objects which excited their wonder. They continued this way more than two hours, these hoping to induce the others to approach, and those wanting to go, yet fearing to meet with misfortune. The admiral was anxious to converse with them, and gather from their signs some information concerning those regions, and knew not how to overcome their hesitation, when he remembered the passion of the inhabitants of the New World for the dance. He then ordered a drummer to go on the fore-castle deck and beat his drum, and another to accompany him with singing, while some of the boys danced, by which amusement he hoped to draw them to him. But at the first roll of the drum and first movement of the dance, the startled savages dropped their oars in a twinkling, and placing their shields on their arms, seized their bows and commenced shooting furiously at the dancers. The music and dance instantly ceased, and the Spaniards replied with a few shafts from their cross-bows, at which the others turned and fled with all speed.

They afterwards discovered the cause of this strange conduct of the Indians. When they went to battle, before beginning the fray, they took their rude instruments, and sang and danced to their accompaniment. This was a religious ceremony, by which they invoked the aid of their gods to win a victory over their enemies. They supposed the Christians were then performing the same rite.

Soon afterwards, they reappeared, but carefully avoiding the admiral's ship, they freely approached one of the other caravels, regarding it as harmless and friendly, since it had taken no part in the music and dancing on the admiral's vessel. Coming close to the stern, they began a conversation, by signs, with the pilot, who boldly went into their canoe, and gave a coat and a cap to the one

* *Narrative of Columbus.*—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxvii.

who seemed to be their chief, who, as well as the others, showed great delight, and gave the pilot to understand that they invited him to come on shore, where he would be treated with all kindness. He made a sign of assent, and that they should go first, and he would follow. They started to go, but as the pilot durst not accept their invitation without the admiral's permission, and went first to him to ascertain his pleasure, the Indians, seeing him visit the hostile ship, became suspicious, and left without waiting for him; and neither they nor any others of those islanders were seen after that.*

As soon as the vessels were anchored off Point Arenal, the admiral sent the boats ashore to look for water, and to get speech of the natives; but they could find neither water nor inhabitants, the land being low and deserted. The following day he sent men to dig in the sand for water, and they were fortunate enough to find trenches already dug, and filled with excellent water, and they judged that the trenches had been made by the fishermen. The complexion, features, and the whole figure of those Indians, were a great surprise to Columbus, and gave him matter for much reflection. Supposing that he was seven degrees north of the equator, though he was actually ten, he expected to find the inhabitants black, ill-shaped, and woolly-haired, like the natives of the same latitude in Africa; and instead, he found them of fine stature, with long hair, and not so dark as the Indians he had previously seen much further from the equator. Even the climate, instead of being warmer in consequence of its closeness to the equator, was rather cool, and although it was midsummer, they required nearly as much clothing at night and in the morning as if it were winter. This happens in many parts of the torrid zone, and especially when no wind is blowing, for then nature moistens the land at night with plentiful dew after the excessive heat of the day.† These deviations from the ordinary laws of nature caused Columbus at first much pain as well as astonishment, for they destroyed the hopes he founded on the theory of the jeweller Ferrer; but with his usual activity of imagination and sharpness of mind, he was not long in framing fresh conjectures, as we shall see, which, from a

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxviii.—Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. vi.—Las Casas, lib. i, cap. cxxxviii.—*Narrative of the Admiral*.

† Irving, *Columbus*, book x, ch. ii.

world of fair illusions, transported him to another of still fairer.

A rapid current of the sea, with the impetuosity, says the admiral, of the Guadalquivir when overflowing its banks, ran from east to west along the southern shore of Trinidad, and emptied into the channel between that island and the continent opposite. The channel is hardly three leagues in width, and in the middle of it is an island, or rock, which they named *El Gallo*. This current rushing into the narrow passage, encounters another from the north, and each being forced to share with the other that contracted space, they dash against each other and against the shore, which here and there confines them, with a roaring fearful to hear, particularly in the silence of night. To express their fear of the place, Columbus gave the channel the significant name of Serpent's Mouth. The Spanish vessels, anchored near this Mouth, found themselves in the dreadful position of not being able to return eastward on account of the force of the current, which deprived them of all hope of escaping by sailing back the way they came ; and the frightful roaring from the channel, like that of the waves of the Ocean dashing on the rocks in a violent storm, and which the Spaniards supposed was caused by rocks and reefs across the short opening of the channel, seemed to threaten sure death to any who should attempt the passage to the north.

The admiral, on whose head rested the thought and care for all, was in the greatest anxiety. In this state of mind, the second night that they were in this distress, as he was still on deck because his physical and mental sufferings allowed him no rest, he experienced as great a fright as he ever did in all his life. But it should be told in the simplicity of his own words : " I was afraid of not being able to return on account of the currents, nor advance on account of the shallow bottom, so that I kept awake, and when the night was well advanced, as I was standing on the ship's poop, I heard a terrible noise and roaring that came from the direction of the south towards the vessel ; I looked in that direction and saw the sea rising from the west to the east, forming a hill as high as the ship, and slowly coming towards me. Besides this elevation of the sea, there was a current running with horrid din, and the roaring was mingled with the frightful noise of the other currents, which I have already likened to the waves of the sea breaking on the rocks. Even now my heart trembles as I think of the fear I had of being drowned when the gigantic wave

should reach my vessel.”* At the sound of that horrid commotion coming towards them, they all sprang to their feet and rushed on deck, where they grew pale at the sight of the death which they believed it was bringing to them all. But that hill of water passing under the ships lifted them reeling on high, and then let them slide down on its back without further injury than tearing one of them from her anchors and forcing her to a distance.† Arriving then at the mouth of the channel, it remained there a long while with horrid commotion, trying vainly to force its way against the two currents which closed the mouth, till, gradually wasted by them, it slowly fell and disappeared entirely. This strange occurrence is explained by the supposition of the sudden swelling on this night of one of the branches of the Orinoco, opposite to the place where the Spaniards were at anchor. Whoever has witnessed the sight, knows how fearfully impressive is the first approach of a great whirlpool. Now, such a sight, which must strongly affect the imagination even in ordinary times, must necessarily have produced an extraordinary effect on the minds of the admiral and his Spaniards in their present exceptional position and circumstances. They were in a new world, knowing nothing of what was before them, confined in a small place, and their fancy was already alarmed by fear of the currents, and their ears were resounding with the roar of the channel near them. What wonder that in such a state of mind, unable to see any thing distinctly in the darkness of night, a sight grand and fearful of itself, should assume in their eyes strange and fearful proportions ?

There was urgent need of escaping from a place so full of danger, and as soon as it was daylight, the admiral sent the boats to sound the mouth of the channel, to see if there was any chance of the vessels passing through with safety. To his great surprise and greater comfort, they reported six to seven fathoms in the shallowest part, and that the roaring was caused not by rocks or shoals, but by the meeting of opposite currents. As soon as there was a puff of favorable wind, they quickly hoisted sail, and easily and safely passed the Serpent's Mouth, and found themselves in a beautiful calm bay extending from the coast of Trinidad to the opposite shore of the main-land. They all

* *Narrative of the Third Voyage.*

† Fernando Colombo, cap. lxix.—*Narrative of the Third Voyage.*—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. xi, cap. x.

thought they were on the open sea, and were much astonished when, casually tasting the water, they found it fresh. They coasted along the island towards a very high mountain which rose far away to the north, about fourteen leagues from Point Arenal. As they approached it they discovered opposite to it, a short distance to the west, another peak on a point of land which Columbus thought was also an island, and named it Land of Grace, but which was the long promontory of Paria. Between the two capes there was another outlet from the bay, narrower than the Serpent's Mouth, and very dangerous, being nearly closed with rocks, as was proved by the roar, much louder than at the Serpent's Mouth, although the Spaniards had then thought that impossible. Columbus, in fit opposition of one to the other, named the second the Dragon's Mouth.

With the exception of the twenty-five savages seen near Point Arenal, not a living soul made its appearance along the whole coast; and the admiral was anxious to meet some of the natives to learn something about those regions. Partly for that purpose, and partly from unwillingness to risk the Dragon's Mouth, he turned the prows westward, intending to sail along the coast of the supposed island in front of him until he reached its end and then steer straight for Hispaniola. Meanwhile, he hoped to come in sight of some of the natives. As they advanced they found the water fresher, and pleasant to drink, at which they were overcome with wonder, and they were not less so at sight of the sea as calm and smooth as any harbor. The reason of the water being fresh was that they were then in the season of periodical rains, and the numerous water-courses on the coast, pouring their swollen streams into the bay, almost entirely overcame its saltness; and the smoothness of the sea was owing to the bay being completely shut in and protected from the wind. The shore was delightful, covered with fruit-trees and extensive forests, with numerous streams of water, and convenient landing-places; but here, too, not a living soul was in sight. After sailing a long distance, they came to a place where the soil seemed to be cultivated, and where they anchored, and sent the boats ashore to take possession, and examine the place. The admiral, confined on board by a severe ophthalmia from which he was suffering, sent Captain Pedro di Tereros in his stead to plant the cross on this new discovery.* They found on shore many marks

* Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, lib. vi, § xxvi.

of persons who had fled on their approach, but not a shadow of a man. The place was wonderfully abundant in a certain kind of apes. Wishing to take advantage of the wind, which was then favorable for getting out, they quickly hoisted their sails, and followed the coast for fifteen leagues, without entering any harbor. At the end of the fifteen leagues, they anchored again, at the mouth of a river, near which the shore was more level, and they had hardly stopped when a canoe with three Indians came near one of the vessels. The Spanish captain, while pretending to talk with them by signs, and they were intent on trying to understand him, leaped into the canoe and capsized it, throwing them all three into the water; and his men, who were on the watch, were on them in a flash, and captured them.* They were taken to the admiral, who, with his usual goodness, relieved their fear, and presenting them with strings of beads, little bells, sugar, and other trifles, sent them ashore free. Beside themselves with wonder and delight, they ran to tell their companions of their happy reception and to show their presents; and soon several canoes approached the ships with confidence.

These natives had the same figure and complexion, the same ornaments and weapons, every thing the same as the twenty-five seen near Point Arenal. They brought the Spaniards gifts of bread, maize, and other food, and different drinks, some pale, made from maize, and resembling beer, others green and like wine, made from the juice of fruit. These Indians seemed to have a strange way of judging things, which was by the smell, and not by the sight or taste, like other people, for they smelt of every thing they came near,—the ship, the seamen, their clothes, and every article. They made little account of the glass baubles offered them, but they went crazy over the little bells and the copper. This metal must have pleased their smell greatly, for they kept smelling of it with great delight, repeating the word *turey* (heaven), meaning that it came truly from above.† They said their country was called Paria, and, further to the west, was thickly peopled.

Taking four of these Indians to act as guides and interpreters, they sailed eight leagues further on to Cape Aguja,‡ where, the admiral

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxx.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. ix.

† Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. ii.

‡ Now called Cape *Alcatrazes*. (Navarrete.)—*Narrative of the Admiral*.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxx.

writes, they found the most beautiful lands in the world, and very populous. To give them a name suited to the beauty they displayed on every side, he called them *The Gardens*; and anchored there to examine them further and to enjoy the pleasing sight. Soon a multitude of inhabitants, jumping into their canoes, hurried to the ship and urged the admiral, by signs, to come ashore. Their canoes, much better constructed than those of the other Indians, had a cabin in the middle for the use of the commander and his family. Seeing that the admiral was not disposed to go, the multitude of the curious increased, and there was a continual coming and going on the water, and the ships were constantly filled with people. Many wore around the neck plates of an inferior quality of gold called *guanin*, which they said they obtained from a mountainous country a short distance to the west, adding that it was dangerous to go there, whether it was that the inhabitants were cannibals, or that the country was infested with venomous animals. But what most attracted the Spaniards' attention and roused all their cupidity, was the sight of long strings of great pearls which many of the women had around their arms. When asked where they obtained them, they replied that they found them on the northern coast of Paria, and showed the shells from which they had been taken. Columbus's whole desire turned at once in that direction, but the supplies of grain, wine, and meat, obtained with so great difficulty in Europe, and which he was carrying for the relief of the people left in Hispaniola, were spoiling daily; and to keep them much longer shut up on the ships, was to render them utterly worthless. Therefore we may imagine with what regret he had to decide on leaving for Hispaniola. But he sent some of his men on shore to see if they could collect a small quantity of pearls in a short time, to send as specimens to the king and queen of Spain.* As soon as the Spaniards came on shore, the natives, with the cacique and his son at their head, crowded to receive them, and led them to the cacique's residence, quite a large house, built with a front and sides, and not round like an army-tent, as were all the others. There, as savory a collation as the place afforded was served, after the custom of the country, consisting of bread made of maize, fruit of various kinds, and that sort of white and red wine, or rather beer and ale, which they made of grain and fruit. The men

* *Narrative of the Admiral.*—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxx.

were all together on one side of the Spaniards, and the women on the other. It was a cause of regret that the Spaniards and Indians could not understand each other, for they had a thousand questions to ask, and their curiosity remained unsatisfied. After the refection in the cacique's house, another like it was served in the house of his son. Towards evening, the Spaniards returned to their ships, with many pieces of guanin gold, one of them as large as an apple; some beautiful parrots of different varieties, of which there was an abundance in that place; and a fine assortment of pearls, received in exchange for a little bell, or some other European trifle of no value.*

The theory of the jeweller Ferrer, which, on first arriving there, Columbus thought had not stood the proof, now seemed to him to answer fully all it promised; and it is impossible to tell the courage and comfort he derived from it, or how his fancy took a sudden flight to boundless hopes in the future. He remembered reading in Pliny that pearls are produced by drops of dew falling into oysters' mouths; and in that case, where could they be better formed and multiplied than on the coast of Paria? The dew there was frequent and abundant, and the oysters so plentiful that the roots and hanging branches of mangrove-trees which lined the very shores of the sea, were thick with them, and it was only necessary to hold a branch a little while under water to draw it out all covered with oysters.†

Continuing further to the west, they discovered at the bottom of the bay two other points, which are only projections of the main-land, but which Columbus supposed to be islands, and he named one Isabella and the other Tramontana, and fancied that the desired outlet to the open sea must lie between them. But the further he proceeded, the shallower the water became, till his vessel, which was quite large and heavy, began to be uneasy and in some danger; and therefore, on the 11th day of August, he cast anchor, and sent ahead the lightest caravel to look for an outlet in that direction to the Ocean.

The next morning the caravel returned with the report that at the western extremity of the bay they found an opening two leagues wide, leading to an inner bay of a circular form, around which they saw four other openings, which seemed to be smaller bays, and a river emptied into each of them, which was the reason why the water

* *Narrative of the Admiral*.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxx.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. x.

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, cap. cxxxvi.—Herrera, 1. c.

of that sea was so fresh ; and it was much fresher in there, and that all those lands which looked like islands were parts of the same land, and that there was so much grass in the bay that the caravel had difficulty in sailing through it.* To this inner bay Columbus gave the name of Bay of Pearls, firmly believing they were abundant there, when in fact there were none there at all. Abandoning all hope of finding an outlet to the sea, they reluctantly turned about, and, letting themselves drift with the rapid current, at the end of two days were back near the Dragon's Mouth to attempt its passage.

The night from Sunday, the 13th, to Monday, the 14th, they remained at anchor at the mouth of the Dragon, terrified at the roar of its waves, and the next morning they got ready to attempt the fearful passage.

The distance between the two extreme points of Paria and Trinidad, is about five leagues, with two small islands between. The enormous masses of fresh water crossing the bay in a swift current, especially in the rainy months of July and August, finding their way barred at the Dragon's Mouth by these two islands, rush against them and tumble back with such seething and roaring of foaming waves, that even at the present day old and experienced navigators grow pale when obliged to attempt the passage. What must, then, have been the impression made on Columbus and his companions, entire strangers, with no knowledge of the place ? At first, Columbus believed that the frightful agitation of the waves was caused by shoals and hidden sand-banks ; but further observation showed him that it was produced by the effort of that prodigious volume of fresh water to escape from the bay against the tide from the Ocean rushing in. This gave him courage, and seizing the moment when there was a slight breeze in his favor, he began the dangerous passage. But the ships had hardly entered that fearful channel when the wind died away, and with no means of withstanding the force of the current, they were drawn where the whirlpools were the strongest. It was a terrible moment for them all. And when the violence of the current forcing them out of the vortex, carried them out a long distance to sea, they could hardly trust their own eyes that they had come out safe from that mouth of hell.†

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxi.

† Id. l. c.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i. lib. iii, cap. xi.

Notwithstanding the urgent necessity of proceeding at once to Hispaniola, the admiral could not restrain his desire to sail for a while along the northern coast of Paria. He turned, therefore, to the west, keeping close to the shore. Two small islands which were seen well to the north, he named Assumption and Conception, without stopping at them; they are doubtless the same now known as Tobago and Granada. He did the same to many other small islands and good harbors as he discovered them.

On the 15th, he discovered the islands of Margarita and Cubagua, since famous for their pearl-fisheries. As they neared the dry and barren island of Cubagua, which lies between Margarita and the main-land, and hardly four leagues from the latter, they saw a number of Indians fishing for pearls, who hurried to the land as soon as they saw our people. A boat was sent after them, and coming up with them, one of the seamen observed on the neck of an Indian woman several strings of pearls, and having a vase of Valencia terra-cotta, which is a sort of painted porcelain, the colors on which are very bright, he broke it and offered the pieces to the savage, who in exchange gave him a good number of her pearls. The seamen carried them to the admiral, who immediately sent more of his men on shore with more Valencia porcelain, and some bells, and they returned in a short time with three good pounds of pearls, some of which were of wonderful size.*

Columbus was strongly tempted to remain in that bay, or else visit the other places designated by the Indians as abounding with pearls; and the coast, extending westward as far as the eye could reach, seemed to invite him; but the desperate condition of his health absolutely forbade his enduring the labors and sufferings of the voyage any longer. For, in consequence of too much watching, his eyes were so inflamed that he could hardly use them at all, and he was obliged to employ the seamen and pilots to write the greater part of the notes of his narrative; † and he says himself that although when exploring the coast of Cuba on his previous voyage, he was thirty-three days without sleep, and for some time lost his sight, still his eyes had never been so inflamed as at present, nor caused him so much pain. ‡ He was therefore obliged reluctantly to tear him-

* Charlevoix, *Hist Saint-Domingue*, liv. ii, p. 147.

† Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxii.

‡ *Narrative of the Admiral*.

self away and proceed direct to Hispaniola ; but he consoled himself with the thought that he would send his brother Bartholomew to continue the exploration.

After five days of further navigation, they came in sight of Hispaniola, on August 20th ; but, instead of being at the mouth of the Ozema, for which they had been steering, they found themselves fifty leagues to the west of it ; and the next morning they anchored near the island of Beata, thirty leagues from the Ozema. Columbus was greatly surprised at the error in his reckoning, and attributed it rightly to the force of the current, which had insensibly carried him westward while lying to at night for fear of striking on rocks or sand-banks. Meanwhile, the wind blew again from the east, delaying his progress, and as he was in danger of being kept too long at that little island, he sent a boat to find an Indian to carry a letter by land to his brother the adelantado.* Six of them came on board, all ready to serve him, and one of them held a Spanish cross-bow in his hand. Columbus was alarmed at sight of the cross-bow, for it was not an article to traffic in, and the first thought that occurred to him on seeing it in the hands of a savage, was that the Spaniard who had carried it was dead. He remembered the ruin of Fort Nativity, the disobedience and revolt of Margarita, the rebellion of the Indians, and their war, and he trembled at the fresh disasters awaiting him on his return to the island. With such sad forebodings, he left there a few days later, and on the 30th of August came to the mouth of the Ozema. As soon as Don Bartholomew received the letter, he went to meet his brother with a caravel, the sooner to enjoy the pleasure of seeing and embracing him again.†

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxii. † Las Casas, *Hist. Gen. Ind.*, cap. cxlviii.

CHAPTER III.

Columbus's conjectures concerning Paria.—His observation and explanation of certain phenomena.—Depth and extent of his knowledge (1498).

COLUMBUS reached Hispaniola reduced to a shadow of what he had been,—pale, thin, and almost blind. His voyages exacted labors beyond the endurance of any man's constitution, and that his had lasted till now, was a wonder. Sailing amidst unknown dangers, he had to be on the lookout at all hours of day and night; and as his years and sufferings weighed heavier on him, these dangers and fatigues increased, and his strength, however extraordinary, was now too exhausted to bear them. On this last voyage, worn down by a burning fever, and attacked by the gont, which allowed him no rest, he would continue the struggle, and remained always at his post and in command of his ships, ever intent on observing, foreseeing, and providing for every thing; but the effort had exhausted the little strength he had left, and he landed at San Domingo in a state pitiful to look at. But if his body was broken down under the weight of his woes, his soul roamed with delight across the broad horizon which his late discoveries had opened to his ardent fancy. The reader is aware of the reasons which induced Columbus to take the course towards the equinoctial line, and remembers his disappointment on finding the climate, vegetation, and inhabitants at Trinidad entirely different from what they were on the opposite shores of the Old World in the same latitudes, thus overturning the theory of the learned Ferrer, and all the hopes founded upon it. He tried to think of some explanation of this strange phenomenon, but not a ray of light penetrated the thick darkness which enveloped it. His surprise and doubt found a solution in the discovery of the great mass of fresh water emptying into the Gulf of Paria. He safely argued that so great a mass of water could not flow from any island, and that the rivers flowing between the islands at the bottom of the

gulf must be so many mouths of some great river which in its course through a vast extent of country, received the waters of many tributaries, and poured them all into the Ocean. Only a continent, therefore, could supply such a river. In this way he reached the conviction, that "there was an immense land situated to the south, of which nothing had as yet been known."* With the notions then entertained of the smallness of the earth, it seemed impossible that there should be room for another continent of such size; and, therefore, he stopped to prove, by the authority of the Master of Ecclesiastical History, of Nicholas of Lira, Aristotle, Seneca, Averrhoes, and Cardinal d'Ailly, that it was quite possible that only a small part of the surface of the globe was covered by water, and that the land extended over all the rest. The opinion of these learned men found support in the book attributed to the Prophet Esdras, which says, *of seven parts of the world, six are dry, and the water extends over the other*; and as this book, which was afterwards rejected by the Council of Trent, had even at that time many opponents who rejected it, he brings in the authority of St. Augustine and St. Ambrose, who regarded it as canonical.

At a word, at a misunderstood sign, of a savage, we have seen Columbus, with a heated fancy, run after hopes and hypotheses, which were plainly and formally contradicted by the persons and things before him; what, then, must have been the excitement of his imagination at sight of an immense continent suddenly and unexpectedly presented to his view? And what man, in his place, after the labors and sufferings he had endured, on gathering such fruit of his work, would not have been raised to enthusiasm, or could have restrained his fancy from roaming too freely among the hypotheses and hopes caused by the discovery? His heart was deeply affected, and, in the fervor of his joy, connecting with this discovery various phenomena, concerning which he had puzzled his mind to no purpose, an idea flashed upon him; and with his wonderful facility in assimilating in his reasoning the most disconnected facts and arguments, and moulding them into one homogeneous and consistent whole, it was not long before that idea was changed into firm conviction; and he abandoned himself to a bolder flight of imagination than he or any one else had ever known.

* *Narrative of the Admiral.*

Regarded in the light of modern criticism and incredulity, the matter must appear less a delusion than a real mental aberration ; and therefore, to keep it as far as possible in the surroundings in which it was born, and from which it derives all the reason for its existence, I have thought I ought to precede the account of it with a short notice of the opinions in relation to it, in order that the reader, with better knowledge of the belief of those times, may judge Columbus's opinion by a criterion in conformity with that age.

Many subjects of religious discussion which even the most pious Christians would now-a-days look upon as ridiculous, have in past times been matters of profound study and long meditation for the most learned minds and the acutest geniuses recorded in history ; and many things which would scarce find credit with any woman to-day, then appeared altogether probable to men of the greatest sense and experience. One of the most singular of those subjects, and the one we are now engaged with, was the position of the earthly paradise, and whether it still remained such as God created it for the habitation of Adam and Eve. Some thought it should be sought for not far from the countries of Asia, where the Bible record places the first men ; and therefore, one put it in Palestine, another in Mesopotamia, and still another in Armenia. Others, for opposite reasons, maintained, on the contrary, that it must be looked for very far from those countries, and placed it, one in Taprobana, now called Ceylon, one in Sumatra ; another in the Fortunate Islands, called by moderns the Canary Islands, another in one of the islands of the Sound ; and others in some privileged spot under the equinoctial line. But the opinion most followed placed it in the extreme east. It was supported by the expression in the Septuagint version of the Bible : " God planted in the East a garden of delight."* The main difficulty which they all found in applying the description given in the Bible of the garden of Eden, to the spot selected, was the great river which ran through paradise, and after leaving it, was divided into the four great rivers, the Pison, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates ; and it is dreadful to see how they tortured their brain to get over the difficulty. Those in favor of the Holy Land, or Palestine, supposed the great river was the Jordan, by the subsequent division of which the Tigris and Euphrates were formed ;

* Gen. ii, 7.

as to the other two, the Pison and the Gihon, they said that the former flowed through Arabia Felix, and the latter through Arabia Petræa, but the sand had filled up their beds. The others who placed the earthly paradise in some place near the equator, were in no wise alarmed at the enormous difficulty of making the Tigris and Euphrates rise in the equator, although their source is in Armenia, and their course is from north to south; and they even maintained that one of the unknown rivers, the Pison or the Gihon, was the Nile, which is a long way from the Tigris and Euphrates, and runs in a contrary direction, from south to north. Nothing could be simpler than their method of solving the difficulty. They said that these three rivers separated underground, and passing under the Indian Ocean and a part of Africa and Asia, reappeared, the Nile in the mountains of Abyssinia, and the Tigris and Euphrates in those of Armenia, the first in a northern, and the others in a southern direction. Some added another strange theory, that as fresh water is lighter than salt water, these rivers might cross on the surface of the Indian Ocean, and coming to the land, take a subterranean course till they reached the place where they appeared in Asia or Africa. But it must be said that this opinion of the underground course of rivers, which seems so odd to us, was so firmly fixed in every mind in ancient times and all through the middle ages, that even the wisest and most positive writers admitted it as a very natural matter of fact. Pomponius Mela made the Nile rise from the land of the antipodes under the bed of the Ocean.* Pausanias accepted as probable the account of Timæus, that a bottle cast into the river Alpheus in Greece, was drawn by the subterranean current of the river, and came out at the fountain of Cretusa in Sicily.† These two examples will do for a hundred others that could be brought forward.

Others carried the earthly paradise beyond the equator, saying it must be situated in the fairest and happiest part of our globe; and then endeavored to prove by a long argument that the greatest beauty and happiness belonged to the southern hemisphere. They looked upon the torrid zone as the flaming sword of the cherubim which prevented any mortal from entering the earthly paradise.

Some maintained that the deluge had destroyed the garden of Eden,

* L. i, c. ix, § iv.

† V. 7, 2.

and changed the whole face of the earth, so that the four rivers named in the Bible had lost their ancient bed, and taken different directions from those recorded in Genesis. But St. Augustine and many others were of the opinion that the earthly paradise still existed in all its original beauty and delights, but was inaccessible to mortals, being situated on the summit of a very high mountain, extending into the third aerial region, and not far from the moon; and that it was this altitude that had saved it from the waters of the deluge.

This short notice of the question is sufficient for our present purpose, without stopping even to touch upon the other matters discussed in connection with this subject. I am anxious, however, to mention what was written by one Granville, better known as Bartholomæus Anglicus, in a work of his, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, which was a sort of encyclopedia of all that was generally known at the time; because Las Casas, the friend and truthful historian of Christopher Columbus, supposes that he derived the opinion of which we have been speaking, from that source. Granville, citing St. Basil and St. Ambrose, thinks the earthly paradise is situated in the east, on a very high mountain, from the summit of which the water of the river descends and forms an immense lake; that in the descent its roaring so shocks the organs of hearing of all the inhabitants, that they are born deaf; and from the lake, as a common source, proceed the four rivers named in the Bible, viz. : the Pison, or the modern Ganges; the Gihon, now Nile; and the Tigris and Euphrates.*

Let us now go back to the reasoning of Columbus, and the splendid illusion which was the result.

On his two previous voyages, he had observed that hardly 100 leagues west of the Azores there was a sudden change in the sky and the stars, and in the temperature of the air and of the sea. It seemed as though a line ran through that point from north to south, beyond which every thing was different.† The magnetic needle, which had previously turned to the north, deviated a whole point to the north-west, from the moment the crews came to that line, as if they were crossing some ridge; and the polar star described a daily circle of five degrees. The sea, on the surface of which not a plant

* Barthol. Anglici, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, lib. xv, c. cxii.

† We remarked in its place (bk. ii, ch. ii) that the celebrated division, made by Pope Alexander VI, between the sovereigns of Spain and Portugal, must have been based on these phenomena observed by Columbus.

of any kind was to be seen, as soon as that line was passed, was so thickly covered with grass, that, on the first voyage, they were in continual apprehension of running aground. The whole face of the sea was perfectly calm, and even when the wind was blowing violently, no waves arose. The temperature became mild, and remained the same in winter as in summer.

On this third voyage, they had changed their course and taken a southerly direction to reach the equinoctial line; and the wilting heat had forced them to turn westward in order to breathe. And now again, just as they crossed that line, the same change occurred: the temperature grew mild, and the further they went, the milder was the climate. All the phenomena observed on the previous voyages by the more northern course, were repeated now when they were more to the south, except that the sea was clear of grass, and the movement of the stars was different; for there the polar star described a circle of five degrees, and here of ten; there its greatest altitude was ten degrees, here it was fifteen. This difference struck the admiral with wonder, and for several nights he repeated his observations with great care, but always found the fact confirmed.

These and other circumstances made him seriously doubt the theory then held concerning the earth's shape. Ptolemy, and all the greatest philosophers who have written on the subject, said that the earth was round; but after the irregularity Columbus had encountered on his voyages, he believed that this opinion should be modified, and held that the earth was *shaped like a ball nearly round, but had at one point a sort of nipple like the pap of the breast*; and he imagined that this point, the most elevated, and the nearest to the sky, was in the interior of the new continent, directly under the equator. This theory furnished at once a plain and easy explanation of all the phenomena previously observed, the solution of which had been impossible. The changes noticed beyond that imaginary line from north to south, were caused by the ships coming to this supposed elevation of the earth, and entering a purer atmosphere as they began to ascend imperceptibly towards the sky; and the variation of the magnetic needle was influenced by that new mildness of the climate, and increased as the vessels continued to ascend, which would be in proportion to the increase of that mildness. The altitude of the polar star and the circle described by it seemed greater, because observed from a more elevated position, less obliquely, and through a transparent

atmosphere; and he believed that as he approached the equator, those phenomena would be more marked, on account of the constantly increasing elevation of that part of the earth. Ptolemy and the other wise men, he said, were excusable for thinking the earth a perfect sphere, because they were ignorant of this part discovered by him, and all their reasoning was based solely on the hemisphere which they lived in, and which he, too, admitted to be perfectly spherical in form.

He drew another argument in favor of his theory from the difference in climate, vegetation, and the natives, of this part of the New World, from what was found under the same parallel in Africa, where the heat was unendurable, the ground baked to a powder by the sun's heat, the inhabitants black, curly-haired, and of indolent and brutal character. Here, on the contrary, even in midsummer, the climate was pleasant, the ground and trees were as green and beautiful as in the gardens of Valencia in April, and the inhabitants even whiter than in the countries further north, their hair was very long and smooth, their stature tall, their spirits lively, and they were full of activity and courage. All this he attributed to the extreme mildness of the temperature, and this mildness resulted, according to him, from this land being the highest in the world, and nearest to the pure regions of the sky. That there was a part of the earth higher than the rest, and nearer to the sky, was no new opinion, for many philosophers had held it; but some, with Aristotle, placed that region in the Antarctic Circle, and others in the Arctic. They could have no suspicion, says Columbus, that it was found, instead, under the equinoctial line in the other hemisphere, for they had no certain knowledge of that hemisphere, and what little they said of it, was mere conjecture. And clenching his argument, he says, that sailing northwards in the Gulf of Paria so short a distance as that from the Serpent's Mouth to the Dragon's, he observed a difference in the circle described by the polar star, and at the same time found the rapidity of the current of the sea so much stronger that, on the 15th of August, from the time of mass, when they started, to compline, they made sixty-five leagues of four miles each, although the wind was rather light. "And that," he says, "helped to prove that sailing from this point southwards we ascended, and, on the contrary, going towards the north, we descended."

He brought in Holy Writ also to support his view, as usual.

“What makes this opinion infinitely stronger,” he writes, “is that when the Lord our God made the sun, its first light was seen in the beginning of the Orient ;”* and the beginning of the Orient was for him the point where the Indies meet the Ocean. He supposed that this highest part of the earth was neither rugged nor steep, though immensely high, but rising gently and gradually. The beautiful and fertile shores of Paria, he believed, were its borders, and to this he attributed their abundance of the rarest productions of nature. He imagined that the land grew richer in its products as one proceeded further into the interior, until it terminated in a cone under the equator. On that eminence where the atmosphere attained its greatest mildness ; where no disturbance of the elements ever ruffled the perennial peace and calm which reigned there ; where spring was eternal, nature and the sun always smiled,—on that eminence, he fancied the primitive dwelling of our first parents, the home of happiness and innocence,—the terrestrial paradise. But he believed that no one could reach there, because God, by his prohibition, had closed the entrance to man. And with great store of erudition, which I pass over, because all that is necessary or useful to know has been told already, he proves the possibility and probability of his opinion, and that the great current crossing the Gulf of Paria was the great stream supplied by the fountain in the middle of paradise.

Washington Irving concludes his account of this splendid illusion of Columbus, with the following sensible remarks : “Shrewd men, in the coolness and quietude of ordinary life, and in these modern days of cautious and sober fact, may smile at such a reverie, but it was countenanced by the speculations of the most sage and learned of those times ; and if this had not been the case, could we wonder at any sally of the imagination of a man placed in the situation of Columbus ? He beheld a vast world rising, as it were, into existence before him, its nature and extent unknown and undefined, as yet a mere region for conjecture. Every day displayed some new feature of beauty and sublimity : island after island, where the rocks, he was told, were veined with gold, the groves teemed with spices, or the shores abounded with pearls ; interminable ranges of coast, promontory beyond promontory, stretching as far as the eye could

* *Narrative of the Third Voyage.*

reach ; luxuriant valleys sweeping away into a vast interior, whose distant mountains, he was told, concealed still happier lands, and realms of greater opulence. When he looked upon all this region of golden promise, it was with the glorious conviction that his genius had called it into existence ; he regarded it with the triumphant eye of a discoverer. Had not Columbus been capable of these enthusiastic soarings of the imagination, he might, with other sages, have reasoned calmly and coldly in his closet about the probability of a continent existing in the west ; but he would never have had the daring enterprise to adventure in search of it into the unknown realms of Ocean.”*

That the terrestrial paradise was to be found in the lands he discovered, was suspected by Columbus even on his first voyage. Observing the mild temperature of the air and the calmness of the sea, he said the holy theologians and the philosophers had good reason for placing the terrestrial paradise at the extremity of the Orient, because that is the most temperate region ; and he added that the land discovered by him was just at the extreme east. † Amerigo Vespucci was likewise of the opinion that if the terrestrial paradise still existed, it would be found in those regions.

One strange thing about Columbus, which I think is met with in no one else, at least not in the same degree, is that while yielding so readily to the fascination of this lame illusion, he continued with his wonted security and clearness of intellect, to observe new phenomena, and search for their hidden causes, and never desisted from the search until he had found some solution. If at times he was at fault, it will surprise no one who knows how little of physics was studied at the time, and what thought, calculation, and experiment were afterwards requisite to form a sound judgment on those questions, which he attempted to solve in the first instance by mere force of intellect. It is more surprising that in many of those phenomena he had glimpses, or rather correct conjectures, of the hidden laws which governed them. Some of the phenomena then first presented to Columbus, are a problem still. Who knows but what, some day, when they are illuminated by the light of science, it will be found that his wonderful acuteness of mind came nearer to their true solution than is now believed ?

* *Columbus*, book x, ch. iv.

† *Journal of the First Voyage*, 21 February, 1493.

It would take more than one chapter of his biography to treat properly of this one matter, still leaving a large harvest of others ungathered ; but it is beyond the plan of my book, and my ability. Whoever desires to be informed of the variety and extent of Columbus's knowledge, his clearness of mind, his power of analysis and synthesis, and how many discoveries the physical and natural sciences owe to him, should read Alexander von Humboldt's *Cosmos* and *Critical Examination of Geography in the XV Century*. It is enough for me to touch this subject lightly in passing, and I shall do it in the very words of that scientist, more in the hope of inducing others to read those works, than of giving any idea of the wonderful powers of mind possessed by Columbus. Humboldt, than who there is no more competent judge in such matters, calls Columbus's clearness of mind almost intuitive ;* and admires his extreme sagacity of observation as applied to physical phenomena.† What characterizes Columbus, he says, is his penetration and extreme accuracy in observing the phenomena of the external world.‡ He does not confine himself to collecting isolated facts ; he combines them, seeks for their mutual relation, and at times rises boldly to the discovery of the general laws which govern the physical world. This tendency to generalize the facts he observes is all the more noteworthy, as being the only instance we find prior to the close of the xv century. In his discussions of physical geography, the great navigator combines his observations into theories of his own.§ A palpable proof of this faculty is found in the phenomena just related in his narrative of his third voyage, and the general theories he drew from them.

Uniting what Columbus pointed out in his other writings with what is contained in this narrative, Humboldt goes on to say, that the physical laws which he saw more or less clearly, are : 1. The influence of longitude on the deviation of the magnetic needle ; 2. The inflection of the isothermal lines in curves from the west of Europe to the eastern shores of America ; 3. The position of the great fucus bank in the basin of the Atlantic Ocean, and its relation to the temperature of the atmosphere over that part of the Ocean ; 4. The direction of the general currents of the tropical seas ; 5. The configuration of the islands, and the geological causes which

* *Examen Critique de la Géographie au Quinzième Siècle*, vol. iii, p. 13. Paris, Ad. Laine et I. Havard, 1836-39.

† *Ib.* p. 15.

‡ *Ib.* p. 20.

§ *Ib.* pp. 25-28.

appear to have influenced that configuration in the sea of the Antilles.*

Taking up each of these points in succession, Humboldt remarks that the sagacity of Columbus, on his various expeditions, in investigating the variation of the magnetic needle, led to his discovering likewise the influence of longitude on the distribution of heat following the same parallel, which two phenomena he regarded as dependent on each other. He noted the difference of the climate of the western hemisphere, taking for the limit between the two hemispheres the line where there was no magnetic variation; and although his reasoning is not altogether correct in the universal application he makes of it, we should not the less, on that account, says Humboldt, admire this talent for combining facts possessed by a mariner whose youth had been untrained in the study of natural philosophy.† And not only did he discover the place on the Atlantic Ocean, where the magnetic and geographic meridians coincide; but he added the ingenious observation that the magnetic declination may be used to determine the position of a ship in regard to longitude.‡ In fact, we find him, on his second voyage, determining his position by the declination of the magnetic needle.§ The progress of science has shown that this theory does not always correspond to the truth; but all through the xvi century it absorbed the study of men of science, and this is enough to prove its profoundness and the merit of Columbus in conceiving and proposing it.

The observations of Columbus on the great banks of *fuci* west of the Azores, are not only remarkable for his discernment in describing the phenomenon, distinguishing the various degrees of freshness of the marine plants, the direction taken by their different groups under the influence of the currents, and the general position of the fucus bank in relation to the meridian of Corvo; but these observations furnish proof of the stability of the laws governing the geographical distribution of thalassophytes.||

Columbus thought that the island of Trinidad had at one time been joined to Paria, and that the rapidity of the current, wearing away the short isthmus, had in course of time, opened the *Dragon's*

* *Examen Critique de la Géographie au Quinzième Siècle*, vol. iii, p. 13. Paris, Ad. Laine et I. Havard, 1836-39.

† *Ib.* p. 59. ‡ *Ib.* pp. 38-39.

§ Fernando Colombo, cap. lxiii.

|| Humboldt, l. c., pp. 38-39.

Mouth; and he attributed to the same cause the formation of the numerous small i-lands, extending in a semicircle, like a hedge, in front of the Caribbean Sea, supposing that the waters constantly wearing off the shore of the continent, had collected here and there the soil that had been detached, which resulted in the formation of so many islands of various size, according to the quantity of soil collected in each. He gave as a proof of this, the shape of the islands themselves, which are all longer from west to east, and from north-west to south-east, and narrower from north to south, and from north-east to south-west. Now these ideas are fully confirmed by the teaching of the most celebrated modern writers on natural history.*

In vain Columbus wearied his mind in the attempt to explain the phenomenon of the polar star presenting, at a certain point, a notable anomaly in the altitude of its circle; but his very errors, says Muñoz, in thinking that the circle described by the polar star was magnified by optical illusion, in proportion as the observer approached the equinoctial line, proves him a philosopher in advance of his age.†

Returning now to the general subject of the narrative of the third voyage, before concluding this chapter, we should call attention to the wonderful erudition there shown by Columbus in the physical sciences, the history of the holy fathers, the Bible, and nearly every thing that was then known, by which he drew from them proofs, arguments, and authority to support his opinions. On the same page, he cites Pliny, the master of ecclesiastical history, Nicholas of Lira, Aristotle, Averrhoes, Cardinal d'Ailly, Seneca, the Book of Esdras, St. Augustine, and St. Ambrose; and not their mere names, as an exhibition of idle erudition, but he gives their opinions and expressions; for they were so familiar to him that they presented themselves spontaneously to his mind, while the character of the style and the incoherency of ideas indicate great rapidity in writing. Nor should it be forgotten that he wrote this narrative on board ship, suffering severely from ophthalmia and gout, without the aid of books, drawing every thing, as it were, from the rich deposit he had stored in his memory from the constant reading of years and years of study. "When we think of Christopher's life," says Humboldt, "of his voyages, from

* Cf. *Buffon's Theory*, lib. vi, § xxxii.—Humboldt, l. c., p. 146.

† Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, lib. vi, § xxxii.

the age of fourteen years, to the Levant, to Iceland, Guinea, and America, we are astounded at the extent of the literary knowledge of a man of the sea of the xv century.*

CHAPTER IV.

The adelantado's administration.—Expedition into Xaragua.—Festive reception of the Christians.—Anacoana, cacique and poet.—Don Bartholomew's return to Isabella.—Establishment of a chain of military posts.—The Indians prepare to rebel.—Causes of the discontent.—The adelantado's extreme severity.—Second voyage to Xaragua to collect the tribute.—Festivities of the inhabitants (1496).

WE must now go back to the 10th of March, 1496, the day on which the admiral left Hispaniola, to relate the events which occurred during the thirty months of his absence from the New World, and the condition in which he found the colony and the island on his return. Don Bartholomew, whom he had left as governor-general with the title of Adelantado, according to the orders he had received, proceeded at once to work the mines discovered by Miguel Diaz in the south of the island ;† and to force the work on, he left his brother Don Diego in command at Isabella, and went in person to take charge of the soldiers and laborers who were sent there in large numbers. He first built a fort in the vicinity, to serve as a protection and a refuge in case of necessity, and called it St. Christopher, after the admiral ; but the laborers surnamed it the Tower of Gold, on account of the many grains of gold found in the stones used in its construction.

The adelantado remained in the place three months, endeavoring,

* The Iceland here mentioned by Humboldt, is the Frisland of which we spoke in the 1st book, ch. iii.

† See book i. ch. xxxvi.

with his usual energy, to push forward the work of the fort, and the necessary preparations for excavating the mines and purifying the gold ; but the work was greatly impeded by great scarcity of provisions. The Indians, with their frugal habits, from indolence, and because they had never felt the necessity of laying in large stores of provisions, seldom had enough to last very long ; and with the addition of this great multitude of Spaniards, the little which they had in reserve, was soon consumed. Their former hospitality and eagerness to serve the White Men was at an end ; for they had learnt too well, by the example of the latter, to put a price on every thing ; and they either refused to take the trouble to procure them any food, or, if they did, they put a price on the bit of bread they furnished to the stranger to stay his hunger. It often happened, in consequence, that a part of the Spaniards were obliged to quit their work, and scour the country for food for themselves and their companions. The difficulty of finding it increased every day. The adelantado, therefore, seeing how impossible it was to keep so many persons there for any length of time, until the ground about was cultivated, or supplies received from Spain, contented himself, for the present, with building the fort ; and leaving there a guard of ten men, with a dog to hunt utias, he marched with the rest, nearly 400 in number, to Fort Concepcion in the Vega. Here he remained all through June, collecting the quarterly tribute of the Indians, Guarionex and the other caciques supplying them with the necessary food. In the month of July following, the three caravels, commanded by Pedro Alonzo Niño, arrived at Isabella with reinforcements of troops, and, what was more pressing, an abundant supply of food.* This was at once distributed among the colonists, but, unfortunately, again the greater part had been spoiled on the way out. The admiral's letter, which Niño brought to Don Bartholomew, contained instructions for founding a town and seaport at the mouth of the Ozema, near the new mines that were to be opened ; and recommended sending as prisoners to Spain all the caciques and other Indians who should be found guilty of the death of any Spaniard, the Spanish jurists and theologians having agreed that this was a sufficient ground for reducing them to slavery. It was in pursuance of this order that the adelantado sent 300 Indian prisoners and three caciques to

* Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. v.

Spain on the return voyage of the caravels ; and it was on this cargo that Niño so foolishly founded the great expectations, which caused the admiral incalculable injury and mortification.*

The adelantado, as soon as possible, returned to Fort Saint Christopher with a part of the provisions, and then proceeded to the mouth of the Ozema to select a proper site for a seaport. The choice fell upon a small bay on the left bank of the river, near its mouth, easy of access, of sufficient depth, and good anchorage. The place was near the residence of the female cacique who had bestowed her love on the young Spaniard Miguel Diaz, and faithfully kept her promise to receive the White Men with cordial hospitality

The river ran through a beautiful and fertile country ; its waters were pure and salubrious, with abundance of fine fish ; its banks were shaded with thick trees loaded with the finest fruits of the island, and hanging so low that the fruit could be plucked with the hand from the branches while sailing by. On a near eminence commanding the harbor, a fort was built, which the adelantado called San Domingo, after his father Domenico,† and that was the origin of the city which arose near by, and still bears the name.

As soon as the fort was completed, the adelantado, whose energy was indefatigable, leaving twenty men as a garrison, started with all the rest on an expedition into Xaragua. This province included, as we said, all the western part of Hispaniola as far as Cape Tiburon, and extended south to the point opposite to the small island of Beata, and was the most populous and fertile state on the island. It is a sufficient proof of the delightfulness of this district that here was situated, according to many Indian traditions, the paradise which awaited the souls of the good. The cacique Behechio, who ruled this district, had taken an active part in the confederation of the caciques against the Spaniards, but his dominions were so remote from all their forts, that he had hitherto remained free from the incursions and exactions of the White Men. But now that the affairs of the Spaniards were tranquil and safe on all sides, Don Bartholomew was impatient to reduce this country also to submission. Behechio's sister, Anacoana, resided with him. She was the widow of the fierce Caonabo, and one of the most beautiful of the Indian women, and is said, by all the Spanish writers, to have possessed a nat-

* Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. v.

† Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxii.

ural grace and dignity, and an elevation of mind, that in a savage were amazing. She was also famous among the Indians as a poet, and her areytos, or ballads and dance-songs used by the natives in dancing, were spread over all the island, and had everywhere, to the great delight of the savages, superseded the older and less beautiful songs. Her name in the language of the country meant *Golden Flower* ;* which makes me suspect that Anacoana, instead of a true name, was a surname given her by the gallantry of her savages, on account of her graces, her amiableness, and her genius.†

The Spaniards had deprived her of her throne and her husband, and bitterly wounded her pride and affection ; but neither the bitterness of her grief, nor the desire of revenge, could cloud her mind so, as not to see the fate in store for the whole island, and that the caciques could retain a show of power only by making friends of the powerful strangers. She therefore counselled her brother to take warning from Caonabo's fate, and rest content with the little still left him by fortune. Some think her sentiments were known to Don Bartholomew, as well as her influence over the mind of her brother, and that this was the principal reason for his determining on the expedition to Xaragua.‡

Following the example of the admiral on a similar occasion, Don Bartholomew entered the territory of Behechio with all the parade he could make of his forces, knowing that it would strike the savages with great fear as well as wonder at the extraordinary power of the White Men. As he came to a village, he placed the cavalry in the advance, and the infantry followed with banners flying, drums beating, and trumpets sounding. Soon after passing the borders of Xaragua, he met Behechio at the head of a large force of his subjects, all armed with bows and arrows, and lances. But whether the cacique was there with some other purpose than that of opposing the White Men, or the formidable appearance had overcome his courage and altered his purpose, the fact is, that as soon as he saw them in front of him, his men laid down their arms, and he advanced tow-

* *Ana*, flower ; and *Coana*, or, as some have it, *Caona*, fine gold.

† Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. iii, cap. vi.—Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, lib. vi, § vi.—Oviedo, *Hist. Ind. Oc.*, lib. v, cap. iii.—Peter Martyr, dec. iii, lib. ix.—Ramusio, *Delle Navigazioni e Viaggi*, ecc. vol. iii, fol. ix.—Charlevoix, *Hist. Saint-Domingue*, liv. ii.

‡ Charlevoix, l. c.—Muñoz, l. c.

ards the adelantado with friendly look and frank bearing, and told him he was there with a few troops to subdue some villages along the river, and inquired of him the object of his expedition. Don Bartholomew replied that he had come to make a friendly visit and to pass some time in the delightful province of Xaragua. Behechio believed, or pretended to believe, Don Bartholomew's fine words, and dismissing all his troops, sent swift messengers to announce his return, and to order suitable preparations for the reception of so distinguished a guest.

The inferior caciques subject to Behechio, through whose lands the Spaniards passed, vied with one another in welcoming the White Men, offering them cassava-bread, cotton, and all the best products of the land. Behechio's capital was at the bottom of a deep bay, in a beautiful situation. As the Spaniards came near, thirty females suddenly appeared from a grove close by, singing areytos and dancing, and waving palm-branches in their hands. Those that were married were distinguished from the others by a sort of apron of embroidered cotton reaching from the waist to the knees; all wore a narrow band around the forehead, and let their long hair fall over their shoulders.

They were all young, handsome, well-proportioned, with a beautiful brown complexion. The Spaniards were surprised and delighted; they almost imagined, says the historian Peter Martyr, with classic emphasis, they beheld the fabled dryads, or the nymphs and naiads sung by the ancient poets.*

When they came before Don Bartholomew, they all bent one knee to the ground, and offered him their branch of palm. After these came Anacoana, gracefully reclining on a sort of bed, which six strong savages bore on their shoulders. Like the other women, she wore only a small apron, which was all speckled with different hues; but on her head, neck, and arms she wore garlands of white and red flowers. The grace and courtesy with which she received the adelantado and his officers, showed that she deserved the reputation she enjoyed among her people, and though the Spaniards had expected much, they were forced to acknowledge that the reality surpassed their anticipation.

Cleopatra, arrayed in all the pomp and splendor of an Oriental

* Peter Martyr dec. i, lib. v

queen going to meet Cæsar and captivating him with her charms, fails in comparison with this nude daughter of the forests, hoping by mere force of genius and attractive grace to win the friendship of the men believed to have come from heaven.

At Behechio's house they were given the most sumptuous banquet the poor savages could prepare, consisting of utias, different kinds of sea and river fish, with their best roots and most savory fruit. The favorite food of the Indians was *guana*, a sort of serpent shaped like a crocodile, but much smaller, which the Spaniards regarded with such disgust that it turned their stomachs to see it eaten. On this occasion, Don Bartholomew was seated next to Anacoana, and the princess urged him to taste and he would find it was not so horrid as he imagined. Don Bartholomew could no longer refuse, and gallantly took a mouthful of the horrid fish, and by a great effort swallowed it. To his surprise he found it excellent, and without waiting to be asked, took more. His companions, who had wondered at his valor in attacking the serpent, seeing him setting about eating it in earnest, would not be left behind, and all tried it. The impression was the same on all, and from that time, the *guana* acquired such a reputation with Spanish epicures that most of them declared it superior to pheasant or partridge.*

For two days there was a constant succession of Indian games and festivities, by which the cacique sought to entertain and amuse his guests. Among these shows, the following deserves especial mention. Two large squadrons of naked Indians, armed with bows and arrows, suddenly appeared on a great square arranged for the purpose, and began a skirmish much in the style of a certain game of sticks in use among the Moors. But the sport soon turned to earnest, and they fought with such fury that four of them were soon killed, and many fell more or less seriously wounded. The more blood was spilt the greater was the enjoyment of the Indian spectators. Strange resemblance in the savage sports of these naked Indians and of the Roman masters of the world applauding blood and death in the circus! The battle would have continued and more blood flowed, had not the adelantado and his officers interfered and begged Behechio to put an end to the bloody play.†

At the end of the two days, as mutual friendship and confidence

* Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. v.

† Las Casas, lib. i, cap. cxiii.

seemed established, Don Bartholomew explained to Behechio and Anacoana the real object of his journey. He told them that his brother, the admiral, had been sent to that island by the sovereigns of Castile, who were great and powerful princes, ruling over many kingdoms. That the admiral had returned to Spain to report to his sovereigns how many caciques on the island had declared themselves tributaries; and in the mean time had left the adelantado in command of the colony. That he had come to offer Behechio the protection of his powerful sovereigns, and to come to an understanding as to the tribute to be paid in return, in such manner as should be most convenient and agreeable.* The cacique was troubled at the proposal of Don Bartholomew, knowing to what vexations the other Indians had been subjected on account of the tribute, and answered respectfully, that he was aware that the White Men had come on the island to procure gold, and that the other caciques paid their tribute in that metal; but there was none to be found in his states, and his people scarcely knew it by name. "That makes no difference," Don Bartholomew adroitly interrupted; "I see an abundance of cotton and hemp growing in your country, and if it is more convenient, you may pay your tribute in those materials." Behechio considered himself fortunate in getting off so easily, and declared himself more than satisfied. The matter was thus settled, and Behechio sent orders to all his subordinate caciques to sow an abundance of cotton for the payment of the tribute to the White Men.

"Thus," says Irving, "by amicable and sagacious management, one of the most extensive provinces of the island was brought into cheerful subjection; and had not the wise policy of the adelantado been defeated by the excesses of worthless and turbulent men, a large revenue might have been collected, without any recourse to violence or oppression. In all instances, these simple people appear to have been extremely tractable, and meekly and even cheerfully to have resigned their rights to the White Men, when treated with gentleness and humanity.†

Delighted with the course which matters had taken, the adelantado, without further delay, took leave of Behechio and Anacoana, and set out on his return to Isabella.

During his absence from Isabella, the bad humors, which the firm

* Las Casas, lib. i, cap. cxiv

† Columbus, bk. xi, ch. i.

hand of Don Bartholomew had kept down, had broken out under the feeble rule of Don Diego. The provisions brought out by Niño were for the most part spoilt, as we said, and what little arrived in good condition, was soon consumed, owing partly to the great dearth, and partly to want of that frugality which the circumstances made necessary. There was no relief, nor hope of relief, from the fertile lands around Isabella; for the colonists, through sickness or indolence, had entirely neglected their cultivation. It seems hardly credible, that in the bosom of a country prodigiously fertile, like the virgin lands of the New World, where little more than casting the seed on the ground was requisite to produce an exuberant harvest, the Spaniards should be continually suffering from the gnawings of hunger, and the sad effects of the past should not teach them caution and prudence for the future. But their only care was to search the sands of torrents and brooks for a few grains of gold to add to the little treasure set aside for transportation to Spain; and every labor which did not conduce to this seemed to their insatiable greediness as thrown away. All the care of cultivating the soil and providing food was left to the savages, whilst, instead of winning their affections, and making them fond of work and of agriculture, by every kind of abuse, fraud, and injustice they wore out their wonderful patience, till the greater part of those wretched Indians, driven to utter despair, abandoned the vicinity of Isabella, and withdrew to the mountains, preferring to live on roots and herbs in those wild retreats, rather than remain in the fertile plains where they were continually exposed to the injuries and cruelty of the White Men. The condition of the city had consequently grown immeasurably worse, and murmurs and complaints were heard on every hand. They said the government in Spain had entirely forgotten them, and the admiral, amid the pleasures and delights of the court, took no further thought of them. And their distress was increased by their having no ship in port by which they could make their wretched condition known in Europe.

Don Bartholomew had hardly returned to Isabella before he set to work, with his usual activity, increased by the urgent need, to remedy the evils, and first of all to raise the dejected spirits of the colonists. He gave orders for the immediate construction of two caravels, not that he supposed they would be of any use except for coasting along the island, but in order to keep the thoughts and hopes of the men employed. Next, in order to relieve the colony

from the heavy burden of all useless mouths in these times of extreme scarcity, and better to provide for the health of those who were sick, he sent the infirm and all who were unfit to work or to bear arms, into the interior, in the hope that the pure air and the more abundant nourishment to be had from the Indians, would promote their recovery. He likewise established a chain of military posts between Isabella and the new port of San Domingo, which consisted of small forts surrounded by a few dependent dwellings.* The first of these, called the *Esperanza*, was a little less than nine leagues from Isabella; the second, six leagues further, *Santa Catalina*; four leagues and a half beyond came *Santiago*; five leagues further was *Concepcion*, the fort built by the admiral, which, as has been said repeatedly, was the main stronghold of the Spaniards in Hispaniola, situated in the vast and populous *Vega*, close to the gold mountains of *Cibao*, scarce half-a-league from the residence of the powerful cacique *Guarionex*. Between *Concepcion* and *San Domingo* was *Fort Bona*, around which were gathered the largest group of Spanish houses in the interior of the island, and which we shall soon find gaining a sad celebrity in the wars which desolated the colony. Leaving in these places and at *Isabella* only those who were needed for the garrisons and for building the ships, and those who were too ill to be removed, the adelantado, with all the rest, set out for *San Domingo* to resume the works which had been interrupted.

But he was soon forced by a serious revolt of the Indians, to proceed in all haste to *Concepcion*. The causes of this revolt were very different from those of the preceding, and deserve to be related at some length. Of the twelve religious who came with *Father Boil* to evangelize the countries *Columbus* might discover, only two had remained at their post; all the others had returned to the easy labors of their own country. The two that stayed were the *Hieronymite* friar *Roman' Pane*, who styled himself the *Poor Hermit*; and the *Franciscan*, *Juan Borgoñon*; and both had labored, with a zeal and charity truly apostolic, to sow the seeds of the doctrine of *Christ* among the innocent people. It would be hard to find better soil, such was the ingenuous simplicity of heart of the Indians. The two laborers performed their work so well that in a short time

* *Peter. Martyr, dec. i. lib. v.*

they reaped a plentiful harvest ; but, unfortunately, the seed sown by them was spoilt by the infamous life of the Spaniards, who, indulging in every kind of vice while they professed to be, and were, Christians, showed by their conduct that the promises and threats made by the religious in the name of Christ to good and evil-doers, were idle words of no account. And as deeds are more eloquent than words, it seemed to those ingenuous savages that, to accept the law of Christ was to abandon their simple and virtuous mode of life, and give themselves up to every crime and indecency. The blameless life of the two religious caused them to be received everywhere with respect and veneration ; but their mission was so far from successful, that they were losing what little had been gained in the beginning. They had established themselves at Fort Concepcion, near the residence of Guarionex, directing their principal efforts to bringing that powerful cacique over to the faith, rightly judging that his conversion would bring after it innumerable others. At first, every thing promised well. Guarionex, with many of his household, soon learnt the *Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria*, and *Credo*, and recited them twice a day.* But this fervor was soon cooled by the spectacle presented by the Spaniards ; and for two years that the missionaries continued near him, all their efforts to bring him one step nearer to the faith were ineffectual. He still kept on reciting those prayers, perhaps, in his natural timidity, fearing some harm from the White Men if he should omit them. But one of the Spaniards having seduced and carried off his favorite wife, he refused to hear another word of a religion which, he believed, permitted such crimes.

The two missionaries, after losing all hope of the conversion of Guarionex, sorrowfully left the place, and sought in the land of another cacique a more suitable soil for their labor. Before they left they erected a small chapel with an altar, a crucifix, and some sacred images, where the few faithful whom in their two years of work they had succeeded in winning to the faith of Christ, might perform their devotions. But the second day after their departure, six Indians, who said they were sent by Guarionex, came to the chapel, and commanded some boys who were there on guard, to take the im-

**Narrative of Friar Roman Pane*, ch. xxv, in Fernando Colombo's *History*, at ch. lxi.

ages left by Friar Roman, and to break them and throw them away. The boys refusing, and trying to prevent them from entering the chapel, the six savages forced their way in, and taking the images and furiously breaking them in pieces, buried them, and did vile insult over them.

Had Guarionex really given the command, or was his name used without authority? I believe the latter; for his timid and cautious character would not suffer him to do any thing so offensive to the White Men, and so sure to be bitterly avenged. And vengeance was speedy, fearful, and fierce, as required by the Spanish laws, which were harsh beyond measure in matters affecting religion. Heresy, apostasy, or sacrilege, even when committed by a Moor or a Jew, was punished by burning; and the same law was immediately applied to the crime of the Indians. They were caught, examined, and confessing, were all six burnt alive.

Owing to the simplicity of their habits, the Indians rarely required punishment, and when they did, it was always light, as were the faults they were guilty of; hence such excessive severity as burning a man alive was beyond all their conceptions. And as their religious notions were vague and indistinct, and they had no clear conception of religion of any kind, they could not even understand the character and extent of a crime which the Spaniards had punished so barbarously. The consequence was, that instead of fear, they conceived only horror and fierce hatred for those who inflicted such new and atrocious torments for what was nothing at all.

Guarionex himself, so meek and calm in his feelings, was most indignant. The other caciques, taking advantage of his resentment, used every effort to make him decide for a general insurrection against the Spaniards. They would rise all at once, and each in his own territory falling upon the Spaniards that were there, and taking them unawares and in small bands, there could be no doubt of an easy victory, which would for ever liberate them from the foreign yoke. Guarionex felt the weight and shame of foreign rule, and desired nothing more than to be freed from it; but from prudence, and partly from timidity, he weighed in one scale his naked subjects deficient in arms, and inexperienced in their use; and in the other, the military genius of the White Men, their dogs and horses, the lightning flashing from their guns and inflicting wounds and death at a distance; and had ever before his sight the fate of the brave Caonabo.

Contemporary historians tell of a tradition concerning Guarionex, which was spread among the inhabitants of the island. He came of a very old family of caciques, and it is related that his father, long before the coming of the White Men, after fasting for five days according to the custom, had recourse to his Zemes to learn the future; and the Zemes answered that after a few years there should come to the island people covered with clothing, who would destroy their customs and ceremonies, and slay their children, or reduce them to the most painful slavery.* This prophecy, undoubtedly an invention of the Butios, was probably put in circulation at this time of greatest hatred towards the Spaniards, for the purpose of influencing Guarionex, showing him that in making war he was trying his fate, but in enduring patiently he was running straight to inevitable ruin. Some historians assert that he was forced to take up arms, by the threat that if he refused to lead them to battle, they would choose another chief; whilst others claim that the injury done him in relation to his wife, was the main cause of the insurrection.† They held a consultation on the manner of carrying out their intention, and agreed that on the day fixed for the payment of tribute, when they could all meet without exciting suspicion, they should throw themselves suddenly on the Spaniards, and massacre them.‡

The garrison of Concepcion got information of the conspiracy,—by what means we know not,—and were in the greatest alarm, for the rest of the Spaniards were living quietly, scattered here and there over the island, in complete ignorance of the danger; and they themselves were not only unable to help them, but few as they were, and surrounded by a hostile people on every side, they could not hope to defend even themselves. Their only hope was in prompt aid from the adelantado, and they decided to send him in all haste an Indian messenger with a letter warning him of the imminent danger. But this was not easy, as the savages had discovered the strange power of those papers covered with writing, and fancied them endowed with speech. To get the letter to its destination, they used this stratagem. They gave the letter to an Indian who was attached to them, and whom they could trust, and instructed him how to act. The messenger was arrested and questioned, but

* Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. ix.

† Las Casas, lib. i, cap. cxxi.

‡ Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. lxiii.—Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. v.

feigned to be lame and dumb, and indicated by signs that he was returning to his home. The simple Indians believed him, and never suspected the cane with which the mute assisted his lame foot. But the letter was concealed in the cane. They allowed him to leave, and he went on his way limping slowly until he was out of their sight, and then hastened along the road with all his speed.*

The adelantado set out immediately. His men were tired out with work, and weak from want of proper food ; but the energy of their leader, and the danger of their brethren, gave them double vigor. When they arrived, many thousands of Indians were gathered around the fort or hidden in the neighboring forests, and only waited for the signal to begin the massacre. As soon as the adelantado came, he called a council of the officers of the fort, and being informed of the disposition of the enemy's forces, he assigned an officer with a detachment of soldiers silently to invest the place where each cacique was sleeping unarmed and secure, and at a given hour, in the heart of night, to fall upon them and bring them prisoners to the fort, before their followers could recover from the surprise and gain their arms for their defence. As Guarionex was the most powerful of them all, and dwelt in the most populous village, and his known prudence and circumspection would render his capture the most difficult, the adelantado himself assumed this duty, and with 100 of his best soldiers proceeded to seize him. The plan succeeded perfectly ; the Indians, overcome by fear and surprise, did not think of resisting. Don Bartholomew was aware of the affectionate attachment of all the savages to their chiefs, and was sure of every thing if he could lay hands on the caciques. In fact, the next morning a great crowd of unarmed Indians surrounded the fort, filling the air with their lamentations and howlings over the imprisonment of their chiefs, and imploring their pardon. The adelantado conducted the affair throughout with prudence and all the justice and moderation desirable in the peculiar situation of the Spaniards in regard to the Indians. He wanted to learn the whole progress of the conspiracy, and he put to death the two caciques who had been its main instigators and most active in drawing Guarionex into it. As to the latter, when it was known what a mortal offence had been done him in the wife he loved, and how unwillingly he had joined

in the conspiracy, Don Bartholomew granted him full pardon, and caused the wretched Spaniard who had offended him, to be seized and punished with extreme rigor. He treated all the other caciques with the same clemency, suffering them to depart for their villages free and unharmed, with the promise of great favors and rewards if they remained loyal to him, and terrible punishments if they offended him again. The impression made on all the Indians by this clemency was in proportion to the fearful vengeance they had looked for. Guarionex, deeply moved, made an address to his people, in which he depicted the great power and resistless valor of the White Men, their indulgence towards offenders, and their generosity towards such as remained faithful; and therefore earnestly recommended the cultivation of their friendship. At the conclusion of his speech, his savages, overjoyed at having him again unexpectedly among them, raised him on their shoulders, and making the air echo with songs and cries of joy, bore him to his residence.*

The satisfaction of so happily terminating an undertaking which had threatened the Spaniards with utter ruin, was heightened by the information soon afterwards received from Behechio, that he and all his people had their tribute ready, and therefore requested the adelantado to come and receive it. Don Bartholomew set out at once with a large force. His soldiers joyfully hailed the orders to march, remembering the delights of Xaragua, and the hospitality of its inhabitants. They were received there with the same cordial festivity as before; and as long as they remained, Behechio and the fair Anacoana could only plan songs, dances, and games for the entertainment of the White Men. The adelantado, on entering Behechio's house, found thirty-two inferior caciques waiting to do homage to him, and to present in person their tribute. This, as has been said, consisted of cotton, and they had brought enough of it to fill one of their houses; and besides this, which they were obliged to give, they declared themselves ready to give him, as a free offering, as much cassava-bread as he wished. The scarcity of provisions to which the colony was reduced, made this proposal most seasonable and acceptable, and as one of the caravels was almost completed, orders were sent to Isabella to dispatch it thither at the first possible moment. After a short time, the caravel arrived and

* Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. v.—Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. vi.

anchored six miles from Behechio's residence. Anacoana, who had heard of the great size of the Spanish ships, but had never seen one, proposed to her brother to visit what she called the big canoe of the White Men. Her house, which was on the road they were to go by, was a truthful mirror of her artistic soul and her sentiment of the beautiful. Whatever was rarest and most precious of the few articles employed in the simple life of the Indians, she had gathered for the adornment of her house. There were objects in ebony wrought with infinite care and patience, and there were carved figures which the artist intended should represent the shades of the departed, which were believed to wander about at night frightening the living; images of men, of serpents, of birds, and various other things. If we bear in mind that the Indians, having no iron or other metal for making tools, had to work that wood with the edge or the point of a stone, we shall readily understand how heartily the Spaniards must have admired and praised that simple art.

And Anacoana, in whose heart a sentiment stronger than admiration or friendship seems to have existed for the adelantado, enjoyed offering him such articles as appeared to please him; and the more he accepted, the happier she seemed. The sight of the Spanish vessel was an inexpressible wonder and delight to Anacoana. Behechio had provided two canoes handsomely wrought and painted in many colors, one for himself and his caciques, and the other for his sister and her women. But she preferred to go in the ship's boat, and sat beside Don Bartholomew. A salute was fired from all the guns as they neared the caravel, and Anacoana, whose heart and mind were wholly intent on enjoying Don Bartholomew and asking him a thousand questions, was so overcome with fear at the report and the flash suddenly issuing from the ship's side, that she threw herself into his arms, and the other women were about to leap into the sea and swim away. But the laughter of the Spaniards and the adelantado's words reassured them; and the harmony of the military music, which they had never before heard, at once striking up, raised them from a state of blind dismay to the highest enthusiasm. They went aboard, and their admiration increased at beholding such solidity, so many compartments, the complicated cordage, the size of the vessel, its shape, and every thing, accustomed, as they were, to their small, light, simple canoes. And when, the anchor weighed and the sails set, they saw the great mass of wood, urged by a light

breeze, set itself in motion as by an act of its own will, turning here and there, and sporting on the water like some monster of the sea, Behechio and Anacoana and all the others seemed beside themselves with admiration and delight.*

After the caravel had left, loaded with the tribute and the gifts of the caciques, the adelantado made many presents to Behechio and Anacoana and the principal personages of the place, and took his leave, to return to Isabella. Anacoana was very sad, and earnestly begged him to remain a little longer with them, and seemed to fear that she had not succeeded in pleasing him as she desired. Unable to endure the sorrow of separation, she offered to follow him wherever he went; but Don Bartholomew was too prudent to permit it. He encouraged her by a promise to return soon to see her, and by this means somewhat soothed her sorrow.†

CHAPTER V.

Conspiracy and rebellion of Francisco Roldan, chief-justice of the island (1497).

IF ability on the part of the governor could have repaired the evils which had been introduced in the colony, Don Bartholomew was the man to succeed in it. It is impossible not to wonder at the singular talent of administration which he, whose life had been spent in the art and study of navigation, manifested in the short period of his government. His first care was to keep the colonists in constant activity, knowing that idleness is always the great fomentor of discontent. He was, therefore, ever seeking occasions and pretexts to keep them incessantly in motion, not so much by force of command as by the influence of his own example, being always the first at every work. Thus, in a short time, he had raised numerous forts

* Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. v.—Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. vi.

† Ramusio, viii, pag. 9.

for their protection, and to restrain the natives ; begun and completed a new city and port ; advanced the works of the mines ; opened new roads ; and built two ships. At the same time, he made frequent journeys of great length, strengthening the friendly, encouraging the timid, intimidating the hostile, and establishing order and discipline everywhere. By his prudence, he had gained the vast and wealthy state of Xaragua without striking a blow ; and by his caution he had, with a handful of men, and without blood spilt, broken up a dangerous conspiracy which threatened their general destruction. But the ground on which he was working was all undermined, and before the completion of the labors he had carried on with such industry, the mine exploded and demolished every thing.

The authority of Don Bartholomew was greatly diminished by the fact that he came to the New World and to the colony after things were somewhat settled, and leaped at once into the office of adelantado, by the mere accident of being brother to the admiral. This excited envy and spite among the ambitious, who thought themselves fit for and entitled to the position, and furnished material and pretext for the anger and rage of all those whom his iron hand held to their work and duty, however reluctant. Francisco Roldan, who held the highest post, after the adelantado, in the administration of the island, thought to turn to his own profit those evil dispositions of mind, and blowing on the fire that was creeping secretly, he produced a flame that flashed over the whole island. This man came of a low family, and had been brought to Hispaniola as one of the admiral's domestics, in which humble office he had always been distinguished for his zeal and fidelity. The admiral was attached to him, and having to appoint an ordinary alcalde, which corresponds to what we should call a justice of the peace, he entrusted him with this office, though he had little education to boast of ; but the colonial laws were not yet complicated, and required in that office only discretion, prudence, and integrity.* And, in fact, he gave proof that he possessed these qualities in a higher degree than the admiral had believed. This so increased the admiral's esteem for him, that on returning to Spain, he thought of raising him to the rank of Alcalde-Mayor, or chief-justice of the island, feeling sure that, having raised him from nothing to a rank beyond all his hopes and expecta-

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, c. i.

tions, he might count on his gratitude and unwavering support of his brother's authority. But Roldan was one of those base souls that measure gratitude by interest, and when the latter weakens or stops, lose all memory of benefits conferred.

The too protracted absence of the admiral, and the long time that had elapsed without any tidings of him, gave a stronger appearance of truth to the report left by Aguado that he had fallen from favor at court; and Roldan, hoping in his heart that it was so, turned his mind to the building up of his own fortune on the calamity of his benefactor. He knew that Diego and Bartholomew Columbus had no support in the affection or esteem of the colony, beyond the name of their brother, on which their authority rested, and therefore, it could not be difficult to set them aside; and, as there was only the adelantado above him, upon his removal, it would be easy to get command and bring the government of the whole island into his own hands. But so long as the eye of Don Bartholomew guarded the affairs of the public, he went no further than desire, and contented himself with fomenting the discontent of the colonists, and ingratiating himself with them, for he was awed by the adelantado's resolution and severity. But when he had left for Xaragua, and affairs were in Don Diego's hands, Roldan believed he could go to work freely; for, although Don Diego was a man of great good sense, careful, and discreet, yet he was wanting in boldness and force, and much inferior to himself in audacity, astuteness, and cunning. An excellent opportunity to carry on his work was furnished by the office, which he held, of superintendent of public works, which rendered his frequent meeting of persons of the lower class unsuspecting, and enabled him easily to ingratiate himself with them, and bend them at his pleasure. These laborers and sailors felt highly honored by the condescension of the alcalde-mayor, and became more attached to him as they beheld the interest he took in their affairs. He mingled, in a friendly way, and as if by accident, in their private conversations, and hearing them complain of their hard condition, under pretext of inspiring them with courage and hope, provoked them on to greater discontent and despair. He insinuated that the admiral's long delay in returning was sure proof that he had fallen into disgrace in consequence of the charges made by Aguado; and no one could tell how much longer they would have to bear the burden of his brothers' government. And when opportunity offered, confiding in the

secrecy of one at a time, as though unable to suppress his indignation, he deplored that the government of the colony was entrusted to foreigners, bound by no tie of interest in, or love for, the glory and good of Spain. He expressed deep grief over the present sad condition, and the fear of much worse threatened in the future. The family of Columbus had, and could have, no other wish or aim than to increase as much as possible the rich treasure gathered in these opulent regions. They saw the power slipping from their grasp, and they wanted to draw the greatest profit possible in the short time they might still retain it ; for this they bled the wretched Indians by tribute, and killed the Spaniards with work, giving them no rest, running hither and thither to frighten and oppress the innocent savages, and building forts to hold them in subjection and fear, so that they should be punctual and submissive in the payment of tribute. That land was indeed rich enough in gold, spices, and other products to satisfy the most inordinate avarice, and there would be abundance for all the colonists, if their evil fate had not decreed differently. He suggested the advantage of making the natives do all the work, whilst the Spaniards grew rich at their ease, enjoying life among the many savage beauties within reach of all. But now, instead, they were groaning under the weight of their labors and sufferings, and till death should bring them rest (for now they had little else to look to for comfort), the adelantado wanted them to live like monks ; they were now condemned to chastity, poverty, and obedience, with the accompaniment of fasts, disciplines, confinement, and a thousand other tortures, which the adelantado inflicted for a mere nothing. By these and such like speeches, to which his authority as alcalde-mayor gave the greatest weight and importance in the eyes of the vulgar, he was able to arouse in the people such a ferment and exasperation that they formed a conspiracy for the desperate purpose of killing Don Bartholomew, as the only means of freeing themselves from "the tyranny which oppressed them.

To carry their purpose into effect, they chose the day and hour appointed for the execution of a Spaniard named Berahona, a friend of Roldan and of several of the conspirators. What his crime was we know not ; but from a passage of Las Casas, it would seem as though he was the Spaniard who had offended Guarionex in regard to his wife. It was known that the adelantado would be present at the exe-

cution with a great crowd of Spaniards and Indians. At the moment when all were intent on the spectacle of death, it was their intention to excite a sudden tumult, and, in the confusion, prompt and bold persons would fall upon the adelantado and carry out the common vengeance. The matter appeared to them so easy and sure that they even got a rope ready to hang him after death. But, fortunately, he pardoned the culprit, the assemblage did not take place, and the plans of the conspirators were thwarted.* Don Bartholomew soon afterwards made his second expedition into Xaragua, and the administration being in the hands of Don Diego, it seemed to the crafty Roldan that he could not have a better opportunity to strike a decisive blow. He knew the sentiments of the people, and that many of them only needed a leader to rise in revolt. He determined, accordingly, to get up a sedition, and in the midst of the tumult, to interpose his authority as alcalde-mayor, and throwing all the blame on the tyranny of Don Bartholomew and Don Diego, seize the reins of government, under pretext of avoiding greater evils. He would thus, without exposing himself, or running any risk, succeed in his plan, and be looked upon by their Majesties and by all Spain as having saved the colony from danger by his good sense and prudence, and provided for its interests and those of the mother country. A favorable occasion for the projected revolt was furnished by the return of the caravel which had been sent to Xaragua, by order of the adelantado, to take on board the tribute and gifts of the caciques. Don Diego was aware of the serious discontent spreading among the population, and remembering the flight of Margarita and Father Boil, and apprehending some stroke on the part of the more daring, he had it hauled on shore, to prevent any temptation or risk of misconduct.

The building of those two caravels, as Don Bartholomew had foreseen, had served to keep up the spirits and hopes of the colonists, who saw in them a final escape from their sufferings. And now, to see the one which was completed and had sailed successfully, drawn again on dry land and left idle under their eyes, could not but excite much discontent and murmuring in the colony. Roldan seized the opportunity, and, under color of the common interest, urged Don Diego to return her to the water, showing that it was nec-

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxiii.

essary for the safety of them all that she should be got in order for a voyage to Castile to make known their needs. Don Diego replying that this was absolutely impossible, for want of the necessary machinery, Roldan insinuated to his followers that this was only a pretext ; that the real reason was the fear that they might succeed in making known to their Majesties the tyrannical manner in which the Columbuses ruled the island ; that the matter was too plain, and they should not be so foolish as to open the door themselves for fortune to pass out. And now, what should the colonists do ? If they allowed themselves to be trampled on anew, when and how could they ever expect to escape from so many woes ? It was idle to hope for help from the admiral, who was undoubtedly fallen under the weight of the charges preferred against him by Aguado, as was evident from no tidings of him being received, and his not returning ; for he would never have willingly relinquished the scenes of his discoveries. They could hope for none from their native country ; for it was ignorant of their misery, or, rather, falsely led to believe that they were prosperous. It only remained, then, for them to seize that caravel, drag her into the water, and, in spite of every thing and everybody, send some one to Spain to make known their terrible wretchedness. These words entered like red-hot irons into hearts already burning with wrath and vengeance, and a deep murmur spread through the city, and grew more and more threatening. Don Diego was advised of what was going on, and that the *alcalde-mayor* was the author of all the evil ; but such was his following and authority with the people, and so great was the general irritation, that it was too dangerous to attack him directly. It seemed more prudent to remove him on some honorable pretext, and so, when the principal incentive of disaffection was gone, things would gradually return to their former state. He accordingly gave Roldan the command of forty men, and ordered him to start at once for the Vega to restrain by his presence some of the Indians who refused to pay the tribute, and showed signs of rebellion.

Roldan saw through Don Diego's plan, and determined to carry out his project in every event. He cunningly saw how he could turn the affair to his own purpose, and, willingly accepting the command, set out without delay. Arriving in the Vega, he began the same secret work among the *caciques* as before among the Spaniards : he spoke of the oppression and tyranny of the Columbuses ; he bewailed

the fate of the poor Indians, and assured them that such was not the intention of the Spanish sovereigns ; and if he were in command, he would do justice to all, and would soon do away with the odious tribute that had been imposed only by the avarice of Columbus and his brothers. In this way he gained over nearly all the caciques of the Vega. He won the friendship and devotion of the soldiers by giving a free rein to all that were disposed to second his plans, and disarming such as would not follow in his way.

In the mean time, Don Bartholomew had returned from Xaragua ; but Roldan, knowing himself to be supported by a strong party and a large number of the soldiers, gave himself no concern on that account ; and, returning also to Isabella, boldly demanded that he should haul the caravel into the water, or permit his companions to do so. Don Bartholomew, incensed at his arrogance, haughtily refused, adding that neither Roldan nor his companions were seamen enough to attend to such work, and that the caravel was not suited for a long voyage, and he was not willing to endanger the ship or her crew.

The firm and resolute tone of Don Bartholomew repressed the arrogant presumption of Roldan, who, made cowardly by his conscience, like all evil-doers, suspected himself to be worse off than he really was. Knowing that it would not do to go too far with a man like Don Bartholomew, he determined to get out of Isabella at once ; and, as he had not been able to carry out his design in a secret way and by the hands of others, he resolved to seek a free and open field for his enterprise, and there openly unfold the banner of rebellion, still confident of coming out with glory and profit, as the defender and savior of his oppressed and down-trod brethren.

He had at his command seventy resolute men, well-armed, and felt sure that as soon as he raised the standard of revolt, all the disaffected would hasten to rally around it. He therefore left Isabella suddenly, and took the direction of the Vega with the intention of seizing Fort Concepcion, and then, in possession of that rich province and of the largest fort on the island, of openly defying Don Bartholomew. He had scarce left Isabella when he threw off the authority of the adelantado, protesting that he was only acting from a love of justice in order to oppose his character of alcalde-mayor as a trench against the tyranny of the Columbuses ; that for the rest, he was and would remain a loyal and obedient subject to the author-

ity of the king and queen. Under this standard, he invited the Spaniards and Indians to join him in resisting the injustice and cruelty of the adelantado, and establishing a just and humane government, according to the wish of their Majesties. To the Spaniards that should follow him he promised full liberty in all the pleasures and riches so abundantly offered in that land ; to the natives, exemption from all tribute, assuring them that only the insatiable rapacity of the Columbuses had overburdened them with imposts, contrary to the intention of their Catholic Majesties, who desired nothing from their subjects but obedience, and always treated them with paternal affection, in peace and justice. And there could be no doubt, if they quietly paid the tribute imposed on them, that the avarice of the Columbuses, encouraged by their patience, would increase it and make it more burdensome every year. They ought, then, to revolt against such intolerable tyranny, and enjoy the liberty which the Spanish sovereigns granted. Nor should they fear that terrible man, the adelantado, for he was there with his men ready to defend and save them.

The caciques who had previously been won to his side, received him with open arms, especially one named Diego Marque, in whose village he had taken up his quarters, as it was only two leagues from Concepcion. But Roldan was disappointed in his hopes of surprising the fort. Its commander, Miguel Ballester, an old soldier, bold, prudent, and trusty, shut himself up in the tower, and prepared to defend it as soon as he was aware of Roldan's approach and intention. He had only a small and feeble garrison at his command, but the fort was safe against an assault, being situated on a steep hill, and protected by a broad river. Still, Roldan did not give up all hope of carrying it, flattering himself that Ballester might have some grounds of enmity towards the Columbuses, and suffer himself to be drawn over like the rest ; or else his men, on seeing the free and licentious life led by the rebels, might desert and make common cause with them. Meantime, he betook himself to the neighboring village, where Guarionex resided, and in which thirty Spanish soldiers were quartered, in order to make his first attempt at seduction on them. But Captain Garcia de Barrantes, their commander, shut himself up with them in a fortified house, and forbade all communication with Roldan's rebels. Then Roldan threatened to fire the house ; but he only threatened, well knowing that such ex-

tremes could only injure his cause ; and contented himself with emptying the store-house where their provisions were kept, and then suddenly went back to Fort Concepcion.*

CHAPTER VI.

Measures of the adelantado in face of Roldan's revolt (1497).

THE first reports of the revolt that reached Don Bartholomew, were most alarming. Hardly had Roldan begun his movement, when Diego de Escobar, the alcaide of Fort Magdalen, Adrian de Moxica, and Pedro de Valdivieso, three persons of the greatest authority and influence in the colony, joined his party. As nothing had yet been heard from Fort Concepcion it was feared that its commander had taken the same course.

Don Bartholomew was in fearful uncertainty, and did not dare to move against the rebels with his usual celerity ; for he could not tell how far he might rely on the soldiers he had with him ; and the ease with which the rest had been induced to join Roldan, made him fear that these might do the same, and perhaps, instead of overcoming and crushing the rebels, he might fall into their hands himself. But he was soon relieved concerning Fort Concepcion, by the letters he received from its commander. That brave and loyal veteran related briefly the movement of Roldan, the constant increase of the rebels, and the summons sent to the fort ; that he was shut up there with his men, and would defend it desperately ; but they were only a handful, and could not long hold out. Don Bartholomew was restored to life at this, and starting immediately on the march, threw himself with a strong force within the fort. Still, as he was ignorant of the forces of the rebels, and distrustful of the fidelity of his own men, he determined to try conciliatory measures. He accordingly sent a messenger to Roldan, who was quartered in a village half-a-league away,

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. i.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxiv

to point out to him the odiousness of his conduct, its sad consequences on the tranquillity of the island, and the final ruin which was sure to overtake him. At the same time, he invited him to come to Fort Concepcion, where they could talk matters over, and remove any difficulty there might be; and pledged his word to respect his person in every way. Roldan accepted, and the two met, one at the foot of the fort, and the other at a window; but, as might have been expected, they parted worse enemies than before. Don Bartholomew asked Roldan why he had taken up arms to oppose the royal authority, which he represented; and Roldan replied, with shameless arrogance, that the interests of the king and queen were rather supported by him, who was defending their subjects against the tyranny of those who sought only their destruction. The adelantado called upon him to give up the *alcalde-mayor's* staff, the badge of his office, and submit peaceably, for his own good, to the lawful authority. Roldan refused the first demand, and as to the second, he said he was not such a fool as to put himself in the power of an enemy who bore him bitter hatred, and who, if he could not get rid of him, would at least try to disgrace him. Then Don Bartholomew proposed to him to submit to a court of inquiry; and the other replied that he would do so when it was ordered by the king himself.

But pretending always that he would in no wise resist legitimate authority so long as it kept within the limits of its powers, Roldan declared he was ready to remove with his companions to such a place as the adelantado should designate. The latter at once chose the village of the cacique Diego Columbus, the Indian from the island of San Salvador, who had been baptized in Spain, and, after faithfully serving the Christians as interpreter, in reward of his service, had received one of the daughters of Guarionex in marriage, and the government of a small district of Hispaniola. But Roldan refused; on the pretext that the place could not supply food enough; and, without giving Don Bartholomew time to propose another, said he would select the most convenient and pleasant. With these words, he left abruptly and returned to his companions. The failure to get possession of Fort Concepcion disconcerted all Roldan's plans. He had intended to fix his headquarters in the fertile Vega, which would have furnished abundance of food for his men; but now, that the fortified point completely commanding it remained in the hands of the adelantado, he could not forage here and there, as might

be necessary, without danger of being surprised in small parties, and crushed. Moreover, it would be a risk to keep his rebels so close to the lawful authority, which might regain its influence over them, and gradually reduce them to submission. On looking around for a spot suited to his wants, it seemed to him that the state of Xaragua, on account of the fertility of the land, and its distance from the seat of government, was the most eligible; and he proposed the journey thither to his companions, reminding them of the wonders told concerning the richness of the place, the hospitality of the inhabitants, and the feasts and amusements that took place there. His proposal was received with shouts of approval, especially as the women there were more beautiful and agreeable than elsewhere; which, says Fernando, was the main attraction.* This settled, he moved suddenly on the city of Isabella, in the hope, while the adelantado was away with most of his men, of launching the caravel and reaching Xaragua by water.

Don Diego, at the first noise of their approach, prepared to withstand him, with his officers and the small force at his disposal; but on seeing the number of his followers, thought it best to withdraw to the fort.

Roldan conferred with him, and, it is said, offered to acknowledge him as head of the colony, if he would detach himself from Don Bartholomew; his answer to which may easily be imagined. All the ship tackle being shut up in the fort, all hope of hauling the caravel into the water vanished; and the little fort was in such condition for defence as to render vain any assault; and to sit around it for a long siege, was not to be thought of, while the adelantado was in arms outside. It was, on the contrary, necessary to hasten his departure, on account of the danger they were in between the men shut up in the fort, and Don Bartholomew, who was on their heels. Roldan's whole attention was therefore turned to getting the necessary provisions for the journey; and still pretending to act as alcalde-mayor for the defence and protection of the oppressed subjects of the crown, he battered down the doors of the royal magazine, with cries of *Viva el Ré*, and drew out ammunition, arms, clothing, every thing he needed or wished for. Then passing to the inclosure, in which the herds brought from Europe were kept, he selected

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxiv.

the best animals, killing some for present food, and carrying off the others for future use ; after which they marched out of the city in triumph.* But instead of taking the road to Xaragua, they turned their steps again towards the Vega.

oldan, who was sufficiently astute to see what kind of a man he had to deal with in the adelantado, knew that he could never be safe in any part of the island while the other was alive and in arms. He resolved, therefore, to try again to lay hands on him, or, at least, deal him such a blow as would prevent his troubling them for some time to come. His hope lay in corrupting his men. Returning to the vicinity of Fort Concepcion, he set his agents to work to overcome the constancy of the soldiers who still remained faithful ; and while, on one hand, he painted in the blackest colors the life they were leading under the iron hand of the adelantado ; on the other, he laid before their eyes, in the most seductive manner, the pleasures freely enjoyed by his followers. The adelantado soon heard of these attempts, and was alarmed at finding his men lending a willing ear to these words. To lessen as much as possible their bad effect, he relaxed his usual rigor to some extent, treated the soldiers with great kindness, and encouraged them by the hope of reward.

Roldan showed himself equally eager to gain over the Indians. He manifested great sympathy with their afflictions, inveighed fiercely against the tyranny of the Columbuses, swore to take bitter revenge on them, and, at the same time, released the natives from all taxes, in accordance, he said, with the will of the sovereigns.

Wherever his followers spread, and in many other places, nearly all the caciques joined him, the most powerful and the best known of whom was Manicacotex, Caonabo's brother, whom he succeeded in binding firmly to his cause by presents and caresses, and calling him ostentatiously by the name of brother.† Those wretched savages, seduced by the hope of an armed protector, who would deliver them from their oppressive burdens, joyfully submitted to every exaction to aid him in opposing the tyranny of the Columbuses,—brought him victuals in abundance, gave him all the gold they could collect, willingly paying in a few days a larger and more onerous tribute than the admiral's government would have imposed in a year.

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. vii.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxiv

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. cviii.

In the midst of this anarchy and fatal discord, the affairs of the colony had fallen into confusion. Nearly all the caciques around had declared for the rebels, and not to drive the few that still remained loyal, to join the rebels also for their own interests, the adelantado had to relieve them from every imposition. Those at a distance, taking advantage of the dissensions of the Spaniards, had emancipated themselves from both parties, and paid tribute to neither. The adelantado's condition was very different from Roldan's. The latter, abundantly supplied with every thing by the deluded Indians, moved triumphantly in every direction, everywhere received as a deliverer; the former was reduced to the scanty food that could be gathered near the fortified places; he could not go out into the open country, for his men were few, and their fidelity doubtful; and, looked upon by the Indians as oppressors and tyrants, they would encounter enemies and treason on every side; and he had been warned that measures had been taken to kill him if he went out of the fort. So far from finding any comfort in the prospect of the future, every thing indicated more fearful straits; for the provisions were daily growing less, defections increasing, difficulties accumulating; and the slender cord which still held a few soldiers faithful to duty, was wearing thinner under constantly increasing insubordination and insolence, which had to be overlooked and tolerated for fear of worse; and in no direction was there a gleam of light giving hope of any thing better.*

Things were at this desperate point, when Don Bartholomew was informed of the arrival of Pedro Fernandez Coronel in the harbor of San Domingo, with two vessels laden with provisions of every kind, and a considerable reinforcement of troops. These were the two ships which the admiral, finding his departure delayed, and seriously concerned about the needs and dangers of the colony, had with great difficulty succeeded in getting dispatched soon after the opening of that year 1498.

Coronel reached San Domingo the 3rd of February. His arrival was the salvation of the colony and of Don Bartholomew, not so much by the abundance of provisions he brought, and the fresh troops on board, as by the moral support which the authority of the adelantado gained by the dissipation of the doubts and contradiction

* Las Casas *Hist. Ind.*, lib. iv, cap. cx.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxvi.

of the rumors that had been spread, that the admiral had fallen into disgrace and was lost as well as his brothers ; which rumors, with the greater part of the Spaniards, had been the strongest argument, and the principal cause, of their transgression. The party of Roldan was weakened and discouraged by the event as much as that of the adelantado was strengthened.

Don Bartholomew boldly issued from Fort Concepcion with part of his force, and took the road to San Domingo, notwithstanding that the rebels held the neighboring village of the cacique Guarionex with a much superior force. Roldan, at the head of his men, followed after, but, so far from attacking, did not even molest him ; and halted about a mile from San Domingo, for the purpose of making sure whether the news of the arrival was true, and if it was, to try to draw over a part of the new-comers, and in any case to act according to circumstances. Contrary to every one's expectation and his own fiery temper, Don Bartholomew, instead of taking advantage of his present superiority over his enemies, had recourse again to conciliation. He reflected that most of them were poor, deluded men, exhausted by sufferings, who had permitted themselves to be seduced by the promises that if he were taken off, the cause of their sufferings would be removed, and they might begin a new life of rest and enjoyment. He saw how in that state of mind, and believing that the admiral had fallen into disgrace, and would not again return, the words and example of the alcalde-mayor must have been powerful to incite them to rebellion, claiming, as he did, to act in the name of the king. He considered the injury that would result to the colony if they resorted to arms for the restoration of order, every victim of the war being a soldier or laborer withdrawn from its defence or its works. To this was added the thought of giving back the colony bathed in blood and covered with wounded and dead, into the hands of his brother, who would soon arrive : and he loved his brother intensely, and felt what his grief would be on finding his beloved land in such state of slaughter. For all these reasons, he formed a magnanimous resolve, and on the day when he solemnly published the royal decree confirming him in his office of adelantado, he caused a decree of his own to be read also, granting full amnesty to all rebels, whatever their guilt, who should lay down their arms and return to duty within a given time.

As this decree was unexpected, he thought it would have all the

more effect. To show that Roldan was included in the general amnesty, he also sent Coronel, whom their Highnesses had named Alguazil Mayor of the island,* to assure him by his own testimony of the favor the admiral still enjoyed at court, and to make him understand, by the weight of his name and authority, the great wrong he had done, and the terrible punishment he would receive, if, instead of profiting by the pardon offered him, he awaited the forces of the adelantado, and the still more powerful forces soon to be led by the admiral in person.

Roldan's conscience warned him that his guilt was too serious for him to hope for pardon on such easy terms. He, therefore, distrusted the adelantado's word, and fearful of being deserted by his followers, he took every precaution to prevent their having any communication with the government. Informed of Coronel's approach and of his mission, in order that his words and arguments should not reach his followers, he chose a few of his most resolute and faithful bowmen, and went to meet him in a narrow defile. As Coronel approached, they drew their bows, and Roldan cried : " Halt, there, traitor ! Had you come a week later, we should all have been united in a single body."†

Coronel tried in vain, by reasoning and entreaty, to bring him back to his duty, and induce him to provide for his own and his followers' safety, and spare the colony and himself much suffering. He was immovable, claiming that he had not risen against lawful authority, but against the tyranny and misrule of the adelantado ; and would submit to the admiral on his arrival.

To the same effect, he and his principal confederates wrote to their friends in San Domingo, asking them to defend their cause before the admiral upon his arrival, and assure him that they were ready to submit to his authority.

When the adelantado learnt from Coronel how Roldan had received his offer of pardon, he proclaimed him and all his followers as traitors, and prepared to take up arms against them. But that shrewd man, knowing the effect that would be produced on the minds of his followers, by the certainty of pardon if they submitted at once, and the fear of future chastisement if they continued in revolt, had again

* An office similar to that of Chief of Police.

† Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. viii.

inflamed their hearts with the description of the delights of Xaragua, and commenced the march thither, before they heard of the peaceful intentions of the adelantado, trusting that the voluptuous license of that place would prove an indissoluble bond to unite them to his cause, and then he would not be left exposed alone to the rigor and vengeance of the dreaded adelantado. Don Bartholomew was unable to hinder his evil design, for other events and dangers required his presence elsewhere.

CHAPTER VII.

Second insurrection of Guarionex.—His flight into the mountains of Ciguay.—Desperate struggle of the brave and noble mountaineers (1498).

THE evil seed sown among the Indians by Roldan, was already yielding fruit. The caciques of the Vega, as soon as they saw the adelantado leave Concepcion and knew that he had enough to occupy him with Roldan, who had followed him, determined to surprise the fort, now left with a small and feeble garrison. Guarionex was the leader of the plot; not, as on former occasions, led on by the rest. The facility of the undertaking, and the sure support he had in Roldan, had overcome his timidity; and the distant hope that after crushing the adelantado and his government, he would have no great difficulty in beating Roldan and his followers, and thus freeing himself entirely from the burden of the foreigners, had made him exceedingly zealous in aiding the work of the rebels. He accordingly called together the tributary caciques in secret council, and it was decided that they should all fall at once upon the White Men who were scattered in the different districts (because no place being sufficient for the support of a large number, the Spaniards had been obliged to divide into little bands of eight or ten persons in each of the principal villages); while Guarionex would surprise Fort Concepcion, with a strong force of chosen warriors.

But because, in indicating dates or arranging any thing that required calculation, the Indians had no numbers to count with, beyond their fingers, in order to make no mistake as to the time agreed on, the insurrection was fixed for the night of the full moon. It happened, however, that one of the caciques, who was not an experienced observer, thought the moon was full before it was, and began the assault before the time; being unsupported, he was easily resisted, and the alarm being given, the Spaniards were all on their guard, and there was no further chance for their projected extermination. The rash cacique fled from his village in fear and shame, and sought refuge with Guarionex; but the latter, beside himself with anger and despair, had him put to death on the spot.* As soon as Don Bartholomew learnt what had happened, he left the rebels to pursue their course, and came like a flash on Fort Concepcion, to extinguish this fresh conflagration on its first manifestation. Guarionex concealed himself, and, in despair, abandoned that delightful abode of the Vega, the happy seat of his ancestors, and with his family and a few servants sought a refuge in the mountains of Ciguay. This high chain of mountains extends along the northern coast of the island, between the Vega and the sea, and was inhabited by a wild population of mountaineers, whose strength and courage indicated a race quite different from the weak and timid dwellers of the plains. It was a part of these bold mountaineers, on the first voyage of Columbus, who first dared make a stand against the White Men, in the Gulf of Samana, and it was in the skirmish that ensued, that the first drops of European blood stained that virgin soil. If the reader will recall that event to his memory, and the boldness of those naked savages on the first appearance of the Spaniards, their frankness and confidence the day after the skirmish, and the cacique's fearless boarding of the admiral's vessel, he will understand the character of the Ciguayans.† Their cacique was named Mayobanex, and was probably the same whom the Spaniards had known at the Gulf of Samana. To him Guarionex fled in his despair, asking an asylum; and the valiant savage not only received him with generous hospitality, but gave him a solemn pledge to defend him and his cause, and share, if need be, his fate.‡

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxv.

† See book i, ch. xx.

‡ Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. cxxi.—Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. v.

Despair changed the nature of the timid and peaceful Guarionex. Accompanied by a good force of his new allies, he made bold and unexpected descents on the plains, and woe to the Spaniards who singly or in small bands fell in his way. Not less fierce was his rage against the villages that remained faithful to the foreigner; to these he set fire, pursuing the inhabitants, and destroying the plants and fruit-trees around them. The adelantado, taking with him ninety foot-soldiers, a few horse, and a body of Indians, hastened to defend them against this violence. The Spaniards, hunting them up a narrow and precipitous chasm, reached the summit of the mountain with much difficulty, but without meeting the face of an enemy. Descending the opposite side, whilst looking for a ford in a river which flowed at the entrance of a valley shut in by mountains on every side but that towards the sea, they discovered two Indian scouts concealed in the tall reeds growing on the river's bank. One sprang quickly into the river, and, hidden under the water, succeeded in swimming to the other side, and escaped. The other was not in time, and was captured. From him it was learnt that on the other side of the river there were 6,000 Indians lying in wait to fall on the Spaniards the moment they were engaged in crossing the river. Don Bartholomew, taking the necessary precautions and instructing his men what they were to do, and having found the ford, ordered a crossing. Hardly were they in the water when a furious yell was heard from the woods, from which issued a multitude of savages, painted in so repulsive a manner that they resembled figures of demons more than men, and showered their arrows on the Spaniards. The latter were on their guard, and with their shields warded off the thick hail; but such was the number of arrows that neither their shields nor their strong armor wholly sufficed for their protection, and some received wounds. No one recoiled a step, but they continued to cross the ford with rapidity. The savages, who had expected to have killed at one blow those few White Men, or at least to have terrified and put them to flight, on seeing them boldly advancing and on the point of reaching the bank, took fright in turn, and fled. The Spaniards set out to pursue, but with the exception of a few who fell under the blows of their swords, the rest escaped, because, concealed by the woods, they glided among the branches and bushes which closed the passage, whilst the Europeans were hindered at every step by the weight of their arms, and the inconvenience of their clothes.

By advice of one of his guides, the adelantado quickened his march along the valley to reach the village of Cabron, which was the residence of the cacique Mayobanex, situated about ten leagues west of Isabella. Along the way, the savages would suddenly rush from the thick forests, with wild yells, quickly disappearing after a shower of their arrows; but the Spaniards were on the alert, and were not injured. Having taken several prisoners, the adelantado sent one of them, in company with one of his own Indians, to Mayobanex, with this message: "If he should deliver up Guarionex, he should have the friendship and protection of the Spaniards; or look to see his domains given over to fire and blood, if he did not do the will of the White Men." Mayobanex listened attentively to the messenger, and then replied: "Say to the Spaniards, that they are cruel, wicked men, tyrants, usurpers of others' property, foul with innocent blood. I want not the friendship of such. Guarionex is good, is my friend, my guest; he has come to seek an asylum with me, and I have promised to protect him. I will keep my promise."*

For the adelantado, especially in the dangerous condition in which Roldan's revolt had put him, it was a matter of life or death, to extinguish on its first outburst this fire which rose so wildly menacing from the glens of Ciguay. Under these circumstances, and with the opinion then universally held, that white men and Christians had full right to dispose at will of men of another color or religion, it is easy to imagine the effect produced on the haughty character of the Spaniard, by the answer of Mayobanex,—the most magnanimous and sublime answer in all history, but in which Don Bartholomew, with his mind filled with his right and duty to reestablish order in the colony and settle the authority of Spain over the savages, saw only an atrocious insult. Horrid times, when, in the name of religion and of civilization, a portion of the human race believed itself right in regarding and treating the rest as worse than beasts! As soon, then, as the adelantado received this answer, he set fire to the village where he was, and to many others in the neighborhood, to show the insolent cacique how quickly deeds followed his words. He also sent another embassy to Mayobanex, to say again that if he did not at once deliver up Guarionex, he would find himself in the midst of smoke and flames. The inhabitants, terrified by these fearful menaces, which

* Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. vii.



they saw so quickly transformed to deeds, surrounded Mayobanex, supplicating him, with loud cries, to have compassion on them, and since he was constrained by a force so much greater, to give up his generous hospitality, and obey the orders of the invincible White Men. Mayobanex was inflexible; he called to mind the virtues of Guarionex, and the sacred rights of hospitality, and declared himself ready to suffer the greatest adversity rather than that it should ever be said that Mayobanex had betrayed his guest. After giving this answer to his people, he sent for the frightened Guarionex, and renewed the promise to defend him at every cost, even that of all his states. To the adelantado he made no reply; and lest his repeated messages should dishearten his people, he posted some of his strongest and most resolute mountaineers along the road, with orders to dispatch without mercy any ambassador from the Spaniards. It was not long before two new ambassadors appeared, a Ciguayan prisoner and another of the Indians that were with the Spaniards. Both, as they appeared, were laid dead under a hail of arrows. Don Bartholomew was a short way off, with ten foot-soldiers and four mounted, and with his own eyes beheld the assault and death of the two ambassadors. Boiling with fury, he hastened back to the main body of his army, resolved to proceed to extreme rigor, since nothing would bend those fierce mountaineers; and marched with all his force on Cabron, where Mayobanex had gathered his entire army for a desperate resistance.

But the Spaniards were preceded by the fame of their invincibility, and fear of the evils that came on all who resisted them. Hardly were they in sight of the army of Mayobanex, when all the inferior caciques, whom he had sent for in the moment of danger, were seized with fear, and caring more for themselves than for the fate of their chief, took to flight with all their men. Thus the unfortunate and brave Mayobanex, left almost alone, with a handful of his men, was forced to flee also, and taking with him his family, he took refuge in the most hidden recesses of his mountains.

Meanwhile, some of the Ciguayans thought of killing Guarionex, hoping to purchase by his death the safety of their country; but he, being apprized of it, fled and hid himself in the wildest and most lonely spots.

The adelantado set out in pursuit of the two caciques, but it proved longer and more difficult than anticipated. The district was with-

out roads, and thick forests covered the mountains ; and they were often obliged to cling with their hands in climbing the rugged rocks, and the axes were in constant use to open a passage through the thick brush. The villages were deserted ; nowhere was seen a human being from whom to inquire the way, for all the inhabitants had fled or hidden themselves ; or, if by chance they got hold of one, there was no means of getting a word from him, all giving the same answer, that they knew nothing of the place where the two caciques had taken refuge. The Spaniards had nothing to eat but cassava-bread, and the roots and herbs which were gathered by the Indians who accompanied them, and now and then an utias, which they caught with the aid of their dogs. At night, they nearly always slept in the open air, exposed to the heavy dews of that moist climate. They lived in this way with infinite hardships for three months, at the end of which, many who had plantations near Fort Concepcion which needed care, were glad of an excuse for asking the adelantado for leave to return to their lands ; and, although he was unwilling to diminish his force, he felt obliged to grant the leave asked for, and let them depart. But Don Bartholomew did not, on this account, abandon the pursuit of the two caciques, and though reduced to only thirty men, he continued his toilsome march, hunting in every cavern till he found them. For several days he moved at random from one place to another, with no knowledge or sign to guide him but his opinion of what was probable. But one day, as they were hunting utias, they captured two servants of Mayobanex, who were looking for a little cassava-bread. Brought before the adelantado, history tells us only that they were forced to make known where their cacique was hiding, and even to guide his pursuers to the spot. It did well to spare us the tale of the cruelties which must have been inflicted on the two wretched men ; for such was the Ciguayan character, and the devotion of those savages to their cacique, that it certainly was not menaces that forced from the mouth of the strong and fearless mountaineers the word that would be the death of their lord. Informed of the hiding-place of their prey, twelve Spaniards set out at once for it, pushing the guides before them ; and not to be betrayed by their dress and the color of their skin, they laid aside their clothes, and stained their bodies after the style of the mountaineers, and hid their swords by wrapping them in large palm-leaves. Arriving at the spot where the unlucky Mayobanex was concealed, they entered

unexpectedly and found him seated on the ground, near his wife, who was playing with their children ; and there were present a few others, who had clung to him in his misery. Quickly drawing their swords, the Spaniards were on them, and made them all prisoners before they had time to recover from their surprise and fright.

With this rich prey, Don Bartholomew took no further concern about Guarionex, but returned to Fort Concepcion. Among the prisoners was a sister of Mayobanex, a woman of rare beauty among the Indians, married to a cacique of another district, which had not yet felt the weight of the White Man's civilization, and where the inhabitants were still enjoying the peace and quiet of their innocent life. This beautiful young woman, when informed of her brother's ill-fortune, quitting the delights of her family and her people, hastened to his hiding-place, and for several days had remained there, comforting him in his grief, and sharing with him the pangs of hunger and fear. When her husband learnt of her imprisonment, he was beside himself with grief, and going to the adelantado, with tears in his eyes, offered to submit to his authority, with all his possessions, if he would restore his wife to him. Don Bartholomew desired nothing better, and gave up his wife and a few of his savages who had been taken with her. This kindness was never lost on that peaceful and affectionate people. The cacique stamped on his heart the favor received, and was ever after a good and faithful ally of the Spaniards, cultivated many fields for them, and furnished them a great quantity of cassava-bread and other provisions. The Ciguayans, on hearing of this unhoped-for clemency of the White Men, came down in numbers from the mountains, and bringing presents to Fort Concepcion, and promising obedience and faith, earnestly begged for the liberty of their cacique and his family. Don Bartholomew granted only a part of their prayer, and retaining Mayobanex as a hostage, set the rest free.

Meantime, the unhappy Guarionex, hiding in the mountains, wandered in fear from rock to rock, and only at three or four days' interval, driven by famine, came down cautiously to the cultivated country in search of a bit of bread or a few roots. But the Ciguayans now pursued him with all their hate, convinced, by the clemency of the White Men, that it was all his own fault that drew on him the wrath of the invincible strangers. They laid on his head all they had suffered,—their fatigues, hunger, fears, wounds, and death, all

their villages destroyed, and their cacique a prisoner. The rage for vengeance, and the hope of bartering his death for the liberty of Mayobanex, urged them on his tracks, and finding out where the wretched man was in the habit of coming for a little food, they made it known to the adelantado. A few days afterwards, as he approached with his usual caution, a band of Spaniards sprang suddenly on him and bound him. Lean, hollow-eyed, and bent with hunger and exhaustion, he was brought before the adelantado. He was aware what awaited him, but, resigned in despair to his cruel fate, he stood half-stupefied before his judge, awaiting his sentence. Don Bartholomew, whose severity was inexorable when the needs of government required it, was a man of humane sentiments when he saw that generosity could do no harm. Now that the mountains of Ciguay, and the plains of the Vega, were quiet, conquered partly by his clemency, and partly by the terror of his arms, although it was the second time Guarionex had risen against the Spaniards, and attempted their destruction, and although he had so ill requited the pardon lately granted him; still, even again he listened to the voice of his heart calling to him not to take vengeance on this shadow of a man; and he contented himself with retaining him as a hostage within the fort, and under guard, but treated him with all the respect due to his rank.

So ended the magnanimous struggle of those mountaineers, which, if related by some Indian Plutarch, would claim from posterity as great admiration and glory as the most famous war ever carried on by any people. When the affairs of that province were pacified, Don Bartholomew returned to San Domingo, to devote all his attention to the rest of the island; and not long after, he was notified that the admiral would soon arrive.*

* Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. vi.—Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. lxxxix.

CHAPTER VIII.

The rebels in Xaragua.—Their increased strength and audacity.—Arrival of Columbus at San Domingo.—Fruitless attempts to conciliate the rebels.—Want of force to oppose them.—Fears of further treason (1498).

THE rebels, on entering Xaragua, overran that delightful region, abusing men and property without restraint, at the dictate of avarice, lust, or caprice. Passing from place to place, they found themselves, one day, on the sea-shore, when they discovered three European vessels approaching the land. They were much alarmed, supposing the ships had been sent against them; but Roldan, with his usual perspicacity, judged they were more likely ships from Europe, driven westward, out of their course, by the force of the currents, and that they would know nothing of the late occurrences in Hispaniola. They were, therefore, to keep up their courage, and let him manage. Recommending them to observe the greatest secrecy, he boldly went on board of the caravels, and said he was in those parts, by command of the adelantado, to keep the province to its duty, and collect the tribute.

Roldan's conjecture was correct; the three caravels were the same which Columbus had detached from his squadron; at the Canaries, to take victuals and munitions direct to Hispaniola, while he took the course towards the equator,* and arriving in the Caribbean Sea, the strong currents of which were unknown to their captains, contrary to their calculations, they had been carried far out of their course to the coast of Xaragua. The three captains, regarding Roldan as an important personage deserving of entire confidence, willingly yielded to every demand of his; so that, under pretext of want of arms, he was able to procure a liberal supply of swords, spears, and fire-arms, with plenty of ammunition. At the same time,

* See book ii, ch. ii.

some of his most faithful and crafty followers visited the vessels, without exciting suspicion, laboring underhand to corrupt and gain over the new-comers, relating the hardships and strict discipline under the adelantado, and the freedom and delights enjoyed with Roldan.

The reader will remember how, when volunteers could not be had for the third expedition of Columbus, at his suggestion, recourse was had to the expedient of inviting those who had accounts to square with justice, commuting their punishment for a certain number of years to be spent in Hispaniola. Thus, the crews of these three vessels were mainly made up of convicts from prisons and galleys, or vagabonds and suspected criminals from the slums of Spanish cities,—soil well fitted for the evil seed now cast on it.

At the end of the third day of free communication between the crews and Roldan's followers, Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, the most circumspect of the three captains, discovered the treachery, but too late. The poison had circulated, and many had agreed to desert at the first opportunity, and go over to the rebels. Carvajal and the two other captains had frequent conferences with Roldan, to try to bring him back to his duty, and put an end to a state of things which was injurious to the government, and which, in the long run, must undoubtedly terminate in his ruin. Roldan tried to appear firm; but under all his words the sharp eye of Carvajal discovered an uncertainty and hesitation, which led him to hope he might yet succeed in his work of reconciliation. That uncertainty and hesitation of Roldan's was caused by the announcement that the admiral was already on his way, and would soon arrive with additional authority and forces. He had always feared this return, and we saw how he prepared his friends at San Domingo to be ready to plead his cause with the admiral as soon as the latter arrived, assuring him that Roldan had only meant to resist the injustice and oppression of the adelantado, but was ready to submit to the admiral on his return. Now, as the danger increased and grew nearer, his fear became greater, and his principal confederates were equally alarmed. He, therefore, always replied with the usual excuse, that he had not meant to rebel against the government or against the admiral, but only to withdraw himself and others from the intolerable tyranny of the adelantado, and when the admiral came, he would do his duty; that he had charged fair and honest men in San Domingo to inform him on his arrival of

the true state of things, so that he might not be led by the false accounts of others, into any deception concerning the true cause of his movement.

It appeared to Carvajal that with patience and perseverance he might arrive at a favorable result, and, with the advice and consent of the other captains, he determined to remain with the rebels and continue his efforts, whilst the other two resumed their voyage to San Domingo. At the same time, it was decided that Captain Juan Antonio Colombo should conduct by land to San Domingo the men hired for working in the mines and other trades and service, because in addition to the currents, the high sea and the wind were unfavorable for the voyage, which might take two or three months, and there was danger of disease breaking out among so many crowded together on board, to say nothing of the loss of time, which was very serious in the present needs of the colony. Arana, the third captain, was charged with taking the ships thither, as soon as the weather should permit. The next morning, Juan Antonio Colombo landed accordingly, with forty men armed with swords, lances, and fire-arms, and started for San Domingo. But the following day, all his men but six or seven, left him and joined the rebels. Persuasion, entreaty, and threats were unavailing to retain them. Sunk in crime, without shame, and accustomed to jeer at all order, morals, or law, they laughed in his face, and marched triumphantly to join the free ranks of the insurgents. Regardless of the danger he was running, he followed them, and sought out Roldan and reminded him of his late protestations of devotion to the government, showed him how the fact would contradict his words, if he suffered these men who had been brought to colonize and cultivate the land, and work at their trades for pay already received, should remain there, and lose the time without complying with their obligations; whereas, if he drove them off, he would show that his acts agreed with his words, and that he had withdrawn with his men, in consequence of his unfortunate relations with the adelantado, and not from evil designs. But Roldan gained too much by this increase of his numbers, whether in facilitating his plan, or because, in case of failure, the greater the number of the guilty, the easier would it be to save himself, and to obtain pardon; and interrupting the captain, excused himself, saying he could not use force, "because his establishment was a monastery of the strict Observance, where none could be refused

the habit.”* Juan Antonio Colombo, seeing that further importunity would uselessly increase his danger, retraced his steps, and with the few that remained faithful, returned on board, humbled and mortified.

Immediately thereafter, in spite of the condition of the sea and the weather, to prevent further desertion, the ships sailed for San Domingo; but Carvajal adhered to his plan, and remained on shore with the rebels. The ships had a rougher voyage than was expected, and Carvajal's, commanded by his lieutenant, was on the point of being lost on the shoals, where she broke her rudder, and stove a large opening in her bottom, and was got off with great difficulty. The provisions for the colony, as usual, were found, when landed, to be mostly spoilt.

Carvajal arrived a few days later, escorted, within six leagues of the place, by a number of rebels, for protection against the Indians. He had not succeeded in persuading them to submit immediately; but Roldan had promised him that, as soon as informed of the admiral's return, he would come into the neighborhood of San Domingo, for the purpose of setting forth his complaints, explaining his conduct, and discussing the settlement of all differences. Carvajal was the bearer of a letter, to this effect, from Roldan to the admiral, and from his own observation during his stay among the rebels, he was convinced that a promise of amnesty would bring them all back to duty.*

The three vessels were so long on the voyage to San Domingo, that on their arrival they found that the admiral had already been there some days. We left him, half-blind, prostrated with fever and gout, forced to return to Hispaniola, and grieved beyond measure at being compelled to abandon the exploration of the coast of Paria. But he found comfort in the thought that as soon as he reached San Domingo he would send his brother Bartholomew to continue his discovery, where his fervid imagination had beheld a world of wonders

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxvii.—To understand the precise meaning of this answer, it should be known that some religious orders have monasteries where the discipline of the cloister is more strictly observed. The religious cannot be ordered to one of these monasteries by their superiors, as they can to others; but those who wish to lead a more retired and austere life, go of their free choice.

† Las Casas, lib. i, cap. cxlix-l.—Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. xii.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxvii.

and riches, sufficient not only to raise again his oft-deluded hopes, and fulfil the unperformed promises of his voyages ; but even to go far beyond, and surpass all expectation. Arriving at Hispaniola in this happy mood, we can imagine what a blow it must have been to his heart to learn of the evils that were wasting the colony. He was on the point of confounding the fury of his enemies, by the splendor of his new discoveries, and of mounting in triumph the pedestal of glory from which they had thrown him with savage delight,—and behold, an iron hand stops his way, and presses him back in a worse condition than before ; and so far from enjoying the triumph of his new discoveries, he will have as much as he can do to maintain his authority in the old.

Against the number and audacity of the rebels, whose open attack was to be apprehended, he, old, sick, almost blind, and surrounded mostly by doubtful or weak persons, had no hope of safety but in the courage and activity of the adelantado. And it was precisely against the adelantado that, as a pretext at least, all the fury of the rebels was directed, so that the first step towards their pacification would seem to be his removal, which was equivalent to depriving himself of the only arm on which he could safely rely, and giving himself up to the control of his enemies. What made the matter worse, the charges preferred against Don Bartholomew by the rebels had gained a foothold even amongst those colonists who remained loyal to the government, and it was the general opinion, even of the most calm and sensible, that the excessive rigor of the adelantado was the main cause of the insurrection.

In regard to which opinion, we wish to remark, before proceeding further, that it had no foundation in fact, but was a pretence put forward by the rebels to excuse the infamy of their conduct ; and accepted by some in good faith, spread by the malice of others, and being in accord with our readiness to blame the action of government and to uphold those who claim they are oppressed and rise in self-defence,—gradually became in a greater or less degree the conviction of all, Spaniards as well as Indians. That this was so, is clear from the fact that none ever complained of too great rigor on the admiral's part, and yet he was treated by the colonists no better than his brother ; it is also clear from the fact that in their accusations against the adelantado, oral or written, the rebels never alleged any instance of his excessive severity, but always made the

charge in general terms ; and in fine, Las Casas assures us of it, after collecting much testimony on the spot concerning Don Bartholomew's conduct, and adds that in regard to Roldan in particular he had always been most indulgent.

The difficulty was all the greater for Christopher Columbus, because the adelantado was his brother, and the malice of the rebels could easily claim that the judgment of the admiral was distorted by partiality. In the midst of such difficulties, governing himself with the greatest prudence, for the first thing on his arrival, he issued a proclamation approving all the arrangements of the adelantado during his absence, and deploring and condemning the conduct of Roldan and his associates. Then, to show strict impartiality and to leave them room to hope for their exculpation, he followed up the proclamation by a decree ordering a fresh report of the proceedings to be drawn up for the information of the sovereigns.* Knowing that many of the old colonists ardently wished to return to Europe, and that the strongest reliance of the rebels was the report they had spread that the avarice of the Columbuses, and not the will of their Majesties, kept them so long away from their country, in order to have more arms to labor for the increase of their accumulated riches ; on the 12th of September, he announced, by public proclamation, that five vessels would shortly return to Europe, and in the king's and queen's name permitted any who desired, to return home with free passage and table furnished them. He hoped by this decree to purge the colony of the idle and malcontent, who, without being openly leagued with Roldan, were still a constant anxiety and peril to the government, on account of their conduct and the uncertainty of their sentiments ; and moreover, he hoped thereby to destroy the source of the insurgents' strength, because by opening to them a way of escape without personal harm, or humiliation, it was reasonable to presume that many, certainly the least compromised, would promptly seize the unexpected chance of quietly placing themselves in safety in their homes.

The arrival of Carvajal, with information of the approach of Roldan with all his followers, in order the better to come to some agreement,—instead of being a comfort to Columbus, caused him the greatest uneasiness, as he was afraid that these fair words hid some

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxviii.

sinister plan formed against Fort Concepcion or San Domingo; and he wrote at once to Miguel Ballester, the loyal and brave commander of Concepcion, to be on his guard, for the rebels were approaching. He also charged him to talk with Roldan, and offer him full pardon and forgetfulness of the past, on condition of his returning to his duty without delay; and at the same time to invite him to San Domingo to confer with the admiral on the steps to be taken to heal the wounds from which the colony was suffering, solemnly promising to respect his person, which promise should be put in writing, if desired. Ballester had hardly received this letter before the rebels arrived at Bonaio, a village about ten leagues distant from Concepcion and twenty from San Domingo, in a pleasant, fertile, and populous plain or vega, where Pedro Riquelme, one of the rebel leaders, had large possessions. The real cause of this movement on Roldan's part was, that in consequence of the increase of the government forces by arrivals from Europe, the rebels saw the danger of their remaining scattered, and word was sent them all to collect in a suitable place where they could consult together and be ready for whatever might occur.

Ballester, being informed of their arrival, set out at once to fulfil his mission. He was a white-haired old man, of grave aspect, but of frank and open manners, as became a soldier, firm of character, of blameless life, and proverbial loyalty; the man, in short, required as a mediator with a rash and dissolute rabble. With Roldan he found his three principal confederates, Pedro Riquelme, Pedro Gomez, and Adrian de Moxica, each with his swarm of rebel followers.

Roldan, emboldened at the sight of the forces at his disposal, haughtily rejected the offer of pardon, saying he had not come to treat of peace, but to demand the liberation of the Indians who had been made prisoners when assembled near Concepcion, because they had met in his favor and for the king's service, and in his character of alcalde he had solemnly assured them of his protection; and he would listen to no terms of agreement until they were set free. Finally, he declared that he wanted no agreement or peace, for he held the admiral and his whole force in his hand, to uphold or cast down, as he pleased; and even if he should consent to terms, they would have to be very advantageous to himself; and he would treat with none but Carvajal, who was the only fair and impartial man

among them, as he had found in his relations with him in Xaragua.*

The situation of Columbus was desperate. To attempt to come to any terms with the rebels, after so insolent an answer, was to fall at their feet, confess his own weakness, and let them dictate the law. To have recourse to arms, with the experience he had at that very time of how far the faith and spirit of his men could be relied on, he saw would involve his own ruin, and the triumph of the rebels. The experience he had was this. When Carvajal brought news that the rebels were approaching San Domingo to treat with the government, suspecting that under this pretext they might conceal a design of seizing the city and his own person, he had called on the inhabitants of San Domingo to assemble under arms, so that he might see what force he had at his command. It was rumored that this call was for service against the rebels, and in this belief scarce seventy responded; and of those, one had a sore foot, another said he was suffering with fever, others from some other trouble; one had a relative, friend, or benefactor among Roldan's followers—and in the end there were not more than forty that could be made use of.† There was not even any use of temporizing, trusting to events for aid or counsel, for hitherto the principal restraint of many had been the name and authority of the admiral, who was expected at any moment; but now that the hopes based on his authority had failed, what further barrier could be opposed to the victorious irruption of the insurgents? Roldan was only a few steps off, inviting them to freedom and enjoyment by intrigue and example, and the number of the guilty gave immunity from punishment. If the matter should have to be decided in the open field, it was to be feared that even those who had hitherto remained faithful might, as the less evil, go over to Roldan, till some one should be sent out from Spain with lawful authority and sufficient strength to repair these disasters. And in that case, what would become of the admiral, his enterprise, and his projects?

In the hope of bringing the rebels to submission, and thus being able to send less unfavorable reports of the colony to Spain, he had delayed the departure of the five vessels, and they had now been eighteen days waiting for the order to weigh anchor. Even if it was possible to come to some agreement, Roldan's answer showed that it

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxviii. † Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, c. cxxxiii.

would not be for some time ; and meanwhile, the provisions shipped for the voyage were diminishing, and the Indian prisoners on board were suffering horribly. Crowded in the hold, they suffocated with heat, and every day some sickened, and some died. The nearness of their native land increased the anguish of slavery, and it was necessary to keep constant watch on them, because, in their intolerable distress of body and mind, one after another of those wretches, giving way to despair, threw himself headlong into the sea, to seek in death a release from suffering. Neither was it prudent to exhaust by too long delay those malcontents who had accepted the proposal to embark and return to Spain. He, therefore, gave the order to sail, and on the 18th of October the five ships put out to sea.*

Columbus wrote to their Highnesses all the particulars of the insurrection, his offer of pardon, and the rebels' refusal. And since Roldan pretended that it was a mere quarrel between himself and the adelantado, and as Don Bartholomew's brother could not be an impartial judge in the case, he begged their Highnesses to recall Roldan to Spain, and judge his conduct themselves, or else to order an inquest to be held on the island, before Alonzo de Carvajal, who would be acceptable to Roldan, and Miguel Ballester for the adelantado. He said he attributed these unfortunate occurrences, in great part, to the endless delays which detained him so long in Spain, and to the obstacles continually placed in his way by the very persons charged to assist him, who had detained the ships till the colony was reduced to the last straits. From this had sprung, first, discontent among the colonists, then murmurs, and at last, revolt. He, therefore, earnestly besought their Highnesses to give positive orders that the affairs of the colony should be properly cared for, and those who were appointed for the purpose at Seville, should not be allowed to impede instead of helping. He spoke of his ungovernable movement of anger against Ximeno de Breviesca, Fonseca's impudent favorite, who, in the presence of all the people and of the whole fleet, at the very moment of sailing, when Columbus most wanted peace and respect, had vomited his insolence against him.† Suspecting the charges and calumnies his enemies must have founded

* On one of these ships was the father of the historian Las Casas, from whom he learnt the principal details of this part of his history. (Las Casas, lib. i, cap. cliii.)

† See book ii, ch. i.

upon that fact, he implored their Highnesses not to listen to the base insinuations that were made to ruin him in their opinion, reminding them that he was *absent, exposed to envy, and a foreigner*.* He confirmed all he had previously stated of the wonderful fertility of the island; that its products were more than enough to meet all the wants of the colonists, but that these were dissolute and indolent, and therefore in constant distress. He, therefore, proposed that on every return voyage, as at present, a certain number of the idle and discontented should be sent home, to be replaced by an equal number of new colonists who were better disposed. With the colony thus purged and renewed, the island would fulfil the hopes he had felt from the beginning. But in the mean time, and until the population of the colony was invigorated by a new infusion, as there was great scarcity of hands, he asked that the Spaniards might be permitted, for two years longer, to employ the Indians as slaves, restricting this penalty to those taken in war or in insurrection. He requested that pious and learned religious might be sent out, not only for the instruction and conversion of the Indians, but also to assist him, by the hopes and fears of religion, in keeping the Spaniards firm in duty and virtue; and also with them, royal officers for the colonial administration, and an able and experienced jurist as judge of the island, who would apply the law against those who merited it, with rigor, with impartiality, and without being suspected of undue severity.

In another letter he gave an account of his voyage, adding a chart descriptive of the course sailed, and some specimens of the gold found in his new discoveries, and a fine collection of pearls from the Gulf of Paria. He called the special attention of their Highnesses to these pearls as the first seen in Europe from the New World.† This is the letter we have often cited, in which he describes his new discovery so enthusiastically, and his fervid fancy beheld not only an exhaustless source of wealth, but also the very seat of the terrestrial paradise. As soon as the affairs of the colony should permit, he promised to follow up this glorious discovery with his three remaining ships.

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. clvii.

† Oviedo, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. iii, cap. vi.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. xv.

Roldan and his confederates also wrote letters to their friends in Spain, shamelessly presenting the events in the colony in such way that they came out not only innocent, but with a halo of glory for their courage and self-denial in rising against the injustice and tyranny of the admiral's government. And although their individual authority was nothing by the side of the admiral's, still, by weight of numbers, the impudence with which they misstated the causes and effects, and most of all owing to the hostility which they knew many in Spain entertained for him, they trusted their efforts would outweigh his word.

After the departure of the vessels, Columbus turned his whole attention to putting an end to the sedition. He was not sure whether it was more injurious on account of the damage to Hispaniola, or because it prevented his prosecuting his discoveries in Paria, where treasures and marvels surpassing all imagination seemed to await him. The use of force being out of question, it was necessary, however painful and humiliating it might be, to resume negotiations. Accordingly making a virtue of necessity, he wrote a letter to Roldan, recalling in affectionate terms their former friendship, the confidence he had always had in him, and the eulogium he had made of Roldan's zeal and loyalty to the king and queen. He asked him to imagine how his heart suffered on finding bitter discord springing up between him and his brother the adelantado. He had intended to write him immediately after his return to San Domingo, but had been afraid that if his followers should know of it, the letter, if known to the rebels, might cause trouble, and instead of writing he had sent the commandant Miguel Ballester, whom he knew how much the admiral trusted, and who might therefore be looked upon as his signature and seal. That mission not having resulted as he hoped, he now determined to write to him direct; and, for the public weal, and for his own reputation after the eulogium he had made of him to the king and queen, he begged him not to persist any longer in his insubordination. Let him return to the admiral, whose arms were open, and who renewed the promise that no harm should befall his person or that of his companions.*

The next difficulty was whom to employ to carry this letter and act as mediator with the rebels. Roldan had protested that he would

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxviii.

treat only with Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, and there was no hope he would modify this in the least. But the government had grave suspicions of Carvajal's loyalty, in consequence of the rebels' tenderness for him, and, as happens in such cases, reasons for distrusting him were presented from all sides. It was remembered that the rebels, before talking with Carvajal, had often written and sent messengers to their friends who were about the adelantado, protesting that as soon as the admiral returned they would come and place themselves in his hands, and therefore begged them to be their advocates, and prevent his being prejudiced against them. And instead, on the admiral's arrival, their arrogance and insubordination increased, and the cause was suspected to be Carvajal's language. It was said that at Xaragua, knowing that Roldan was a rebel, he might have detained him as a prisoner, with his principal accomplices, on board of his vessel; but he permitted them to rove about for two days, and had even allowed them to purchase from his ship fifty-four swords and forty cross-bows. He was charged with not using proper care and prudence in ascertaining the designs of those who landed with Captain Juan Antonio Colombo, or at least with not doing all he should to recall them to their duty after he knew they had gone over to the rebels. They accused him of saying he had been sent to the Indies as the admiral's colleague, in order that nothing should be done without his assent, as it was feared in Castile that the admiral would commit some blunder. And as Roldan, in the letter sent by Carvajal to the admiral, had written that he was now approaching San Domingo by Carvajal's advice, in order to be on hand to treat of a settlement as soon as he arrived in Hispaniola, and the facts did not afterwards conform to the words of the letter; there seemed good grounds for believing that Carvajal had suggested the rebels' coming there, with the intention, in case the admiral had not arrived, of turning out the adelantado, and seizing the reins of government between them, Carvajal as colleague of the admiral, and Roldan as chief judge of the island. On what good terms he was with the rebels, was shown by their care to escort him, for the sake of safety, to within six leagues of San Domingo, and still more by the correspondence he kept up with them after their arrival at Bonao, and the provisions he sent to them. Finally, the main foundation of the suspicion, and which rendered his connivance with the rebels certain in the opinion of many, was the fact that they not only would treat with no one else,

but that they unanimously declared that in case of need, they would have taken him for their leader.

Columbus felt the force of this reasoning, and was greatly perplexed. But then, he reflected that he had always found Carvajal acting honorably on every occasion, and that most of the circumstances alleged against him could be explained in his favor, and the rest were only rumors (and he knew by his own experience how the most upright acts and the purest intentions can be distorted by malice); and he resolved to cast aside all suspicion, and place entire confidence in him. He accordingly entrusted him with carrying the letter to Roldan and resuming negotiations, giving him Miguel Ballester as a companion and assistant.

CHAPTER IX.

First agreement with the rebels.—They revolt again.—Second agreement.—Overbearing conduct of Roldan.—A great part of the rebels return to Spain (1499).

SOON after Carvajal departed on his mission to Bonaó, a letter was brought to the admiral from the four principal leaders of the rebels, Francisco Roldan, Adrian de Moxica, Pedro de Gomez, and Diego de Escobar. In this they declared that they had separated from the adelantado to save their life, as he was seeking means to put them to death; and besides exculpating and defending their conduct, they claimed great credit for dissuading their men from their determination to kill the adelantado in revenge for his tyranny, and advising them to wait patiently for the admiral, who would do them justice. But now a month had elapsed since his return, and they had waited daily for his orders, and their only reward for preventing serious evils was his anger and resentment against them. After that, in or-

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxvii.

der honorably and freely to carry out what they had resolved upon, they took leave of him and presented their resignation.

The letter was dated at Bonao, October 17th. It was hardly sent before the two envoys of the admiral made their appearance in camp. The rebels, immediately on seeing them, protested, with much resentment, that as they had not brought the Indian prisoners, they would enter into no negotiations with them. Carvajal answered so prudently, and argued so well, that, with the aid of the admiral's letter, written in terms of much kindness, he induced Roldan, Gomez, Escobar, and two or three others of the leaders, to visit the admiral for the purpose of coming to an agreement; and they were mounting their horses to leave with Carvajal, when the wildest of the others and the rabble, who hated to abandon that idle and licentious life to return to discipline and work, crowded around them, saying they would not consent to their going; but if an agreement was to be made, it should be in writing, and submitted for their approval. For two or three days the discussion was carried on by the rebels with great heat, at the end of which, Roldan, by general consent, wrote a letter to the admiral, in which, after repeating the charge that the adelantado was alone to blame for their division, he added that as they had no security in going to give an account of what had happened, his people would not consent to his leaving; and if the admiral desired him to come, he should send him a safe-conduct, in accordance with the enclosed minute, to be signed by himself and his principal officers.

Ballester wrote likewise to the admiral, by the same courier, praising the zeal and earnestness with which Carvajal endeavored to influence the insurgents, and assuring the admiral that as he had not been able to dissuade the rebels from their purpose, nothing remained but to yield to their demands. Therefore, as a conscientious and loyal servant, he advised and urged him to subscribe whatever conditions they offered; for their strength was continually increasing, whilst many of his own men were daily deserting to Roldan. It was necessary to concede what they asked, and have them embark quickly for Spain, for if there was much more delay, all would be lost; and not only the admiral's authority, but his person also, would be in serious danger. He had no doubt that all the hildagos and officers would do their whole duty, and even suffer themselves to be killed in their superior's defence; but besides being too few for

the great number of the insurgents, he saw that no great reliance could be placed on the mass of those who had thus far remained loyal to the government.*

The admiral immediately sent a safe-conduct, dated October 26th, and Roldan came at once to San Domingo; but his conduct while in that city showed clearly that he had come more for the purpose of securing partisans and inciting others to desert, than to settle terms of agreement.

The admiral had many conferences with him; many things were treated of, on both sides, in writing, and Columbus made great concessions; but it was impossible to satisfy Roldan's demands.† Roldan accordingly left, without any settlement, saying he would refer every thing to his associates, and report their decision in writing; and the admiral sent with him Diego de Salamanca, his majordomo, to act in his name. After many consultations with his confederates, Roldan, with their concurrence, on the 6th of November, reported to the admiral the terms they agreed to, saying that they were the best he could obtain, and if the admiral consented to them, he was to send a written acceptance to Concepcion, to which place he would proceed, because there was a great scarcity of food at Bonao, and where he would wait for an answer till the following Monday, the 11th. The letter was written in an arrogant and threatening tone, and contained such insolent demands that, at first, the admiral refused to accept them, rather choosing to run the risk of any danger than submit to these terms, which were a disgrace to justice, and a dishonor to himself and his brothers.‡ But to show his good-will and deprive the rebels of every pretext of blaming his obstinacy for the continuance of the sedition, he issued a proclamation on November 11th, which he ordered posted on the gate of the fort, promising full pardon and oblivion of the past, to Roldan and his partisans, all in general and each one in particular, who should return to duty and appear before the admiral within a month; even offering to return to Spain such as wished to go home, and to give the necessary orders to enable each one to receive his pay. At the end of that term, he would proceed with rigor against such as persisted in rebellion. He sent a copy of the proclama-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. cliii. — Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxviii-lxxix.

† Las Casas, l. c.

‡ Fernando Colombo, l. c.

tion to Roldan, by Carvajal, with a letter showing the impossibility of subscribing to the proposed terms, but offering to submit to any agreement that was approved of by Carvajal and Salamanca.

Carvajal, on arriving at Concepcion, found the place besieged by Roldan, on the pretext that they were harboring a refugee from justice, whose delivery he demanded as *alcalde-mayor*. Not expecting to take it by assault, he was reducing it by famine, and had already turned aside its supply of water. When the rebels learnt of the proclamation of amnesty, they ridiculed it, and said the admiral would soon be begging amnesty of them. But Carvajal again succeeded in moderating the fury of their feelings, and after many lively discussions between the two parties, nine articles of agreement were concurred in. By these it was settled : That the admiral should put at the disposal of the insurgents, in the harbor of Xaragua, two ships in good condition, sufficiently supplied, in the opinion of expert sailors, with provisions for the return voyage to Spain. That he should give them an order for the payment up to that time, with letters for the Catholic sovereigns, showing they had served faithfully. That as a reward for their labor in the government's service, a certain number of slaves should be turned over to them, as had been done to others ; and as many of the insurgents had taken women in various parts of the island, who had lately, or soon would, become mothers, they should be permitted to take them, if willing, in place of the slaves they were to have, and the children born of them should be free. That those whose property had been confiscated should be indemnified. That they should be given permission and opportunity for selling or otherwise disposing of their property on the island, and be indemnified by the government for what they should be obliged to leave undisposed of. And finally, that they should receive a safe-conduct in the sovereigns' name and on the word and faith of a gentleman, according to the Spanish custom, that neither the admiral nor any one for him should use the remaining ships to injure or molest the two with which they were leaving.

If the admiral's ratification of these terms was not received within a week, the whole was to be null and void.* Roldan, for himself and his followers, bound himself not to accept any of the persons in the admiral's service before the elapse of the period allowed for the

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxx.

ratification of the agreement ; that within fifty days from the time of receiving the admiral's ratification, they should embark for Castile ; that none of the slaves they were permitted to take should be carried off forcibly ; and that they would account to the officers appointed by the admiral for every one they took with them, and deliver up all property of the government in their possession.

The convention was signed by the admiral's delegates and by Roldan, on the 16th of November, 1498, ratified by the admiral on the 21st, and delivered by Ballester to Roldan on the 24th. Columbus, of his own motion, added to it a new amnesty, more extensive than the former, permitting such as wished to remain on the island either to come to San Domingo and enter the king's service, or to settle as proprietors in any part of the island they chose, assigning to each a tract of land, with a certain number of Indians to help in working it. But they all preferred going with Roldan, and started at once for Xaragua, to wait for the two vessels and leave in them. Miguel Ballester went with them by order of the admiral, for the purpose of watching and hurrying their preparations for sailing.

Columbus was sick at heart on seeing those two ships sail, for he had rested all his plans on them for prosecuting the recent discovery of the land of Paria. And besides losing the vessels necessary for that exploration, nearly all his provisions were carried off, for 'he saw the prudence of furnishing the rebels with abundant supplies for the voyage. He tried to find consolation in the thought that when order was restored and the island quiet, he could devote himself with greater zeal to his discoveries, and recover by more intense earnestness, when free from trouble, all that he was now forced to give up. He therefore ordered the fitting out of the two ships to be hastened as much as possible. As to the certificate of good conduct he was required to give all the rebels, he knew it was a fraud on their Majesties to represent as honest men a factious rabble who had upset the island, caused incalculable injury to the government and to the natives, and committed every enormity. He, consequently, wrote them a letter, telling all that had occurred, and that he had been induced to give the certificate by the unanimous advice of the wisest and most prudent men in the colony, as the only means of getting rid of that plague, and being in danger, if he refused, of seeing the whole colony fall into irreparable ruin ; that they had not only withdrawn from and resisted the lawful authority, but had also

prevented the Indians from paying tribute, overrun and robbed the whole island, seized a great quantity of gold, and dragged away many daughters of the caciques for their vicious purposes. And therefore he advised their Majesties to have them arrested, deprive them of their gold and slaves, until a regular inquiry should be made into their conduct. This letter he entrusted to an officer of tried fidelity and devotedness, to be carried to the court with his own hand.

Every thing being arranged for the departure of the rebels, and having no fears for the tranquillity of San Domingo, he determined to visit Isabella and the interior, to see what injury had been produced by the revolt, and make such provisions as might be necessary to repair it. He set out at once, accompanied by Don Bartholomew, leaving the government of San Domingo in Don Diego's hands.*

The good results of the inspection made by Columbus and his active brother, were soon seen. The cultivation of the soil, which had been almost entirely neglected, was resumed; the mines, which had been abandoned, were worked; the cattle running at large in every direction, were herded; and the caciques required to pay the former tribute. But just as the beneficial effects of a regular administration began to be felt, and restored tranquillity of mind was having a salutary influence on the physical health of Columbus, word was brought that the rebels, whom he supposed on the way to Europe, were still at Xaragua, and so far from being disposed to leave, that they had set on foot a fresh revolt.

Owing to the state of disorder the colony had fallen into during all these disturbances, the two ships that should have been fitted out within the fifty days, in spite of every effort, were not ready till towards the end of February, 1499. Nor was this the only ill-fortune; for, on the way from San Domingo to Xaragua, they were caught in a furious storm and forced to take shelter in a bay, where they were held till the last of March; and one of the ships was so disabled that it was necessary for her to return to San Domingo for repairs. The untiring Carvajal, seeing that the repairs would take too long, in order to give the rebels no grounds for complaint, suggested transferring her cargo to the third vessel then in the harbor. This was done, and he sailed in the new caravel in order to hasten the departure of the

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. xvi.—Fernando Colombo, c. lxxxii.

rebels ; and after a voyage of eleven days, arrived at Xaragua, where the other caravel was at anchor. But in the mean time the rebels had changed their mind about returning to Spain, and gladly availed themselves of the delay of the ships as a pretext for breaking their agreement. They complained of the admiral's breach of faith, accused him of violating his oaths, and, as one of the vessels was somewhat injured in the recent tempest, and the provisions were a little diminished, charged him with treacherously wishing to send them to sure death in a vessel unfit for a long voyage, and to starve them. And they declared that they now refused to leave.

When Carvajal found it impossible to overcome their obstinacy, he caused the notary whom he had with him, to draw up a formal protest of their refusal to embark after subscribing and swearing to the terms of agreement ; and as the worms were seriously damaging the two ships, and the provisions were consumed uselessly while they stayed in those waters, he sent the vessels back to San Domingo, on the 25th of April. The insurgents were glad of this, but they also drew up their writings, throwing on the admiral the blame of breaking the agreement, and keeping them in Hispaniola.

Carvajal went by land to San Domingo, and Roldan accompanied him part of the way on horseback. Contrary to his former arrogant and presuming air, the latter was now sad and thoughtful. After they had proceeded a short distance, he told Carvajal he wished to talk with him privately, and both withdrew to converse under a tree. Then Roldan, after asserting the sincerity of his intentions, said that if the admiral would send him and his principal associates a new safe-conduct, he would go to meet him, and hoped that every thing might be arranged to the satisfaction of both parties ; but it was necessary this offer should be kept secret from his companions.

For some time, Roldan had been reflecting seriously on his position. The admiral's authority was declining every day ; the rebel ranks were daily swelled by desertions ; but this in no wise helped his case, and he had lost all hope of gaining control of the government of the colony, and presenting himself to the sovereigns as the savior of their interests in the New World ; because his followers, by their unrestrained indulgence, had become weak in body, and by following their caprice in going where they pleased, had grown intolerant of all authority and discipline. For this reason, he and the other leaders, contrary to the wishes and clamors of their rabble,

had been anxious to see the admiral, to treat of an agreement, in order that they might impose such conditions as would not only save them harmless, but secure them a good position, and they could, on returning to Spain, present themselves as the liberators of their oppressed brethren, and be honored and rewarded for their work. The refusal of his followers to permit their departure having rendered this impossible, he now sought, with the agreement of the other leaders, to resume negotiations with the admiral.

Carvajal, overjoyed at the unexpected renewal of negotiations, wrote to the admiral, on the 15th of May, immediately on his arrival at San Domingo; and the admiral answered at once, enclosing the safe-conduct asked for, and also a letter for Roldan, which, his son Fernando tells us, was "short in words, but long and effective in meaning," confirming him in his resolution. Then returning to San Domingo to be at hand for the negotiations, the admiral wrote him again, on the 29th of June, a most affectionate letter; and seeing that the matter was not nearing a settlement, in order that the rebels might not be held back by any doubt, he caused six or seven of the principal persons of the colony to write to Roldan, assuring him that they would be security that no harm should be done him or any that accompanied him, during the negotiations, unless they should attack the authority of the sovereigns or their representatives.*

In the midst of the anxiety, and whilst Columbus was exerting himself with untiring energy and generous sacrifices for the welfare of the colony and the interest of the sovereigns, he received an answer from Spain, to the letter he had written to their Majesties the previous autumn, relating the sad events of the revolt, and asking protection and aid from the government. The answer was written by Fonseca, his fierce and hypocritical enemy, saying, in a few dry words, that information of Roldan's insurrection had been received; but for the moment, no decision could be made, as their Majesties wished to examine the matter carefully, and apply proper remedies.† This cold answer froze Columbus's heart. It was clear that the rebels' false reports, backed by his enemies, had affected the sentiments of their Majesties, and that his wise recommendations for repairing the evils from which the island was suf-

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxiii.

† Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. xvi.

fering, and prevent their recurrence, had been rejected as coming from a suspicious source. This want of confidence discouraged him less on account of his own humiliation and his being deserted in his desperate attempt to restore order, and quiet in the colony, than of his fear that the rebels, as was likely, should discover how very little influence he had at court, and thereby become more exacting in their demands. This rendered him the more eager to conclude an agreement with them before any thing should happen ; and with this intention, towards the end of August, he proceeded, with two caravels, to the harbor of Azua, which was west of San Domingo and much nearer Xaragua, taking with him many of the most important persons of the colony, in order by his presence and the concurrence of the others, to push the negotiations to a conclusion.

Roldan met him with a part of his gang and Adrian de Moxica, the most turbulent of the insurgents. But the rebels must have known of Fonseca's answer and its coldness, for Roldan's manner towards the admiral was too different from what could have been expected from his private conference with Carvajal and his eagerness to come to an agreement. A conqueror dictating terms of peace after a battle, could not be more haughty and arrogant than was Roldan on board of the admiral's caravel, laying down the basis on which he and his companions were willing to treat. This was : 1. That he should be allowed to send fifteen of his men to Spain by the vessels at San Domingo ; 2. Those that remained, instead of the pay they were entitled to, should receive separate tracts of land to cultivate ; 3. That a proclamation should be issued in solemn form, that all the charges against him and his companions were based on false reports, at the instigation of those who wished to ruin him, and who were enemies of their Majesties ; and 4. That he should be restored to the office of *alcalde-mayor*.

These were hard and insolent demands, especially as they were only preliminary ; but they were agreed to. Roldan then left to discuss with his confederates the terms to be submitted to the admiral for his definitive approbation. After consulting for two days, the rebels sent their capitulation drawn up in proper form. It contained the four articles just mentioned, the terms agreed on at Fort Concepcion, which the present convention did not abrogate, and an additional article, declaring that if the admiral should violate a single one of the provisions of the agreement, they should have the right to assemble

and require its execution forcibly or otherwise, as they deemed best.* Not content with securing full oblivion of the past, they provided by that agreement for a fresh rebellion, when, where, and however they chose.

But the admiral was in no position to hesitate, and however exorbitant the insurgents' terms, he was forced to bow his head and accept them. Some of those who had remained faithful till now, on seeing the authority of the government destroyed, and the insurgents triumphant and fearless in their license, had begun to consider the plan of withdrawing to Higüey, the eastern part of the island, which was said to contain rich gold-mines, and there setting up a separate government, enjoy themselves and grow rich, without troubling themselves about either Roldan or the admiral.

This fresh conspiracy threw him on the brink of the precipice, and the humiliating capitulation presented by the insurgents was the only hold he had, if for nothing else, to gain time, and not lose all hope for the future. He, therefore, accepted the terms; but before signing the convention, added a clause, to the effect that the king's orders, his own, and those of the officers appointed by him, should be strictly carried out.†

It is painful to read the details of this long struggle which a man so great and deserving as Columbus, was forced to sustain against a few wretches who owed it to him that they had become of any importance. But a powerful wheel is sometimes turned aside or stopped by a small stick. Who can say what a glorious career of discovery was hindered by this little obstacle in the way? Instead of that, all his energy and marvellous talent were wasted in fruitless efforts against a handful of factious men; he was prevented from deriving from Hispaniola the profit he had promised himself, and which he could have drawn from it; the little he had begun to derive from it was dissipated; and the new continent his genius had foreseen, on which he had based such hope of restoring his decayed fortune, remained a glorious field for the labors and discoveries of those who came after him.

Tuesday, the 5th of November, Roldan was again installed in his office of *alcalde-mayor*, in which he bore himself with the same ar-

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. xvi.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxii.

† Herrera, l. c.

rogance with which he had dictated the capitulation. He passed haughtily through the streets with a long train of followers; he associated only with the disaffected; conscious of the support of all that was most criminal and vile in the colony, his audacity intimidated the good and peaceable Spaniards who continued faithful to their duty. He paid no sort of respect to the admiral's authority, but rather opposed it. Among other acts of his is mentioned his removal of Rodrigo Perez, appointed by Columbus lieutenant to the *alcalde-mayor*, denying the admiral's authority to make such appointment. His followers regulated their conduct by his example, assuming the part of heroes, who at risk of life had put down the tyranny of Columbus, and secured the interests of the government and the freedom of the colonists. All this was distressing to Columbus; but for fear of worse, he durst not open his mouth. His only comfort was the hope that his mildness would, by degrees, overcome the prejudice and ill-will which had been excited against him, and bring them back to their duty. Roldan presented to him the request, signed by more than 100 of his followers, that lands for cultivation should be assigned to them in the province of *Xaragua*. The collection of so many factious persons in a place so remote from the action of the government was a serious peril, as they might some day serve as the nucleus for gathering others who were disaffected, and raising another rebellion against the admiral's authority. With his usual gentle patience, he succeeded in dissuading them from all settling in the same province, and got them to accept the pleasantest lands in different parts of the island. Some were sent to *Bonao*, where their settlement was the beginning of the city afterwards known by that name; others on the banks of the *Rio Verde* in the *Vega*; and some went six leagues beyond *Santiago*. To give them a greater interest in the cultivation of the lands assigned to them, and to encourage and help them, he made an arrangement with the *caciques* in their vicinity, by which these *caciques* were exempted from paying tribute, and in lieu thereof, should furnish these Spaniards with a certain number of free Indians to assist in cultivating their lands.

The first intention of Columbus in regard to the Indians, was, as we saw, that of an affectionate father towards his children, and all his hopes and desires were directed to making of them good and peaceful subjects of the Catholic sovereigns, and fervent followers of

the law of Christ. But the violent and licentious conduct of most of his companions, the revolts of the natives, the necessity of making up for the want of hands and of victuals, and the other disasters which befell him, forced his hand, and dragged him into the ideas of his time, which looked on discoveries of infidel lands in the light of conquests, and gave the conqueror absolute dominion over person and property. Still, he had recourse to this extreme only so far as driven by necessity, and always tempered its severity by the innate goodness and meekness of his heart. The horror came afterwards, in the frightful extension given to the mild principles he had laid down. So, from the arrangement made at this time with the caciques, originated the custom of *repartimientos*, or distributions of free Indians amongst the colonists, which was afterwards adopted in all the Spanish colonies. Restricted to the conditions established by Columbus, the thing would not have been burdensome to the Indians, but rather, if carried out with order and humanity, might have been of great benefit to them, gradually instructing them and accustoming them to the regular cultivation of the fields; whilst in the hands of men without any feeling of humanity in their insatiable greed, it exposed the wretched Indians to the cruelest slavery, and was one of the main causes of the extinction of their race in Hispaniola.*

After amply providing for his followers, Roldan was equally bold in making his own demands. He claimed various lands around Isabella as his property before the revolt, and got it; he demanded a royal holding in the Vega, where all kinds of poultry were raised, and it was given him; he demanded the right of using the cattle raised on the farms belonging to the crown, and this was granted, but with the proviso that it was only till the pleasure of the king and queen should be known; for the admiral still hoped that when their Highnesses were informed by what violence and rebellion they had been seized, the rebels would not only be deprived of their ill-got property, but receive the severe punishment they had merited.

When Roldan thought he had claimed and secured enough to satisfy his cupidity, he asked permission to visit his lands; and Columbus reluctantly gave it. He left at once for the Vega, and stopping at Bonao, his headquarters during the revolt, appointed

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. xvi.—Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, lib. vi, § 50

Pedro Riquelme, one of his most active followers, alcalde of that district, with authority to arrest and try all criminals, except those accused of capital crimes, who were to be sent to Fort Concepcion, where the alcalde-mayor reserved to himself the decision of their fate. This was an assumption of authority on Roldan's part beyond his powers, and the admiral felt it severely, but again was forced to submit and be silent.

During this time, the two ships which had brought supplies for the colony and the unfortunate letter written by Fonseca to the admiral in the name of the Catholic sovereigns, had been got ready to return to Europe. Columbus had prepared to return to Spain also, with his brother Bartholomew, for the purpose of showing in their true light the late events on the island, as he found his letters of explanation were discredited by the action of his enemies.* With this intention, and to provide for greater tranquillity on the island during his absence, he determined to establish a sort of police, and selecting soldiers to form a company, he entrusted their command to one of his most trusty officers, with instructions to visit the provinces, compel the Indians to pay their tribute, watch the behavior of the colonists, and suppress the first symptoms of insurrection.† But he hesitated whether to go or stay, when he considered the uncertain condition in which he was leaving the island. He was doubtful of the fidelity of the late insurgents, although he had purchased their submission at so dear a price; and there were rumors that the mountain tribes of Ciguay were making preparations for a descent on the Vega, for the purpose of freeing their cacique Mayobanex, who was still confined in Fort Concepcion. He finally decided to put off his departure to another time, on receiving information, from the western part of the island, that four vessels had arrived off the coast with suspicious intentions.

The two caravels sailed in the beginning of October, taking all that preferred to return to their country. Among these were some of Roldan's followers, who nearly all took with them one or two, or more slaves, some of them even daughters of caciques whom they had seduced or seized. The admiral was grieved, but was forced to connive at these and many other iniquities, for their companions on

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. xvi.—Fernando Colombø, cap. lxxxii-lxxxiv.

† Herrera, l. c.—Fernando Colombo, l. c.

shore were on the lookout, ready to snarl and bite at the least act of authority on his part. It was clear that all these rascals would join his enemies, defame his character, and revile his conduct. To weaken as far as possible the effect of their calumnies, he sent with them Miguel Ballester and Garcia de Barrantes, with the necessary powers to watch his interest at court, and with all the testimony taken on the conduct of Roldan and his companions. He gave them also a letter for the sovereigns, entreating them carefully to inform themselves concerning the late events in Hispaniola, to determine the validity of the concessions he had been compelled to make, and to take such measures as their Majesties should judge best. For himself, he considered his capitulation with the rebels null and void: 1st, because it was extorted by force, and on the sea where he was not acting as viceroy; 2ndly, because prior to the capitulation, the rebels had been twice proceeded against and condemned as traitors, and he had no authority in his capacity as admiral to absolve them; 3rdly, because many of the articles concerned the royal revenue, over which he had no control, without the intervention of the officers appointed for that purpose by their Majesties; 4thly, because Roldan and his companions, on leaving Spain, had sworn fidelity to the king and queen, and to the admiral as their representative. For these and other like reasons, the seriousness of which should not be too closely inquired into, considering the painful state he was in, he entreated their Majesties not to consider themselves bound to ratify the convention which he had been compelled, in spite of himself, to sign with these men stained with every crime, but to order an inquiry into their conduct, and then decide on their fate.*

He renewed, at the same time, his request for a learned man of tried honesty to be sent to the island, to act as judge and apply the laws, as he had been accused of too great severity, although his conscience assured him he had always used great clemency. He also requested that discreet persons might be sent out to form a council for the government of the island, and others specially charged to guard the rights of the treasury; but he recommended that the powers of each should be well defined, so that they should not interfere with his rights and privileges as conceded by their Highnesses. He insisted strongly on this point, as for a long time there had begun

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. xvi.

to be an encroachment on his prerogatives. He ended by saying that he might perhaps be mistaken, but he thought princes could never place too much confidence in the persons governing in their name, for that was the only way to make their authority strong and respected—a very sound maxim, and well suited to his own case; for the audacity of the rebels and their triumph were the result of the well-known distrust of him by the court, and disregard of his just complaints. Finally, as he felt his age and infirmity increasing, and his health, much impaired by the fatigues and sufferings of his last voyage, no longer permitted him to attend to affairs with the necessary activity, he begged them to send his son Diego to support and aid him in the varied and laborious duties of his government.* Don Diego was still serving as page to the queen, but was of an age to give great help to his old father. But it was probably less for the sake of his assistance, than to train him in the difficult art of governing, and let him gain the necessary experience amidst such great difficulties and dangers, under the eye of his father, for the time when he should take his place.

Let us now turn to the four vessels arrived at the western coast of the island, on account of which Columbus gave up his intention of going to Spain.

CHAPTER X.

Descent of Ojeda on the coast of Hispaniola.—Suspicion and fear of treachery.—Columbus is disheartened and meditates flight.—Content of craft between Ojeda and Roldan who is sent against him.—Conspiracy of Guevara and Moxica.—Quick and fierce extinction of the conspiracy.—Administrative reform, safety, and improvement of the colony (1499-1500).

THE first rumor of the arrival of the four vessels was quickly followed by the report that they had entered a bay a little beyond the harbor of Jacquemel, and were under the command of Alonzo de

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. iii, cap. xvi.

Ojeda, the bold and fiery cavalier who had so artfully captured the formidable Caonabo. This information caused the admiral great anxiety ; for, knowing the man's character, he saw that only evil could result from his coming in this freebooting style. There were signs that could not be doubted that the bad humors of the late rebels were still circulating in their veins, ready to break out anew ; and there was every thing to fear, if a man of Ojeda's boldness should occasion a fresh outbreak, and, uniting the men he had in his ships with the criminals and the discontented in the colony, raise again the standard of revolt. The admiral's anxiety was the greater, owing to the absence of the adelantado, who had been hurriedly dispatched to the mountains of Ciguay to prevent the threatened descent of those tribes ; and he was the only man of sufficient discretion and vigor that could be trusted to cope with Ojeda's craft and daring, if necessary.

After consulting those about him, he concluded that the safest plan would be to send Roldan himself against Ojeda, as the only person of sufficient courage and skill to oppose him. It was a dangerous experiment ; yet there seemed grounds for expecting a good result. Roldan had gained honors, wealth, power, all that he asked for, and what further could he desire ? Nothing remained for him but to secure the peaceable enjoyment of what he possessed. All agitators are alike : they labor with tongue and hand till their ambition or avarice is satiated ; but once they have a position to keep or possessions to guard, they are the most obstinate conservatives and most violent opponents of their former allies. Roldan could not be different from his species. If he still entertained evil designs, to leave him with his partisans in the centre of the undefended colony,—as it was necessary to send all that could be depended on to resist Ojeda,—was to open a way for him to put them in execution while the government was engaged with all its forces elsewhere. But to give him this unexpected proof of confidence, would flatter his self-love, and make him take pride in acquitting himself honorably in an expedition of which he was alone thought capable ; and the effect could not but be favorable on his partisans, by assuring them of the sincerity of the government in their pardon, and the concessions made to them.

Roldan was accordingly sent for, and charged to start at once against Ojeda, with two caravels.

Whilst Roldan was away on this expedition, his trusty ally and

friend, Pedro Riquelme, began building on a strong elevation a large and solid edifice, which he said was for a shelter for his cattle, but from the strong position of the site, and the size and the solidity of the walls, looked more like a fort than a shelter for beasts; the more so, as great numbers of his former companions in revolt were settled in the neighborhood. But Pedro de Arana, who was on duty in that part of the island, probably as chief of the company selected to make the rounds, suspecting the real object of the building, forbade the continuance of the work. This caused heated disputes between them, but Arana remained firm. Riquelme, making a report of the opposition, with all the testimony, appealed to the admiral, who fully sustained his officer, and Riquelme for the time acquiesced.*

The matter, serious enough in itself, as proving that the pacified rebels were planning fresh disturbances, became much more important at this time, on account of Riquelme's close relation to Roldan, and it was rumored that Riquelme was raising that fort in full understanding with Roldan, as a seasonable preparation for future purposes. The admiral was already much worried as to Roldan's fidelity in executing his mission; and now the thought that he was surrounded on every side by treason, took possession of his mind. Alone, old, infirm, he despaired of coming out safely; completely discouraged, he who had so often faced death without fear on the sea and the Ocean, and had ventured where none ventured before,—here, under the weight of so many misfortunes and adversities, yielded to the weakness of human nature, and felt fear—fear that an attempt would be made on his life, and prepared to abandon all and save himself by flight.

Here is his own account of his despondency, and how he was restored: On Christmas day, being in utter anguish from the torments caused me by the wicked Christians and the Indians, and on the point of abandoning every thing to save my life, if possible, God our Lord comforted me by saying miraculously: "Take courage, yield not to sadness and fear; I will care for every thing. The seven years of the term of gold are not yet expired, and for that and all else I am able to provide." And he goes on to relate how "that same day I learnt there were eighty leagues of the soil, in which gold-mines were found at every step, so that they seemed to form a

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxvi.

single mine.”* In the same letter from which these words are taken, he returns twice to relate again his extreme dejection and the miraculous help he received from heaven. *The seven years of the term of gold* relate to the vow he had made, that on discovering the New World, he would, within seven years, from the profits and revenues of his discoveries, fit out 50,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre, and a like number within the next five years.†

The comfort which Columbus felt in his mind must, without doubt, be referred to the intelligence that new mines had been discovered, thus reviving his former hopes, which he thought had gone for ever. But in his utter prostration, his mind more than ever filled with the thought of God (as is always the case with persons of strong faith, when most borne down by misfortune and deserted by all), on seeing a way opened, beyond all expectation, which would lead to the end of his labors and the satisfaction of his most lively desires, his thoughts turned at once to God, and in the unexpected occurrence he beheld his all-powerful arm raised for his help; and in the intense joy of his soul he felt remorse for his doubt and despondency; and this remorse, in the pious disposition of his spirit, took the form of an interior voice, saying: “O man of little faith! take heart; what dost thou fear when I am with thee?”

Further consolation was soon after received from Roldan’s fidelity. Proud of the work entrusted to him, Roldan made every effort to respond in a worthy manner to the unexpected confidence of the government. He had sailed at once with two caravels, and, on the 29th of September, anchored two leagues from Ojeda. Landing with twenty-five of his most resolute men, well-armed, he sent five of them forward to learn where Ojeda was, following with the rest at a short distance, ready to fall upon the daring adventurer when discovered. They learnt that he was several leagues from his ships, with only fifteen men, unsuspectingly engaged in making cassava-bread in an Indian village. Roldan threw himself between them and their ships, hoping to take them by surprise; but Ojeda

* *Letter to the Governess of the Infante Don Juan*, written towards the end of 1500. In the *Raccolta di Viaggi* of F. C. Marmocchi. Prato, 1840.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxvi.

† *Letter of Columbus to the Supreme Pontiff Alexander VI.*—Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. cxlv.

was informed of his approach by the Indians, in whom the very name of Roldan inspired terror after the excesses he had committed in Xaragua ; and at once supposing he had been sent against him, stopped his work and endeavored to reach his caravels in all haste. But in this he was disappointed, for, when half-way, he saw Roldan appear suddenly before him.

Still he was not dismayed ; his quick mind immediately found a way out, and taking six of his men, he boldly presented himself before Roldan. The latter began with a few general questions, and next inquired his motive for landing in so remote and lonely a part without notifying the admiral of his arrival. Ojeda replied that he was returning from a voyage of discovery, and had been forced to put in there to repair his ships and procure provisions ; but he intended to touch also at San Domingo, to pay his homage to the admiral, and report many things which he could communicate to no one else. And, by way of great confidence and secrecy, he gave him to understand that the admiral had lost all favor at court, and there was talk of relieving him from command.

Roldan asked to see the license under which he was sailing, and on being told it was on board, accompanied Ojeda as far as the ships, to make sure of it, and was shown a license signed by Fonseca. There were many persons on board whom Roldan knew, as they had been in Hispaniola before ; and these confirmed Ojeda's statements, and exhibited various articles collected in the places they had visited. After that, trusting Ojeda's promise that he would visit the admiral, Roldan repaired to his own ships and returned to San Domingo.

The glowing accounts sent home by Columbus of his discoveries in the land of Paria, the great hopes which he expressed of the riches of those new regions, and the splendid specimens of pearls sent to the king and queen, excited the cupidity and ambition of many adventurers. Amongst these was Alonzo de Ojeda. He was a favorite of Fonseca, who gave him the admiral's narrative to read, and showed him the chart of the course followed. From the narrative itself he learnt that for the present the admiral was prevented, by the disturbances in Hispaniola, from pursuing the exploration of the hoped-for treasures, and, on the other hand, he knew, from his conversations with Fonseca and other enemies of the admiral, that King Ferdinand, who was naturally suspicious, entertained doubts with respect to the conduct of the admiral ; and his speedy downfall was beginning to

be whispered, Isabella, in the hopeless condition of her health, being unable to give a thought to his protection. The idea struck Ojeda that he might draw profit from these circumstances, and, by means of a private enterprise, be the first to gather fruit from the recently-discovered country. Daring in all his thoughts, and caring little for delicacy or scruples, he determined at once to follow out this idea, and communicated it to Fonseca, his patron. The latter, a bitter enemy of the fortune and fame of Columbus, was delighted with his client's idea, made him take copies of all the charts and writings of Columbus, to guide him in those unknown seas, gave him a license for the voyage, signed only by himself, as he feared he could not get the sanction of the king and queen, and helped him, by his name and influence, to form a company that would supply the means for the undertaking.* In this way, Ojeda soon had four vessels fully equipped. In his license, he was forbidden to touch at any land belonging to the king of Portugal, or any that had been discovered by Columbus prior to 1495. This date is enough to show the perfidious hypocrisy of Fonseca towards Columbus; for whilst respecting his rights and privileges in appearance, in fact he aimed a stroke directly at his heart; for the land of Paria and the island of pearls were discovered after 1495, and so Ojeda was left free to sail to those places with perfect safety and impunity. The ships were to be fitted out wholly at Ojeda's expense, and the crown was to receive a certain proportion of the profits of the voyage.

Ojeda sailed from Spain in May, 1499. He had for the chief pilot of the expedition, or, as we should call it in these times, his lieutenant, Juan de la Cosa, a man of singular skill in all that related to the sea, and a pupil of the admiral's, sailing with him on the first and second voyages, accompanying him in the long and perilous navigation along the southern coast of Cuba, and around the island of Jamaica. His contemporaries looked upon him as the most expert mariner of his time, and almost an oracle in every thing relating to the sea; and his vanity made him esteem himself the equal of Christopher Columbus.† Another of his pilots, of considerable reputation and importance, was Bartholomew Roldan, who had made

* *Proceso de D. Diego Colon*.—Deposition of Ojeda himself, and that of Bernal de Haro, who copied the letter of Columbus to their Majesties concerning this recent discovery.—Navarrete, *Col. Pregunta 2. 9*

† Navarrete, *Col. Viaj.*, iii, p. 12

the voyage to Paria with the admiral, and thus united knowledge of the locality to that of his profession.* Amongst the volunteers to share with Ojeda the labor and profit of that voyage, special mention should be made of Amerigo Vespucci, by whose name, through a strange caprice of fortune, the New World discovered by Columbus was afterwards called.

Ojeda struck the new continent about 200 leagues west of the Orinoco, and following the coast, crossed the Gulf of Paria, and coming out of the Dragon's Mouth, kept along the shore to the west as far as Cape Vela, visited the island of Margarita, and discovered the Gulf of Venezuela. But the results of the voyage did not equal their anticipations, and so, to make up for it elsewhere, they sailed to the Caribbean Sea and from there to Hispaniola, thus making the longest voyage that had yet been made along the shores of the New World.†

Ojeda had gone quite beyond the limits granted him by Fonseca, but he was aware that this would be an easy matter to arrange with his patron; and moreover, he was not one to regard very closely the rights or wishes of others, when opposed to his own interest.

At the Caribbee Islands, he had an engagement with the warlike natives, and took many prisoners, intending to sell them as slaves in some market in Spain. He had come now to Hispaniola for the purpose of extorting what he could from the Indians, capturing more slaves, and taking in a cargo of Brazil-wood, which was abundant there, and was highly prized in Europe for dyeing; and at the same time to repair his ships, and procure provisions. He arrived on the 5th of September, 1499, on that long peninsula that terminates at Cape Tiburon, at a place which the Indians called Yaquimo, and the Christians Brazil, on account of the quantity of the wood of that name.

The admiral felt sorely the grant made to Ojeda, which was an open violation of his privileges and the solemn agreement made with him, and he waited impatiently for the promised visit for fuller explanation. But Ojeda had no such intention, having given that promise solely to elude the vigilance of Roldan. As soon as he had repaired his ships, and taken in provisions, he sailed along the coast to Xaragua, where he landed in February, 1500, and was cordially

* Navarrete, *Col. Viaj.*, iii, p. 4.

† Herrera, dec. i, lib. iv, cap. iv.—Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo.*—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxiv.

received by the Spaniards residing there. Many of them had belonged to the forces of Roldan, and were now restive under the slight restraint which the admiral had been able to impose on their licentious life. When they found that Ojeda was there by stealth, knowing his character, they gathered around him as a new leader, who had come to take the post, wrongly abandoned by Roldan, and secure their rights. They made a thousand complaints to him and his men, of the injustice and tyranny of Columbus, whom they accused, among other things, of keeping back their pay. Ojeda lent a willing ear to their complaints, and, partly because it was his chivalric nature to assume the defence of the weak and oppressed, and partly because it suited his wants and ambition, he accepted the office.

Fernando relates that in order to increase the number of his partisans, he began to give out that the Catholic sovereigns had selected him together with Carvajal to advise, or rather watch, the admiral, and allow him to do nothing they did not consider for the service of their Majesties; and that one of the many commands he had received was that he should enforce the payment of those who were on the island in the service of the crown.* But daring and giddy as he was, Ojeda was at the same time very wary; and it is hardly likely he would venture to give out what was so sure to be proved false, and, when found out, cause his ruin. It was surely a report begun in the tattle of the men, willingly listened to by the ignorant, and encouraged by the malice of those interested. The coupling of Carvajal's name with his own, was likewise a partisan move, suggested to him and perhaps done without his direct interference, by the leaders of the new revolt; because that valiant officer, notwithstanding his unswerving fidelity to the admiral, always retained the esteem of the former rebels, and his name was for the mass of them the strongest proof that Ojeda could allege in support of his words. That Ojeda was so easily induced to rise against the admiral, was due to his knowledge that Columbus was losing favor at court, and that, in any event, he had a safe refuge in the powerful protection of Fonseca. The step resolved on, Ojeda threw himself into it with his characteristic impetuosity, and proposed marching at once on San Domingo, to compel the admiral to pay them on the spot, or drive him from the island. This proposition was hailed

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxiv.

with transport by some, but seriously opposed by others, who thought it too bold a step; or perhaps their discontent went no further than their lips, and thinking themselves very fortunate in coming out of their last revolt without harm, and even to advantage, were unwilling to risk imprudently what they had gained, and perhaps bring on themselves the punishment they had then escaped. Their minds grew warm, strong words were used, deeds followed words, arms were brandished on either side, and a brawl ensued. Some were wounded and killed on both sides; but the victory was with the boldest, and it was decided to march on San Domingo.

But the admiral had been informed of Ojeda's arrival at Xaragua, and at once dispatched Roldan to watch his movements. On his way, Roldan was apprized of the two parties that had been formed, and of the quarrel that had taken place, and seeing that matters were taking a worse turn than he expected, he sent word to Diego de Escobar, who was in those parts, to follow him at once with all his force. Escobar had been one of Roldan's principal confederates in his revolt; but he was now heartily in earnest to show his loyalty, in order to secure the possession of the wealth he had acquired. They reached Xaragua within a day of each other. The rebels, hearing that Roldan was coming, made a plan for his capture, but, warned in time, he was able to disappoint them.*

When Ojeda found that a superior force was approaching, he withdrew to his ships. It was perhaps the first time his indomitable courage ever drew back in the face of danger; but in this instance he was aware that however matters turned out, he was sure to be loser; for if he had hoped to acquire glory when he had succeeded in overthrowing the government of Columbus by a sudden blow, showing that it had rendered itself intolerable to all, and proclaiming himself the deliverer of the oppressed Spaniards, he was certain of encountering serious trouble in attempting a bloody battle against the government, sustained and regularly defended by the greater part of the colony.

Then Roldan began the same remonstrances against this new enemy of the admiral, that had been used against himself, showing him the injury he was working to the colony and to Spain, the impossibility of succeeding in his designs, the disgrace and punishment that must

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxiv.

ensue from his disloyalty, and invited him to a meeting for the purpose of amicably settling matters. But Ojeda, knowing the crafty and violent disposition of Roldan, and from what he himself would have done in Roldan's case, arguing what he had to expect if he put himself in his power, laughed at the honeyed proposals of his crafty enemy, and so far from being grateful, detained his messenger, Diego de Truxillo, a prisoner on board of the ships. He then landed suddenly and carried off another of Roldan's companions, named Toribio de Lenares, and kept them both on board in irons, as hostages for one of his sailors who had deserted, threatening to hang them if the deserter was not given up.* Then making sail, he proceeded twelve leagues further north, to the province of Cahay, one of the most beautiful and fertile on the island, and inhabited by a quiet and gentle people; and landing with forty men, seized all the provisions he could find there. Roldan and Escobar followed along shore, and soon came up with him. Roldan, determined to bring matters to an end, sent Escobar, in a light canoe paddled by Indians, to confer with Ojeda at proper distance, and propose in his name that, as Ojeda would not trust himself ashore, Roldan would "go and confer with him, if he would send a boat for him." Ojeda believed he had caught his enemy, and enjoying his unexpected prey in advance, sent his own boat for him. When they were a short distance from the shore, the crew stopped the boat and told Roldan they were ready for him: "How many persons may I take with me?" he asked. They replied, "not more than five." Then Escobar and four others went out to the boat and were taken in. Roldan then left the shore, carried on the shoulders of one of his men, with another at his side, pretending to keep him from falling. By this stratagem they were increased to eight. The instant Roldan was in the boat, he commanded the men to row to shore, and they hardly had time to express their refusal, before he and his companions, drawing their swords, wounded some and took the rest prisoners, except an Indian archer, who glided like a fish through the water, and escaped. The loss of his men was nothing to Ojeda compared with that of his boat, which was indispensable for the ship's service, and his absolute need of the boat made him bow his head and be the first to propose peace. He accordingly approached the shore in the

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. clxix.

little boat, that remained, accompanied by his chief pilot, an arquebusier, and four oarsmen. Roldan went out in the other boat to meet him. Keeping at a distance from each other, cautious and on their guard, the two wary adversaries held their conference. Ojeda tried to justify his hostile conduct towards the admiral, saying he had been driven to it by seeing Roldan come with a large force to seize him. The other positively denied having any such intention, and promised him the most cordial reception from the admiral, if he would repair to San Domingo. After many words on both sides, without either believing a word the other said, they came to this agreement: that the boat should be given up, the prisoners released on both sides, excepting the deserter, whose whereabouts was not known, and Ojeda should leave the island at once. In fact, he left the next day, but went off threatening to come back at a future day with more men and ships.* Roldan, suspecting he had not really left, remained some time in the neighborhood, and then learning that he had landed in a distant part of the island, took eighty men with him, in Indian canoes, to follow him, at the same time sending scouts by land. But when he arrived, Ojeda had left, and was not heard of further. Las Casas says it is uncertain whether he went to some remote province of Hispaniola, or to Porto Rico, where he made up what he called his *cabalgada*, or drove of slaves, large numbers of whom he carried off to Spain, and sold in the markets of Cadiz.†

Roldan's men had behaved in the affair like well-disciplined and honest soldiers; and they thought no reward too great for their good conduct, following so soon on their late licentiousness and insubordination. And as the province of Cahay, where they then were, was the most beautiful and fertile on the whole island, and still untouched by the hand of the White Men, they asked, as a recompense of their services, to have it shared amongst them, and to settle there. Roldan, who was now anxious to prove himself a scrupulous observer of law and justice, replied that he had no authority to grant their request, and they must apply to the admiral. But, conscious that a few months previously he had accustomed these turbulent spirits to demand whatever their whim suggested, and to have it at once con-

* Letter of C. Columbus to the Goeriness of Prince Juan. In the *Raccolta di Viaggi* of F. C. Marmocchi. Prato, 1840.

† Las Casas, lib. i, cap. clxix.

ceded, he was afraid to refuse outright, and, as a partial satisfaction, offered them some lands of his own in the neighboring province of Xaragua. He then wrote to the admiral, asking the permission to return to San Domingo, and received an affectionate answer, congratulating him on his energy and skill in executing the difficult duty assigned to him, but requesting him to remain for a time in Xaragua, lest the adventurer should be still in the vicinity, and attempt another descent on the province. But even Roldan was soon to have his days of sorrow, and the snake he had warmed and fostered for the admiral, was about to vent its poison on its master. Don Fernando de Guevara, a young Spanish cavalier, of noble race, and fine person, elegant in his dress, his bearing, and his manners, but of dissolute habits, had been banished from the island, by Columbus, on account of his base behavior; and as there was no immediate opportunity of returning him to Europe, he had been sent to Xaragua to embark on one of Ojeda's ships. But he arrived after they had left. Roldan, out of deference for Guevara's cousin, Adrian de Moxica, who had been his intimate friend and colleague in the recent revolt, received him most courteously, and while waiting the admiral's further orders, left him free to reside in the neighborhood where he chose, and conferred many other favors on him. Guevara chose the province of Cahay, in a place where his cousin Moxica was training a number of dogs and falcons for hunting. From there he was able to visit the neighboring province of Xaragua, and became the guest of Anacoana, who still retained something of her old reverence for the White Men, in spite of the enormities she had seen them commit before her eyes. She had by her marriage with the bold Caonabo a daughter, named Higuana, in the flower of youth, and worthy of her mother's beauty. Guevara soon fell in love with her, and his fine person, gentle manners, and elegant bearing and apparel, easily produced a corresponding sentiment in the maiden. The mother, knowing nothing of his base life and his banishment from the island, was pleased to see their affection, and hoped for an honorable and profitable marriage for her daughter. Roldan was soon informed of Guevara's new love, and judging his future by his past, ordered his immediate return to his post. Guevara delayed, and even, it is said, sent for a priest to baptize his intended bride. Roldan then sent for him, and rebuked him for daring to deceive the daughter of a woman like Anacoana. Guevara admitted his love

for the girl, swore that his intentions were honest, and earnestly begged leave to stay in Xaragua. Roldan was inflexible, alleging that his consenting might be wrongly interpreted by the admiral. Guevara went back to Cahay, but had hardly been there three days, when, unable to resist the desire to see the object of his love, he escaped secretly to Xaragua with four or five friends who favored his passion, and concealed himself with them in Anacoana's house. Roldan was indignant when apprized of this, and sent him orders to return instantly to Cahay. Guevara assumed a tone of defiance, and told Roldan not to make enemies at a time when he was in great need of friends, because he knew from good authority that the admiral intended to send him to execution. At this insolence, Roldan became furious, and commanded Guevara to leave instantly and report to the admiral in San Domingo. The enamoured cavalier was possessed this time by real love, and dreading the thought of separation from his beloved maiden, whom he might never see again, he wept, and implored Roldan to allow him to stay a little longer. Roldan was softened by his prayers and his submission, and consented.

From some words of Las Casas, it would appear that Roldan was also enamoured of the fair Higuana, and that jealousy had much to do with his severity towards Guevara. But if it were so, would he have yielded to Guevara's prayers and tears, and permitted him to remain a little longer by the side of the adored maiden, and not rather have felt his jealousy increased by witnessing the ardent passion of a dreaded rival, and hastened his departure?

The humiliation he underwent, and the obstacles placed in the way of securing the happiness he anticipated, excited in Guevara's heart a bitter hatred for Roldan, and a fierce desire for revenge. He soon found accomplices and assistants in his evil designs, amongst the former followers of Roldan, who from warm admirers and blind tools of his will, now that he supported order and justice, detested him as much as they before loved him. It was, accordingly, concerted among them to rise suddenly upon him while he was confined to his dwelling by a serious trouble of the eyes, and either put them out or kill him. But Roldan was on his guard, and soon discovered their plot against him, and at once sent to arrest Guevara in the very house of Anacoana, and before the eyes of his betrothed, and his seven confederates with him. He immediately wrote an

account of all the details to the admiral, declaring that he wished to take no step without his advice, and that he could not decide in the matter that concerned himself personally. Columbus, who was at this time at Fort Concepcion in the *Vega*, ordered the prisoners to be taken to the fort of San Domingo.

Love affairs are sure to find sympathy from every one, and Guevara was sure of it in any case, especially when, declaring his intention of making the maiden his wife, he seemed to have reason and justice on his side; but now it was united with indignation at seeing excessive severity and tyrannical use of power on the part of one, who, a few months previously, to oppose severity and tyranny, had revolted against the legitimate authority of the government, and preached and granted his followers complete license. Roldan's former partisans raged, and vented every thing abusive against him. The most furious of all was Adrian de Moxica, who resented his cousin's arrest, and thought more deference was due him from Roldan, after the part he had taken in their revolt. Breathing vengeance, he hastened to Bonao, the former headquarters of the rebels, to secure the assistance of Pedro Riquelme. The friendship of the wicked is not more durable than the passion or interest which gave it birth. Riquelme, forgetting his obligations to Roldan, even his recent appointment by him as *alcalde* of his district, lent a ready ear to Moxica's words, and coming to an agreement, the two visited every part of the *Vega*, where most of their former confederates had received lands and had settled, arousing them to resist this new tyranny that was beginning to overthrow and trample on the liberties and rights of Spaniards. No man is more odious to his former associate than a reformed knave, or a rebel entering the service of justice. The appeal was answered from every side, and Moxica soon found himself at the head of a band of rascals, who only waited for his signal to rise in arms and follow his banner wherever he wished. His design was not merely to liberate his cousin, but to put an end to both Roldan and the admiral, his ambition looking to the supreme command of the island. But the wary Roldan was watching their steps, and at the proper time fell suddenly, by night, on the place where the chief conspirators were gathered. Whether they felt sure of their secret, or were deceived by their enemy's apparent inaction, the fact is that they took no precaution, and were all captured at a single stroke. Roldan wrote immediately to the admiral,

informing him of what had occurred, and asking for instructions. "I had determined to hurt no one," the admiral wrote, "but his (Moxica's) ingratitude compelled me to alter this resolve; nor would I act otherwise with my own brother, if he wanted to assassinate me and usurp the lordship which my King and Queen had given into my custody."* He accordingly instructed Roldan to proceed against the prisoners, and do justice in accordance with the law. Roldan tried them without further delay; and condemned Moxica and some of his principal accomplices to death, some he banished, and the rest he sentenced to imprisonment, with the inflexible rigor of justice peculiar to all knaves after escaping, like him, from the penalty their crimes deserved, and putting on the garb of an honest man. Moxica, who, at the head of the rebels, had made a great show of fearlessness, now, at the approach of death, lost heart, and trembled worse than the weakest woman. He asked for a confessor, and then lengthened his confession all he could, pausing, hesitating, and beginning all over again, as if he hoped, by gaining time, to find yet some means of escape. He descended to the infamy of accusing others, whose innocence was well known, whether for the purpose of intimidating the government by the number and importance of the conspirators, or in order to gain favor by informing. But Roldan, tired of waiting, and incensed at his cowardice, cut short his confession, and ordered him to be swung from the battlements.†

Herrera, in relating this occurrence, is lacking in his usual accuracy. He relates the affair as it is given by Fernando and by us above, but refers both the imprisonment and execution of Moxica to the admiral instead of Roldan. There is no room for doubting which is the true account; for the character of the two persons, the nature of the act, the circumstances of time and place, all unite to show the improbability of Herrera's relation. To mention only one, it is absolutely repugnant to the profound piety and religion of Columbus furiously to cut short the confession of a man at the point of death, and give up all hope of a sinner's reconciliation with God at the instant he is going to appear before the awful justice of His tribunal; whereas it is perfectly in keeping with Roldan's fiery and impetuous nature. But the question is settled by the testimony of the admiral himself,

* *Letter of Columbus to the Governess of Prince Juan.*

† *Ib.*—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxvi.

who expressly declares it was Roldan's work. "The alcalde seized him and a part of his band, and the fact is that he did justice on them without my having ordered it."* These words cannot refer to punishment generally, for by his own confession he had permitted and ordered it; but must refer to Roldan's application of punishment in this particular case, as soon as the trial was over, without waiting or asking for fresh orders from the admiral. The admiral's testimony, although in his own case, is decisive in this instance, for he wrote these words, on his way as a prisoner from San Domingo to Spain, when all the witnesses were alive, when Roldan was still in the glory of his office of chief-justice, upheld and favored by the new government of Hispaniola. Is it credible that he would dare to give a false aspect to the matter, when his falsehood could be so easily proved by so many witnesses, and at that moment, with such shame and injury to himself?

After Moxica's execution, his principal accomplices, likewise condemned to death, were for the present detained in prison, and their execution put off for some other time.

These acts of unexpected severity on the part of the admiral, who had always exhibited such patient forbearance, cast consternation amongst the conspirators, and the greater part of them fled to the usual refuge of Xaragua. But they were not allowed time to assemble and concert fresh disturbances. The adelantado, furiously seconded by Roldan, put himself on their track, and followed them with his characteristic activity and diligence. It was said that he carried a priest along with him, so as to lose no time, but as soon as the criminals were taken, they could reconcile themselves, if they wished, with God, and be hanged at once; but this is probably a malicious exaggeration of his enemies, growing out of his speedy and rigorous justice, and it is more likely that he sent them under guard to San Domingo. At one time, he had seventeen confined in one tower awaiting trial, whilst he was pursuing the rest with untiring persistency. By these measures, which surely no one will accuse of excessive severity, considering the poor results, in the past, of the patience and generosity Columbus had shown the insurgents, the bad humor was soon quieted, and peace brought back on the island. The Indians, seeing harmony restored among the Spaniards, and the

* *Letter to Prince Juan's Governess.*

impossibility of further resistance, patiently submitted to their yoke, or rather, began to show signs of incipient civilization, and if one of the chiefs had occasion to appear before the admiral, he procured clothing for the purpose ; and Christianity began to make less rare and uncertain progress in their hearts and minds. Every thing promised a prosperous future, and Columbus, forgetting his sorrow and anguish, opened his heart again to joyful hopes.

CHAPTER XI.

Intrigues at court against Columbus.—Arrival of Roldan's former confederates in Spain.—Their shameful attempts to injure the admiral.—Francisco de Bobadilla appointed commissioner to Hispaniola (1500).

WHILST Columbus, on his part, was struggling with unwearied energy to repress the calamities that were destroying the colony, and by enormous sacrifice and humiliation, in fear and anxiety, succeeding in restoring some order in Hispaniola, and preparing better days to come ; his enemies in Spain made use of these calamities, and by this means finally succeeded in the war they had carried on for so many years against him.

Knowing how King Ferdinand was harassed by the necessity of constantly sending succors to the Indies, when he was in urgent need of money for carrying on his wars and promoting the object of his ambition, they let no occasion escape of irritating his wound, and, under cover of regard for the public good and for justice, they kept continually lamenting that of all the admiral's promises, not one had been fulfilled, but every thing had turned out the contrary of what was looked for. He had written incredible things about the island ; that its mountains were inexhaustible mines of gold ; assured them it was the ancient Ophir of King Solomon ; and now, every ship that arrived brought demands for fresh succor, and the

mother country must be drained to support the colony. Then they rehearsed the old charge that he and his brothers were wholly unused to the arts and difficulties of government, and even with the best will in the world they could not carry it on successfully ; and they never failed to bring in the insinuation that, as foreigners, they could not be greatly affected by the interest or the honor of Spain ; that it was the necessary disposition of human nature, that poor people, risen from nothing, should look first to their own comfort and aggrandizement.

The war grew fiercer with every return of a ship from the New World, for every one brought a number of colonists returning home, —some tired of those distant regions, some in despair on seeing their boundless hopes of gold vanishing one by one, some expelled for their vicious conduct ; but all a continual reinforcement of the army of the admiral's accusers and calumniators, and his enemies understood perfectly well how to make use of them to help on their cause. The charges and calumnies of those that returned were confirmed by the letters of those that remained, and all together they gave a frightful picture of the colony and its government. It is true that every ship arriving from the Indies also brought letters from Columbus, giving truthful statements of the facts, and showing where the real sore was, and proposing the proper remedy ; but his letters came at long intervals, whilst his enemies were constantly by the side of the government, or rather, were the government, for the principal forge of all these charges and calumnies was Fonseca, with the departments under him, from which all orders relating to Indian affairs were issued ; and they were able to weaken and destroy at once whatever good impression his letters might produce ; and for one charge which he proved false, they were ready to substitute ten others ; and before another letter came to give them the lie, they had made the rounds of every mind, penetrated every heart, and although afterwards shown to be lies and calumnies, they left the germ of their venom behind.

The matter went so far that a report was circulated that Columbus was looking for alliance with some powerful prince, to break off entirely with Spain, and proclaim himself independent sovereign of those new lands, on the pretext that they had been discovered by his industry and labor alone. This, they said, was why he dragged out the work in the mines, hoping to keep all the treasure for

himself ; this was why he did not want the Indians made slaves to the Christians, or converted to the faith, as by petting and favoring them he aimed at binding them to him and having them ready to use, when needed, against the rights and authority of the Catholic kings ; this was the reason of his oppressing and degrading the Spanish gentlemen and hidalgos, so as to remove every one who might oppose his treacherous design.* These calumnies were blunted by the known loyalty and scrupulous conscientiousness of Columbus ; but what his character and his devotion to the crown made impossible in his case, was still very possible in that of his successors, who would have the same rights and powers without his virtues. And for one so suspicious and jealous as Ferdinand, the mere thought of a distant danger was enough to give umbrage, and increase the ill-feeling he already had for the admiral.

Their importunity and boldness in carrying on the war increased with their perfidy and rage. One of their most successful means of irritating the miserly Ferdinand was to force the disaffected colonists, on returning, to demand the pay which the admiral, for one reason or another, had withheld, or to claim indemnity for their losses in his service. We can imagine how carefully Fouseca and the other officials at Seville, where the affairs of the Indies were managed, presented these demands to their Majesties. When the last of these factious agitators who had left Hispaniola voluntarily or by order of the admiral, returned, the court happened to be at Granada, and the admiral's enemies made the best use of their opportunity. Some fifty of the worst of them, at their instigation, bought a quantity of grapes, and each taking a bunch, penetrated to the inner courts of the Alhambra at the hour of the greatest throng. There they began to eat the grapes under the very windows of their Majesties, as if famishing, to show the misery they had been reduced to since they unluckily went to the New World ; at the same time railing against the admiral for deceiving and the government for abandoning them. These vagabonds were delighted with their own impudence, and, becoming bolder, went so far that every time the Catholic king went out they surrounded him, crying, *Pay ! Pay !* When the two sons of the admiral, pages to the queen, chanced to

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxv.—Girolamo Benzoni, *Storia del Nuovo Mondo*, lib. i.—*Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica, April 7, 1503*, in the *Raccolta di Viaggi* of F. C. Marmocchi.

pass, they pursued them with imprecations, crying out: "Look at the delicate sons of the admiral who discovered the land of vanity and fraud, the misery and the tomb of gentlemen of Castile!" The poor boys, humbled and abashed, were obliged to avoid them afterwards.*

"The incessant repetition of falsehood," Irving says, "will gradually wear its way into the most candid mind. Isabella herself began to entertain doubts respecting the conduct of Columbus. Where there was such universal and incessant complaint, it seemed reasonable to conclude that there must exist some fault. If Columbus and his brothers were upright, they might be injudicious; and in government, mischief is produced oftener through error of judgment than iniquity of design. The letters written by Columbus himself, presented a lamentable picture of the confusion of the island. Might not this arise from the weakness and incapacity of the rulers? Even granting that the prevalent abuses arose, in a great measure, from the enmity of the people to the admiral and his brothers, and their prejudices against them as foreigners, was it safe to entrust so important and distant a command to persons so unpopular with the community?" †

If these considerations affected the noble heart of Isabella, who not only esteemed and admired Columbus, but almost venerated him, they must have been all-powerful with the avaricious, distrustful, and jealous Ferdinand, who regretted the extensive powers granted the admiral, in proportion as his discoveries in the New World increased in extent and importance. For these reasons, as early as the spring of 1499, he determined to send out some person of consequence, with extraordinary powers, to investigate the affairs in Hispaniola, decide such as were most pressing, and refer the rest to their Majesties. This difficult and delicate office was entrusted to Don Francisco de Bobadilla, an officer of the king's household, and a commander of the military and religious order of Calatrava. The commissioner's authority and duties were defined by a letter of the sovereigns of March 21st, 1499.

In this letter, after relating the complaints of the admiral against the alcalde-mayor and other officers who had revolted against him, their Majesties say to the royal commissioner: "We command you

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxv.

† Irving, *Columbus*, bk. xiii, ch. i.

to inform yourself of what has been done; to ascertain who they were that revolted against the admiral, and for what cause they did so; what robberies and other crimes they have committed; and furthermore, you will extend your inquiries to every thing relating to these matters; when the investigation is finished, and the truth known, you will arrest those who were guilty, whoever they may be, and sequestrate their property; you will proceed against them, whether present or absent, both civilly and criminally, and impose on them such fines and punishments as you may judge suitable." To carry out these orders, Bobadilla was authorized, in case of necessity, to call in the assistance of the admiral, and of all other persons in authority.*

The powers conferred in this letter on the commissioner are evidently directed merely against the rebels; and they correspond, for the most part, to the request of the admiral himself, contained in his letter to Europe of October 18th, 1498,† in which he asked that Roldan might be recalled to Europe, where their Majesties could themselves decide on his conduct, or else that they would order a special investigation in Hispaniola before Carvajal, acting for Roldan, and Ballester, for the adelantado, as his own authority might be objected to, on account of his being Don Bartholomew's brother. But, on the 21st of May, hardly two months after, other letters of the sovereigns alter the whole character and scope of the commissioner's authority, and place the admiral entirely in Bobadilla's power. What had occurred in the interval to produce such change, to the admiral's injury? Nothing. The cause can only be the greater fury and subtler art with which, after that order, he was assailed in Isabella's good opinion by his enemies. It was evident that the full and peaceful execution of the first order would have secured the triumph of the admiral; and it was natural that in their hatred they should make a final effort to avert the danger that threatened them. There can be no doubt but that when a decision was to be made in regard to the affairs of the Indies, the enemies of Columbus assailed the queen with every artifice and intrigue to secure a decision unfavorable to the admiral. The appointment of Bobadilla proves this, without looking further. His subsequent cruelty and perfidy towards the admiral show plainly that he was either a tool of his most

* Navarrete, *Col. Doc. Dipl.*, No. cxxvii.

† See book ii, ch. vii.

violent enemies, or else one of their number. It is impossible that a man, without previous feeling, could so shamelessly abuse his authority and suddenly change from a judge to a violent persecutor. I am therefore of the opinion that the admiral's enemies, when they saw the party in favor of sustaining his authority against the rebels ruling the councils of the government, as their only step, skilfully contrived to have one of themselves chosen as commissioner, in order at least to embroil matters, and diminish as much as possible the benefit he might derive from the order. But they did not confine themselves to the advantage they thus gained, but kept up the contest, and finally succeeded in drawing into their base schemes the magnanimous heart of the queen.

One of the letters signed by their Majesties on the 21st of May, and in which the admiral is mentioned neither directly nor indirectly, is addressed : " To the Counsellors, Judges, Magistrates, Cavaliers, Gentlemen, Officers, and Inhabitants of the Colony," informing them of the appointment of Don Francisco Bobadilla as governor-general of the Indies, with the most extensive civil and criminal jurisdiction. The following clause in it deserves particular consideration : " We order and command all cavaliers and other persons now on these islands or arriving hereafter, to quit them if the said commander, Francisco Bobadilla, judge it necessary for Our service, and not to return thither, but to repair immediately to Us. For this purpose, by Our present letters, We confer on him all necessary powers, and order every one to obey his orders at once, without waiting to consult Us, or to get further instructions, and without appeal, under such penalty as he may impose in Our name, &c., &c."*

The other letter, in which Columbus is designated only by his title of Admiral of the Ocean, orders him and his brothers to surrender the forts, vessels, magazines, arms, ammunition, and every thing belonging to the king, into the hands of Bobadilla as governor, under penalty of incurring the punishment denounced against such as refuse to deliver up forts and other trusts, when ordered by the king.†

Five days later, on the 26th of May, another letter was signed, addressed to Columbus himself, by his title of admiral only ; but it

* Navarrete, *Col. Doc. Dipl.*, No. cxxviii.

† *Ib.* No. cxxix.

was a mere credential, informing him of Bobadilla's appointment as commissioner, and ordering him to believe and obey whatever should be announced by Bobadilla.*

The two letters dated May 21st, were evidently given on the condition that Bobadilla was to make use of them only in case the admiral's guilt was clear after a conscientious investigation. And it may be regarded as unquestionable that the main argument by which the enemies of Columbus induced the queen to enlarge the commissioner's powers, was precisely this condition, by which they persuaded her, with every appearance of logic and justice, that the admiral could not be injured or disgraced by a power which was to remain a silent letter, unknown to every one, and within a portfolio, if the disasters of the colony were really imputable to the rebels. But if it was otherwise, what would be the use of Bobadilla's mission, if he was not provided with the necessary powers for applying the remedy for so many complaints? It would only remain for him to return to Europe, and report the true condition in which he found things in Hispaniola, and the government would then be under the necessity of taking the proper measures. Would it not be better to do at once, what would have to be done so soon afterwards? Why allow the evil to putrefy and incur the risk of every thing being brought to such a pass as to be beyond all remedy? The admiral's honesty and ability rendered the first supposition much the more probable, but his want of experience in government rendered the second quite possible, and it was the duty of a prudent government to be prepared with remedies and measures for either case.

But when the time came to carry their determination into effect, Isabella could not be induced to take such severe measures against one for whom she entertained so much gratitude and admiration. In consequence of her hesitation, the orders remained for several months a dead letter, till the enemies of Columbus found an opportunity to make a fresh onset on Isabella, and bend her definitively to their side.

In the following autumn, the ships returning from their annual voyage to the New World, brought back to Spain those confederates of Roldan, who, in pursuance of the capitulation with the admiral, chose to go back to their country. They all returned, as we have

* *Col. Doc. Dipl.*, cxxx.

seen,* accompanied by numerous slaves, some conceded by the admiral, in accordance with their agreement, and these were Indians taken prisoners in the different insurrections and wars of the savages against the Spaniards; others carried off violently by the rebels, without the government being able to prevent it. Among the latter were a number of girls, many of them caciques' daughters, forcibly seized when the rebels were roaming over the island, some already mothers, others about to become so. It was a sight that touched the heart and provoked a cry of horror from all that witnessed it. The whole infamy of this proceeding was cast on the admiral, who was said to have openly authorized it. He had written to their Majesties, begging them to execute that justice which sad necessity prevented him from carrying out; Miguel Ballester and Garcia de Barantes, his representatives, confirmed his account; but on the other side were the protestations of all the rebels, who naturally, in order to escape the punishment they deserved, maintained that they had his full consent and permission. But as it was the interest of too many persons of influence to uphold the rebels' story, and the admiral had unfortunately left them a strong support, by renewing in that very letter his oft-rejected proposal of keeping up slavery in Hispaniola for some time longer; it was not difficult to turn all the horror of these infamies against him. Isabella, who had the affectionate interest of a mother in the welfare of the Indians, and in spite of her esteem for Columbus and her confidence in him, had always rejected his proposal of slavery, was all the more offended and irritated, and this persistency on the part of Columbus seemed a defiance of her wishes. Her sensibility as a woman, and her dignity as a queen, were equally wounded.† It is said that in a moment of indignation, she exclaimed: "What right has the admiral to dispose of my subjects?"‡ By a determined act, worthy of her generous soul, she immediately issued a decree, ordering, *under pain of death*, that whoever had received any slaves from the admiral should instantly deliver them up to be restored to their native land. She excepted from the decree such as had been previously brought, because, she said, it was known that these had been captured in a just war.§

* Book ii, ch. ix.

† Irving, *Columbus*, book xiii, ch. i.

‡ Las Casas, lib. i, cap. clxxix.

§ Herrera, dec. i, lib. iv, c. vii.—Fernando Colombo, c. lxxxv.—Navarrete, *Doc. Dipl.*, No. cxxxiv.

After this, Bobadilla's departure was delayed only by the necessity of waiting for the favorable season for sailing. He left Spain for San Domingo towards the middle of July, 1500, with two caravels, and twenty-five soldiers enlisted for one year. There were also six friars for the apostolic ministry among the Indians, and these friars were specially charged with the care of the poor slaves returning home. Bobadilla was given a royal decree authorizing him to ascertain and discharge all arrears of pay due from the crown, and to oblige the admiral to pay whatever he personally owed; "so that," the decree said, "each one should receive whatever was due him, and there should be no more complaints." Besides this, he was given several letters in blank, signed by the two sovereigns, which he was at liberty to use as he thought best for the accomplishment of his mission.

CHAPTER XII.

Bobadilla's arrival at San Domingo.—He distorts his orders and seizes the command.—Columbus and his brothers are sent in chains to Spain (1500).

THE morning of the 23rd of August, at daybreak, there were seen from San Domingo, at about a league's distance, two caravels tacking and waiting for the breeze from the sea (which usually sprang up at about ten o'clock), to take them into the harbor. The admiral, at that time, was at Fort Concepcion, regulating the affairs of the Vega, where the greatest number of Indians were found, and where Moxica's sedition had been mainly fomented.* The adelantado, seconded by Roldan, was pursuing and punishing the rebels who had fled into Xaragua. Meanwhile, Don Diego was in command at San Domingo. Seeing the two vessels which he supposed

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxv.—*Letter of the Admiral to Prince Juan's Governess.*

were from Spain with a supply of victuals and ammunition, and thinking his nephew Diego, whom the admiral had requested the queen to send him, might also be on board, he immediately sent a boat to obtain information. Bobadilla replied in person, announcing himself as a commissioner sent by the king to investigate the late revolt, adding that the admiral's son Diego was not with him. He then made his inquiries, and learnt of the new rebellion of Moxica, and his fearful punishment ; that seven rebels had been hanged that same week ; and that five more were confined in the fort of San Domingo, expecting every moment the same fate (among these were Pedro Riquelme, Moxica's principal friend and assistant, and Fernando de Guevara, the young cavalier whose passion for Ana-coana's daughter had been the original cause of the rebellion) ; and that the admiral was in the Vega, the adelantado in Xaragua, and the government of San Domingo temporarily in Don Diego's own hands.

The news that a commissioner had arrived to investigate the late troubles, created a great agitation in the city ; and numerous bands gathered everywhere to discuss the matter. Those whose conscience was uneasy, were filled with consternation ; while such as had a real or imaginary wrong to redress, and, above all those whose pay was in arrear, manifested great satisfaction.*

As he entered the port, Bobadilla discovered a gallows from which hung a Spaniard lately executed, and the sight sufficed to convince him that the charge of the admiral's cruelty was well founded. A great number of boats soon hurried to the commissioner's ship, all vying which should be the first to pay homage to the dreaded public censor.

Bobadilla remained all day on board of his vessel, collecting every word and indication of his visitors, which might throw any light on the subject of his mission ; and as the Spaniards who were the most eager to do him homage and to win his favor, were such as by their past conduct had most to apprehend from his investigation, it is needless to say what were his first impressions concerning the admiral's administration. Before he landed, the culpability of the admiral was decided in his mind. †

The next morning, he landed with all his followers, and went to

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. clxxix.—Herrera, dec. i, l. iv, c. viii.

† Irving, *Columbus*, book xiii, ch. ii.

the church, where he heard Mass. Don Diego, Rodrigo Perez, the admiral's lieutenant, and many other persons of note in the colony, were likewise present. After Mass, they all gathered in front of the church door, where a great crowd had already assembled, and Bobadilla ordered his first letter patent of March 21st to be read in a loud voice. This was the letter charging him to make a minute inquiry into the late rebellion, to arrest those that were guilty, sequester their property, and proceed against them with all the rigor of the law; and commanding the admiral and all others in authority on the island to aid him with all their power. When the letter was read, he demanded of Don Diego and the alcaldes to surrender to him Pedro Riquelme, Fernando de Guevara, and the rest of the prisoners, with all the depositions taken against them; and ordered their accusers, and whoever had commanded their arrest, to appear before him. Don Diego replied, that whatever had been done was by order of the admiral, whose powers were superior to Bobadilla's, and without whose authority he could do nothing. He requested, at the same time, a copy of the royal letter, to send to his brother, who was the only person who could answer him. This Bobadilla refused with disdain, saying it was useless to give him a copy, since he could do nothing. But as the office of commissioner seemed to have no weight with them, he added that he would see if that of governor would do better; and that he would show them that he had the right to command them all, not even excepting the admiral himself.

In fact, the next morning, he made his appearance at the church again, determined to assume at once the powers which he was to have used only in case that upon careful and impartial investigation there should be no doubt of the admiral's culpability. The crowd assembled in front of the church was larger than the day before, and eagerly awaiting the settlement of the question. After Mass was over, Bobadilla, in the presence of Don Diego and Rodrigo Perez, ordered the notary, Gomez de Ribera, to read the second royal order of May 21st, appointing him governor-general of the islands and continent of the New World. The order being read, he took the customary oath, and commanded Don Diego, Rodrigo Perez, and all present to do the same. He then demanded a second time the surrender of the prisoners confined in the fort. Don Diego and Perez replied that they had all due respect for their Majesties' letters, but were responsible for the prisoners to the admiral, from whom they had re-

ceived them, and to whom the king and queer had given much more extensive powers than Bobadilla's.

Bobadilla was greatly exasperated at this resistance, especially as he observed that Don Diego's firmness made an impression on the crowd. He therefore brought forward the other royal order, commanding Columbus and his brothers to turn over to him the forts, vessels and every thing belonging to their Majesties. And to bring the crowd at once to his side, he had read the additional order of May 30th, ordering him to discharge all arrears of pay due to persons in the royal service, and to compel the admiral also to pay whatever he owed on his own account.

As most of those present, in consequence of the emptiness of the treasury, had long arrears due them from the government, this order had all the effect Bobadilla hoped for, and its reading was received with shouts of applause. Assured by this reception, Bobadilla again commanded Don Diego to surrender the prisoners, and met the same reply as before. Then, sure of the people's support, he moved towards the fort, to take possession of it by force, and was followed by the crowd, partly out of curiosity, and partly for the purpose of aiding him. The fort was in command of Miguel Diaz, the same cavalier that, flying from the adelantado's house after a homicide, had won the affections of and married the female cacique in his place of refuge, and had been informed by her of the gold-mines in the valley of the Ozema, near which the city of San Domingo was soon after founded.*

The gates of the fort were found shut, and the alcaide was on the parapet.

Bobadilla ordered his letters patent to be read with a loud voice, and went as near to Diaz as he could, to let him recognize the signatures and seals of their Majesties, and then demanded the surrender of the prisoners. Diaz requested a copy of the letters, but Bobadilla refused, on the pretext that there was no time to lose, as the prisoners having been sentenced to death, their sentence might be executed at any moment; and threatened to proceed to extremities, if they were not surrendered immediately, and Diaz would have to answer for the consequences. The wary alcaide asked for time to consider, and again demanded a copy of Bobadilla's orders, saying that he held that fort in the king's name and by command of the admiral,

* See book 1, ch. xxxvii.

his lord, who had gained that territory for the crown at the cost of his sweat ; and as soon as he arrived he would immediately obey.* Bobadilla, already exasperated by Don Diego's resistance, broke into fury at this further resistance of Diaz. He collected the few soldiers he had brought from Spain, and the crews of the two caravels, and called all who had any feeling for the poor prisoners and for justice to join him. The mob responded largely to his call, and in a few hours he found himself at the head of a numerous force armed with muskets, swords, lances, picks, spades, and every other implement for fighting, or overturning gates and walls. With these troops, he moved to the assault, at about the hour of vespers, encouraging his followers to bear themselves with valor, but requesting them to harm no one unless in case of resistance. His troops, disposed according to the rules of war, advanced cautiously to the fort, and attacked it on several sides at once. But having been built to withstand only a few naked and badly-armed Indians, it was formidable only in name, and all its apparent strength was soon dissolved, for at the first blow the gate gave way and allowed free entrance to every one ; and within the fort the only persons found with arms were the two officers Miguel Diaz, the alcaide, and Diego de Alvarado, who, standing on the parapet with their swords drawn, were quietly waiting to be made prisoners. Thus, an affair begun with such show of force, ended in so absurd and ludicrous a manner, that we should be inclined to look upon it as an invention for the purpose of wounding Bobadilla's vanity, if the truth of the fact had not been guaranteed us by the habitual seriousness of the historian who relates it. The prisoners were found in one of the rooms, in irons, and were soon brought before Bobadilla, who, after putting a few questions to them as a matter of form, gave them in charge of an alguazil, named Juan de Espinosa.†

From the fort, Bobadilla proceeded to the admiral's dwelling-house, and took possession of every thing, not even excepting his letters and private papers relating to his personal matters.

"A corsair," the admiral writes, "could have done no worse with a merchantman ; but what grieved me most of all, was the loss of my papers, none of which I have been able to recover possession of, and the most necessary for my exculpation are precisely those he has kept the best concealed."‡

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. clxxix.

† Id. l. c.

‡ Letter to Don Juan's Governness.

He took the gold he found there, without weighing or measuring it, to pay those who had claims against the admiral ; but it was suspected that some of it went to increase his own hoards. Thus, in a short time, were scattered the specimens of gold as large as a hen's egg, which the admiral had put by to send to the king and queen, to stimulate their courage and hopes for the continuance of the enterprise. It was said that Bobadilla decided to pay these out first of all, in order to prevent their Majesties from seeing them, as they would redound to the glory and advantage of the admiral. Then the better to ingratiate himself with the people, the same day that he took possession of the admiral's house, he issued a proclamation authorizing all indiscriminately to collect gold for twenty years, reducing the quota to be paid the government from a third to an eleventh part. He not only spoke of the admiral in terms of contempt, but gave out publicly that he would send him and his brothers back to Spain loaded with chains, and neither he nor any one of his family should ever set foot in those countries again.*

On first hearing of the proceedings at San Domingo, Columbus thought it was some adventurer, like Ojeda, who had arrived there. Since government had apparently thrown open the door to private enterprise, he might expect to have his path continually crossed, and his jurisdiction infringed by bold intermeddlers, feigning or fancying themselves authorized to interfere in the affairs of the colony.† Since Ojeda's departure, another squadron, under command of Vicente Yañez Pinzon, had touched at the island, without, however, creating any disturbance ; and still other vessels were reported to have been seen in these seas. What wonder, then, if some bolder and more knavish adventurer had thrown himself on the capital itself of the island ? The only way in which he could explain Bobadilla's behavior, was by supposing him to be some adventurer attempting an attack on the island. He had seized the fort and the city by violence ; he had gathered about him the lowest rabble ; he had made extravagant concessions, injurious to the interests of the government, and only intended for the purpose of winning partisans ; he had kept on saying he would send Columbus to Spain loaded with irons. Could it be supposed that the government had authorized its agent to pro-

* *Letter to Don Juan's Governess.*—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxv.—Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. clxxix.—Herrera, dec. i, lib. iv, cap. ix.

† Irving, *Columbus*, book xiii, ch. iii.

ceed with such violence and foolish prodigality? And what of the threatened arrest of the admiral? Why? and for what purpose?

The consciousness of his services to Spain, the repeated assurance of their Majesties' love and esteem, his privileges and rights solemnly confirmed under their hand and seal,—all proved to Columbus that the proceedings at San Domingo were merely the vaunts and knavery of some bold intriguer. In this conviction, he left Concepcion and proceeded to Bonaó, so as to be nearer to San Domingo, to obtain more correct information, and be in a better position to take such measures as the case might require.

Bonaó had already become a place of some importance, many Spaniards having built houses there, and gone largely into the cultivation of the adjacent fields. Nearly at the same time with the admiral, there arrived an alcalde from San Domingo, with all the marks of his office, to proclaim the appointment of Bobadilla as governor-general of the island, and read the royal letters and patents, of which he brought copies.

Columbus was now overcome by alarm. There was no longer any doubt that Bobadilla had been really clothed by the sovereigns with the fullest powers; but how could he believe that their Highnesses could have exercised against him an act of such excessive severity, so unexpected and so undeserved, depriving him on the instant of the authority so hardly gained and so securely guaranteed? He tried to persuade himself that Bobadilla had been sent out to exercise the functions of chief-judge, in accordance with his request to their Majesties, and that he had received special authority and instructions to investigate the late disorders on the island; and that whatever he did beyond that, was an assumption and abuse of authority, as Aguado had done or attempted.

Adhering to this persuasion, he saw that it was for his advantage to gain time; for, if the king and queen had been really induced to adopt harsh measures in his regard, it could only have been in consequence of calumnies, and a short delay would convince them of their error, and they would repair it. He wrote, therefore, to Bobadilla, in very moderate terms, a letter, in which he bade him welcome, and notified him that he was himself on the point of leaving and repairing to court, and on this account had put up at auction every thing he owned; and in a short time would turn over to him the command of the island. Meanwhile, he asked him to suspend his determina-

tion concerning the franchise for digging gold. He wrote, to the same effect also to one of the monks that had come out with Bobadilla; but never received any answer. Nor did Bobadilla even send him any letter or message of any kind.* But while Bobadilla refused him the courtesy due even to an enemy, he sent Roldan and the other leaders of his party letters signed in blank by their Highnesses, filled with favors and rewards. "Think of that," wrote Columbus, with intense bitterness. "What would any one in my place have supposed? To honor and reward those who had attacked their Highnesses' sovereignty, and caused all the evils, and drag in the mire the one who defended their authority and upheld it through so many perils!"†

To prevent as much as possible the evil that might result from the concessions and licenses so freely granted by Bobadilla, Columbus published orally and in writing, that the powers assumed by Bobadilla were not valid, nor his concessions and licenses, because the admiral's powers from the crown were superior to his, and granted in perpetuity, and could no more be superseded by Bobadilla than they could have been by Aguado.‡

But he soon discovered the horror of his situation. On the evening of the 7th of September, Francisco Velasquez, the royal treasurer, and Juan de Trasierra, a Franciscan monk, arrived at Bonao, bearing the letter written to him by the king and queen on the 26th of May, 1499. This terribly laconic epistle was in these words:

"To Don Christopher Columbus, Our Admiral of the Ocean Sea:

"We have ordered the commander Francisco Bobadilla, the bearer of this, to say some things to you on Our part: We, therefore, pray you to give him faith and credence, and to obey him."§

Together with the letter, they delivered an order from Bobadilla for Columbus to appear immediately before him. There was no further room for doubt; he bowed his head and started at once for San Domingo.||

The tidings that a new governor had arrived, and that Columbus was in disgrace, and to be sent home in chains, circulated rapidly through the Vega, and the colonists hastened from all parts to San Domingo, to make interest with Bobadilla. It was

* *Letter of the Admiral to Don Juan's Governess.* † *Ib.* ‡ *Ib.*

§ *Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxv.—Navarrete, Col. Dipl. Doc., cxxx.*

|| *Letter to Don Juan's Governess.—Herrera, dec. i, lib. iv, cap. ix.*

soon perceived that there was no surer way than that of vilifying his predecessor. Bobadilla felt that he had taken a rash step in seizing on the government, and that his own safety required the conviction of Columbus. He listened eagerly, therefore, to all accusations, public or private; and welcome was he who could bring any charge, however extravagant, against the admiral and his brothers.*

When he heard that Columbus was on his way to San Domingo, he called out all the troops, and made great preparations for defence, pretending to believe that Columbus would provoke a sedition and call on the caciques of the Vega and their vassals to aid him in resisting the orders of the crown. Having, as a measure of safety, arrested the peaceful Don Diego, he loaded him with chains, and confined him on board of one of the caravels. As there was no ground whatever for his suspicion, it is clear that his object in all this was merely to give a pretext for the violence and insult he meditated.

In the mean time, Columbus was proceeding towards San Domingo without guards and attendants, and although he was aware of the hostile intentions of Bobadilla, and his threats of violence, he decided to appear in San Domingo in that modest manner, to show his pacific feelings, or, at least, to remove suspicion.†

As soon as Bobadilla was informed of his arrival, he ordered him to be put in irons, and confined in the fort.‡ This outrage on a man so venerable and of such eminent merit, seemed atrocious even to his enemies; and when the irons were brought, every one drew back in horror at the idea of having to put them on him. But one was found willing to perform the odious task, and, to increase the aged admiral's grief, it was one of his own domestics. "He was an impudent and shameless cook," says Las Casas, "that rivetted the irons on his master's feet with the same alacrity and readiness as though he were serving him some savory dish. I knew the wretch, and think his name was Espinosa.§

But although Bobadilla had the admiral and Don Diego in his power, and was sure of popular favor; he was still very uncertain and anxious, so long as Don Bartholomew was at large and at the

* Irving, *Columbus*, book xiii, ch. iv.

† *Letter to the Governess*.—Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. clxxx.

‡ Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxvi.

§ Las Casas, l. c.

head of a considerable armed force. Knowing his warlike humor and fiery temper, he feared he might take some violent measure when he heard of his brothers' ill-treatment and imprisonment; and he dared not write to him directly, ordering him to turn over his command and repair at once to San Domingo, for fear of still further exasperating him. He, therefore, applied to the admiral, and requested him to write, inviting Don Bartholomew to repair peaceably to San Domingo, and forbidding him to execute the prisoners he held in confinement. Columbus, out of regard for the wishes of the Catholic sovereigns, and in order not to bring the horrors of war on the desolated provinces of Hispaniola, readily complied, and urged his brother to submit quietly to the authority of the king and queen, and endure with patience the insults to which he would be subjected, in the firm confidence that when they arrived in Castile, the truth would be known, and justice done them.

Don Bartholomew, always deferring to his brother's wishes, followed his advice, and repaired peaceably to San Domingo; and as soon as he arrived, Bobadilla, who had waited like a huntsman for his game, arrested him, loaded him with chains, and confined him in the hold of the other caravel.

The three brothers were kept separate and allowed no communication one with another. Bobadilla would not see them, or permit any one to visit them, prohibiting under the severest penalty all intercourse with them.

Having thus secured their persons, and deprived them of all possibility of exculpating or defending themselves, he commenced the investigation of the evils inflicted on Hispaniola, shamelessly calling as witnesses the rebels, mutineers, prisoners,—the lowest rabble of the colony,—all who were known to be hostile to the admiral and his brothers. His conduct released the wretches from all shame, and all those that had been called on to answer for any fault, or disturbed by the watchful eye of the government in their rapines, their licentiousness, and oppression of the weak Indians, hastened to vomit the rancor so long gathering in their hearts, and they contended to see who should lay before the commissioner the most serious charges or calumnies against the admiral or his brothers. From the old complaint, that the admiral had outraged the honor of Castilians in forcing hidalgos to descend to servile labor, down to the latest calumny, that he had wanted to raise the standard of revolt against the govern-

ment, and, with the aid of the Indians, withdraw Hispaniola from the Spanish dominion,—there was scarce an act of his long administration that was not distorted into a weapon against him. If the Indians often rose in arms, the blame was laid on Columbus for driving them to despair by his exactions; if there were constant disease and frequent death among the Spaniards, it was the fault of Columbus, who broke them down and killed them by unheard-of labors and every sort of privation; if the island did not fulfil the hopes that had been formed, it was the fault of the admiral and his brothers, who gave themselves no concern about the public good, but thought only of adding to their already enormous wealth. They accused the admiral of defrauding the government of a great part of the pearls collected on the coast of Paria, and of concealing the discovery of that country for some time, in the hope of getting the first profit from it for himself; of waging unjust wars against the indigenes, for the sole purpose of extorting their last grain of gold; and even of hindering their conversion to Christianity, in order to have a pretext for sending them as slaves to Spain, and obtain more gold by the sale of their persons.

The few days' delay in the sailing of the vessels that were to bear to Europe the tidings of the discovery of a new continent—a delay caused, as we have seen,* by the hope of first ending Roldan's rebellion, and sending to Spain less distressing reports of the colony,—this delay was the ground of the charge that he was trying to keep that new discovery concealed from the crown. We know that not only he sent the joyful news of the discovery, with all the indications and charts relating to the course he followed; but the perfidy of Fonseca in communicating them to Ojeda, and letting him take the copies for his clandestine voyage. But calumny reached the extreme of impudence, when he was charged with hindering the natives' conversion. This accusation enables us to measure the audacity and baseness with which not only the acts, but even the motives, of Columbus were shamelessly distorted, falsified, and presented in the most odious and guilty aspect. The truth was, that some savages of mature age had shown a wish to become Christians, and the missionaries, with ill-advised zeal, were disposed to satisfy their wishes at once; but the admiral, wisely judging that it was an abuse of the sacrament to bestow it blindly on the first comer, had ordered

* See book ii, ch. ix.

their baptism deferred until they were instructed at least in the fundamental truths of Christianity. For the rest, in order to judge of the value of all that mass of calumnies and accusations, it is enough to consider what was imputed to him in regard to the Indians. Some said he favored and caressed them in order to use them at the proper time against the government; others, that he intentionally persecuted them by tyranny and bloody wars, in order to have a pretext for stripping them of every thing they owned, and selling them as slaves, to get money. The words of the Gospel apply appropriately to this case: *et non erant convenientia testimonia eorum*—and their witness did not agree together.

“There was made against me,” he wrote in the letter to the governess of Prince Juan, “a juridical inquiry into misdeeds, the like of which were never invented in hell.” But Bobadilla accepted and recorded every thing. With less habitude of lying, and less prejudice and hostility towards the admiral, both he and the accusers would have perceived that by their exaggeration they overleaped their aim; but an eye blinded by fury miscalculates distances, and mistakes proportions.* Meanwhile, all the talk in the city was of the trial of the admiral, and the well-disposed being reduced to silence by fear and discouragement, the evil were triumphant all along the line. They sent out lampoons, satires, libels, full of the grossest abuse and foulest calumny, which the authors read in public in the squares, and the rabble, mainly composed of those whose punishment in the penitentiary or on the gallows had been commuted to exile to the New World, for want of other colonists, and on whom the government had been obliged to keep a careful watch, on account of their tendency to follow their former instincts,—this rabble, rejoicing at the admiral’s humiliation, sang their insulting songs under the windows of the buildings where he and his brothers were confined, and lauded Bobadilla for freeing them from their tyranny. Bobadilla not only did nothing to restrain these excesses, but openly showed his pleasure and enjoyment of them.† And whilst every one was discussing their misdeeds, the three brothers were alone kept in ignorance of what was going on, save so far as they could infer from the fierce yells of the rabble dancing and clamoring in

* Roselly de Lorgues, *Hist. Chr. Col.*, liv. iii, ch. vii.

† Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxvi

front of their prison. "I was never able to speak with Bobadilla," writes the admiral, "and no one was permitted to address me a word; and I take my oath that I cannot imagine why I am held a prisoner."* And at another time, speaking of these occurrences, he says: "I was arrested conjointly with my two brothers, confined in the hold of a vessel, loaded with chains, nearly naked, subjected to the most infamous treatment, without undergoing interrogatories or sentence;" and further on he says that every thing was taken from him and sold, "even to his *sayo*."† This was a loose garment, without buttons or button-holes, reaching nearly to the calf of the leg, and was the ordinary dress of Spanish peasants. The *sayo* proves both the admiral's extreme moderation in dress, and Bobadilla's overbearing cruelty in stripping him of every thing. As to Roldan and the other leaders of the rebellion, they were regarded as strenuous defenders of justice and of Spanish honor, for loyally and nobly resisting the tyranny which the admiral and his brothers had inflicted on the colonists and indigenes.

Guevara, Riquelme, and their confederates, were set free, almost without trial; in fact, it is said that Bobadilla was prodigal of favors and protection to them. He had manifested the greatest friendship for Roldan from his very arrival, and had honored him with his correspondence. In short, every one whose conduct had rendered him liable to justice, received the governor's pardon and favor; and the greater his opposition to the admiral, whatever had been its cause, the more merit and favor he had with Bobadilla.

The ships, in the mean time, had been preparing, and were now ready, for the usual return voyage; and Bobadilla, seeing that he had collected more than enough matter for the admiral's condemnation and for securing for himself the government of Hispaniola, determined to send the three brothers to Spain, with the report of the evidence in their case. To take charge of them he chose Alonzo de Villejo, who had come to Hispaniola in his company, and was a nephew of Gonzalo Gomez de Cervantes from Cadiz, Fonseca's friend, and, on his uncle's account, was also dear to Fonseca and brought up in his house.‡ Bobadilla ordered him, on reaching Cadiz, to deliver the prisoners at once to Fonseca, or in case of Fonseca's ab-

* Letter to Prince Juan's Governness.

† Letter written to their Majesties from Jamaica, July 7, 1503.

‡ Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. iv, cap. x.



sence, to his uncle Gonzalo Gomez. This circumstance is another strong proof, if such were needed, that Fonseca had secretly urged Bobadilla to take these violent measures against the admiral, promising to protect and aid him at court, if his conduct should be blamed or complained of. Villejo's kinship and education were regarded by Bobadilla as guaranties of scrupulous exactness in executing his orders for the close custody of the prisoners; but the noble youth discharged the unpleasant duty very differently from what the inhuman Bobadilla intended. "Alonzo de Villejo," says the venerable Las Casas, "was an hidalgo of noble character, and my particular friend. When he came to conduct the admiral from his prison to the vessel, he found him sunk in deep despondency. He had been so brutally treated, such unjust feeling had been manifested towards him, that he feared he should end his days without any chance of justification, thus leaving to posterity a dishonored and infamous name. His anguish was increased at the thought of his sons, who would have to bear his infamy; and who could tell what their future would be, in a foreign land, amongst a people detesting their name, and powerful enemies whose interest required their permanent humiliation? Seeing Villejo enter with a guard, he thought at once that they had come to lead him to execution, and with fearful earnestness he asked:

"Villejo, whither are you taking me?"

"To the ship, my lord," respectfully replied the young officer, "on which we are to embark."

"To embark," cried the admiral: "Villejo, is what you tell me the real truth?"

"On my honor, my lord, it is the truth."

At these words, his eyes sparkled with joy, and he seemed as one restored from death to life. This touching colloquy is reported by Las Casas, who doubtless heard it from the lips of his friend Villejo.

Together with the report of the proceedings, Bobadilla sent to Spain a number of letters from himself and others, aggravating still more, if possible, the conduct of Columbus, and expressing a desire that the king and queen might never be induced to place again in command one who had so grossly abused his authority.

The caravels weighed anchor in the beginning of October. They were hardly out of the harbor before the noble Villejo and Andres

Martin, the master of the ship, another good and loyal Spaniard who showed his horror of the unjust treatment the discoverer of the New World was subjected to,—approached the admiral with profound respect to free him from his chains. But with noble dignity he replied: “No. I am grateful for your good-will; but cannot consent to what you propose. Their Majesties have written to me to submit to every thing Bobadilla might command me in their name; and it was in their name that he loaded me with these chains; and I will carry them until the king and queen give orders to take them off. And I will keep them in future as a monument of the recompense bestowed on my services.”*

“And I saw them afterwards,” Fernando relates, “always in his chamber, and when he came to die, he wished them buried with him beside his bones.”†

Fortunately, the weather was favorable, and they arrived in Spain in a little over a month; during which the two noble officers endeavored, by every attention, to alleviate the sufferings of the aged admiral.

CHAPTER XIII.

Christopher Columbus arrives in Spain in irons.—The news produces everywhere a sorrowful impression.—Columbus sends a sad story of his ill-treatment to a friend of the queen’s, by a private messenger.—The queen’s grief and indignation.—Affectionate reception of Columbus by the sovereigns (1500).

THE ships with the three prisoners entered the harbor of Cadiz on the 20th of November, 1500, and the news spread immediately through the city that the discoverer of the New World was on board as a prisoner and in irons. From there it passed throughout Spain, and everywhere there was one general outburst of indig-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. clxxx.

† Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxvi.

nation. It was one of those striking and obvious facts, says Irving, which speak to the feelings of the multitude, and preclude the necessity of reflection.* No one thought of inquiring what he was accused of; it was enough to know that he had been brought back in irons from the new world he had discovered.

The admiral's enemies had defeated their design by their excess of violence; for, as almost always happens when persecution is carried to extremity, a powerful reaction of public opinion sets in; and the same people, who, believing their charges and calumnies, had shortly before been loud in their clamor against the admiral, now, touched by pity and horror at such humiliation of so grand a man, were unanimous in crying out against the enormity of that deed. The queen was excessively angry, and the whole court with her had only words of surprise and indignation.

Columbus, wounded by such outrage, and not knowing how far it had been authorized by the Catholic kings, did not venture to address them directly; but during the voyage prepared a long letter for Doña Juana de la Torre, formerly governess of Prince Juan, and still the chosen favorite of the queen. She was a large-hearted woman, and, like her mistress, had a special love and admiration for the discoverer of the New World; and Columbus felt certain that the queen would quickly learn the contents of his letter; and it was to the queen he wanted to make known his griefs and the injustice he had suffered. This is the letter we have so often quoted in the sad report of the recent occurrences. Andres Martin, master of the caravel, permitted Columbus, on arriving at Cadiz, to send it by express, and in secret, to its destination; and in this way the king and queen received from the admiral himself their first information of all that had taken place.† And besides information in regard to Bobadilla's injustice and cruelty, they had a speaking picture of the mortal anguish the discoverer of the New World had been made to suffer in their name, in reward of his boundless devotion to them, his justice, his magnanimity, and his fidelity; for Columbus, solely intent on relating his wrongs, in the fuiness of his anguish expressed his thoughts and words as they came, and, without being aware of it, had spontaneously and naturally given a faithful mir-

* Irving, *Columbus*, book xiv, ch. i.

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. clxxxii.

ror of all that was passing within him ; and the slight disorder and confusion occasionally met with in the letter, instead of weakening its force added to its effect, by manifesting the afflicted condition of his mind. It cannot be read without tears ; and I should like to insert it here entire, but its length prevents ; and, moreover, it would only be repeating the circumstances related in their place. Some sentences, however, taken here and there in which he vents his grief, deserve to be presented.

It begins in these words :

“ Although it is not usual for me to complain of the world, it is none the less true that its practice of ill-treating men is very ancient ; it has attacked me in a thousand combats, and I have always resisted, until the present moment, when arms and counsel have been unable to aid me, and it has thrown me to the bottom in an extremely cruel manner.

“ Hope in Him who created us, sustains me ; his help has been ever at hand. On another occasion, not long ago, being still more cast down, extending to me his divine hand, he raised me up and said to me : Man of little faith, be comforted : what fearest thou, when I am with thee ?*

“ I was led to serve those princes by the strongest attachment, and have rendered them unheard-of services. God made me the messenger of the new sky and the new earth. . . . Every one was incredulous ; but God gave my lady the Queen the spirit of understanding, and bestowed on her the necessary courage, and endowed her, as a beloved daughter, with the inheritance of this new world. . . . And now I have reached the point that from the most exalted to the vilest of living men, there is none but seeks to revile me ; but the day will come, when, thanks be to God, this will be told to the world, and my traducers will be held in detestation. If I had pillaged the Indies, and given them to the Moors, I should not have been more hated in Spain. . . .

“ They have tried to give me so bad a name, that if I build churches and hospitals, they will call them dens of robbers.

“ I could very well have prevented all that I have related that befell me since I came to the Indies, if I had attended solely to my personal interest, if that would have been becoming ; but I am

* See book ii, ch. ix.

undone, because I have always maintained justice, and enlarged their Highnesses' dominions.

"Intrigues and calumny have done me more harm than all my labor has benefited me: a sad example for the present and for future generations!

"I swear that many men unworthy of baptism in the eyes of God as well as in those of men, have been in the Indies, and even now are going back to them. The commander has made them all my enemies; and it appears from his manner of acting and from the forms he has used, that he has long been my bitterest enemy. . . . I had never before heard that the person charged with an investigation had to assemble the rebels and take their witness against the one in command, as well as the testimony of every wretched miscreant who was unworthy of belief.

"If their Highnesses would make a general investigation on the spot, I assure you they would be surprised to learn that the island has by no means been wasted."

Then referring to the calumny that he wanted to become independent in the government of the Indies, he continues in this style: "However little sense I may have, it does not seem to me that I ought to be supposed so stupid as not to know that even if the Indians had been dependent on me, I could not have sustained myself without some prince's aid; and if it is so, where could I have ever found better support and greater security against the chance of being driven out of the lands I discovered, than from our lords the King and Queen, who have elevated me to so high a degree from nothing, and are the most powerful monarchs in the world, both on land and sea? They are not ignorant of my services to them, and protect my privileges and recompense; or if these are invaded by any one, their Highnesses always extend them, ordering the highest honors to be paid me, as in the affair of Juan Aguado. Yes, their Highnesses, as I said, have received services on my part, and have not scorned to receive my sons into the number of their domestics, which certainly would never have been done by any other prince, for where love is wanting, every thing disappears.

"If I now complain of the evil spoken of me by wicked persons, it is against my will, as this is a matter which should not be remembered even in dreams. The commander Bobadilla affects a malicious frankness of maner and of action in this affair; but I shall easily

prove to him that his ignorance, his great cowardice, and his inordinate avarice have not made him successful in his undertaking. . . . I was never able to get speech of him, and, to this day, no one was permitted to address me a word; and I take my oath that I cannot imagine why I am held a prisoner.

“I have been much aggrieved that a man should be sent out to investigate my conduct, who knew that if his investigation turned out to my injury, he would himself remain at the head of the government.

“God is just, and will make known all that has happened, and for what reason, and in what manner.

“Judged as the governor of a province or a city regularly administered, and where the laws can be fully carried out without fear of prejudice to the public interest, I cannot escape great shame; but that is not to judge me justly; I should be judged as a captain sent by Spain way to the Indies to conquer a numerous and warlike nation, whose customs and religion are just the opposite to ours; whose members live on the mountains, without regular dwellings either for themselves or for us; and where, by the will of God, I have brought another world under the dominion of our lords the King and Queen, by which means Spain, that was said to be poor, is at present the richest empire in the world.

“I ought to be judged as a captain who had borne arms for so many years, without once laying them aside for an instant, and by cavaliers of conquest,*—by real cavaliers, not by gownsmen, unless they should be Greeks or Romans, or some of those of these days, of whom there are many in Spain deserving of the greatest respect,—because in any other way I suffer great damage, there being neither cities nor treaties in the Indies.

“Heaven grant I might be as certain that no worse evil than I have borne already will befall me, as I am that I shall undertake to follow anew, in the name of our Lord, the track of my first voyage, or of what I said regarding Arabia Felix as far as Mecca, in the letter I sent their Highnesses by the hands of Antonio de Torres, in reply to the redivision of the sea and the land between Spain and Portugal; and that from there I shall proceed to the North

* The old Spaniards called the conquerors, amongst whom the conquered lands were divided, *Caballeros de Conquista*.

Pole, as I said and left in writing at the monastery of La Mayorada.

“The mistakes I may have made are not the effect of evil intention, and I think their Highnesses will believe what I say; but I certainly am not ignorant, and see clearly, that they use mercy towards those who do them ill service.

“I believe and hold for certain that they will reckon much better towards me, who may have erred, but innocently, and constrained by circumstances, as soon as they shall have full knowledge,—towards me who am their creature; and every day they will recognize more fully the services and advantage they have drawn from me.

“They will put all in a balance that will be made, as Holy Writ says, of the good and the evil on the day of judgment.”

The letter ends with these significant words: “God, our Lord, retains his wisdom and power, and punishes ingratitude in a special manner.”

The mention he makes of Arabia Felix undoubtedly refers to his project of making the circuit of the earth, continuing his voyage to the west from the New World, and returning to the Mediterranean by the East Indies and the Red Sea,—a project which he tried to carry out on his second voyage, when he explored the southern coast of Cuba. As to the voyage to the North Pole, Humboldt believes it was the idea of a new project derived from the accounts of the voyages of the Cabots, who sought a passage by the north to the land of spices, shorter than that discovered by the Portuguese.*

There is one obscure expression in this letter, which ought to receive special notice. Towards the end, in the middle of his account of the wrongs and anguish he had been made to suffer, the writer begins a new paragraph with the sudden remark: “The other famous affair is calling with open arms: it has been a stranger till now.” And then he returns to speak of his sufferings and his wrongs.

What affair could this have been? I have no doubt whatever that these obscure words allude to the delivering of the Holy Sepulchre. We have partly seen, and shall see at length, what was the highest thought of Christopher Columbus, and it is of the utmost importance in studying his life. This positive age will only smile at the simple superstition of this man, loaded with chains,

* Humboldt, *Examen Critique de la Géographie*, tom. iii, p. 244, note. Paris, Ad. Laine et I. Havard, 1836-39.

fallen into the hands of implacable enemies, still dreaming of his liberation of Christ's Sepulchre ; but such as restrict man's life not to material goods, but recognize also a broad field for the mind's wants and aspirations, be their faith what it may, must not only admire this man, who, in the abyss into which he has fallen, crushed under a fearful weight of woes, in the depths of his heart groans to see involved in his ruin the great enterprise which, in the enthusiasm of his faith, he believed himself chosen by God to bring to a triumphant issue. And how grand, how sublime, and worthy of the awful imagination of Isaiah, is that picture of the enterprise, with extended arms calling for help, and all ears remaining strangers !

But why not speak clearly and openly ? The answer is found in the condition in which Columbus then was. To repeat in that condition his plans for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre, would have seemed ridiculous ; he felt this, and was silent. But the anguish of his sorrow was too sharp, and he could not restrain a word of hidden complaint.

Whatever Ferdinand may have thought in his heart, public opinion was so clearly expressed, that he could not oppose it. He, accordingly, joined the queen in openly disavowing what had been done, and making it clearly known that Bobadilla had acted contrary to their intention and to the orders they had given him. Without waiting for the documents he had sent, they immediately ordered the prisoners set free and treated with every respect. They then wrote to Columbus a letter in the most affectionate and honorable terms, expressing their great displeasure at what he had been made to suffer, and inviting him to court, and, at the same time, ordered 2,000 ducats to be given him to procure whatever he might need in order to make his appearance in a style suited to his rank.*

This letter was better than any balm to the ulcerated heart of Columbus. Brought back from death to life, he immediately set about the preparations for his journey ; and on the 20th of December presented himself at the court, then at Granada, not as one stricken and fallen, but with a large retinue and splendid apparel as suited the importance of his rank and his name. The two sovereigns received him with the greatest kindness and distinction, and when the queen saw him before her, as she thought of his greatness, and of his humil-

* Las Casas, lib. i, cap. clxxxii.

iation and suffering, she was moved to tears. At the sight of this, Columbus, already much affected by the manner of his reception, could not restrain himself, but fell on his knees before their Majesties, and for a time was prevented from speaking, by the violence of his tears and sobbing.*

Ferdinand and Isabella raised him from the ground, and renewed the assurance of their affectionate regard. Regaining his self-possession, he made his vindication with the simple but effective eloquence that was natural to him, and which at that moment was spurred on by the excitement of his mind, and the consciousness of the enormity of the wrong that had been done to him. But no apology on his part was needed. The intemperance of his enemies spoke stronger than any argument he could make in his favor. It was not his right alone, or justice, that protested against Bobadilla's acts, but the honor of the sovereigns themselves demanded an open and complete condemnation of those outrages, to vindicate themselves, in the eyes of the world, from the suspicion of such monstrous ingratitude towards one who had enriched them with a new world. And, in truth, they seemed to seek every opportunity to show their affection and esteem for Columbus. There was no mention of his trial, or of Bobadilla's letters against him, nor is it known what became of them; but they renewed the assurance that he should be indemnified for his wrongs, and restored to all his rights and privileges.

It was precisely concerning these that he was anxious; all else he was ready not only to pardon, but even to forget all that it had caused him to suffer. But, notwithstanding their Majesties' ample promises, he knew, by hard experience, how often the words of sovereigns and their wishes are subject to change, and consequently, to secure himself from all danger, a few days after the audience, he prepared a memorial to present to the members of the council of the crown to influence them in his favor. In that he repeated briefly the story of his coming to Spain, of the struggles he had to sustain there, and the magnanimity of the queen in bravely assuming the undertaking he proposed. He spoke of his discoveries, of their greatness, and of the hopes that might justly be founded on them. Then referring to the recent occurrences, and the reward he had received

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. iv, cap. x.

for all his labors, and defending his administration, he prays the members of the council to examine all his agreements with the crown, *with the earnestness of faithful Christians.**

CHAPTER XIV.

King Ferdinand's secret hostility for Columbus.—Contemporary voyages of discovery.—Vindication of Columbus from the charges against him.—Ovando appointed governor of Hispaniola.—Wretched condition of the Indians under Bobadilla's government.—Measures taken by the sovereigns for the government of Hispaniola.—Departure of Ovando (1501).

ISABELLA'S honest nature and candid mind are an assurance that in all these demonstrations and protests she was perfectly sincere in her feelings and expressions; but subsequent events prove that the astute Ferdinand was far from intending what he said. He was certainly sincere in deploring and condemning the acts of Bobadilla, as is proved by the severe measures he adopted in his regard; but the removal of the admiral from command accorded with his interests, and he was not one to halt from delicacy or scruple, when his road led to his advantage. For the better understanding of the matter, it will be necessary to cast a glance at the development, which was then taking place, of the Spanish discoveries and those of other nations.

The general authorization by the Catholic kings in 1495 to undertake voyages of discovery, gave rise to various expeditions directed by private individuals, the greater part of whom were seamen who had accompanied Columbus in his earlier voyages. The Spanish government looked favorably on these undertakings, which enlarged the domain of the crown without any expense to it, and poured handsome amounts into the public treasury as the share it reserved to itself in the profits of such voyages. Accordingly, though it pub-

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. cxxxvii.

lished, on the 2nd of June, 1497, in consequence of the strong remonstrances of Columbus, a decree greatly restricting that authorization, it still continued in fact to favor those undertakings, the more so, as the government, exhausted by constant wars, was unable to send out fresh expeditions at its own expense. The passion for these voyages was much increased after the discovery of the land of Paria, by the magnificent hopes excited by the glowing description Columbus gave of it, and by the facility with which his charts and indications pointed out the course to be followed.

The first to pursue that course was Ojeda, in the spring of 1499, and his unprofitable voyage has already been touched upon.

It was followed, at a short interval, with different fortune, by Pedro Alonzo Niño, the skilful pilot who had been in the admiral's service on his voyages along the coasts of Cuba and Paria. Reaching the main-land, he continued for some distance along the southern coast of Paria ; then leaving the gulf, he coasted for more than thirty leagues along the northern shore, visiting what was afterwards named the Coast of Pearls. He landed in different places, exchanged his European trifles at an immense profit, and returned to Europe with great store of gold and pearls.

The influential Pinzon family came third. They fitted out four caravels entirely at their own expense, manned mostly by relatives and friends. Here, too, were some of the pilots who had sailed with the admiral on the discovery of the land of Paria. The command of the squadron was assumed by Vicente Yañez, the youngest of the three brothers, the same who commanded the caravel *Niña* on the first voyage of discovery. He sailed from Palos in December, 1499, and boldly abandoning the track of Columbus, kept so much to the south-west that he lost sight of the polar star. Here he was overtaken by a violent storm, and the strange aspect of the sky caused him the greatest consternation. Nothing was then known of the southern hemisphere, or of the wandering constellation of the southern cross, which in those latitudes supplies for navigators the place of the north star. He expected to find a star at the South Pole to correspond to that at the North ; and was greatly confused at not discovering a guide of that nature, and imagined there must be some prominence of the land that hid the pole from sight.* Con-

* Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. ix.

tinuing, then, with rare courage, on the same course, he discovered a distant promontory on the 26th of January, 1500. He landed and took possession in the name of the Catholic kings. He named the promontory Cape St. Mary of Consolation; and it is the same which is now called Cape S. Augustin in Brazil. From there he sailed to the west, discovering the Marañon, or River of the Amazons, crossed the Gulf of Paria, the Caribbean Sea, and the Gulf of Mexico, and came to the Bahama Islands, where he lost two of his ships on the rocks, near the island of Jumeto. In September, he entered the harbor of his native Palos, with the glory of being the first European who had crossed the equator in the western part of the Atlantic Ocean, besides discovering a vast territory. As a reward of his achievements, he was authorized to colonize and govern the lands he had discovered from the mouths of the Marañon to Cape S. Augustin.*

Less than a month after Pinzon sailed from Palos, another expedition started from the same port, fitted out and commanded by Diego de Lepe, a native of the place. It likewise took a south-west course, and came to the new land of Brazil, but passing Cape S. Augustin, sailed so far south that he discovered more of the southern continent than any other navigator for many years afterwards. He landed to take possession, as customary, for their Catholic Majesties, and carved their names on a tree of such enormous size that seventeen men with their hands joined could not reach around it. Lepe had never sailed with Columbus, which greatly enhances the merit of his bold discoveries; but he had with him several able pilots who had accompanied the admiral on his voyages.†

Another expedition sailed from Cadiz in October, 1500, under the command of Rodrigo Bastidas of Seville. From Cape de la Vela, the western limit of previous discoveries on the main-land, he explored the coast as far as Santa Marta and the Rio Grande de la Madalena, entered the Gulf of Darien and the bay that was afterwards called Nombre de Dios. But a species of gnawing worms, abounding in those waters, having bored and nearly spoilt both his ships, he was forced to turn back, and reached Xaragua with the greatest difficulty, where he abandoned his vessels and proceeded,

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. iv, c. xii.—Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*.

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xii.—Muñoz, l. c.

with all his companions, on foot to San Domingo. Here he was arrested by Bobadilla, under pretext that he had trafficked for gold with the savages of Xaragua, and was kept for some time in prison. He returned to Spain poor and in despair, after an absence of twenty-three months.

Before all these, and with bolder daring, John Cabot entered the path to the New World. He was a Genoese by birth, but had become a naturalized citizen of the Republic of Venice. Thence removing to Bristol for the purposes of commerce, he joined the English marine, and in the government service began to navigate with great hardihood the northern seas in a westerly direction. He took with him his three sons, Lewis, Sebastian, and Santo, the second of whom afterwards came near eclipsing his father's fame. After various vicissitudes, Cabot, in 1494, pushed on till he should *enjoy the first sight of land*, and discovered North America. Three years later, returning to the point of his discovery, which was the island now called Newfoundland, he sailed 300 leagues along the new coast, and planted the standards of England and of St. Mark.*

Whilst discoveries were extending in the west through the work and influence of Columbus, the last obstacle to the passage to the Indies around Africa, was overcome by Vasco da Gama in the south. The way once open, Portugal immediately sent out a fine fleet of thirteen sail to make its name and power known in those regions. It was commanded by Pedro Alvarez de Cabral, an old and experienced sea-captain, and sailed from Portugal on the 9th of March, 1500, and, after passing the Cape Verde Islands, to avoid the frequent calms prevalent on the coast of Guinea, kept well to the westward. On the 25th of April, to their astonishment, they came in sight of a land of which no one in the squadron knew any thing. At first, they supposed it was an island; but after following the coast a long distance, to the 15th degree of south latitude, they became convinced it must be a portion of some great continent. They took possession in the name of Portugal, and dispatched a ship to Lisbon with the glad tidings. It was the same land shortly before discovered by Pinzon and Lepe, and afterwards called Brazil; but Cabral could have had no notice of its discovery by the others.

Brazil being beyond the line agreed on between Spain and Por-

[* See *Giornale Ligustico*, Ann. I, pp. 308-16.

tugal as the boundary of their respective discoveries, it remained the possession of the latter; and in this way the Spaniards found themselves intermediate between the English to the north, and the Portuguese on the south. King Ferdinand beheld with great jealousy this flocking of other nations to share the dominion and wealth of the New World, and was not free from anxiety on account of the danger that might result to him; and therefore, in order to secure possession of the continent, he determined on establishing local governments in the more important places, dependent on the general government of San Domingo, which would thus become the metropolis of all the Spanish possessions in the New World.

The carrying out of this plan would greatly enhance the importance of the powers granted to the admiral; and while this was an additional motive for his desiring the restoration of his rights, it was, on the contrary, a very strong reason with Ferdinand for opposing his desire; the more so, as the vicinity of the English and Portuguese had increased a hundredfold the danger of leaving such great powers in the hands of a subject, at a distance from the supervision and control of the central government; for what was now falsely charged against the admiral, might some day be a reality with his successors, with the temptations and aid their ambitious views would receive from the neighboring powers. And it is certainly no injustice to Ferdinand's character to assign as a motive for his refusing to admit the rights of Columbus, the thought that he had no further need of him. The great discovery was now accomplished, and every one could follow the road he had opened to the New World. Expert seamen had learnt in his school to understand and conquer the Ocean; and were daily besieging the throne with offers to fit out new expeditions at their own cost, leaving the crown a share in the profits. Why, then, grant dignities and prerogatives truly royal, in reward of services which others offered to perform gratuitously?

But here it is natural to ask, if the determination of King Ferdinand was not influenced by the complaints made against Columbus, in spite of his pretence to the contrary. Before answering, let us recall what these complaints were. Having treated each one in its place, and shown what was its value, we need not take up much time with the unpleasant subject. They can all be reduced to three heads: 1. Inflexible harshness and cruelty; 2. Attempts on the

freedom of the Indians; and 3. Want of administrative knowledge and capacity.

In support of the first head, the old complaint was brought forward of his having compelled the hidalgos to perform servile labor, under the heat of a burning sun, to which their bodies were, by education and habit, unsuited, and by which the most of them were lost, broken under the burden of excessive labor; his severity towards Bernal Diaz; the instructions sent to the commander Pedro Margarita; and the execution of Adrian Moxica.

As to the hidalgos, how could he be blamed, in extreme dearth of men and victuals, for taking the only means left for providing for the common safety? Even granting that he exaggerated the peril, and that, in consequence of his over-anxiety, he took too severe measures to prevent the danger they were threatened with; is he to be held responsible for the effects produced by the sun, the fatigue, and, above all, their own fear?

Diaz had put himself at the head of a conspiracy against the order and peace of the colony, and the plan of the conspiracy was found in his own handwriting. The admiral, out of regard for his rank, abstained from inflicting any punishment, and put him on board of a vessel to send him to Spain for trial, and the minor conspirators he punished according to the degree of their guilt, but much less than they deserved. Was this inflexible harshness and cruelty? If I had to make a complaint, it would be that he was too indulgent, for a good example of firm justice at the first symptoms of the conspiracy, would perhaps have had a favorable effect on all the future of the colony.

The punishment prescribed, in the instructions to Margarita, for Indians guilty of theft, was seriously complained of; and, in truth, with our mild laws and customs, that great severity cannot help making a painful impression. And those who blamed the admiral for inflicting the punishment, have suffered themselves to be more influenced by this feeling of compassion than by sound judgment. In the exuberance of nature yielding every thing they could want, the natives of Hispaniola regarded theft as an odious crime, not excusable by any necessity, but punished by them in a fearful manner. "The fault," says Oviedo, "the most abhorred by the inhabitants of this island, was theft. If any one was caught in the act, no matter how trifling the thing stolen, the thief was immediately em-

paled alive, as they say is done in Turkey, and they left him empaled till he expired."* And Fr. Charlevoix adds : " He remained exposed in that state to the sight of every one, and it was not even permitted to intercede for him."† This implacable and dreaded severity had produced the desired effect, and little more than the name of theft was known in Hayti. But the invincible longing for a little bell or some of the gewgaws brought by the Spaniards, was more powerful than fear with some of the Indians, and they tried to steal them. The Spaniards, at first, either smiled at their childish avidity, or passed the theft over with a slight rebuff or frightening of the thief. This was all that was needed to make stealing from the White Men soon become the great aim of all the Indians. The matter went so far, that they were openly assaulted and robbed by the Indians in the highways. In view of this, Columbus, sending Margarita to go the rounds of the island, directed him to cut off the tips of the nose and of the ears of every Indian found guilty of stealing, not so much for his personal punishment, as to leave a permanent mark for an example and terror to the rest. I repeat that with our mild laws and customs, the severity of that punishment shocks us ; but what is the cutting off of a tip of the ear or nose, compared to empaling alive and leaving the victim thus exposed to general ignominy ? What effect would a few days' imprisonment as provided by our law, have in restraining or deterring a people accustomed to see theft punished by empalement ? And besides, this punishment inflicted by Columbus was no invention of his, but was a Spanish law of the codes of Valencia and of the Brotherhood.‡

There remains the execution of Moxica ; but this we showed, at the time, was evidently attributed to the admiral by an error of Herrera's, whereas it was exclusively the work of Roldan. This charge, therefore, falls to the ground without further argument.

Finally, it is to be observed that the enemies of Columbus blamed him for every measure adopted by the adelantado, his brother, whose severe disposition, though upright and just, went straight to its object, without seeking to temper the just severity of his meas-

* Oviedo y Valdez, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. v, cap. iii.

† *Hist. Saint-Domingue*, livre i, pp. 48-49.

‡ Lucii Marinei Siculi, *De Rebus Hispaniæ*, lib. xix.—Tarazona, *Instituciones del Fuero y Privilegios del Reino de Valencia*, tom. viii, p. 396.—Roussew-Saint-Hilaire, *History of Spain*, lib. xviii.

ures by mildness of form, and, regardless of the arrogance of certain haughty hidalgos, inexorably forced them to bend their proud heads to the demands of justice. Las Casas says explicitly that the charges of rigor and cruelty imputed to the admiral had their origin, in great part, in Don Bartholomew's just severity.*

We now come to the charge of attempts against the freedom of the Indians, and we are met at once by the persistence of Columbus in proposing and wishing to maintain slavery for a time among the wretched Indians. We have said all that could be alleged in his exculpation from the practice and opinion of the time, and the irresistible necessity which pressed him from every side. But for all that, the proposal and his persistency in it are an indelible blot on his memory. But if it is a serious stain in our eyes, it certainly was none in the eyes and conscience of his accusers. With the exception of Isabella, who showed the feelings of a true mother for the natives of Hispaniola, the complaints of all the rest about that slavery were crocodile's tears, or something worse. Christopher Columbus never had a slave, and Fonseca, the originator of the charges against him, was the owner of 200.† And while they were making all this clatter against Columbus, who restricted the enslavement of Indians to such as were taken in arms against the Spaniards, or found guilty of grave crime against them; Ojeda, protected by Fonseca, quietly sold on the markets of Spain the droves of slaves he had captured in his sudden raids on various points in the New World.‡ Did not the very government that condemned Columbus for wishing to maintain slavery for a time and in certain specified cases, in the New World, make constant cabalgadas or forays to seize human beings, during the Moorish war, in the centre of Spain, dragging from a single city 11,000 individuals of both sexes, of every age and condition, many of them highly educated, and reduce them to the lowest slavery, even after a moiety of their ransom was paid?§ And while it was so tender of the freedom of the indigenes of Hispaniola, it not only kept up slavery, as we have seen, amongst the infidels of Africa, but also authorized it amongst the indigenes of the rest of the New World. In fact, under date of June 5th, 1500, that is to say, only five months before Christopher Columbus landed

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. xxix.

† Charlevoix. *Hist. Saint-Domingue*, liv. v.

‡ Herrera, dec. i, lib. iv, cap. iv.

§ See book i, ch. xii.

a prisoner in Spain, the queen signed at Seville a contract with the navigator Rodrigo de Bastidas, by which she reserved to herself the fourth part of the slaves he might capture on the voyage he was going to undertake for further discoveries in the New World. Which of the two was the greater offender against the natural law, Christopher Columbus, who restricted slavery to specified cases, and under the direct supervision of the government, or the government, that claimed to give special authorization to this one and that, abandoning the freedom and life of so many unfortunate men to the avarice and caprice of adventurers? Where was the greater cruelty and barbarity? Let the rich booty brought back by Ojeda from his forays, answer. It is painful to see this inconsistency of sentiment in the generous Isabella; but even she, with all her delicacy and kindness of heart, could not entirely withdraw herself from the influence of the ideas and practices of her time; and if she made so handsome an exception for the inhabitants of Hispaniola, it was because she looked with special tenderness on them, as children miraculously entrusted to her by Heaven; and the description which the admiral had given of the simplicity and innocence of their life, while it endeared them to her, made her look on it as something monstrous to inflict slavery on such simplicity and innocence. For the rest, not three years passed, before, by a decree of October 30th, 1503, she authorized her subjects in the Indies to enslave all the cannibals they could capture, because, she said, being brought to Spain, in the service of Christians, they would be more easily converted and attracted to our holy Catholic faith.* What else was this than the proposal of Christopher Columbus, for the same reasons and on the same grounds which he had urged? But there is no need to go beyond the history of Columbus for instances to the contrary in the conduct of the government. A most eloquent one is presented in the very decree ordering the immediate liberation of the slaves brought by Roldan's confederates. It was the arrival of these criminals, as we have seen, which decided the fall of Columbus, for some time held in suspense, and the impassioned words of Isabella are still ringing in our ears: "What right has the admiral to dispose of my subjects?"† Well, the decree commanding under pain of

* *Provision para poder cautivar á los canibales rebeldes.* (Navarrete, *Append. Col. Dipl.*, No. xvii.)

† See book ii, ch. xi.

death the immediate manumission of those slaves, stated that it was to apply to those brought over in the last shipment, and not to such as had been previously imported. And why? Because, the decree says, the latter are known to have been captured in a just war.* The government, consequently, recognized slavery even in the New World; it destroyed by its acts what it ordained in words; and Columbus, disobeying those orders, was well aware that his disobedience would be easily salved.

His pretended attempts, therefore, on the freedom of the Indians, considering the times, and the opinions and customs then in vogue regarding the enslavement of the infidels, amount to nothing.

That his proposal, notwithstanding this, met with opposition from the court, and that he was there represented and believed to be a real oppressor of the Indians, will not surprise us, if we consider the facts already related. When he first made his unfortunate proposal, we have seen how the doctors and theologians differed, and Isabella followed the voice of her heart, and prohibited the infamous traffic. Columbus again insisted, and Isabella's maternal heart and her queenly dignity and pride could not but be hurt. It was the only matter on which she suffered herself to retain some little resentment against the discoverer of the New World; and his enemies, on the watch for every thing, did not fail to turn it to their advantage. With deplorable persistency he resumed the argument, Isabella's disgust grew stronger, and his enemies labored to increase her resentment; till some of Roldan's rebellious associates and other evil-doers returned with a rich load of slaves, principally women, and the seal was put to the complaint so long urged against him. Whilst the heart of Columbus was bleeding for the outrage on so many poor girls torn from their family and dragged to Europe for the gratification of their ravishers, those wretches avoided the infamy and chastisement of their deed by throwing the whole blame on him. His enemies joined in chorus with their calumnies, the former proposals of the admiral gave them credit, and so the tears of the unfortunate slaves called down vengeance and curses on his innocent head.

As to his incapacity for governing, we have no basis whatever for a conscientious judgment either in his favor or against him.

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. iv.

The conditions of his case are so new and so singular, that the rules in other instances furnish no light or assistance. It is very true that a tree is judged by its fruit; and the fruits of the government of Christopher Columbus were of the worst kind. But it is not always the fault of the tree if the fruit is sour and bitter. The climate, the soil, or the season, may spoil fruit which under normal conditions would have turned out excellent. Would others, in the position of Columbus, under the same circumstances, have done better? Who can tell the extent to which the ungrateful character of the soil has been overcome by the skill of the agriculturist? We have no similar case in history, and where the middle term is wanting, we can make no comparison; and his enemies have not formulated a charge as to any particular act, on which an absolute judgment might be passed. If any decision has to be made, it should be in favor of Columbus, because his successors did worse than he, and because the crown, when it wanted to establish rules and ordinances for the government of the island, could find no better rules and guide than the very proposals made by the admiral; and the crown was advised by the same men who had accused the admiral of a want of administrative knowledge and capacity.

Coming back to the point we started from, let the reader judge whether in these charges there was reason and force enough to drive King Ferdinand to the extreme measures he adopted towards Columbus. I do not pretend that some of them might not make an impression on his mind, especially that of incapacity for government; I admit even that the idea of removing him from office might have presented itself to him as a natural and a just proceeding, for the purpose of restoring order in the distracted provinces of Hispaniola; but I consider it beyond all question that this idea had less to do with it than any other; that the real object he had in direct view was to get rid of Columbus and the too great concessions he had made to him. This is clearly shown by Ferdinand's subsequent conduct towards Columbus.

Ferdinand found an opportune pretext for deferring the promised restoration of the admiral to his rights and privileges, in the distracted state of affairs in Hispaniola. He said that the same elements that had broken out in rabid factions against him, the same leaders, the same causes, were still in existence; and his immediate return would only arouse fiercer hatred, and throw the colony into worse

confusion and disorder than ever. The quiet of the island, his personal safety, required his restoration to command to be put off for some time longer. Meanwhile, he would remove Bobadilla, who had so basely abused his authority, and send to take his place some capable and honest man, whose prudence and firmness would discover the roots of the evils, and apply a remedy. He would give this person command for two years only, during which it was to be hoped that all the rebels and libertines would be driven from the island, minds would be calmed, and the way prepared for the admiral's return with advantage and safety.

This arrangement seemed so prudent and equitable that Isabella gave it her full approval, and Columbus was forced to be, or to appear, satisfied with these reasons and promises.

Nicolas de Ovando, commander of Larez, of the order of Alcantara, was selected to relieve Bobadilla and prepare the way for the promised return of the admiral. Historians give a very promising picture of him : a modest yet imposing mien, ease of speech, affability, grace, gentleness, respect for justice, hatred of avarice, sobriety of life, and such humility that, when elected grand commander of Alcantara, he would not permit any one, even in conversation, to give him his title. But on many important occasions his conduct was in direct contradiction to this beautiful enlogium, and if he appeared kind and courteous, he also showed himself astute and dissembling ; and it is easy to see that his show of humility veiled an immoderate love of command. Certain it is, that with all his capacity for government, the Indians under his rule were made to weep tears of blood, and his treatment of Columbus was lacking not only in generosity, but even in justice.

While the measures to be applied to the disorders in Hispaniola were discussing, the ships returning from those desolate provinces brought more and more disastrous reports of their condition. Bobadilla manifested an unfitness and an incapacity for carrying on the government equal to his presumption and audacity in seizing it. Imagining that the rock on which the admiral split, was too great severity, he sought to gain public favor by unlimited indulgence. Once started on that perilous declivity, he had neither the energy nor the discretion to stop, and from concession to concession he arrived at a point where he lost all influence and authority in the colony ; and every restraint of law and morality becoming slack, such

disorders ensued, that even the admiral's enemies regretted the want of the adelantado's salutary rigor. And while, on the one hand, license ran riot without check, on the other, the wretched Indians groaned under the most horrid slavery. Under the pretence that the purpose of the king and the queen was not to enrich themselves, but to promote the well-being of their subjects, he had sold all the farms and estates of the crown at the lowest prices, and the royalty on the produce of the mines being reduced from one-third to one-eleventh, the revenues of the state had fallen almost to nothing. To restore the balance, it was necessary to increase the production of gold so that the eleventh would amount to as much as one-third previously. To accomplish this, he compelled the caciques to furnish every Spaniard a certain number of Indians to assist in the work of the fields and of the mines; and to derive all the advantage possible from this means, he divided the natives into classes, and distributed them arbitrarily among the colonists. After this was done, the Spaniards, by his advice, joined in sets of twos, one superintending the work in the field, the other that of the mines. His only injunction was to collect as much gold as possible, and he frequently repeated this advice: "Make the most of your time; there is no telling how long it will last," alluding to the possibility of his recall. These words, without other proof or argument, sufficiently present Bobadilla's character for capacity and honesty in public administration. It never entered his consideration that the future of the colony must suffer from his ordinances, or that justice was offended; he looked only to the profit of the moment, and the greater the uncertainty of his position, the more eager was he to derive from it all the advantage possible. The Spaniards carried out his counsels only too well, and so mercilessly piled burdens on the Indians, that the eleventh yielded a larger amount of gold than the third under the admiral's administration.

Las Casas, who was an eye-witness, has left us in his history a picture of the oppression of the wretched Indians that is startling. Weak of constitution, accustomed to pass most of their time free and easy among the delights of their island, these unfortunates, now driven to excessive labor, sank under the toil imposed upon them, and still more under the atrocious punishment to which they were condemned for the most trivial offence. Wretches just escaped from the prisons and galleys of Castile, or saved from the executioner's

hands by the sovereigns' grace, put on all the airs of grand cavaliers, were attended by great trains of servants, and kept a harem of fair girls for their use. And the higher the birth or rank of a woman, the more was she exposed to their caprices; and sisters and daughters of caciques, who in former years had been regarded with a sort of veneration, were now dragged trembling and weeping in the train of some robber or assassin, who was indebted to the discovery of the New World for his escape from the gibbet. In travelling, they disdained to ride on the backs of mules or horses, of which there were more than enough for their use, but, luxuriously stretched on a hammock or litter, they were gently borne on the shoulders of fainting Indians; and while some groaned under the burden of the galley-slave, others were forced to hold enormous palm-leaves over his head to shield from the excessive heat of the sun a face bronzed in working in the galleys, and still others had to move a great feather-fan across his face, so that he might not feel the inconvenience of the burning atmosphere. Las Casas affirms that he himself saw the shoulders of the unfortunate Indians who bore the litters all raw and bleeding after a long journey. And when these new gentlemen arrived in an Indian village, they seized the provisions of the inhabitants, not as they needed them, but at the dictate of caprice or ill-will, and compelled the cacique and his subjects to dance before them for their amusement. And their very pleasures were accompanied with cruelty; for they never spoke to the natives but in haughty terms, and at the least offence or slightest sign of anger, condemned them to the lash, the cudgel, or even to death.* The better class of Spaniards, of whom there were still many in the colony, were indignant at these outrages, but the number and insolence of the bad had given them too great preponderance, and they could look for help and a remedy only from Spain, whither they sent lamentable accounts of what was going on, and earnest prayers for a speedy interference.

The unfortunate Bobadilla relied on the great quantities of gold he would send to Spain to outweigh the report of his errors, and even secure him in future a high place in the sovereigns' favor; but he was mistaken. The great abuses of his administration reached the throne; the blood of the wretched Indians who perished in grubbing

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. i.

gold out of the bowels of the earth, cried for vengeance. The government hastened the departure of the new governor, altering and enlarging, as became necessary, the instructions and means furnished him to make a permanent settlement of the disorders of the colony.

The orders given to Ovando, were to assume command immediately on his arrival on the island, and send Bobadilla at once back to Spain. He was to inquire carefully into the abuses that had been introduced, punish the guilty, wherever and whoever they might be, and expel from the island all who had become unfit to remain. He was to revoke at once the general license to search for gold, as it had not been sanctioned by their Majesties. He was to exact a third of all the gold already collected, as provided by the rules established by the admiral, and one-half of all that should be collected in the future. He was empowered to build cities, and grant them the same privileges enjoyed by municipal corporations in Spain; and to compel the Spaniards, especially such as were in the military service, to reside in them, instead of scattering themselves all over the island.

In the restrictive spirit which pervaded the whole commercial system of the times, commercial intercourse with the colony was made the exclusive privilege of the crown; and, accordingly, it was prohibited to carry merchandise there for private account, and a royal factor was appointed through whom alone goods could be obtained from Europe. The king and queen reserved the exclusive ownership not only of the mines, but also of precious stones, and every object of great value, including dye-woods. No foreigners, least of all Moors and Jews, were permitted to settle on the island, or undertake voyages of discovery.

Isabella's greatest solicitude was for the fate of the poor Indians. Ovando was accordingly instructed to assemble the caciques and inform them that the king and queen of Spain took them under their special protection. They were merely to pay tribute like other subjects of the crown, and were to be treated with all possible gentleness.

But all the benefit of these wise measures was destroyed by the unfortunate authority given to compel the Indians to labor in the mines and on all public works undertaken by the state. True, they were to be employed as hired laborers and punctually paid; but with people like most of the colonists, long used to domineering, it could not be expected that this would be strictly observed. It

might have been foreseen that with this opening, abuses and oppression would find entrance, and soon regain their former rule.

It was especially recommended that great pains be taken to win them over to Christianity ; and for this purpose twelve Franciscans were sent out with Ovando, under the direction of Antonio de Espinal, a pious and venerable prelate, to instruct them in the duties of our holy religion.*

Whilst the Catholic sovereigns were so solicitously seeking to alleviate the condition of the Indians, and to confer on them gradually the benefits of civilization and religion ; with that inconsistency frequent in the weakness of the human mind, they published a decree authorizing the importation into the colony of negro slaves born amongst Christians ;† that is to say, such as were born in Spain of the natives of the coast of Africa, that had been brought to Europe as slaves, by the Spaniards and Portuguese.

Concerning the interests and rights of Columbus, they instructed Ovando to examine his accounts, and ascertain the damages he had sustained by his imprisonment, the suspension of his privileges, and the confiscation of his property. Every thing that Bobadilla had sequestered was to be restored, keeping an exact account of what had been sold and could not be found. What had been taken for their Majesties' service was to be paid for from the royal treasury, and Bobadilla made to pay for what he had appropriated to his own use. His brothers were to be indemnified in the same manner for all damages resulting from their imprisonment. Columbus was to be paid all arrears of his revenues, and every care taken to secure their punctual payment in future. He was further empowered to send a factor to Hispaniola to attend to his private affairs, and collect his share of the public revenues according to his contract. To this office he appointed Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, and their Majesties gave orders that Carvajal should be treated with the greatest respect.

The fleet prepared for Ovando was the largest that had yet sailed for the New World, and consisted of thirty sail. Five of them were from ninety to one hundred and fifty tons burden ; twenty-four, from thirty to ninety ; one, of twenty-five only. The number of persons embarked was 2,500. Besides artisans and mechanics,

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. iii.

† Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. iv, cap. xii.



there were on board a physician, a surgeon, an apothecary, and seventy-three married men, of good character, with their families, destined to be distributed in four cities, and to enjoy special privileges, that they might form the basis of a sound and industrious population. They were to replace the same number of the dissolute and idle, who were to be expelled from the island. There were also live-stock, artillery, arms, ammunition, and a large supply of provisions.

To add to the dignity of his office, Ovando was allowed to use garments of silk, embroidered with precious stones, and other costly articles, at that time prohibited in Spain in order to restrain the immoderate extravagance of the nobles; and for his personal guard he was given twenty-two squires, of whom ten were cavaliers. With him sailed Don Alonzo Maldonado, to take the place, as *alcalde-mayor* or chief-justice, of Roldan, who was recalled to Europe.

The fleet hoisted sail on the 13th of February, 1502. At the beginning of the voyage, they encountered a fearful storm, and were obliged to throw overboard every thing on deck to save themselves. But even this could not save one of the ships, which went to the bottom with 120 persons. Much of the cargo jettisoned was cast on the coast of Spain, which gave rise to a rumor that the entire fleet was lost. The grief of Spain at this report was beyond description. The king and queen were so deeply affected that they shut themselves in their apartments, and for eight days would see no one. The twenty-nine ships that had weathered the terrible tempest, assembled again at the island of Gomera in the Canaries, whence pursuing their voyage, they arrived at San Domingo on the 15th of April.*

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. iii.

CHAPTER XV.

Project of Columbus for delivering the Holy Sepulchre.—His Book of the Prophecies (1500-01).

THE diligence of the government in fitting out Ovando's fleet, and the abundant provision of whatever could help in making his mission effective, must have awakened in Columbus the saddest comparisons. If what was now doing for Ovando had been done for him, he would either have avoided his deplorable misfortunes, or have strangled them at their birth. How often had he not asked for some wise and honest person to take Roldan's place, and perform the duties of chief-justice of the island! How often had he not asked for the removal of the idle and dissolute from the colony, to be replaced by honest, industrious, and respectable persons! Nothing was ever granted to him; and now they approve his ideas, accept his propositions, but entrust their execution to another. How well he could have done on the island, what discoveries he could have added to those he made, if instead of being compelled to live in a constant struggle with his subordinates, the government had placed him in a position where his undertakings would not be interfered with! Now others were gathering the fruit of his labors, and a swarm of adventurers following the path he discovered were collecting the profit that by right and sworn agreement belonged to him alone.

But in his magnanimity, his least thought was of the personal injury and dishonor to himself: what was nearest his heart, and occupied all his thoughts, was the great affair of the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre, which was hindered and deferred for, no one could say, how long. We have repeatedly mentioned this project of his, but have never treated it at length; and this seems a suitable place to speak of it more fully. But the reader must first be reminded to transport himself in thought to the age of Columbus, and laying aside the ideas and opinions of this century, identify himself as far

as possible with the ideas and opinions of those days, in order to understand his intention and judge it correctly. Otherwise, he will find only matter for ridicule, and it is unnecessary to remark how unjust such judgment would prove.

In the history of Christianity, inquiries into the time fixed for the end of the world are found to have begun with the Apostles, who asked the divine Master himself. The answer of Christ, "It is not for you to know the times or the moments, which the Father hath put in his own power,"*—this answer, it would seem, ought to prevent any one from seeking to inquire further into the matter; but yet, this problem has ever attracted men's minds with invincible curiosity. We may imagine what it must have been when faith was general and profound, and the ignorance of the age was an apt soil for superstition.

Every one knows what fear pervaded Christendom on the approach of the year 1000, when, according to an erroneous interpretation of a passage in the Apocalypse, it was generally believed that the promised renovation of the heaven and the earth was to take place. When that fear had passed away, the thought of the end of the world no longer disturbed men's minds or hearts; but still, from time to time, some one appeared of great name and authority, who, resuming the subject, renewed amongst the people the belief and dread of the near destruction of all things.

Cardinal d'Ailly, among the various questions discussed in his works, treated of this also, and adopted on the subject the opinion of St. Augustine, who thought the end of the world would be 7,000 years from its creation. Columbus had diligently studied the works of this great cardinal, and had the greatest respect for his opinions, and among the rest, accepted this one regarding the end of the world. But his inquiring mind did not rest content with the opinion of the wise master, but wanted to examine further, and, on the basis of the Alphonsine tables, believed he could establish that the world would not last more than about a century and a half longer. †

* Acts, i, 7.

† Alfonso X of Castile, surnamed the Wise, had certain astronomical tables made, which were called Alphonsine, after his name, and were for some centuries the basis of all astronomical study. Alfonso ascended the throne in 1252, and died in 1284. Here are the words of Columbus: "St. Augustine teaches that the end of the world will be 7,000 years from its creation. This is like-

The Gospel says that before the end of the world, all nations will be converted to the law of Christ, under the guidance of one single pastor: "and there shall be one shepherd and one fold." The end therefore being near, according to the idea of Columbus, it was necessary that preparation be made for the conversion of all nations. But with the colossal power of Islamism, which rose up as the implacable enemy of the name of Christ, so far from hoping to make any progress in propagating the faith, it was rather to be feared that still more provinces and nations would be lost. It was therefore necessary, first of all, to beat down that monster, wrest from its grasp the Holy Sepulchre of Christ, and breaking down the wall by which it shut out Asia and Africa from Christianity, open the way for preaching the Gospel. But faith had grown tepid; the pious enthusiasm of the crusades was spent; and there was no hope that Christian nations, with their divisions and jealousies, would again unite in pouring out their money and blood for a purely religious end. Here was the origin of Columbus's project,—grand, vast, such as only a powerful mind like his could conceive, or a magnanimous heart like his could attempt to carry out. When and how he first conceived the idea, we have no means of determining. But it certainly must from an early period have been coupled with his idea of seeking the east by way of the west, to be so strongly rooted in his thoughts, and to grow and be strengthened with it.

The covetous looks of Europe were turned towards the riches of the Orient, immensely exaggerated to the imagination by distance; but the length of the way, the want of roads, and the barbarism of the nations to be traversed, rendered it vain to attempt to reach there by land. Whilst the Portuguese were looking for a passage by sea to the south of Africa, Columbus, with unheard-of hardihood, conceived the idea of reaching there directly by the west. The conquest of those regions would yield exhaustless wealth, and he, as we have seen, with invincible pertinacity, insisted on receiving a very large share. He was accused of insatiable avarice, and yet

wise the opinion of the holy theologians, and of Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly. Your Highness is aware that from Adam to the birth of Christ was 5,343 years and 318 days, according to the exact calculation of King Alfonso. We are now in the fifteen hundred and first year since the birth of our Lord, and, consequently, the world has lasted already 6,845 years. It will, therefore, be only 155 years before the world is destroyed."

his thoughts were raised so far above earth ! With all the gold he would obtain by his discovery, he made a vow to assemble within seven years an army of 50,000 foot and 5,000 horse, and an equal number in the next five years, to free the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the Turks.*

The Moslem power fought and conquered, the whole earth would be opened to the heralds of the Gospel, and the times would be easily got ready for the second coming of Christ. The project seemed so new and so extraordinary to Columbus himself, that he attributed it all to divine inspiration, and believed and declared that he had been especially sent to prepare the ways of the Lord.† This deliverance by him of Christ's Sepulchre was so certain and so clear, that before he started on his discovery, when every thing was involved in uncertainty and fear, he announced it openly to the king and queen.‡

But the malice of men had thrown so many obstacles in his way that the seven years had passed, and he was further from his object than when he began. This had been a constant distress to his heart, and was increased by the appointment just made of Ovando. His thoughts turned more than ever to this subject, and as the prospect of his succeeding in this undertaking by his own strength alone seemed to grow more distant, he thought of securing the aid of the Catholic sovereigns, by producing in their mind the conviction of his own, that it had been established in the decrees of Providence, that the discovery of the New World was to be followed by the deliverance of Christ's Sepulchre, to prepare the way for the conversion of all nations for the approaching end of the world. With this thought, shutting himself up in deep study and meditation, he set about collecting from the Bible, the holy fathers, the lives of the saints and of those who had lived in great reputation for sanctity, all the prophecies and mystic revelations he could find, that seemed to refer to those two great events ; and when he believed he had made a complete work in accordance with his design, he sent it for revision and correction to Father Gaspare Goricio, a Carthusian of

* *Letter of Columbus to Alexander VI.*

† *Letter of Columbus to the King and Queen, accompanying his Book of the Prophecies.*

‡ *Journal of the First Voyage, 26 December.*

Seville, his friend and a celebrated theologian. Then he presented it to their Majesties.

The title of the work was: *Collection of Prophecies Concerning the Recovery of Jerusalem and the Discovery of the Indies*. Fourteen pages of these prophecies are still preserved; but they are evidently taken from the first sketch or draft, in which the admiral was setting down as he came to them, the witnesses and authorities in his favor, as preparatory materials for the work he intended; for, the passages collected, and the authorities cited, have no connection of argument or coördination with each other. An example of how he turned the meaning of the Holy Scriptures to his preconceived idea, is found in these verses of the Psalmist: "Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?" And the answer is: "He that hath innocent hands and a clean heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully unto his neighbor."* These words are understood by all the sacred interpreters of the acquisition of the heavenly Jerusalem, or Paradise, and of the purity of mind and heart required for reaching it. Columbus, however, applies them to the earthly Jerusalem and its recovery from the power of the Mahometans, and the innocent and pure he regards as Christians in general, in contrast with the turpitude of mind and heart of the followers of Mahomet.†

He accompanied his book with a letter to their Majesties, entreating them not to reject his proposal as something wild and impracticable, and not to listen to the sarcasms sure to be spoken against it, remembering that even his other proposal to discover a new way to the Indies had been received with sarcasm and ridicule. He freely asserted his conviction that he had been chosen by God, from his earliest years, to carry out these two great undertakings,—the discovery of the New World, and the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre. For that purpose, God had led him to embrace a sailor's life, in which one is naturally inclined to study to penetrate the secrets of nature, and he had in addition a spirit of curiosity, which caused him to read every sort of chronicles and books of philosophy. While meditating on these books, his mind had been opened by God "as by a hand," and it was then that he discovered a way by sea to the Indies, and felt himself all on fire with the desire of opening it.

* Ps. xxiv, 3-4.

† *Letter of Columbus from Jamaica, July 7, 1503.*

"Then it was," he says, "that I sought Your Majesties; every one that heard of my undertaking ridiculed it; all the knowledge I had acquired, was of no use to me; I spent ten years at your august court, in discussions with persons of great merit and profound learning, who after much argument ended by declaring my projects to be chimerical. Your Majesties alone had faith and constancy.* Who can doubt that it was the light derived from the Sacred Scriptures, that enlightened your minds with the same rays as mine?"

He concluded by assuring their Majesties that if they would place the same confidence in him now, as they had done for the discovery of the New World, this second undertaking would result no less happily and gloriously. If any one should say he was ignorant and short-sighted, they should answer that the Holy Ghost works in the ignorant as well as in the wise, and makes the future known by means of wonders in animals and mysterious signs in the air and sky, as well as by the voice of reasonable beings.

As far as we can judge from what little has been preserved of these prophecies, and from expressions here and there in his other writings, Columbus must have arranged his work in the following manner.

Laying down certain principles for interpreting the Sacred Scriptures, taken from St. Augustine, St. Thomas, St. Isidore, and Gerson, he began his argument by giving as the basis of his discourse, the promise of Christ, that "before the consummation of the world, all that has been written shall be fulfilled." Then followed the long series of prophecies which he had collected relating to these two great events, developed and explained in a lengthy and well-sustained argument, richly interwoven with interpretations and authorities drawn from the holy fathers and other ecclesiastical writers.

Goricio replied in terms of wonder and praise, and it is easy to believe, looking at it from his point of view, that the work must have been admirable for its wealth of learning and thread of logic. Inasmuch as Goricio's letter, after careful examination of the work of Columbus, shows undoubted sincerity in its approbation and eulogy,† the error of so learned a man is a speaking proof of the con-

* *Book of the Prophecies*, fol. iv. *Letter of the Admiral to the King and Queen*. —The truth was that only Isabella had the faith and constancy; but it was natural for Columbus to mention Ferdinand in connection with her.

† Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. No. cxi.

dition of men's minds at that time, in regard to certain questions, and is the best defence of the mistake of Columbus in putting forth and defending his wild opinion.

After the discovery of the New World, Columbus was not alone in his fervent belief that Providence had given him a special mission, but many others, both churchmen and laymen, and among them persons of distinguished birth, rank, or talent, were convinced of it. The famous Jayme Ferrer, whose learning and genius we have spoken of in another part of our history,* as early as January 27th, 1495, wrote of Columbus to the queen in these words: "I believe that in its deep, mysterious desigus, divine Providence selected him as its agent in this work, which I look upon as the *introduction* and *preparation* for things which the same divine Providence has determined to make known to us for its own glory, and the salvation and happiness of the world."† And on the 5th of August of the same year, he wrote to the admiral himself:

"I behold in this a great mystery: divine and infallible Providence sent the great Thomas‡ from the west to the east to preach our holy Catholic faith in the Indies, and has sent you, señor, by the opposite way, from the east to the west, till, by God's will, you reached the utmost limits of Upper India, in order that the inhabitants might learn those truths which their progenitors cared not to receive from the preaching of St. Thomas. And thus are fulfilled the words of the Prophet: 'Their sound is gone out through all the earth.' "§ And further on: 'In your mission, señor, you seem an apostle, a messenger of God to spread his name in unknown lands.'"||

* See book ii, ch. ii.

† *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. lxviii.

‡ St. Thomas, the Apostle, of whom tradition relates that he preached the Gospel among the Parthians, and some say that he penetrated into India as far as Ceylon and Sumatra. According to tradition, he died a martyr in Coromandel, on the eastern coast of Hindostan.

§ Ps. xviii, 4.

|| In the narrative of his third voyage, Columbus says that Isaiah, in many places, clearly refers to the countries which he discovered, and declares that Spain will make the name of God more known than any other country. He repeats this in his letter to Don Juan's governess, joining with the name of Isaiah that of St. John, in the Apocalypse. The verse from the Psalms, just quoted, shows how Columbus must have interpreted some obscure expression of Isaiah in accordance with his own ideas. Curiosity has induced many conjectures as to what expressions they could have been, and among those proposed are the following: *Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far* (xxx,

While engaged in his work on the prophecies, Columbus, from time to time,—perhaps for amusement, and perhaps as a vent for his piety, which in those days, and among those books, must have exerted a much stronger influence on his mind,—enjoyed writing poems in Spanish on religious subjects, suggested by the Prophets, the Psalms, the Hymns of the Church, or other religious and spiritual matters he had in hand. But these poems are also lost. The paraphrase of *Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin*,* in ten strophes, each commencing with a Latin motto; the beginning of an ode on the birth of St. John the Baptist, entitled: *Gozos del Nacimiento de Sant Iuan Bautista*; a stanza on the duties of a Christian, and some verses scattered here and there in his book of prophecies,—are all that remain. To judge, however, from these few remnants, the loss is not greatly to be deplored from the point of view of poetry.

All this time, Columbus lived in modest retirement, not so much for the purpose of studying in silence and solitude, as on account of the great straits to which he was reduced. He was paid nothing that year, on account of his revenue from Hispaniola. The money which the sovereigns ordered to be given him on his return, was mostly spent in the necessary expense of making a suitable appearance before their Majesties; and he does not appear to have received any further subvention. He was, consequently, struggling with extreme want; for it was no easy matter, with the discredit that had been thrown on the colonies, to find any one who would advance him any money, and his rank and sense of propriety prevented his making requests too much beneath him. He acknowledges that he was often without means to pay for his lodging; † and remembers with especial bitterness that he had not even a *blanca* for the offering at

27). Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knewest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee (lv, 5). Who are these that fly as clouds, and as doves to their windows? For, the islands wait for me, and the ships of Turshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them (lx, 8-9). For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth (lxiv, 17), &c. As to the part which Columbus found reserved for Spain, Navarrete remarks that the Tarshish mentioned in lx, 9, according to some interpreters, refers to one of the most beautiful parts of Spain—the Tartessos of the ancients, situated in Andalusia, and much visited by the Phenicians. It is not unlikely that from this Columbus derived his conviction that the Prophet Isaiah designated Spain as completing the discovery of the New World.

* Ecclus., vii, 40.

† Letter of the Admiral to the Catholic Kings, from Jamaica, July 7, 1503.

church.* This is confirmed by Angiolo Trinigiano, secretary to the Venetian embassy in Spain, who boasts, in a private letter, that he had become a great friend of the admiral of the Indies, by whose means he had obtained from the pilots of Palos, at the request of Domenico Malipiero, a chart of large dimensions, showing all the lands discovered in the Indies. In this letter he says of Columbus that he was *without money or credit*.†

CHAPTER XVI.

Preparations for a fourth voyage.—Letter of Columbus to the Supreme Pontiff.—Measures taken by Columbus to secure his rights.—The signature of Christopher Columbus (1501-02).

AFTER his study of the prophecies, Columbus returned with his old ardor to the thought of voyages and discoveries.

From his observations along the coast of Paria, he judged it must extend far to the west; and he remembered that the southern coast of Cuba, which he had taken for the main-land of Asia, trended in a south-west direction, so that the two coasts must finally join each other. And as the currents of the Caribbean Sea also ran to the west, he argued that at their point of intersection, there must be an opening through which the currents flowed into the Indian Ocean. He determined where that point must be, and indicated, says Las Casas, the vicinity of the harbor that was afterwards called *Nombre de Dios*,‡ that is, where the Isthmus of Darien separates, by a short tongue of land, the waters of the Atlantic from those of the great ocean.§ He directed his views to that point, and determined to

* The *blanca* was the smallest coin in Castile.

† *Letter of Angiolo Trinigiano*, Aug. 21, 1501.—Morelli, *Lettera Rarissima*, p. 44.

‡ Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. iv.

§ Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxviii.—Francisco Lopez de Gomara, *La Hist. de las Indias, El Quarto Viage*, p. 4.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind. Occid.*, dec. i, lib. v, cap. i.—Gir. Benzoni, *La Istoria del Mondo Nuovo*, lib. i, fol. xxviii.

sail in search of that strait, to follow it into the other ocean, reach the Indies of the Portuguese, who were making so much noise over Vasco da Gama, and thus uniting the new world he had discovered with the gorgeous Oriental regions of antiquity, cross the Indian Ocean, sail around Africa, and return to Europe, circumnavigating the globe.

It was the gigantic project which he had tried to carry out on his second voyage, and which he was then compelled to give up, on account of insuperable obstacles, not the least of which was the faint-heartedness of his companions.* He now took it up again with redoubled ardor, because then he thought he was at the gates of the Old World, and now he was facing the unknown of new seas and new lands to be attacked and overcome. The expedition which gave Magellan immortal fame, and which he conducted only after great progress in discovery had already been made, Christopher Columbus twice prepared to accomplish when the first battles with the Ocean had scarce been won, and the hem had hardly been lifted of the veil which hid the secrets of those unknown seas and lands. It was no fault of his that, to the glory of doubling the surface of the known world, he failed to add the honor of being the first to sail around it.

The king and queen listened with great attention to the plan which Columbus unfolded to them; but when it was laid before the royal council, it is said to have met with unexpected obstacles. Some objected the low state of the treasury, and the necessity of providing for more pressing demands; others, that prudence and justice required they should wait for letters from Ovando, to learn whether the admiral really deserved to escape all blame for his conduct in Hispaniola. But their objections were of no weight, because Isabella retained her confidence in Columbus, and Ferdinand looked favorably on the plan. Isabella declared that after providing a powerful fleet and splendid retinue for Ovando merely to take possession of his government, it would be monstrous ingratitude and real barbarity to refuse a few ships to the discoverer of the New World to prosecute his glorious discoveries. And Ferdinand, ever grasping and jealous, was delighted at the prospect of finding a shorter and safer way to those regions, from which Portugal had so rapidly derived a most lucrative trade, and no less desirous of the

* See book i, ch. xxviii.

greater glory he would obtain compared with that of Portugal. It was, besides, no slight advantage for him to keep the admiral occupied on an expedition that would take considerable time, diverting him in the meanwhile from all thoughts of making annoying and burdensome claims, and at the same time employing his talents in the most beneficial way for the crown; for, if Ferdinand had any doubts as to the capacity of Columbus for government, he had the greatest esteem for him as a navigator; and if the strait Columbus spoke of really existed, no one could be better fitted to discover it. His plan was therefore accepted, and he was authorized to get a squadron ready as soon as possible. He set out at once for Seville to devote himself wholly to making the necessary preparations. This was in the autumn of 1501.

The cares of fitting out a fleet did not divert his thoughts from his other idea, which was ever foremost in his mind, and in the early part of the next year, 1502, having properly arranged his *Book of the Prophecies*, he presented it to the king and queen, accompanied by the letter already mentioned. We are completely ignorant of its effect on the two sovereigns. But we know that Ferdinand, a pious and religious person, but withal a sharp politician and careful observer of the times, was so far from intending a chivalric crusade for the recovery of Jerusalem, that he entered into negotiations with the Sultan of Egypt, who had threatened to destroy the temple. He sent as ambassador, Peter Martyr, the learned historian we have so often had occasion to mention in this history, and all the old grievances between the two powers were satisfactorily adjusted, and arrangements made for the custody of the Holy Sepulchre, and for the protection of all Christian pilgrims resorting to it.

In February, Columbus wrote a long letter to the reigning pontiff, Alexander VI, in which he says: "that ever since he sailed on his first expedition, he had intended, on his return, to carry in person to His Holiness an account of his discovery; but the attempts of Portugal compelled him to get ready to start hastily on a second voyage. That he had undertaken these discoveries with the intention of dedicating the proceeds to the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre, and that this thought had given him strength to risk the dangers, the fatigues, and death in various ways, to which he had been exposed on his voyages, with so little thanks from the world. That he had made a vow to raise, within seven years, 50,000 in-

fantry, and 5,000 cavalry, and a like force in the five succeeding years, for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre ; and that his revenues would be amply sufficient for that purpose. But Satan had interfered with all his might to prevent so holy a proposition from being carried into effect, and he saw clearly that unless Providence came to his special assistance, he should never be able to succeed in his design.

“That he was now starting^s on a fourth voyage, but solemnly promised the Holy Father that he would repair to Rome immediately on his return, to relate by word of mouth to His Holiness all that happened to him, and to present to him the account of his voyages, which he had written *from the commencement to that date in the style of Cæsar’s Commentaries.*

“He entreats the Supreme Pontiff to publish a brief requiring all heads of religious orders to allow him to select from their convents six religious to be appointed Missionaries Apostolic ; because,” he says, “I hope in our Lord to spread his Holy Name and Gospel over all the world.”*

The commentary on his voyages mentioned by Columbus, has unfortunately been lost.

On the 26th of February, he wrote to their Majesties, making various proposals, and asking several things, in connection with his intended voyage, and then going back to insist on his rights and privileges. Amongst other things, he asked permission to touch at Hispaniola for supplies ; but their Majesties replied that this would take too much time, and therefore they desired he should sail straight on his way. But they permitted him to stop there on his return, for what might be needed, but only for a brief period, as they were anxious to have the account of his voyage directly from himself. This great unwillingness to lose any time was clearly a pretext to cover their refusal ; and the permission to stop there for a short time only, on his return, shows that they did not look favorably on his going to the island.

In regard to his own affairs, after promising that they would soon attend to them, and urging him to sail without further delay, they added : “Rest assured that your imprisonment gave us great displeasure, as you saw, and every one knew, by our remedying it

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Doc. cxlv.—*Letter of Christopher Columbus to His Holiness.*

as soon as we knew of it. You know with what honor and courtesy we have always commanded you to be treated, and we now do all in our power that you may be respected and honored as is proper. The favors we have bestowed on you will be maintained intact in the form and tenor of the privileges granted, and you and your sons will enjoy them, as is reasonable; and if it becomes necessary to confirm them again, we will confirm them, and will order your son after you to be put in full possession of them all, for it is our greatest desire and intention to add to your honors and rewards. Be assured that we will take all the care of your sons and brothers that reason requires. This will be done when you sail, and the charge of all will be given to your son, as we have said. We entreat you, therefore, not to delay your departure.”*

In kindness of expression and abundant promises, this letter was all that could be wished for; but the past had made Columbus distrustful of the future. To protect his fame, and secure, as far as possible, the rights of his family, he determined to place them under the guardianship of his native land. He, therefore, had two copies made of all the letters, grants, and privileges he had received from the Catholic kings, which related to his appointment as admiral, viceroy, and governor-general of the Indies, and had them authenticated before the alcaldes of Seville, and, by means of different persons, he sent them to his friend Doctor Nicolò Oderigo, the former ambassador from Genoa to the court of Spain. He added a copy of his letter to Prince Juan's governess, triumphantly vindicating his conduct, and defending himself against all the charges and calumnies of his enemies; and two lengthy memorials, in which he declared and claimed all that *belonged, or could, or should belong* to him by virtue of the agreement and treaty with their Majesties. Messer Oderigo was asked to deposite these papers in a safe place, and notify the admiral's eldest son, Don Diego. Columbus feared that the malice of his enemies would attempt the destruction of the documents proving his privileges, and therefore he took the precaution of making several copies of them, and concealing them, and even thought of enclosing them in a little cork casket lined with wax, and hiding them in a cistern.† In placing them under the protec-

* *Col. Dipl. Colombo-Americano*, Doc. xli.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxviii.

† *Letter to Father G. Gorcio*, Jan. 4, 1505, in the *Raccolta di Viaggi* of F. C. Marmocchi. Prato, 1840.

tion of Genoa, it is certain that he was not so much in the hope of securing his country's good offices in favor of his sons, as of securing to them the means of appealing to the world, as a last resort, by publishing the injustice done them. Each of these two packages of documents contained a copy of a letter to the Bank of St. George at Genoa, in which Columbus informed that famous institution of the testamentary disposition he had made in its favor, which Washington Irving calls a truly patriotic donation, inspired by real benevolence, because it was devoted to the relief of the poor of his native city.*

This letter is so short that I am inclined to give it in full.

“To the most noble Lords of the most magnificent Office of St. George.

“Most noble Lords: Although in body far distant, in heart I am always near you. God our Lord has done me the greatest favor of any man since David.

“The facts of my enterprise, already widely published, would astonish you much more if you knew them all, and the government had not cautiously concealed them. I return again to the Indies, in the name of the Most Holy Trinity; but as I am mortal and may leave this life on the way, I have disposed by will, that my son Don Diego shall remit to you every year, in perpetuity, the tenth part of my revenues, to be used in reducing the duties on corn, wine, and other victuals consumed in your city. If this tenth will accomplish something, accept it; if not, accept my good-will.

“I recommend my said son to your favor. Messer Nicolò Oderigo knows much about me; he is the bearer also of a faithful copy of my privileges and rights, to be deposited in some safe place, after showing it to your Lordships at your convenience.

“The King and Queen my Sovereigns, love and honor me more than ever.

“May the Holy Triad preserve your noble persons, and bestow ever greater prosperity on the most magnificent Office of St. George.

“Done at Seville, on the 2nd of April, 1502.

“The Admiral-Major of the Ocean sea, and Viceroy and Governor-General of the islands and main-land of Asia and India, for the

* *Columbus*, book xiv, ch. v.

King and Queen my Sovereigns, and their Captain-General of the sea and their Councillor.

· S ·
· S · A · S ·
X M Y
Xρo FERENS."*

This seems to be a proper place to say something of the manner in which Columbus affixed his signature.

That the seven initials must mean some devout aspiration, or prayer, is beyond all doubt. This is in perfect accord with the character of the person, and the age and nation in which he lived. To accompany the signature with a religious motto, was an old and common custom in Spain, to show that the writer was a Christian. This was of some importance in a country in which Jews and Mohammedans were proscribed and persecuted.† We know from Fernando his son, that when Columbus began writing, he commenced with the ejaculation, *Jesus cum Maria sit nobis in via*‡—a practice by no means peculiar to him, but very common, and still in use among persons who profess a religious life; and I have myself often received letters with *Jesus Maria Joseph* written in Latin, or with the initials of those names. As he raised his thoughts to God before commencing, it was quite natural for him to turn again to God on ending. But the meaning of those letters has never been divined. All agree in reading the third line as Jesus, Mary, Joseph—

**Col. Dipl.*, No. clvi.—“These documents lay unknown in the Oderigo family until 1670, when Lorenzo Oderigo presented them to the government of Genoa, and they were deposited in the archives. In the disturbances and revolutions of later times, one of these copies was taken to Paris, and the other disappeared. In 1816, the latter was discovered in the library of the deceased Count Michelangelo Cambiagio, a senator of Genoa. It was procured by the king of Sardinia, then sovereign of Genoa, and given up by him to the city of Genoa in 1821. A custodia, or monument, was erected in that city for its preservation, consisting of a marble column supporting an urn, surmounted by a bust of Columbus. The documents were deposited in the urn.” (Irving, *Columbus*, book xiv, ch. iv, note.)—These papers were published in 1823, under the title of *Codice Diplomatico Colombo-Americano*, at Genoa, printed by Ponthenier. The other copy, supposed to have been lost, was lately found with other valuable Genoese documents, among the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at Paris.

† Irving, *Columbus*, Appendix xxxvii.

‡ Fernando Colombo, cap. iii.

Xristus, Maria, Yosephus ; and the $X\rho\bar{o}$ Ferens is clearly the name of Christopher, with the first half in Greek letters, abbreviated, and the last half in Roman letters, according to the practice of the time, which still survives, to some extent, in Spain, of using Greek and Roman letters in signatures and inscriptions.* The difficulty is with the first four letters. Spotorno remarks that the first of these letters is between two periods, those of the second line are separated by periods, and those of the third line without any mark of punctuation. From this he concludes that the meaning of the first letter was complete in itself, and he interpreted it as *Salva me*, or *Salve* ; and that the others formed words together, the initial letter being in the third line, and the final in the second ; wherefore, they must be read upwards, and he thought they signified the holy names of Jesus, Mary, Joseph. I cling to this interpretation as the most obvious and probable, giving to the first S the character of a salutation.

	· S ·	Salve	
· S ·		A	· S ·
X	Xristus	M	Y
		Maria	Yosephus

The last part of the signature, $X\rho\bar{o}$ FERENS, was employed in his private letters ; in those of an official character he substituted his title *El Almirante*, as is seen in the fifteen autograph letters found in the archives of the Duke of Veragua, and published by Navarrete, four of which are addressed to his friend Father Gasper Goricio, and eleven to his son Don Diego ; and all bear the signature $X\rho\bar{o}$ FERENS ; whilst, on the other hand, the deed instituting the entail is signed by his title *El Almirante*.†

I pass over certain peculiarities and differences found in his various signatures, as, for example, that the $X\rho\bar{o}$ is sometimes preceded by two little points, and sometimes not ; for that does not affect the substance of the signature, which, I believe, is all that interests the reader.

* Irving, *Columbus*, App. xxxvii

† The practice of Christopher Columbus of signing his title of Admiral, without name or surname, has had the glorious result in South America, that he is always mentioned there merely by his title of *Almirante*. "Il y a de la grandeur historique dans cet usage populaire," Humboldt justly remarks.

CHAPTER XVII.

Departure of Columbus on his fourth voyage.—Its aim.—He is refused entrance to the harbor of San Domingo.—He foretells a violent tempest, and is not believed.—He is exposed to it and escapes; his enemies are its victims.—He falls sick.—He is dragged by the currents near Cuba.—Reaches the little island of Guanaja opposite to Honduras.—Discovers the main-land and takes possession.—Navigation along the coast of Honduras as far as Cape Gracias á Dios (1502).

THE desire of the sovereigns to get rid of the admiral, and keep him occupied with the thoughts and cares of a long expedition, was well known, and, consequently, his activity and solicitude, instead of opposition and ill-will on the part of the officials of Seville, now met with all the aid and earnestness that could be desired, so that in a very short time the fleet was ready to start on his fourth expedition.* It consisted of four caravels, the largest of seventy tons, and the smallest of fifty; and their united crews amounted to only 150 men. With this small number and these frail vessels, did Columbus undertake a voyage intended to extend around the earth! And in what a state of health and of age he undertook it! He was now approaching his sixty-sixth year, with his health ruined by his past labors and sufferings. But if his body was bent under the heavy burden of grief and years, his mind was youthful in hope and enthusiasm, and in that age and condition of health, attempting a long and uncertain voyage, his eyes sparkled with the same joy and confidence as when he started on his former voyages. His age required more affection, and he asked for and obtained the companionship of his second son, Fernando, then hardly fourteen years old. He was also accompanied by the vigorous and intrepid Don Bartholomew, who was at first re-

* *Autograph Letter of Columbus to Father Goricio, of April 4, 1503, in the Raccolta di Viaggi of F. C. Marmocchi.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxviii.*

luctant to devote his labor and life to the service of a government which repaid him with continual ingratitude and injustice, but could not resist the wishes and wants of his brother, whom he regarded with a sort of adoration, and who, old and exhausted by physical and moral sufferings, was now again exposing himself to unknown perils and fatigues.* His to her brother, Don Diego, weary of the world and its struggles, had shut himself up in a monastery as a religious. He likewise obtained two or three persons acquainted with Arabic, to act as interpreters in case they should reach the dominions of the Grand Khan or any other Oriental potentate, where that language might be, at least, partially understood.

The ships were held, by a strong wind from the south, in the harbor of Cadiz, waiting for a favorable moment for putting to sea, when news was received that the Portuguese fortress of Arzilla on the coast of Morocco was blockaded by the Moors. Columbus, in accordance with the customs and obligations inherent in his grade of Grand Admiral of Castile,† at once set sail, and struggling against adverse winds, hastened to the relief of the threatened garrison.‡ They left Cadiz on the 9th of May, 1502, and on the 13th were before Arzilla, but found the siege already raised. Learning that the governor lay ill of a wound received in an assault, the admiral sent his brother Bartholomew, his son Fernando, and the captain of the caravel, to wait upon him, with expressions of friendship and congratulations on his vigorous defence.

The governor returned their courtesy, loading the visitors with kindness, especially the young Fernando, and sent his highest officers (among whom were some relatives of Felipa Moñiz, the first wife of Columbus) to tender his respects to the admiral.

Resuming their voyage the same day, they arrived at the Great Canary on the 20th, and they staved a few days there and at the adjacent islands, for the necessary supply of wood and water for the voyage. The evening of the 25th, they left with so favorable a wind that, without once shifting a sail, on the morning of Wednes-

* *Letter of the Admiral to the Catholic Kings*, of July 7, 1507, from Jamaica.

† *Ordinance of the Admiral of Castile*, 1430.

‡ *Letter of C. Columbus from the Great Canary to the Reverend Father G. Goricio*, of May 24, 1502.—Arzilla, or Azilá (for the spelling of geographical proper names is very confused and uncertain) is on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, seventeen leagues from the Strait of Gibraltar.

day, June 15th, they arrived at one of the Caribbee Islands, which the natives called Mantinino, and is probably the present Martinique. Here they stopped three days, to renew the supply of wood and water, and to wash their clothes; and the Saturday following, they sailed to Dominica, which was to the westward, and about ten leagues distant.

From there they continued by the Antilles to Santa Cruz, then westward, along the south coast of Porto Rico, and then straight to San Domingo.

In accordance with the orders of the sovereigns, which forbade his touching at San Domingo, the first intention of Columbus was to steer directly to the land of Paria, and follow the coast till he came to the strait, which he felt sure must be further on towards the west.* But he was obliged to change his plan, because his largest vessel, not having the masts sunk deep enough in the keel, could not support the sails when spread, and the other vessels were delayed to keep her company. He, therefore, decided to touch at San Domingo to exchange this vessel for one of those which Ovando had lately brought out, or else to purchase another. This seemed to him so reasonable as to be safe from suspicion or blame.† Ovando had arrived at San Domingo on the 15th of April. On the arrival of the new governor, all Bobadilla's importance vanished. Solitary and neglected, deserted by the very persons he had favored the most, he experienced in his own case the fickleness of the popularity gained by flattering the vices of the multitude. Still, it is not related that any process was instituted against him; and Las Casas, who was on the spot, asserts that he never heard any of the colonists speak harshly of him.‡ But a strict investigation was made of Roldan and his companions, and most of them were ordered to Spain to answer for what they had done. None of them seemed uneasy about his fate, relying on the influence of their friends to protect them at court, and on Fonseca, who they knew was ready to defend any one who had shown himself hostile to the admiral. They also knew

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxviii.—*Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica*. July 7, 1503.—*Journal of Diego Porras*, in the *Raccolta di Viaggi* of F. C. Marmocchi.

† *Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica*, July 7, 1503.—*Journal of Porras*.—Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxviii.

‡ Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. v.

that the great quantities of gold they had collected would remove any danger that threatened. With them were sent back the idle and dissolute who strolled over the island, furnishing the principal contingent of every disturbance. All these were to be sent back to Spain in the ships that brought Ovando to Hispaniola. Bobadilla took passage on the largest of the vessels, with an immense quantity of gold,—the proceeds of the crown revenues under his administration, —which he confidently expected would cover every fault that might be found with his conduct.

Roldan and his principal confederates were embarked on the same ship, so that with the gold intended for the crown, and that which Bobadilla, Roldan, and the other chiefs of the revolt put on board as their private property, there was on the flag-ship the largest amount of gold that had ever been got together. But the greatest marvel was an enormous piece of virgin gold, famous in the old Spanish chronicles, and the largest that had yet been found. It had been accidentally found in the mines, by an Indian girl, while carelessly moving her rake to and fro in the water. Its value was estimated at 1,350,000 maravedis, or nearly 2,080 dollars of our money. The great discovery was celebrated by a grand dinner, at which the enormous mass was used as a platter for serving a roasted pig; and the miners remarked that the kings of Castile had never eaten from a plate of such value. We are not informed whether the poor girl received any share of the good fortune; but Las Casas makes the melancholy remark, that she was very lucky if she got a taste of the pig.

This was the finest present Bobadilla had prepared for their Majesties.*

On the same ship was also the unfortunate Guarionex. Ever since his capture, he had been held a prisoner in Fort Concepcion, and now, loaded with chains, he was sent to Spain. Alonso Sanchez de Carvajal returned to Europe in one of the ships of the same fleet, taking with him 4,000 pieces of gold that he had got together, belonging to the admiral—partly revenues collected since his arrival, and partly what Bobadilla had been compelled to restore.

The preparations were all made, and the fleet ready to sail, when,

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. v.—Oviedo y Valdez, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. iii, cap. vii.—Peter Martyr, dec. i, lib. x, § xxiv

on the 29th of June, the little squadron of Columbus appeared off San Domingo. He sent Pedro di Tereros, captain of one of the caravels, on shore, to inform Ovando of the need he had of changing one of his vessels, and to ask, at the same time, for permission to come into the harbor for shelter from a violent hurricane which he saw, from various signs, would soon be upon them. Ovando refused both requests. Las Casas thinks he had been instructed by the king and queen, in case the admiral should make his appearance near San Domingo, not to admit him into the harbor, and that this severity was prudent, as the island was filled with his bitter enemies, more than ever exasperated by the severe measures Ovando adopted in their regard.* In Ovando's defence, it should be added, that the calm state of the sea and the sky seemed to belie the admiral's apprehension of an approaching storm; and the necessity of exchanging a vessel that had been at sea only two months, seemed a flimsy pretext. Columbus was deeply hurt at his repulse. "Who," he wrote soon after to their Majesties—"who, not even excepting Job, would not have died of despair to see, when my safety and that of my son, my brother, and my other friends, was at stake, under these circumstances, access forbidden me to that land, and shelter in that port, which by the will of God and at the price of my blood I had won for Spain?"† But, in spite of his indignation, he was anxious about the certain danger to which he saw that the fleet about to sail would be exposed. He, therefore, sent Tereros back to entreat the governor not to let the fleet weigh anchor, assuring him that he saw sure indications of the approach of a frightful hurricane, and woe to the ships that should be caught at that moment at sea, and exposed to the fury of the winds and the rage of the Ocean.

But they saw no signs of any danger, and seamen and pilots were impatient to start. His predictions were scoffed at, and he was ridiculed as a false prophet.

Columbus, finding that his attempts to save those imprudent men were idle, and certain, from his long experience in observing the natural phenomena of those regions, that the hurricane was imminent, and would come from the land side, kept as close as possible to the shore, seeking for some bay or deserted river to shelter his little squadron. His men were discouraged and astounded at finding

* Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. v.

† *Letter from Jamaica.*

themselves excluded from a port of their own country, where even strangers, under like circumstances, would not be refused hospitality and shelter. They complained of their misfortune in sailing with a captain who seemed excluded from common justice, and anticipated nothing but evil on a voyage on which the sea persecuted them with constant dangers, and the land refused them protection or shelter.*

In the mean time, Bobadilla's beautiful fleet of twenty-eight sail, with songs and music, left the safe harbor and sailed boldly out on the open sea. As they reached the eastern extremity of Hispaniola, the signs that precede a storm were manifest to every one, but the open menace was so quickly followed by the act, that the fleet had no time to seek shelter from the wrath of the sea, or to reach the open ocean and avoid the rocks near the shore. The tempest that burst on them was one of those tremendous hurricanes that sometimes gather up in tropical latitudes, of which we saw a fearful instance in the harbor of Isabella during the second voyage of Columbus.†

The flag-ship, on which were Bobadilla, Roldan, and the rest of the admiral's most bitter enemies, was one of the first to feel the storm, and, driven on a rock, went down with all on board. The others, after a more or less desperate struggle for life, were broken or sunk. Three got back to San Domingo in a pitiable condition. Whilst Bobadilla's fleet met with a fate unparalleled in history, the caravel carrying Carvajal and the admiral's gold, the smallest of all the fleet, came through unharmed; and whilst the other three which lived through the storm, could hardly make their way back to the neighboring port of San Domingo, she crossed the Ocean, blessing God, and arrived in Europe without the loss of a man or a thing.‡

The first day of the storm, Columbus kept his squadron well sheltered in a small bay; but the second day the tempest increased in violence, and at night the darkness was so intense, that the captains of the other three ships, dreading to be close in shore on so dark and boisterous a night, believed themselves safer in the open sea, and were thus exposed to the whole fury of the elements. They suffered terribly, and sustained much injury, but came through safe;

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxviii.—*Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica*, July 7.

† Book i, ch. xxxvi.

‡ Fernando Colombo, l. c.—Oviedo, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. iii, c. ix.

and the following Sunday joined the admiral in the harbor of Azua, west of San Domingo, to the delight and wonder of all, each having given up the others as lost. Only the admiral's caravel, which had remained in the bay, escaped without damage. The ship to suffer the worst was the one the admiral wanted to exchange at San Domingo; for, being hard to control, it always received the whole shock of the wind and the waves. Her long boat and a great part of the provisions were lost, and she rolled so badly that the sea washed over the deck.* She was kept afloat only by the consummate seamanship of the *adelantado*, her commander. "Every one," writes Fernando, "was certain that, after God, her safety was due to his skill and courage, for no one could be found at the time who was more experienced in navigation than he." The same eulogium is repeated and confirmed by the words of the admiral.†

Fernando adds: "When they all related their mishaps, it was found that the *adelantado* had been so fortunate because, as a practical seaman, he kept away from the land; and the admiral incurred no danger because, as a wise astronomer, he kept close to it, knowing from what point the danger was coming."‡

This great catastrophe seemed so strange and so wonderful in all its circumstances and in its effects, that all beheld in it, each after his own fashion, a power beyond nature. And truly, that Columbus should foretell the hurricane two days beforehand, and pronounce so confidently on its extent and duration, advising Ovando to retain the fleet for eight days in port, as the storm would be felt in distant parallels; whilst the captains and pilots of twenty-eight ships, who ought to have some knowledge of the sea and of indications of a storm, and whose life was concerned, unanimously pronounced him a false prophet,—all this was calculated to strike the imagination of any one, but especially of the rude and ignorant mass. But the most marvellous of all was the way the storm treated the different ships in its power. It seemed to have arisen for the express purpose of destroying all the admiral's enemies and the fruits of their iniquities, and at the same time, by sparing him and his friends with their effects, of giving the world a tremendous example of justice in his favor. His enemies extracted from it new motives of hostility,

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxviii.

† *Letter from Jamaica to the Catholic Kings.*

‡ Fernando Colombo, l.c.

and accused him of raising, by magic art, a storm which injured only his enemies; the rest beheld in it a manifest proof of his innocence, and the visible vengeance of God on his adversaries.* He himself saw in it the hand of God, and wrote that "for a long while our Lord God has not shown so public a miracle."†

The effect produced in Spain by the news of the frightful catastrophe, may be imagined. There was general mourning, and the king and queen wrote immediately to Ovando, expressing their displeasure at his refusing to admit the admiral into the harbor in his urgent need, and not following his advice and detaining the fleet a few days longer.‡ But there is no doubt that if the admiral's prediction had not been verified, Ovando would have been praised instead, for refusing to let him enter the harbor, or listen to his warning.

The admiral remained several days in the harbor of Azua, to rest his men after the late tempest, and repair his ships. "On one of those days," Fernando relates,§ "they saw an enormous fish asleep on the surface of the water, and the Vizcaina struck him with a harpoon so that he could not get away, but swam off with the iron fastened in his body. The harpoon was attached to the boat's seat by a long thick rope, so that the wounded fish drew the boat after him as swift as an arrow, around the harbor, and the men in the other ships, ignorant of the cause, but seeing the boat moving in every direction without rowing, were as if in a dream, till the fish was dead, and hauled on board with ropes and capstans; and, to the wonder and delight of all, it was cut up for food and divided among the four ships."

Resuming their voyage, they had not gone far when they were overtaken by another storm, and sought shelter in the harbor of Jacquemel. On the 14th of July, they sailed again, but the wind being too light to resist the force of the currents, they were carried to the vicinity of some islands near Jamaica, that were small and sandy, and which they named Pozas (Puddles), because, when they had stayed there some time, waiting for the wind, and in the mean

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxviii.—Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. v.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. v, cap. ii.—Oviedo, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. iii, cap. ix.—Benzoni, *Storia N. Mondo*, lib. i, fog. xxiv.

† *Letter of the Admiral to the Catholic Kings.*

‡ Herrera, dec. i, lib. v, cap. xii.

§ Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxix.

time looking for water to fill their pots, they could get it only by digging puddles in the sand. Putting out again to sea, expecting more wind, they were becalmed instead, and so, left to the full control of the currents, they were carried quite out of their course, among the small islands on the southern coast of Cuba, to which, in 1494, Columbus had given the name of the Queen's Gardens.

Here they remained till July 27th, on which day they had, at last, a little wind, and they sailed at once to the south-west, in the direction of the main-land. On the 30th, they found themselves at a small, but elevated, island, which the Indians called Guanaja. It is still called Guanaja, or sometimes Bonacea, and is one of the small islands known as Bay Islands, from thirty to fifty miles north of the coast of Honduras, and to the east of the gulf of that name.

By desire of the admiral, Don Bartholomew landed with two boats to examine the character of the place and its inhabitants, and found the land fertile and covered with verdure, and the inhabitants similar to those of the islands they had already visited, except that their foreheads were narrower.

While they were making these observations, they saw a canoe of unusual size approaching the shore from the west. Getting quietly into the two boats, they surprised and captured it, and took it to the admiral. It was hollowed, like the rest, out of the trunk of a single tree, and yet was as long as a galley, eight feet in width, and had twenty-five rowers. For shelter from the sun or rain, there was in the middle a kind of tent or awning, such as the Venetians have on their gondolas, and call *felze*, but made of palm-leaves. Under this sat a cacique with his women and children: there also were the rowers, and various articles of manufacture and national products. The canoe was supposed to have come from Yucatan, which is about forty leagues from the little island of Guanaja.

Columbus was overjoyed, and thanked Providence, which in an instant, without labor or danger, placed before him specimens of all the most important articles of this new land, especially as an examination of the men and objects in the canoe showed unmistakable signs that they were approaching a region of some civilization.

Among weapons and utensils like those used by the rest of the Indians, they found some wrought with a care and art altogether unknown on the islands and lands already visited. These were hatchets for cutting wood, not of stone, like all those they had seen before, but of

copper ; long wooden swords, with a notch, or small furrow, in each edge, in which were set and strongly tied with cords made of fish-gut, sharp pieces of stone that cut like steel into the bare flesh. They were the same kind of swords that were afterwards found among the Mexicans. They also found bells and other articles made of copper, and a rude sort of crucible for melting that metal, and various vessels and utensils wrought, with some art, in clay, marble, and hard wood.

The provisions in the canoe consisted of bread made of maize, roots of various kinds, similar to those in Hispaniola, and a beverage made from maize, resembling ale or beer. They had also a great quantity of cacao—a fruit not before known to the Spaniards, but highly prized by the Indians, who used it both for food and money.

The attention of the Spaniards was particularly attracted to the care with which the men and women covered their nakedness, as they had not found this sense of modesty in any other part of India. The men wore only a piece of cloth around their loins, but the women had shirts embroidered and colored, and a sort of sheet or blanket, which they wrapped all around them, covering even a great part of the face, as the Moorish women of Granada used to do.*

Columbus selected such of the articles as he thought most curious, to send to Spain, and gave in exchange a few European trifles, which the poor savages received with the usual demonstrations of wonder and delight.

The information obtained of the nature of the country was vague and uncertain, for their language differed from that spoken by the admiral's interpreters ; but they gave him to understand that they came from a very rich, cultivated, and industrious country, to the west ; and endeavored to make the admiral comprehend the wealth and magnificence of that region and of its people, urging him to sail in that direction. "Well would it have been for Columbus," says Washington Irving, "had he followed their advice. Within a day or two, he would have arrived at Yucatan ; the discovery of Mexico and the other opulent countries of New Spain would have necessarily followed ; the Southern Ocean would have been disclosed to him, and a succession of splendid discoveries would have shed fresh glory

* Fernando Colombo, cap. lxxxix.

on his declining age, instead of its sinking amidst gloom, neglect, and disappointment.”*

But the admiral's whole thought was bent on discovering the strait; and as the countries described by these Indians lay to the west, he supposed it would be just as well to visit them later, by running with the trade-winds along the coast of Cuba, which he imagined extended to them. At present, he resolved to explore the continent, the mountains of which were visible about ten leagues to the south.† Constantly following the coast to the east, he felt sure of coming to the place where he supposed it was divided by a strait from Paria, and passing through this he would soon reach the islands of spices and the rich regions of India.‡ He, therefore, dismissed the Indians to their canoe, with presents and kind words, retaining, however, as guide and interpreter, a good old man named Jumbe, who had shown himself very intelligent and well acquainted with the neighborhood and its navigation.

Steering south, towards the main-land, after a few leagues, they came to a cape, which they called Caxinas, from the Indian name of the fruit of the trees with which it was covered. It is now known as Punta Castilla, and the bay formed by its projection is called the Bay of Truxillo.§

But the sea was too rough for them to approach the shore without danger, and they kept on towards the east, trying to make headway against contrary winds. Finally, on Sunday, August 14th, the weather was promising, and the adelantado, with all the captains of the caravels, and many of the seamen, went ashore to hear Mass, and take possession in the name of the Spanish sovereigns. But Mass was hardly over before they were forced to return in a hurry to the ships, for the sea and sky became threatening.

They returned the following Wednesday, to take possession at a spot about fifteen leagues from Cape Caxinas, on the banks of a river, which, from this circumstance, they called the River of Possession. During the ceremony, more than 100 Indians came laden with various articles of food, which they presented to the adelantado, whom they recognized as the chief person, by his rich

* *Columbus*, book xv, ch. ii.

† *Journal of Porras*.

‡ *Las Casas*, lib. ii, cap. xx.—*Letter from Jamaica to the Catholic Kings*.—*Fernando Colombo*, cap. xc.

§ *Navarrete*.

dress and the respect shown by the rest, and then drew back to a distance, without speaking a word. The adelantado gave them in return little bells, glass beads, and such trinkets, with which they were delighted; and the next day they returned in much greater numbers, and brought every sort of provisions that they were able, in their poverty, to procure.

The natives of the place were much like the Indians seen on the islands, except that they had lower foreheads. The same type extended along the coast for a considerable distance eastward; but the Indians became more savage the further they proceeded. The men and women here, as was said, covered their bodies as best they could, and if by accident they were exposed, they showed great care and modesty in quickly covering themselves. But further on, this decency and modesty grew less, till it ceased entirely, with both men and women. In one place, the natives ate fish raw as it came from the water, and the old Jumbé said they were cannibals. Their external appearance corresponded to the cruelty of their character, for they painted themselves nearly black, and had holes bored in their ears large enough to pass a hen's egg, and their ears were, consequently, so distended that they were hideous to look at; for which reason, the Spaniards called that region the Coast of the Ear.* Further on, they found some who had figures of different animals on their body, marked by means of fire. Some of these let long tufts of hair hang, for ornament, on their forehead. Their chiefs wore on their heads, like caps, pieces of white or colored cotton. Most of them, on feast-days, painted their body black or red, or made lines of various colors on their face, or circles, generally black, around the eyes, to increase their beauty; but, in truth, says Fernando, they looked like devils.

Keeping so close to land as not to lose sight of the shore, for fear of missing the pass or strait they were in search of, and lying at anchor every night, they came, on the 14th of September, to a cape where the coast made a sudden turn to the south.

From the free and easy way in which we have been relating it, the reader might think that the voyage was as clear and easy as in the beginning, and excepting the little sea and head-wind the first days they were coasting the main-land, all was calm and safe;

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xc.—Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxiv.

whereas, for more than fifty years that he had been at sea, Columbus assures us, he had never had to contend against such adverse winds and furious seas. From the time when they left Port Azua in Hispaniola, they had not had a single hour of good weather. Tired of waiting, they quit that shelter before the tempest was entirely over, and, pursued by its final fury, were obliged to throw themselves on the Pozas islands near Jamaica. Leaving these, in a promise of better weather, the wind died away, and they were swept by the currents nearly to Cuba.* When the wind blew again, it was on their quarter, and between this and the force of the currents they had to cross, to gain any headway to the south towards the main-land, their labor and sufferings were enormous. If that had been all! But at every increase of the wind, the sea became boisterous, and the miserable ships, in the middle of the currents, in the violent wind, and the dashing of the waves, labored, groaned, and seemed every moment on the point of foundering. Through such struggles and fears, they reached Guanaja, and afterwards Cape Caxinas.

Their sufferings were beyond conception. It is enough to say that in forty days they did not make sixty leagues. But it is best to let Columbus himself tell the story.

“During all this time I did not enter a harbor, nor was I even able to get near one; the tempest was incessant, and the currents, the thunder and lightning, seemed to announce the end of the world. . . For *eighty-eight* days,† I was continually assailed by frightful storms, during which time I never saw the sun or the stars; the ships leaked on every side, the sails were split, and I had lost even my anchors and tackle, as well as the cables and small-boats, and a great part of my provisions. My crews were very ill, and every one of us in the greatest affliction; many of my companions vowed to become religious, and there was not one that had not promised God to make some pilgrimage, and most of them had been driven to making their confession to each other. We had been in many storms, but never in one so violent, and lasting so long. Many of my men that were famed for their intrepidity, lost all courage.”‡

* *Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.*

† There is an error in the figures. Calculating from the day he was refused admission to the harbor of San Domingo to his arrival at Cape Gracias á Dios, it was seventy-eight, not eighty-eight, days.

‡ *Letter from Jamaica, July 7, 1503.*

To complete his misery, the very day they left Hispaniola, the admiral fell ill, and was repeatedly at the point of death. His bodily strength exhausted, but that of his mind unconquered, he had a cabin constructed on deck, from which he directed the course of the ships, while stretched on his bed. In his narrative, he scarcely refers to his physical sufferings; it was his mental anguish that tore his heart, and is sadly echoed in his letter.

“What most tormented my mind,” he says, “was my grief for my son, who sailed with me, especially when I considered that in his tender age, not yet past thirteen, he was exposed to so great and protracted fatigue. But God our Lord gave him such courage, that, rising above himself, he animated the rest; and when there was work to do, he acted as though he had been eighty years at sea; and it was he who comforted me.

“I was also extremely distressed that my brother, whom I had brought with me against his will, was in the worst vessel, and the most exposed to danger. Another thought that tore my heart, was the remembrance of my son Diego left an orphan in Spain, and deprived of my honors and emoluments.”*

After all these labors, and fears, and perils, when, on the 14th of September, they reached the eastern extremity of Honduras, and saw the land suddenly bending to the south, so that the wind was in their favor after being so long contrary, the crews of the four vessels burst into hymns of thanksgiving to the Lord; and the admiral, in memory of their joy, gave the promontory the name it still bears, of Cape Gracias á Dios.

At this point, they discharged the good old Jumbe, and sent him back home, as his knowledge did not extend beyond that cape.

* *Letter from Jamaica, July 7, 1503.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

Voyage along the Mosquito coast.—Wild character of the natives.—Frauds and impositions of the Spanish sailors.—Incessant difficulties and dangers of navigation (1502).

THE new shore they were now coasting along (at present called Mosquito), presented a varied aspect: now rugged and rocky, now covered with pleasing verdure, and watered by numerous streams. The rivers brought an abundant supply of fish and tortoises, and their banks produced enormous canes, some as large as a man's thigh. The only revolting sight was the great number of alligators stretched on the banks, basking in the sun. The Spaniards beheld with delight the beauty displayed before their eyes; for the sea was as smooth as a mirror, and the wind so favorable that they made thirty-two leagues in two days, exclusive of the night. Coming, on the 15th, to a river which seemed to have a good entrance, they stopped, and the boats ascended the stream for a supply of wood and water, of which they began to be in want. As they were returning with a supply to the ships, and just as they were about to leave the mouth of the river, the sea suddenly rose and rolled back violently into the mouth of the river where the current was swiftest, and the shock was so sudden that the boats had no time to prepare, and one of them, struck with greater force than the others, was capsized, and all on board perished. This sad event, so unlooked-for in the peaceful tranquillity of the wind and waves, had all the more effect on their minds, as it aroused them from their pleasant repose, and renewed the sad impressions of their past fears and agony. They left immediately, with gloomy hearts, giving to the fatal stream, in memory of what had happened, the name of *Rio del Desastre*.* They continued for several days, with a favorable wind, discovering new lands; but men and ships were

* Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxi.—Fernando Colombo, cap. xci.—*Journal of Porras*.

no longer able to keep on their course, those exhausted by fatigue, and these ruined by the buffetings of so many storms. Finding a suitable place between a small island and the main-land, Columbus anchored there on Sunday, the 25th of September, to rest the men and repair the vessels. The island offered a pleasing sight, with its thick clumps of palms, cocoas, bananas, and other trees and plants overloaded with fruit, and the air was perfumed with flowers, fruits, and fragrant shrubs. On the main-land, hardly a league distant, was a large village, on the bank of a beautiful river, and the whole country around presented a charming variety of landscape, with its plains and hills, and forests with trees so tall that Las Casas says, they seemed to touch the clouds. The delightfulness of the spot was increased tenfold in the eyes of men just escaping from horrid tempests, and seeking rest in its peaceful quiet after fatigue and danger; and the admiral, fitting the name to the sweet impression made on all, called the island *Huerta* (Orchard). The natives called it *Quiribiri*, and the village *Cariay*.

When the inhabitants saw the ships approaching, they gathered in large numbers on the beach to defend their land,—some armed with bows, arrows, and heavy clubs, others with a sort of lance made out of long poles of hard palm-wood, pointed with sharp fish-bones. The men wore their hair braided and wound around the head, the women cut as the men with us.

The Spaniards waited two days before landing, quietly occupied in repairing the vessels, and airing the provisions damaged in the storm, and resting after the fatigues of the voyage. When the savages saw that these strange people remained quietly on board of their ships, intent on their work, and took no notice of them or their arms, the fear they felt at first, gave place to curiosity, and they began to make peaceful signals, and waved their mantles like banners as an invitation to land. Finding that this failed, their curiosity grew stronger, and, emboldened by the indifference of the Spaniards, they swam to the ships, carrying tunics, mantles, and ornaments of guanin, which they wore around their necks, to offer to them. The admiral forbade all traffic, but made them many presents, accepting nothing in return, wishing to give them a favorable idea of the White Men's disinterestedness and generosity. Returning to the shore, they waited for some time for the Spaniards to land, and made signals inviting them; but when they saw they were not coming, their

pride was hurt, as they thought the strangers despised their gifts, and they retaliated by affecting a like contempt for the presents they had received. They, accordingly, gathered up every thing that had been given them, and, tying all together, left them on the shore, where they were found next day by the Spaniards.* Then they suspected that the strangers did not land on account of their hostile demonstrations when they first appeared. They, therefore, tried to dissipate this suspicion, and win their confidence. As a boat was, one day, cautiously approaching the shore, looking for a place to get water, a venerable old man suddenly emerged from among the trees, bearing a piece of white cloth on the end of a staff, as a signal of peace, and leading two girls, one of eight, the other of fourteen years of age. The old man brought the girls to the boat, and delivered them to the Spaniards, to be retained as hostages so long as they chose to remain on shore. Then the Spaniards landed with confidence, to fill their casks. A number of Indians looked on, but kept at a distance, carefully avoiding every act or sign that might excite distrust. When the boat was ready to return to the ships, the old man gave them to understand that they were to take the two girls with them, and withdrew without heeding the signs which the Spaniards made to the contrary. On entering the ships, the girls showed no alarm or grief, though those men must have seemed very strange and formidable.

The admiral was greatly pleased at this occurrence; he gave the girls something to eat, treated them with great kindness, and sent them ashore with fine clothes and some trifling presents. But it was now night, and there was no one on the shore to receive them. They therefore returned, and remained all night under the immediate care of the admiral. The next morning, they were again put on shore, and the same old man, with about fifty other persons, received them with demonstrations of delight. But that same evening, as the boats of the Spaniards came to the beach, the two girls met them, accompanied by a multitude of Indians, and in spite of all opposition, insisted on returning all the presents they had received. It is evident, that, on their return home, the matter must have been discussed, and the decision made that they should refuse all presents, since the strangers would accept nothing from them.

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xci.—*Journal of Perras.*

On the following day, as the adelantado approached the shore to learn something about the people, two of the principal Indians waded out to meet the boat, and insisted on carrying him ashore in their arms, and they seated him on the grass of the bank, in their midst. Then began a conversation by signs, Don Bartholomew trying to get information from them about the country, and they endeavored to gather the meaning of his questions, and were eager to make him understand their answers. But Don Bartholomew having ordered the notary of the fleet, who was with him, to write down their answers; when they saw him produce paper and an ink-horn, and beheld the notary's hand passing over the white paper and leaving on it mysterious black marks, they looked at one another in dismay, and, jumping to their feet, fled away in terror. Soon after, they came back in small groups, and advanced very cautiously. When at a certain distance, they threw a fragrant powder in the air, and burnt some grains, placing themselves in such position that the wind wafted the smoke over the Spaniards. They had taken the black marks on the paper for magic signs, by which the Spaniards wanted to bind them by some enchantment; and first taking to flight, they returned afterwards to cast on the Europeans their powder and smoke, to which they seemed to have attributed the virtue of exorcising the evil influence of sorcery. The best of it was that the Spaniards, as superstitious as themselves, seeing the powder and smoke mysteriously cast over them, were convinced in turn that the savages were sorcerers, and were equally afraid of them. Fernando Columbus, who was present, and relates the scene, remarks that the Indians suspected the Spaniards of sorcery, because they were versed in it themselves, just as a robber thinks all the world thieves. In fact, the belief in witchcraft was so strong in that age, that the admiral himself shared the suspicion, and in the letter he afterwards wrote from Jamaica to the king and queen, he informs them that the natives of Cariay and its vicinity are most dangerous enchanters, and that the two girls that came on board his vessel had a magic powder hidden under their cloaks; and he adds that many of his companions entertained the absurd idea, that their delays and hardships on that coast were all owing to an evil spell thrown over them by the witchcraft of the Indians.

On Sunday, the 2nd of October, the repairs on the ships being completed, and every thing ready for sailing, the admiral sent the

adelantado again on shore, with a strong band of armed men, to collect information concerning the nature of the country, and the habits of the people. They found everywhere the usual richness of vegetation, but no sign of the gold they were in search of, only guanin. But they were assured that by following along the coast, they would soon come to a country where it was found in abundance. Among the customs of the people, they were most struck by their pious care of the dead. In one village, they found the largest and handsomest house in the place, built of wood and thatched with cane, was set apart for the abode of the departed. Inside, it was full of sepulchres. In one of these was an embalmed corpse all dried up; and in another were two bodies wrapped in cotton, and so well preserved as to be free from any unpleasant odor. They deposited with the corpse the arms, utensils, and ornaments which the deceased had used in life, or had been most dear; and the tombs were decorated with rough paintings and carvings of various animals, and even of human figures intended to represent the deceased.

At the moment of his departure, Columbus ordered some of the Indians to be seized, and seven of them were brought to him. He selected the two that seemed the most intelligent to serve for guides, and sent the others home, promising soon to release their companions. The entire population were excited over the capture; they thronged the beach, and sent four of their principal men with presents, to implore their liberation. But the admiral, repeating that he only wanted them as guides for a short distance along the coast, after which he would set them at liberty, refused their request, and, to soothe them, offered the ambassadors various presents. But nothing could calm their grief, and they left with anxiety for the fate of their two companions. It was absolutely necessary to provide other interpreters to help them to understand the new populations they came to, for the inhabitants of the entire coast were so savage, and the different tribes had so little intercourse with one another, that they could not understand those that lived twenty leagues from them.*

The squadron left Cariay on the 5th. of October, and continued its exploration along what was afterwards called Costa Rica, on account of the mines of gold and silver found in the mountains. After

* *Journal of Diego Porras.*

sailing about twenty-two leagues, they entered a great bay, six leagues in length, and more than three broad, with many small islands scattered over it, and with three or four openings convenient for passing out or in with any wind. The natives called it Caribaro, and the two interpreters assured them it abounded with gold. The little islands were beautiful, verdant, covered with pleasing groves, that sent forth a fragrance of fruits and flowers; and the channels between them were so deep and free from obstruction, that the ships slipped insensibly through them, as through the artificial canals in a city.* The boats were sent to one of these islands, where some twenty canoes were seen drawn up on the beach, and they found a number of the natives half-hidden behind the trees, suspicious and timid. The two guides from Cariay reassured them, and they soon advanced with confidence. They were completely naked, as mother nature made them, and wore large plates of pure gold suspended round their neck by cotton cords. This was the first gold of the finest quality that the Spaniards had found in the New World.† They wore ornaments also of the inferior quality of gold, called guanin, and these were all in the shape of an eagle. One of them exchanged his plate of gold for three little bells, and, when weighed, it was found to be worth ten ducats.

On the following day, the boats proceeded to the main-land, at the bottom of the bay, where they met ten canoes filled with Indians who had garlands of flowers around their head, and crowns made of claws of animals and birds' feathers, and nearly all wore plates of gold around their neck. When asked to exchange one of these plates for the articles offered them, they refused; and the Spaniards, seizing by force the two Indians that seemed of most importance, brought them to the admiral, in order to get from them, by means of the two interpreters of Cariay, the information he wanted. One of them had a plate of gold worth, at least, fifteen ducats, and the eagle of the other was worth twenty-two. From them it was learnt that there were many places in the interior, one or two days' journey, where a great quantity of that precious metal could be had, and they particularly named Veragua, twenty-five leagues distant.‡

* The channel by which the admiral sailed in, preserves the memory of the fact in the name which it has always retained, of *Boca del Almirante*.

† *Journal of Porras*.

‡ *Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica*.—Fernando Colombo, cap. xcii.

The sight of so much gold and the prospect of more, greatly excited the desire of the Spaniards, but Columbus was firm in his determination to find the passage to the other sea, and taking merely a specimen of the best products of each place, kept on his voyage.* “Nothing,” says Irving, “could evince more clearly his generous ambition, than hurrying in this brief manner along a coast where wealth was to be gathered at every step, for the purpose of seeking a strait, which, although it might produce vast benefit to mankind, could yield little else to himself than the glory of the discovery.†

On the 17th of the month, they began to sail along the coast of what was afterwards called Veragua, and which was said to be so rich. After sailing about twelve leagues, they came to a large river, called Guaiga by the Indians, and the admiral sent the boats for wood and water. As they approached the shore, they saw about 200 Indians armed with clubs, lances, and swords of palm-wood, and at the same time, heard in the forest near by the sound of drums and sea-shells—the usual signal for the inhabitants to assemble under arms. The savages rushed into the sea up to their waists, yelling, brandishing their weapons, splashing water towards the Christians, and spitting at them a certain herb they were chewing, to indicate defiance, according to their customs. The Spaniards answered by making signs of peace, and their good intentions were confirmed by the interpreters. Then the savages became quiet, and allowed the Spaniards to land, and many of them exchanged the plates they had around their neck, for two or three little bells, giving sixteen plates altogether, of the value of about 150 ducats.

The next day, Friday, the 28th of October, the boats again landed to continue the traffic, but the savages had relapsed into hostility. Many of them were concealed under branches prepared during the night, and the Christians discovering them, and being suspicious, called repeatedly to them to come out. Before leaving their boats, the Spaniards waited to see what would be the result of the Indians' stratagem. The savages intended to fall upon the strangers as they stepped ashore, but as these did not move, they suddenly burst from their hiding-place, and, rushing into the sea, repeated the threats and defiance of the day before; and, at the same time, the woods around echoed the sound of their shells and drums. The Spaniards, tired of

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xcii.

† *Columbus*, book xv, ch. iv.

such provocation, and to take down a little the pride of the savages, wounded one of them in the arm with an arrow from a cross-bow, which astonished and perplexed them, and then discharging a gun so terrified them that they all took to flight, and it was most laughable to see the confusion in which they attempted to get out of the water and reach a place of safety. Four of the Spaniards sprang on shore, and ran after them, calling to them to stop, at which they regained courage a little, and dropping their weapons, came back humbled and trembling, and could scarce trust their eyes, when, instead of anger on the part of the strangers, for three plates of gold which they gave them, they received a few trifles in return.

Continuing their voyage along the coast, the ships anchored at the mouth of another river, called the Catiba, and here, likewise, the moment they arrived, the woods and hills resounded on all sides with shells and drums, to alarm the inhabitants. Soon after, a canoe put out from the shore with two Indians, who came to the ships and inquired who the strange beings were that came to their country, and what they wanted. Seeing the two interpreters from Cariay, and exchanging a few words with them, the two messengers consented to come on board of the admiral's ship, and spoke with the admiral with confidence. Satisfied of the friendly intentions of the strangers, they returned to land, and reported the result of their mission to the cacique. Soon afterwards, another canoe came, with three Indians, who, like the others, gave up their gold-plates, receiving with delight any trinket given in exchange. Friendly relations being thus established, the Spaniards landed, and were kindly received by the cacique. He was quite naked, like his subjects, but was easily distinguished from them by the great respect paid him, and the care with which he protected himself with an immense leaf from the heavy rain that was falling. He had on his neck a very large plate of gold, which he exchanged, without hesitation, for some article that the Spaniards offered him, and invited his subjects also to trade their gold-plates. Nineteen in all were procured. The Spaniards found here the first signs of solid architecture in the New World,—a large piece of stucco that seemed to be made of stone and lime, a piece of which the admiral took for a specimen, regarding it as a sure proof that he was approaching a more civilized country.*

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xcii.

These savages, when questioned as to the character of the coast, confirmed the account of the abundance of gold, and pointed out many places, which they called by name, where they said there were mines. Columbus had intended to visit every place on that shore, and get samples; but he had hardly left the mouth of the river before he encountered so violent a storm that he was compelled to run before the wind.* In this way, he passed in front of five large villages, one of which was Veragua, which afterwards gave its name to the whole province, and where, the two interpreters assured him, the most gold was to be found, and most of the plates were made which they wore around their necks. The next day, they came in sight of the village called Cubiga, where, the interpreters said, the gold-region ended, which began at Cerabora and extended for fifty leagues.† Considering this coast with its mines as now secured to the crown, the admiral was unwilling to waste time in going back to explore it, but kept on his voyage in search of the desired passage to the other sea, which he became every day more anxious to reach, because, from indications gathered along the coast, he had fallen into the delusion that it would be a short and easy passage from there to one of the great and rich nations of the extreme east of Asia. The information given him by the Indians he met near the little island of Guanaja, that in the interior of the country there was a very populous and, as he understood, civilized nation, had made a great impression on him, and as he proceeded along the coast, he carefully questioned the different tribes he met, and all seemed to confirm the existence of this nation, adding full accounts of its greatness, wealth, power, and civilization. Finding his interpretation of what the savages had told him of the neighboring nations and the existence of gold, had been correct, he concluded that he must find their answers to his other questions equally exact.

Every thing indicates that the Guanaja Indians referred to the powerful empire of Mexico, close to Yucatan, from which they were coming; and the savages of the coast must have referred to Mexico, or perhaps the empire of Peru, which was not very far off, and vague rumors, of the greatness of those nations may have reached them. But Columbus, following the theory of Marinus of Tyre, which made

* *Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.—Journal of Porras.*

† Fernando Colombo, cap. xcii.

the earth much smaller than it was generally supposed to be,* and calculating that he was then just where that cosmographer placed the eastern edge of Asia, concluded at once that the great nation mentioned by the savages, under the name of Ciguare, must be one of the provinces belonging to the Grand Khan. Convinced of this, he gathered from the accounts of the Indians, that Ciguare was on the other sea, separated from him, as Fontarabia from Tortosa in Spain, or Pisa from Venice in Italy; that, crossing diagonally over land, it was only nine days' journey, but would take him much longer in his ships by the strait he was in search of, just as it would take a long voyage to go from Fontarabia to Tolosa by way of Gibraltar.†

On the 2nd of November, they anchored in a spacious bay, where the ships could lie near the land and swing around without danger. The country about was cultivated, with houses scattered a stone's throw or a bow-shot apart, with beautiful groves between them, and plantations of maize, vegetables, and pineapples, like an immense garden, the most beautiful sight, says Fernando, that ever was. Columbus, seeking as usual, a fitting name for the bay, called it Puerto Bello, a name which it still retains. It is a pity that the names he gave had not all been kept, for they form a part of his history, not only indicating each step of his way, but also recording his feelings and the circumstances attending the discovery.

The natives of the place soon became friendly, and for seven days that the Christians were detained by heavy rains and stormy weather, it was a constant coming and going of canoes, from all around, bringing things to eat, and balls of cotton, to exchange for needles, and all kinds of brass or iron trifles. No gold whatever was seen, except the little pieces which the cacique and his seven principal officers wore hanging from their nostrils. The inhabitants were generally naked and painted red, the cacique alone was painted black.‡

Wednesday, the 9th of November, they left Puerto Bello, and sailed eight leagues further, to the point afterwards called Nombre de Dios; but the next day, they were driven back by bad weather, and sought shelter behind some small islands close to the main-land.

* See what was said on this point in book i, ch. v.

† *Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.*

‡ Peter Martyr, dec. iii, lib. iv.—Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxiii.—Fernando Colombo, cap. xcii.

All the land around was cultivated with maize, vegetables, and various fruits, and Columbus, naming the place in accordance with the character of its surroundings, called it Puerto de Bastimentos, or Port of Provisions.

A canoe passed close by as the Spaniards arrived, and a boat was quickly dispatched from the fleet to overtake it and get speech of the natives. But the Indians, alarmed at the unexpected sight, when they found the boat was only a stone's throw from them, all sprang into the water to escape by swimming; and although the boat was rowed at full speed, the Spaniards were unable to catch one of them in a distance of a mile and a half that the chase lasted, and though they often succeeded in getting upon one or another of them, they were never able to lay hold of him, because they dived like ducks, and came up a bow-shot or two away; and the boat at last returned empty to the fleet, amid the laughter of all, who had greatly enjoyed this new sort of hunting.*

The bad weather detained them here a fortnight, and they took advantage of this detention to repair the ships, which were again leaking all over, bored by a kind of worms abounding in those seas. These destructive worms are of the size of a man's finger; no wood is hard or thick enough to resist their incessant boring, and unless a vessel is coppered, they soon ruin it.

On the 23rd of November, there seemed a promise of better weather, and the admiral, impatient to continue the voyage, immediately gave orders to leave. The sea was still very rough, and the ships made little advance. They had hardly made fifteen leagues, before the storm was as furious as before, and this, with the strong current against them, caused them to turn back towards the Port of Provisions, but on their way they discovered another harbor, in which they took shelter. This place was dangerous, the entrance being not more than fifteen to twenty paces wide, with reefs of rocks projecting their sharp points above the water on either side, and there was not room enough to hold more than five or six vessels. The admiral was induced to enter by the fraud of the sailors sent to examine it, who made a favorable report because they were anxious to get ashore to traffic with the natives. On account of its depth, the ships had to approach so close to the land to get a hold for the

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xciii.

anchors, that a man could easily leap from the deck to the shore. Columbus called it *el Retrete*—the Closet.*

The banks were infested with alligators, which came out to warm themselves in the sun, and were so numerous that the air all around was impregnated with their odor, which was like strong musk. But they were timid, and fled when attacked; though the Indians declared they would seize a man asleep on the bank, and drag him into the water to devour him. The country around was flat and grassy, with but few trees. The inhabitants were the best-shaped that the Spaniards had so far seen in the New World,—tall, slender, with fine faces, and free from abdominal protuberance. Their relations at first were most friendly. They came freely and confidently to make the usual exchanges, and were treated with justice and kindness. But the nearness of the shore, and the facility for leaving without permission, soon led the sailors to quit the ships in the night-time, and prowl about the dwellings of the Indians, who received them with their accustomed hospitality, till the rough sailors, influenced by avarice and licentiousness, soon committed such excesses as filled the savages with rage and a desire of revenge. Every night was the signal for fresh quarrels, and blood was spilt on both sides. The number of Indians who were outraged increased every day, and their strength and courage increasing with their number, they resolved to attack the ships, which were so conveniently exposed, and complete their vengeance at a single blow. Assembling in a great multitude, they boldly advanced to the harbor to fulfil their design.

The admiral hoped, at the first attack, to disperse them by a few shots of his guns loaded only with powder. But the terror of the discharge was not now sustained by the idea that these were supernatural beings, for these savages had too good reason to believe them worse than human, and the impression produced by the first discharge soon vanished when it was seen that the noise did no harm, and they answered the next discharges with cries and yells, striking the trees with their lances and clubs by way of defiance. Then Columbus, seeing the danger to which the ships were exposed,—so near the land, and so easy to board,—if the infuriated multitude were suffered to continue their audacity, did violence to his meekness of feeling, and ordered the guns loaded with ball. The shot struck in the mid-

* Its present name is *Escribanos*. (Navarrete.)

dle of a group on a little cliff, and showed them that the White Men's thunder might be accompanied by lightning. They all vanished in a twinkling, and not one was seen after that even at a distance.*

The Spaniards remained shut up in the *Retrete* for a fortnight, vainly hoping for a cessation or diminution of the strong wind that was blowing from the east and north-east, which, with the strong current against them, was an invincible obstacle to their voyage; but the wind remained steady in that direction. Most of the companions of Columbus, incapable of comprehending or appreciating his zeal for discovery where there seemed no immediate gain, cursed his obstinacy in running after that strait, and, animated only by sordid feelings, they lamented the land of gold, on which they were turning their back. Many of them, convinced that the constant adverse weather was the result of sorcery on the part of the Indians against them, were still further disheartened by the belief that they were exposed to a power against which there was no means of defence or protection. The officers, alarmed at the condition of the ships, kept reminding the admiral of the impossibility of contending against the elements in those shells that were crumbling to pieces. Very likely, Columbus himself began to doubt the result of his enterprise, for he had now reached the place where, if his calculation was correct, he ought to have found the strait. He might naturally suspect that the passage was further to the south, through the great continent he had discovered on his last voyage. And in that case, it was impossible for him to reach it with such weather, such ships, and such companions.

However all this may have been, he determined on the great sacrifice of abandoning the idea he had been following with such continual labor and suffering, and leaving it to be resumed at some future time, and in the meanwhile to return to search for the mines of *Veragua*, of which he had heard so much from the Indians.† He accordingly gave the welcome announcement that they would go back. And so the splendid dreams that had so long cheered the mind of Christopher Columbus, and promised the grandest enterprise that could be undertaken after the discovery of the New World,

* *Las Casas*, lib. iii, cap. xxiii.—*Fernando Colombo*, cap. xcii.

† *Id.* cap. xciv.

came to naught. But, to his glory, it must be remarked that if the strait he expected to find does not exist in reality, it is, as Irving says, because nature herself had been disappointed, for she appears to have attempted to make one, but to have attempted in vain.* In our days, just where Columbus looked for his strait, human genius and activity are repairing nature's fault, and opening the passage between the two oceans, which Columbus had judged must exist.†

CHAPTER XIX.

Columbus abandons the search for a passage to the other sea, and returns to Veragua.—The winds and storm accompany him at every step, and give him no rest (1502).

COLUMBUS sailed from El Retrete to return to Veragua, on the 5th of December, and in the evening anchored in Puerto Bello, which was about ten leagues distant. They had hardly left this harbor, on the following day, when the wind suddenly veered to the west, in the direction just contrary to his present, but favorable to his former, course. For three months he had constantly waited and longed for it, and now it came precisely when he no longer needed it. It was a strong temptation for him to resume the course he had just abandoned, but he concluded, from the sad experience he had had, that the west winds never lasted long in those regions at that time of the year, and resolved, therefore, to keep to his present direction, and contend for a time with the wind, as it could not be long before it changed. But in a little while it became violent, and shifted about so that it left no time or possibility of defence. The ships turned back, and endeavored to regain the safe harbor of Puerto Bello. With great effort they succeeded in getting near it, and were waiting for a favorable moment to enter it, when sud-

* *Columbus*, book xv, ch. v.

† It is unnecessary to say the allusion is to cutting the Isthmus of Panama.

denly the wind began to blow off shore and drove them out to sea again. This fresh fury was accompanied with a sudden condensing of immense clouds, the sky was hidden from sight, the air full of electricity, and a storm broke forth such as no one had not only ever seen, but even heard of. "Never," Columbus wrote, "was the sea so high, so frightful, and so foamy. The wind did not permit me to advance, but held me in that sea, which seemed all blood, and boiled like a caldron over a hot fire; never was the aspect of the sky seen so fearful, burning like a fiery furnace day and night, and thundering so, that I looked every instant to see if my ma-ts were still standing. The lightning was so dreadful that every one believed that the vessels would be destroyed. During all this time, the water never ceased to pour from the heavens; nor could it be said to rain, for it was rather another deluge; the crews were reduced to such a state that they wished for death to free them from such misery."* Fernando, who was present and witnessed it all, has left us a description equally fearful and horrible. He says: "When we most hoped to reach the harbor (Puerto Bello), the wind turned against us, and at times the thunder and lightning were so dreadful that the men were afraid to open their eyes, and it seemed that the vessels must be lost, and that the sky would fall on them. Sometimes the thunder was so incessant that we thought one of the vessels must be discharging artillery as a signal of distress. At other times, the weather turned to constant rain falling copiously for two or three days, that seemed to be a new deluge. Everybody in the ships was in great grief and half-desperate, unable to get half-an-hour's rest, constantly wet, and driven by the tempest in every direction, striving in fear against all the elements; for, in such dreadful storms, the fire is dread'd for the lightning, the air for its fury, the water for its waves, and the land for the bars and shoals of unknown coasts."†

Their fear was greatest on Tuesday, the 13th of December. On that day, when the storm was at its height, they saw the sea at one point rise vertically in the air, drawing in the waves foaming around it, swelling rapidly, and rising, like a cone, to the clouds; and the clouds came down to meet it, in the form of a cone also, cutting the air with the same rapidity and the same whirling motion. Joining

* *Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.*

† *Fernando Colombo, cap. xciv.*

their points together, the strange horrid shape, resting one part on the sea and the other in the clouds, continued the same whirling dance united that each part had separately begun, and moved towards the ships.

A howl of despair went up from every breast, as, with pale faces and bristling hair, they beheld death rushing upon them. The admiral was stretched on his pallet suffering with a burning fever. He felt his blood curdle at that general howl, and sprang up to see what was the cause. At the sight of those two mountains of water approaching and almost on him, with no time or hope of human defence, he turned to God with his accustomed piety, and quickly seizing his Bible, began to recite the Gospel of St. John, and making a cross in the air with his sword, drew a circle all around it, as if to cut off the dreadful monster. The effect corresponded to his faith. That immense mass of water, with the sea boiling all around it, passed between the ships, and was lost in the confused immensity of the Ocean, causing no other harm to them than being tossed by the waters boiling under them as the monster was going by. The seamen looked at one another, hardly believing they had come safely through that fright.*

It was a water-spout, the most frightful manifestation of the power of the wind and the sea in a storm, and which even in these days, when it is a phenomenon well understood, is the sailor's greatest dread, because where it strikes, there is no protection. What, then, must it have been in those days, when it was hardly known by name, and to those men exhausted by the fatigues and dangers they had been suffering for six months, in the condition their ships were in, and with the increased force which every manifestation of nature assumes in tropical regions?

I am unable to say whether this was the origin of the belief which for a long time after existed amongst the sailors, that typhoons, or water-spouts, could be dispersed by reading the Gospel of St. John, and cutting them with a sword or knife, or whether Columbus acted in accordance with an opinion already in vigor before his time.

The following night, the *Vizcaina* was lost sight of, and for three

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xciv.—Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxiv.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. v, cap. ix.

days given up for lost. At the end of the third day, to their great delight, it rejoined them, but had lost its boat and one anchor. Driven by a sudden gust of wind towards the shore, it attempted to anchor in the shallow water, but finding the place full of rocks, to escape the greater danger of being cast on one of them, it hurriedly cut the cable, and was carried by the wind out to sea. But in the haste to escape, boat and anchor were lost.*

Nearly two days of calm gave the sailors a chance to rest their exhausted bodies; their minds, however, found no relief, for there were indications that the storm would soon rage more terribly than before. The sky was still covered with clouds, the horizon black, and the largest shoals of sharks ever seen, crowded around the vessels. The sight of the sharks caused great fear, for the superstition of sailors attributed to these fish what is told on land about owls and other birds of prey, that they scent beforehand the odor of death; and as these collect on roofs to chant their funeral wail over the future corpse, so those fishes gather around ships on which there is a corpse, or one de-tined to die.†

But the demands of hunger overcame their disgust for these monsters, and forced the Spaniards to take advantage of their vicinity. All the fish and flesh meat they had brought, had been consumed on their long voyage, and, owing to the heat and moisture of the climate, the biscuit had become so wormy that Fernando relates: "So help me God, as I saw many of them wait till night-time to consume their rations, so as not to see the worms they were eating; others got so accustomed to them, that they would not cast them off when they did see them, because that would reduce the ration too much."

They, therefore, fished for the sharks, with large hooks attached to chains, having often only a piece of red cloth for bait, as the animal is so greedy that he swallows every thing he sees; and they caught so many that when they could kill no more, they dragged them behind in the water. In the stomach of one of them was found a tortoise, that continued to live on board of the ship; in that of another the entire head of one of his companions, lately cut off and thrown over-board; these scourges of the Ocean are so greedy to devour every thing that is offered to them. The example of the rest, and

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xciv.

† Id. l. c.

their own hunger, overcame the repugnance of the more superstitious, "and we all," Fernando goes on, "did honor to the repast."

At length, on the 17th, they entered a harbor, long and narrow like a great canal, near an Indian village called Huiva, and remained there three days to rest themselves. The natives of the neighborhood lived in trees, like birds, building their huts on poles stretched from one branch to another. The Spaniards thought this was out of fear of wild beasts or else of enemies, for all along this coast there was fierce hostility at every league. On the 20th, as the sea was a little calm, they ventured out, but were hardly at sea before the wind was furious and forced them to seek shelter quickly in another harbor. On the 23rd, they again set sail with signs of better weather, "but the storm," Fernando relates, "like an enemy waiting for you as you turn the corner of the street, assailed us with violence, and drove us, as soon as we left the harbor, almost to the port of Huiva; but, as though playing with our lives, at the very entrance of this port, it suddenly changed, and blew so furiously in our face, that we had to turn at once and run in despair towards Veragua; and we had almost reached there when it veered again, and drove us back with fury to the same port of Huiva from which it had a short time before expelled us." But now it left them time to run in and shelter themselves. They remained there from the day after Christmas till the 3rd of January of the new year, 1503, repairing the Gallego, which had suffered the most of all the vessels, and taking in a large supply of maize, wood, and water. On the 3rd of January, they tried again to reach Veragua, but it was the same thing over again. After they had sailed a few leagues, the wind was contrary, and whichever way the admiral turned, it blew from the direction towards which he was steering. It seemed governed by a guiding mind, to blow directly against him, no matter which way he turned on the whole voyage. "This was so strange," says Fernando, "and so unheard-of, that I should not have repeated all these variations, if, besides being present, I had not read them in the narrative of the voyage by Diego Mendez, . . . and in the admiral's letter to the Catholic sovereigns, from which, since it is printed, the reader may see what we suffered, and how fortune persecuted those whom she ought most to have favored."* Finally, on

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xcv.—The narrative of Diego Mendez will be several times referred to further on.

the Feast of the Epiphany (with what delight we may imagine), they dropped anchor at the mouth of a large river, hardly a league from Veragua, the fortunate land to which they had been directed, and which promised to repay all their labors with its inexhaustible mines of gold.

From the religious solemnity which the Catholic Church celebrates on that day, in commemoration of the coming of the Magi to Bethlehem, Columbus named the river Belen, the Spanish name for Bethlehem.

From Puerto Bello to Veragua is only thirty leagues, but Columbus was nearly thirty days in sailing that distance, for which reason he called that tract of land, the *Costa de los Contrastes*, or *Coast of Opposition*. During the passage, in consequence of the renewal of his sufferings, and the opening again of an old wound, he was so ill that for nine days his life was despaired of.*

CHAPTER XX.

Commencement of a colony on the Belen River.—The adelantado sent to explore the country.—Richness of the region of Veragua.—The quibian prepares to expel the strangers.—He is taken prisoner.—His escape.—The admiral leaves the river, and puts to sea to wait for a favorable breeze to return to Europe (1503).

A SHORT distance from the sea, on the banks of the Belen, was a village, which the boats immediately visited to procure information; but the inhabitants, at their first approach, ran to the river with their arms, prepared to dispute their landing. It was the reception always to be expected from the wild tribes of the coast, but, as elsewhere, their fears were easily quieted, and their good-will gained.

Questioned about the gold-mines, they, at first, showed great unwill-

* *Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.*—Fernando Colombo, cap. xcvi.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. v, cap. ix.

ingness to speak, but afterwards they yielded, and said they lay in the neighborhood of the river of Veragua. The boats were sent the next day to this river to ascertain the truth on the spot ; and here, too, the inhabitants, on seeing them approach, ran to the river to oppose their landing, and boldly went out in canoes to attack them in the river. But the words of the Indian whom the Spaniards brought as guide, quieted them by assuring them that the strangers had come with friendly intentions, for the sole purpose of traffic. At this, they began at once to deal with the Spaniards, and for a few trifles gave them twenty-five plates of gold, some reeds filled with gold-dust, and many lumps of ore. They confirmed all that had been said along the coast of the richness of their country, adding that the mines lay among distant mountains, and that when they went to them, they observed absolute continency and strict fast.

It seems that this custom of purification before looking for gold was common to all the savages of the New World ; for the Indians of Cuba were accustomed to prepare for it by twenty days of continency and fasting. It would be important and interesting to know what ideas they connected with this necessity of purification to fit themselves to receive the treasures of the earth ; but, unfortunately, those who might have informed us, were occupied with something very different from the study of the customs and beliefs of these ingenuous people.

And here I think it appropriate to mention how Columbus strove to introduce the same practice among his men, and tried to persuade them that it would be a shame that the poor savages, whose mind had scarce a glimpse of a religious notion, should seek by purification and abstinence to render themselves worthy of the rich gifts of their own country, and Christians, born and bred in the light of truth, should in no wise show their gratitude to God, who had led them to places of such wealth almost by a miracle. He would have desired that no one should work in the gold-mines without preparing himself by continency, fasting, and confession. But he was told that the recommendation of continency was useless, as they had all left their wives in Spain ; as to fasting, that they made one perpetual fast, for they were always suffering from hunger, and, most of the time, had only roots, or worse, to quiet a little the murmurs of their stomach ; and as to confession, the church was satisfied with once a year, and that ought to be enough for the admiral.

The report brought by the boats confirming the accounts of the wealth of that region, made Columbus decide to remain, and as the Veragua River, which irrigated the gold region and gave it its name, was not deep enough for the ships, he entered the Belen, which was near by, and had at high tide four fathoms of water. Wednesday, the 9th of January, the smallest two of the caravels sailed in, and the next day, with the tide, the two larger. The natives, now friendly, met them with great rejoicing, bringing for exchange with European trifles, their different sorts of food, especially fish, which was very plentiful in the river, and various gold ornaments; the last, they all said, were procured from Veragua.

The third day after entering the Belen, the adelantado himself went to Veragua, for further and surer proofs of the existence and abundance of gold in that region. He set off with two boats well armed, and ascended the river nearly a league and a half to the village where the quibian resided, as in their language they designated the king or chief cacique of the country. The quibian, learning of the adelantado's approach, hastened to receive him on the river, accompanied by a number of canoes. Their meeting was very friendly, and many gifts were exchanged. They conversed a long time together, and separated with every demonstration of friendship. The next day, the quibian visited the admiral, who received him with honor, and made him many presents; but, whatever was the cause, after a little more than an hour's conversation, the quibian left without ceremony. Before he left, his followers had bartered many plates of gold for the usual trinkets.

After the perils and fatigues they had endured, they enjoyed the repose and safety of the Belen River, as may well be believed, especially as the sea without was again roaring frightfully, and the sight of danger increases tenfold the charm of security to one who has just escaped. But, on the 24th of January, they came near suffering, in their secure harbor, the shipwreck they had by the greatest fortune escaped at sea. On that day, as every one was quietly at work or enjoying a little repose, there was a sudden swelling of the river, and the waters came rushing from the interior with the fury of a torrent, and so unexpectedly that there was no time to make any preparation. The admiral's ship receiving the full force of the water, dragged one of her anchors and was driven so hard on the Gallego that her foremast was carried away. The two ships driven together, were pitched

about so furiously that not only they, but the others, too, were in great danger of a collision, which, in the violence of the shock, would inevitably have sunk them both. Fortunately, the force of the current drove them in different directions, and not straight before it, for the sea, only half-a-mile off, was then in a furious storm, and any ship caught at the mouth of the river where the force of the current, rushing to the sea, met the waves driving it back, was sure to be lost. The cause of this sudden swelling of the river could only have been, what Columbus supposed, a heavy fall of rain on the high mountains which were visible in the interior nearly twenty leagues distant, and which shed their water into the Belen River.*

The storm continued with violence for several days. At length, on the 9th of February, the sea became calmer, and the adelantado, with sixty-eight men well armed, left in the boats for Veragua, to look for the mines. The quibian, informed of his coming, met him again, at the head of his subjects, without arms, and making signals of peace. But in his heart he was much disturbed at the arrival of these strangers in his territory, and if he had been able, would have received them quite differently.

Don Bartholomew remained a day at the quibian's village collecting information concerning the position of the mines and the way to them, and then, leaving a guard with the boats, he departed with the rest on foot towards the mountains, taking along three guides that the quibian furnished. After journeying four leagues and a half to the interior, they stopped for the night on the banks of a river that seemed to water the whole country, as it made so many windings that they were obliged to cross it forty-three times. The next day, a league and a half further on, they came to thick forests of tall trees, where the guides said the mines were situated. In fact, in less than two hours, without using any tools, they picked up, among the roots of the trees, enough gold to give every man three castellanos.† From there the guides led the adelantado to the summit of a high mountain, and showing an extent of country as far as the eye could reach, assured him that beginning at the mountains and going westward twenty days' journey, they would continually find mines, and named the cities and villages near which the richest were

* Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxv.—Fernando Colombo, cap. xcvi.

† Spanish gold coin.

to be found. After this, the delighted Christians, whose only object, on this journey, was to learn the position of the mines, returned to sleep that night at Veragua, and the next on the ships.*

But they soon discovered that they had been deceived by the crafty quibian. His guides had been instructed to lead the Spaniards to the mines of a neighboring cacique, with whom he was at war, in the hope of diverting the dangerous strangers from his own dominions to those of his enemy. The Veragua mines were much richer, where a man of good-will might easily gather a mozada† of gold in ten days.

The indefatigable Don Bartholomew set out again on the 19th of February to explore the country. He took fifty-nine men with him on land, and a boat with fourteen men accompanied them along the shore to the west. He returned on the 24th, and reported to the admiral that he had visited the territory of various caciques, and had been received everywhere with friendly hospitality; that the land was most fertile, excellent fruits abundant, and maize extensively cultivated, a single plantation of which he had seen, in one district, that extended a distance of six leagues; that he saw signs of gold at nearly every step, and almost all the natives wore large plates of it suspended around their neck by cotton cords; but that no place he had visited promised such abundance of this metal as the district of Veragua, and no river was so suitable for anchoring the fleet as the Belen. Finally, he reported, what was equally gratifying to the admiral, that he had again heard of a great nation in the interior, which was quite civilized, and wore clothes and arms like the Spaniards. These tales must, as we remarked, either have been exaggerated rumors concerning the great empire of Peru, or else, as is more likely, the adelantado had misinterpreted the signs made by the Indians whom he questioned in the matter.

These repeated confirmations from every side of the wealth of Veragua; that region of gold extending for twenty days' journey towards the west, which had been shown to the adelantado; the reports of a rich and civilized country not far distant,—had made all the more impression on the admiral's mind in his present sad state, and this fortunate discovery restored to full bloom his almost des-

* *Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.*—Fernando Colombo, cap. xciv.

† A boy's load.

perate affairs. Disappointed in his expectation of finding the strait, he was on the point of going back to Spain with his ships reduced to a pitiful condition, and with his companions so worn out that they could no longer keep up; and for all this loss and suffering he had absolutely nothing to show. What a triumph for his enemies! What irreparable ruin for his whole future! The anguish of these reflections undoubtedly had much to do with the sickness that kept him for nine days at the point of death. But this discovery would compensate for every thing a thousand times over in the opinion of all Spain; for the discovery of the strait would never have made the same impression as the discovery of an extensive region, where, so to speak, it was only necessary to turn a stone to find gold under it. It is no wonder, then, that his excited imagination revelled in bright hopes, and again abandoned itself to sweet illusions.

Still firmly convinced that he was on the eastern edge of Asia, he easily persuaded himself that he had arrived in a favorite part of those regions, and began, in his usual way, to seek in his universal erudition of all that was at that time known of those places, what record or fact he could apply to this great wealth of gold-mines. And finding that Josephus, in his history of *The Antiquities of the Jews*, was of the opinion that the Ophir of the Bible, from which Solomon had drawn such treasures, corresponded to the Golden Chersonese; he concluded that the Golden Chersonese must be Veragua. But his own ingenuous exposition best shows his delusion.

“The nation Pope Pius* spoke of, is now found; but not the horses with saddles, breast-pieces, and bridles of gold; and we should not be surprised at this, for these coast-lands can be inhabited only by fishermen.

“When I discovered the Indies, I pronounced this the richest domain in the world; I spoke of the gold, the pearls, the precious stones, the spices, and their commerce; and as that did not appear evident at once, I was treated with scorn. Such treatment prevents me now from saying any thing except what I have heard from the natives of the country. But there is one thing I venture to report, for there were many eye-witnesses, and that is, that more traces of gold were seen in two days in Veragua than in the whole four years in

* Pius II, before known as Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who published a book with the title: *Cosmographia, seu Historia Rerum Ubique Gestarum, Locorumque Descriptio.*

Hispaniola ; and that more fertile or better cultivated lands than those around it, could not be desired. . . . If I say nothing about the other things I might mention, I have told the reason why ; and therefore I will not say that I confirm thrice over all that I have hitherto said or written, nor that I am at the source of all. . . . At a single time, there was brought to Solomon 666 quintals of gold,* besides what he had of the merchants and seamen, and not counting what was paid in Arabia. Of this gold were made 200 lances and 300 shields ; the roof (of the temple) was decorated with this metal, and enamelled with precious stones ; and many other things were made of it, and numerous large vases were spread over with precious stones : Josephus speaks of it in his chronicles *de antiquitatibus*. It is also spoken of in Paralipomenon and the book of Kings. Josephus is of opinion that the gold came from the *Aurea* ;† and if so, I maintain that the mines of the *Aurea* are absolutely identical with those of Veragua, which, as I have already stated, extend westward more than twenty days' journey, equally distant from the Pole and the Line. All those things—gold, silver, and precious stones—were bought by Solomon ; but here, in this place, all that is necessary, if gold is wanted, is to send to gather it. David, in his testament, left Solomon 3,000 quintals of gold from the Indies, to aid in building the temple ; and, according to Josephus, it came from these same lands. Jerusalem and the Mount of Zion must be restored by the hands of a Christian, and God, by the mouth of the Prophet, has said so in the xiv Psalm. Abbot Joachim asserts that this Christian must come from Spain.‡

* In III Kings, x, 14, where Columbus found this information, the amount is given as 666 talents of gold.

† From the *Aurea Chersonesus* (Golden Peninsula), which the best modern geographers place in the peninsula beyond the Ganges, that is, in Indo-China (the Malay Peninsula) .(Marmocchi.)

‡ Abbot Joachim was a Calabrian friar of the Cistercian order, who lived in the xii century, and governed many monasteries of his order with great wisdom and piety, and had the reputation of possessing the spirit of prophecy. Muratori, in his annals of Italy, at the year 1190, mentions him in these words : “ It was on this occasion (when Philip Augustus, king of France, and Richard, king of England, were at Messina, on their way to the Holy Land, with their forces), that at the instance of King Richard, Abbot Joachim of the Cistercian monastery of Fiore, who at that time had a great reputation for virtue, and for foretelling the future, was called to Messina. When asked if they would deliver Jerusalem, he replied that the time had not yet arrived for that relief.

“St. Jerome pointed out to the Holy Spouse* the way to succeed. The emperor of Cathay asked long ago for learned men to instruct him in the faith of Christ.† Who will present himself for this mission? If our Lord grants me to return to Spain, I bind myself in God’s name to carry him thither safe and sound.”‡

With this view, he resolved to found a colony on the Belen River, and establish there a market that should become the depository of all the wealth collected in the mines of the neighborhood, and at once, with great activity, set about the work, in order to secure the possession of the country for the crown, and to be able to begin the excavation of the mines without delay. The adelantado consented to remain there with the greater part of the crews, while the admiral returned to Spain for men and provisions. Eighty persons were selected to stay with him, and, divided into detachments of ten each, began cheerfully to construct dwellings on a little hill rising from the river’s bank, hardly a cannon-shot from its mouth.

The houses were built of wood, and thatched with palm-leaves. One of them was much larger than the rest, to serve as a warehouse for stores. Much of the artillery and some of the provisions were placed in it; but the main depot was established, for greater safety, on board of the Gallego, which was left with the adelantado for the use of the colony. The provision of food was small enough, as all that was left on the ships, consisted of a little wine, oil, vinegar, cheese, and biscuit, and a small quantity of vegetables; but this gave them no uneasiness, as the country was fertile, and could easily supply the necessaries of life; and the sea and river abounded with excellent fish. For this purpose, all the fishing-tackle was left on the Gallego. The country would also have supplied various beverages, which the natives extracted from the maize, from the pith of some of their palm-trees, from pineapples, and many other fruits, which were all more or less pleasant even to a European palate.§

To gain the good-will of the Indians towards their new guests, so that they should supply whatever was needed in his absence, Columbus took pains to conciliate them by great kindness and many

* The Holy Spouse is the church, the spouse of Christ.

† See Toscanelli’s letter, book i, ch. vi.

‡ *Letter of the Admiral*, July 7, 1503, from Jamaica.

§ Fernando Colombo, cap. xcvi.

presents to the quibian to overcome the dislike he must feel to having strange people establish themselves on his territory.*

The houses for the colonists being now well advanced, and ten or twelve of the cabins thatched with straw, so as to give some shelter, the admiral prepared to leave. But an unforeseen obstacle presented itself. The heavy rains which had distressed the Spaniards for so many months, had ceased, and the weather become clear. The current of the Belen, deprived of the mountain torrents, was no longer forcible enough to resist the strong Ocean flood, and so much sand had been washed in, that hardly half-a-fathom of water was left. Light as were the admiral's vessels, it was impossible to haul them over the sand, as they had not the necessary machines, and even if they had had them, it would have been just as impossible, for the Ocean broke on the coast with such fury that it would have dashed to pieces the vessels, which were now so perforated by the worms that Fernando says they were *like a honey-comb*.† It was therefore necessary to wait for more rain to enable the current to force open the mouth of the river, and they prayed to God for rain with the same fervor with which, a few days before, they were begging it might stop.

During this time, the quibian of Veragua, a proud man, and jealous of his authority and independence, with a great number of bold warriors under his command, perceiving that the strangers showed an intention of establishing themselves on his territory, determined on a stroke that would for ever relieve him from their neighborhood, and as he had had no experience of the superiority of the White Men over his Indians, he believed he could easily carry out his plan by a well-conceived stratagem. He sent accordingly through the neighboring country to collect his warriors on the river Veragua, giving out that he was going to war with the next province. It was so easy and common for those people to take up arms, that neither the admiral nor his officers took any notice of the many Indians they saw passing with arms in front of the ships on their way to the cacique's residence. They were roused from their indifference by Diego Mendez, to whose circumspection the unusual movement was suspicious. He was as brave as he was watchful, and his zealous devotion to the admiral, whose trusty companion he had been on al-

* *Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.*

† Fernando Colombo, cap. xcvi.

his four voyages, was unequalled by that of any of his friends and followers, as the facts we are about to narrate will clearly show.

He made his suspicions known to the admiral, and offered to creep along the coast to the river Veragua, with a few armed men, and watch what was doing in the Indian camp. His proposal being accepted, he left the river, and had gone only half-a-league when he discovered about a thousand Indians, all armed and supplied with provisions of every kind, marching in the direction of the Belen. Boldly approaching them in his boat, he sprang ashore alone, not to excite suspicion, and, joining them, began to converse with them as well as he could; and hearing them say that they were going against the Indians of Cobrava Auriva, he offered to accompany them with his boat and fight with them. They declined his offer with thanks, but were unable to conceal in their looks their impatience to get rid of him. He returned to his boat, but remained there watching them. Seeing that they were watched, not to arouse suspicion, the Indians all returned the same night to Veragua. Mendez hastened to the ships to report what he had observed. Suspicion was strengthened, but still there was no certainty of evil intent on the part of the Indians; and the admiral was prudently unwilling to risk an attack which might prove unjust and injurious. Then Mendez boldly offered to land with a single companion, go to the quibian's residence, and penetrate as a spy into the very headquarters. It was a daring attempt, which might easily cost him his life; but Mendez was precisely one of those men who love to defy fortune, and fortune, pleased with their audacity, generally brings them through safe. The young Rodrigo de Escobar offered to accompany him, and the two landed, and proceeded on foot along the coast towards the quibian's residence. At the mouth of the Veragua, they met two canoes filled with Indians from another district, and, entering into conversation with them, had their suspicions confirmed that the thousand warriors were really on their way to the ships, but gave up the attempt because they were discovered and watched by the White Men; but in a couple of days would renew it with a stronger force. Mendez was not satisfied with this information, but determined to get at the bottom of the affair; and therefore requested the Indians to carry him in their canoes as far as the cacique's residence. They tried to dissuade him, showing him that he was going to certain death; but he insisted, and by making them a present, prevailed on them to carry

him in their canoes wherever he wished. The village extended along the river's bank, not in a cluster of houses close together, but scattered among trees and groves, the most commanding of all being the quibian's, on a little hill. The place was full of arms and armed men, and every look grew dark at sight of the two foreigners. Appearing indifferent, they passed through the midst of these suspected figures, and went towards the cacique's residence; but as they came to the summit of the hill, they were forbidden to go further. Then Mendez, who knew that the quibian had been wounded in the side by an arrow, in a combat had a few days before with another cacique, announced that he was a surgeon come for the purpose of curing their chief. On this pretext he was permitted to pass. The quibian's house was very large, with a great square in front, around which 300 heads of enemies killed in battle were arranged in order, hung to as many stakes. It was a sight to shake the boldest heart, but not the two Spaniards, who fearlessly continued their way. But at the door of the house were assembled a number of women and girls of the quibian's family, who, as soon as they saw the two strange figures coming towards them, sprang to their feet and ran, frightened, in every direction, with cries, yells, and screams as though it was the end of the world. At the sudden noise, a son of the quibian, a tall and powerful young man, rushed furiously out, and seeing the two White Men, struck Mendez, who was in advance, a blow that made him draw back at least three steps. The wily Spaniard, repressing his wrath and pain, showed no resentment, but tried to persuade the raw youth that he was a surgeon come to cure his father's wound, and showed an ointment which he told him would infallibly heal it. But words were useless. The youth glared furiously at him, and kept pushing him back. Meanwhile, many more Indians had been drawn to the spot by the screams, and their number was steadily increasing. Then Mendez, who was ready for every thing, and had studied profoundly the character and nature of these savages, with wonderful and almost incredible coolness and phlegm, produced a comb and a pair of scissors, which he handed to his companion, who, having been instructed what to do, proceeded with the same phlegmatic coolness to comb and cut Mendez's hair. The Indians stood breathless watching the novel process. When it was over, Mendez gave the cacique's son a looking-glass to see himself in, and ordered Escobar

to comb and cut his hair also. Escobar carried out his order, and the young savage, in his astonishment, submitted. Then Mendez presented the comb, scissors, and looking-glass to the Indian, and asked for something to eat and drink. This was quickly brought, and all ate together and became good friends. After this, without further insisting on his mission as surgeon, Mendez took his leave, and returned in haste to the ships, having more than enough to satisfy him that a dangerous plot threatened the Spaniards, and would soon be carried into execution.* His report was confirmed and made clearer by an Indian interpreter from a village near by, who had been with the Christians over three months, and, being treated very kindly, had conceived a great affection for them. Having discovered the plan of his compatriots, he immediately informed the admiral.† It was the quibian's intention to come at night, at the head of a considerable armed force, and under cover of the darkness make a sudden attack on the vessels and houses, set fire to them, and massacre all the Spaniards. The danger was obviated for the moment by placing a strong guard over the squadron and the houses. Then resolving what further measures should be taken, it was decided to march at once to the cacique's residence, and arresting him with his family and principal officers, send them as prisoners to Castile, as there was no doubt that after that, it would be an easy matter to subdue his people.

The adelantado was charged with the execution of the plan, and quickly got ready. He took with him the wily and bold Mendez, and the Indian interpreter who had discovered the plot, and, on the 30th of March, embarked in the boats with some eighty men well armed, kept close to the coast till he came to the mouth of the Veragua, which he ascended rapidly, and before the Indians had any suspicion, entered the village at the foot of the hill on which the house of the cacique was situated. When the quibian was informed that the adelantado was coming up the hill with an armed force, he sent to request him not to come to his house. This was not because he suspected the intentions of the White Men, or feared that his own had been discovered, but in order that his women should not be seen; for the Indians of all this coast were very jealous of them

* *Narrative of Diego Mendez*, in the *Raccolta di Viaggi* of F. C. Marmocchi.

† *Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica*.—Fernando Colombo cap. xvii.

and the Spaniards, as usual, had given them sufficient cause. Lest the cacique should be alarmed by so many armed men, and take to flight, the adelantado pretended to acquiesce, and, halting his command, proceeded with only five of his companions, one of whom was Mendez, and with the Indian interpreter; but left orders for the rest to come up silently and cautiously by twos, and at a considerable distance apart; and, at the first discharge of an arquebuse, surround the house and permit no one to escape.

As the adelantado came to the great square in front of the quibian's residence, the latter sent another messenger to beg him not to enter the house, saying he would go out to meet him, although still suffering from his wound. And, in fact, he appeared at the entrance immediately behind the messenger, and seating himself in the doorway, notified the adelantado that he desired him to approach alone. Don Bartholomew charged his men to run to him at once as soon as they saw him take the cacique's arm, and then advanced with only the interpreter. This poor Indian, accustomed to look upon the quibian's majesty with a sort of holy awe, now stood in his presence with fear and trembling, being aware of the Spaniards' hostile intentions; for, as he had seen no proof of the White Men's power, the attempts to subdue the quibian in the very centre of his power,—in his own house, and in the midst of his warriors,—was beyond his imagination. Approaching the cacique, Don Bartholomew inquired after his health and about the country; then pretending to want to see where he was wounded, he took hold of his arm. At this concerted signal, his companions discharged a musket, and flew to his assistance. The quibian, discovering the treachery, fierce and strong as he was, caught hold of Don Bartholomew, and made every effort to loosen his grip, and a violent struggle followed; but the herculean strength of the adelantado won, and the Indian was held fast, foaming and roaring like a wild beast as he twisted about, till he others fell on him and bound him hand and foot. At the same time, the rest of the Spaniards rushed from their ambush, and made themselves masters of the quibian's house. Within it were fifty persons, large and small, among them the sons and women of the cacique, and many of his principal subjects. The greater part were captured, but no one was wounded, for the Indians, taken by surprise, and seeing their chief a prisoner, did not dare to move, but deafened the air with lamentations, begging for the cacique's liberty, and prom-

ising for his ransom a great treasure which they said was hid in the forest near by. But the adelantado was deaf to their prayers and offers ; this was too dangerous an enemy to leave free, and the few Spaniards who were to remain on the Belen, must be secured against every danger.

The blow had succeeded, but it was necessary to consider that the country around was filled with armed men, so devoted to their cacique, that if they assembled in great number, it was not certain that the prey might not escape from their hands. It was therefore decided to send the prisoners at once to the river to be put on the boats and taken to the fleet ; and that Don Bartholomew, with the greater part of his men, should remain on shore to continue his work against the other chiefs and relatives of the cacique, who had succeeded in escaping. The adelantado, consulting his chief officers as to who should take charge of the prisoners and carry them to the admiral, Juan Sanchez, the chief pilot of the fleet, asked to be chosen, saying he was willing to have his beard plucked out hair by hair, if the quibian got away from him. In fact, he guarded the cacique with such jealous care after he was put in the boat, that, not satisfied with seeing him bound hand and foot, he secured him still further by a rope to the boat's bench, and kept his eyes steadily on him for fear he might untie himself.

The night was dark, the banks silent and deserted, and the boat descended the current rapidly without meeting any thing. During the whole passage, the quibian had complained of pain from being too tightly bound, and as they were now in the open sea, half-a-league from the Veragua's mouth, out of all danger of surprise by the Indians, Sanchez, moved to pity, untied him from the bench, contenting himself with holding the end of the cord in his hand.

The crafty Indian pretended to be half-dead, but kept his eye always on his jailer ; and at a moment when the latter was looking another way, he dropped suddenly into the water. It was like the fall of a large stone thrown into the water, and the shock was so violent that Sanchez had to let the rope go or be dragged in with him. The darkness of the night, and the noise made by the sailors, hindered them from seeing or hearing where the fugitive came up, and the necessity of securing the rest of the prisoners prevented their searching for him or learning what became of him. And Sanchez, cursing himself and Heaven, continued on his way mortified and humbled.

Don Bartholomew remained all night on the shore waiting for morning ; but when the morning came, on further considering the wild aspect of the country, and that it would be slow, difficult, and almost impossible to overtake the Indians among the forests and mountains, with nearly all the houses on the tops of hills, from which they could watch every step of the White Men, he gave up the thought of pursuing them, and returned to the ships.

The plunder obtained in the quibian's house consisted of some large plates and other ornaments to hang around the neck, great rings for the arms and legs, and crowns for the head, all of solid gold ; without mentioning articles of an inferior quality of gold, called guanin. The admiral, after laying aside the fifth part for the crown, divided the rest among those who had taken part in the expedition, adding to the adelantado's share one of the crowns, as a trophy of his victory.*

CHAPTER XXI.

The quibian and his warriors attack the colony.—Slaughter of a boat-load of Christians.—Terror of the colonists.—Desperate resolution of the savage prisoners.—Pitiful condition of Christopher Columbus.—His vision.—He recovers his men.—Sets out on his return voyage with only two vessels (1503).

MUCH as they regretted the quibian's escape, they had no doubt of the good effect of Don Bartholomew's daring exploit, since, if the cacique was dead,—and dead he must be, after falling into the water with his hands and feet tied,—with his death would end his subjects' main incentive to hostility ; and besides, the daring of that act must have impressed them with such terror as to make them doubly fearful of again provoking the vengeance of the powerful strangers ; and if by singular fortune he had succeeded in saving himself,

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xcvi. — Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxvii.

the captivity of his family and principal subjects must restrain his warlike spirit and his wrath, for fear of their being held as security for his conduct.

Confident, then, of the good condition, in this respect, in which he was leaving the colony, the admiral hailed with delight the rain which not long afterwards, with its usual frequency among those mountains, came to swell the current of the Belen, and gave it force to open again the mouth of the river, and taking advantage of the first calm moment when the sea was not breaking too strongly against the river's mouth, he got under way with the three ships that were to go with him. But as the channel that was opened was still shallow, it was necessary to lighten them of their cargo, and tow them with the boats, and even then all three grounded repeatedly, and if the sand had not been light and easily furrowed, they would have been in danger, in spite of the calm.* When out of the river, the cargo was quickly reshipped, and they anchored a league from its mouth, to await a favorable wind. On the 6th of April, whilst waiting there, it became necessary to send the boat of the admiral's ship to shore, and this expedition, which was fatal to all that were engaged in it, was the salvation of the colony.

The quibian was not dead, and the danger he had been in, instead of humbling and disheartening him, had made him more furious than ever. An expert swimmer, like all the Indians, accustomed from infancy to glide like fishes in the water, he had succeeded, tied as he was, in swimming to the bank, from which he dragged himself to the woods, where he was soon found by his men. He was devoured by hate and rage, the more intense as he was unable to satisfy his thirst for revenge. He ran towards the ships to learn the fate of his people, and as he saw his wives and children depart for the unknown world of the strangers, his heart was torn by his affection as father, and his jealousy as husband.

But the strangers had not all departed ; and it was a sad comfort in his distress to think of the vengeance he could wreak on those that remained. Collecting 400 of his best warriors, he moved silently towards the settlement. There had remained with Don Bartholomew and Diego Mendez seventy others, but their confidence of having terrified the Indians by their exploit, had made them care-

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xcvi. — Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxvii.

less of every precaution. Most of them were on the beach to take a last look at the departing ships, some were on duty aboard the Gallego, and a few were in their cabins intent on their work. The thick forests protected the Indians' march, and they were within ten steps of the houses without any one being aware of it. Here they sent up a wild yell, then a second, and a third, either to frighten their enemies or to keep up their own courage. Those three yells were the saving of the Christians; for, without that warning, taken unawares, probably not one would have escaped massacre.

The yells were followed by a heavy shower of arrows on the cabins, which, being covered only with palm-leaves, were easily pierced, and some who were within them were wounded. Aroused by the terrible yell which echoed through the woods, the Spaniards ran for their arms, and first rushed out the adelantado with seven or eight others, and seizing a lance, by voice and example encouraging the rest, he set upon the Indians as they came out of the woods. Diego Mendez and some others quickly joined him, and so they were about twenty to bear the shock of the furious savages. But their shields protected them from the enemy's arrows, whilst the savages had their naked bodies exposed to their swords. The Christians had, besides, an ally who was three times as frightful as their swords; this was a dog, an animal never seen before by the Indians, and which, infuriated by the rushing and yelling, came to the defence of its masters, and sprang at the faces of the frightened savages. The sight of this monster did more than the slaughter to drive the Indians back to their forests. From there, hidden behind trees, they continued the fight, showering their arrows on the Spaniards, sometimes rushing out to try their lances in close conflict, till the rest of the Christians coming up from all sides, increased the number so as to deprive the Indians of all further hope, and they retired to the woods, which resounded with their wild yells. The skirmish lasted three hours, and besides the wounded whom they were able to carry off, the Indians left nineteen of their men on the field. The Spaniards had one killed and seven wounded; among the latter was the adelantado, struck in the breast by a lance. The boat from the admiral's ship entered the mouth of the river just as the battle was hottest, but Captain Diego Tristan, who was in command of it, took no part, but remained in the channel a mute spectator while it lasted. When questioned why he had not gone to the relief of his comrades in their

peril, and even blamed for not doing so, he replied, that if those on shore had seen a way of escape open, they might have run to the boat and overloaded it, and they would all have perished ; whilst left to themselves, with no other way to escape, they would be able to secure their safety by their arms.

After the battle, he hurried up the river to where the water was fresh, to fill his casks, and return at once to the admiral to report what had taken place. They called to him from the bank not to proceed further for fear of the Indians and their canoes, but he replied that he had no fear of them ; that the admiral had sent him on this duty, and he would perform it.

The river was very deep, and shut in on both sides by woods reaching to the water's edge, and so thick that it was impossible to land except at the end of the paths made by the fishermen, or where they drew their canoes on shore. When the boat had gone about a league above the settlement, there was a terrible yell and sounding of shells from the banks and the adjacent forests, and at the same time numberless canoes darted from the thickets and pressed the boat on every side. The Indians had an immense advantage over the Spaniards, because, as the canoes were very light and required only a single person to manage them (especially the small canoes and those of the fishermen), three or four Indians came in each, and while one directed the canoe, the others hurled their lances, which were heavy and formidable spears, although pointed only with a thorn or fish-tooth. In the Spaniards' boat there were only seven or eight rowers and the captain, with three men-at-arms. If at the Indians' first approach they had only had the presence of mind to use their fire-arms, they would certainly have saved themselves, for the novelty of the thing, with the smoke and discharge instantly followed by wounds and death, would not have failed to throw the savages into the usual consternation which would have caused them to fly ; but they were stunned by the frightful yell which sounded from every side, with the thick hail of arrows, and the constantly increasing number of canoes, lost their wits, and only thought of covering themselves with their shields. But that was of no avail against the swarms of Indians attacking them from every side. The captain, Diego Tristan, although repeatedly wounded, endeavored with great intrepidity to sustain the courage of his men ; but a stroke of a lance in the right eye laid him dead. With him fell all the courage of his men, and

it was no longer a combat, but a mere butchery. The Indians rushed on them with savage rage, every one anxious to slake his vengeance on their bodies, and the blows and wounds were so numerous that the corpses were all cut to pieces. Only one of the Spaniards escaped, a cooper from Seville, named Juan de Noya, who by good fortune had fallen overboard without any one noticing him in the confusion, and swam under water to the bank, and hiding behind the trees, reached the Christian settlement and told the news of the massacre.

At the settlement, every thing was upside down, every one discussing the danger incurred in the Indians' attack, and the boldness and ferocity of the savages, whom they had believed humbled and afraid to look at the White Men. In this excitement, Noya arrived with his report, which came upon them like a clap of thunder. Their fears exaggerated the danger they were in, and they thought themselves lost. They were only a handful in the midst of a swarm of fierce savages, thirsting for revenge and death, who had already attacked them twice within a few hours; what would become of them abandoned on that coast? They saw no alternative but death at the hands of the savages if they ventured in search of food, or starvation if they remained shut up in the settlement. A panic fear seized every mind, and their only thought was to run to the Gallego, go on board, join the admiral, and sail away with him. They, accordingly, abandoned their cabins, and rushed for the Gallego. The adelantado vainly tried to restrain them or keep them in order. But the current was no longer strong enough to keep the mouth of the river open, and another sand-bar had formed at the mouth, and it was impossible to get the ship out. It was not even possible to send a boat to notify the admiral of what had happened, for the sea was again tempestuous, and the waves, dashing furiously against the coast, left no hope that their frail boat could live in them. And as though it were not enough to see every means of escape and hope of relief cut off, a revolting spectacle was presented, which nearly drove them out of their senses with fear and horror. The current carried before their eyes the bodies of Diego Tristan and his companions, with a flock of crows and other carnivorous birds noisily quarrelling over the bloody pieces. Between the wounds inflicted by their savage conquerors, and the picking and tearing of the birds, their appearance was so deformed that they could no longer be recognized, but presented a mass of bare

bones and torn flesh. It is hard to imagine, and harder to express, what they suffered at the sight as each seemed to read in the corpses the sentence of his own fate. At the same time, the sounding of shells and the beating of drums in the forest, grew nearer and more constant,—a sure sign that the savage enemy was approaching with increasing numbers.

Their situation was truly pitiable. They were few, subdued by fear, and their cabin open to attack, with no protection but palm-leaves, whilst the enemy was returning to the assault elated with his recent victory and with increased numbers. It was necessary to take some precaution, or all would be lost. In the trouble and anxiety of the case, all united in carrying tables, chests, casks, and every thing that could be used for defence, to the open beach, and formed a bulwark on an open space where there were no trees, and they could watch the enemy from every side, and shut themselves in, leaving only two openings, which were defended by two falconets.

It was not long before the shore resounded with shells and drums, and the Indians issued, like a swarm of bees, from the woods, and advanced with wild yells to assault the little fort. But the two falconets gave them a reception which quickly drove them back to the forests, and they did not dare make a second attempt, for the impression of their first fright was kept up by the balls which from time to time cut through the thicket and carried wounds and death into their hidden recesses. Still, they stayed there, behind the trees and hidden among the branches, watching day and night, like famished beasts, for the White Men to come out of their enclosure. The Spaniards, exhausted by fatigue and constant watching, grew daily more alarmed and discouraged, foreseeing their inevitable massacre as soon as their ammunition was gone, or they were compelled by hunger to go out to look for food.*

On board of the admiral's vessels there was the greatest anxiety at not seeing Diego Tristan return. It was now ten days since he left, and nothing had been seen of him, and they were all living in great fear of what might have happened to him. There was no way of sending to learn the cause, for the Vizcaina's boat having been lost,

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xcix.—Las Casas, lib. ii.—*Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica*.—*Narrative of Diego Mendez, Journal of Porras, in the Raccolta di Viaggi*, of F. C. Marmocchi.

only the Santiago's remained, and the sea was so rough and the coast so rocky that they were afraid to risk the only boat by which the fleet could communicate with the shore. In this distress and alarm, a frightful accident occurred, which completed their consternation.

The family of the quibian and the other prisoners that Columbus was taking to Spain, and whom he regarded as security for the men he left on the banks of the Belen, were embarked on the Santiago, and at night were shut up below deck. But as the hatch was too high to reach with the hands, and, moreover, some of the sailors were sleeping over it, the guards neglected to fasten it on the outside with chains. The prisoners, distressed at being torn from their native forests and their family ties, to be carried to an unknown world, perceiving the carelessness of their jailers, founded on it a hope of escape. Quietly collecting, one night, the stones that served for ballast, they piled them under the hatchway, and the strongest of them mounting upon them, by a strong heave all together, they forced the hatch, and threw off the men that were sleeping on it. Springing on deck, they were soon out of sight in the water. But on the alarm being given, most of them were retaken and secured under hatches, this time with the chains fastened, and under a strong guard. In despair at not having escaped with their companions, the prisoners, men and women, came to a common resolution, and collecting the cords that were in the hold, all strangled themselves. So firmly had they carried out their design, that some of them were found with their feet and knees stretched on the bottom, because it was not high enough for them to hang, and they made use of their hands and feet to tighten the cords about their neck.*

In their anxiety about their companions on land, this sight filled the Spaniards with horror. The courage of the Veraguans was very different from what they had supposed. How was that handful of sailors, with a scant supply of food, in an unknown land, to maintain itself against a people so wild and indomitable? Hitherto, there was hope of restraining the quibian by fear of reprisal, but that was now past. And the prisoners who had fled would rekindle his wrath and excite his rage.

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cix.

In this state of anxiety and distress, some of the sailors offered to swim ashore in that rough sea, and ascertain what had become of their companions, and only asked to have the boat take them to the edge of the surf. The fact that the Indians had escaped by swimming through the rough waves, had nettled their honor. If the Indians, they said, had defied the furious sea at a league's distance, for the mere desire to escape from slavery, cannot we attempt the shorter distance to save ourselves and many of our brothers?

The admiral gladly accepted the offer, and the boat was soon lowered and took them within a cannon-shot of the land, as far as it could go without manifest danger. But the waves breaking on the shore were so high and furious, that the sailors' hearts failed them, and they durst not throw themselves into what appeared sure death. Only one stood to the proof, a sailor from Seville, named Pedro Ledesma, a man going on forty-five years old, of athletic frame and unequalled courage.* Stripping himself of his clothes, he plunged into the water, and sometimes above and sometimes below, now conquering the force of the waves, and now dragged helplessly after them, with renewed effort he succeeded in reaching the shore.

He found the Spaniards in their enclosure, and every thing in disorder and confusion. Soldiers and sailors, blind with fear and despair, no longer listened to Don Bartholomew and the other officers, but openly refused to do any work which looked to their continued stay in the place, and thought only of getting ready to embark in two canoes which they had found, and their own boat, and joining the fleet as soon as the sea should permit. When they discovered Ledesma, they pressed around him in a sort of frenzy, telling him of the catastrophe of Diego Tristan, and their own desperate condition; with joined hands, they begged him to persuade the admiral that it was impossible to remain there, and not to abandon them, for charity's sake; that they were determined to leave at any cost, and they pointed to their preparations already made for their departure to join their companions. If the admiral refused to take them, and left them there, they called on Heaven to witness his cruelty, but they would leave at any rate on the ship they had, preferring to risk any peril of the sea rather than wait for death from

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xcix.

the hatred and cruelty of the savages. Ledesma, after ascertaining the condition of things, and taking the orders of the adelantado, boldly returned to the sea, and renewing his fatiguing struggle with the waves, safely reached the boat that was waiting for him.

In all the trouble and distress which Columbus had undergone in his four voyages, he had never found himself in so desperate a situation as when Ledesma brought his news. I say nothing of his grief for the death of Diego Tristan and his party. But what measures was he to take in the state to which he was reduced? To desert his brother on that shore, was to leave him a certain prey to the ferocity of the savages; to send more men to his succor, was impossible; for the loss of Tristan and his party had weakened his crew too much. Rather than give up the settlement, he would gladly have joined the adelantado with all his troops; but then, how could he convey to their Majesties the news of his important discovery? There remained no other course than to give up the settlement for the present, and embark all the men and return to Spain, reserving for a better opportunity his return with a sufficient force to take possession of the country. But it was doubtful when he would be able to adopt this course. The wind was blowing violently, the sea was high, and there was no hope that a boat could reach the shore. On the other hand, the ships were in a most dangerous condition. They were short of sailors, ruined by continued tempests, pierced by boring worms; and, moreover, they were exposed, in a stormy sea, to all the fury of the wind and waves, and in danger of being driven at any moment on the rocks of the neighboring coast. His mind was completely prostrated under the weight of so many blows, and his body, worn with age and continual fatigues and watching, and, above all, by the uninterrupted succession of disasters, was attacked by a violent fever. Reduced to a state of utter despair, beside himself with anguish and fever, he dragged himself with difficulty to the wheel-house, and there, in complaint, called on the four winds to aid him, and his officers stood around weeping hot tears. Then he fell asleep, overcome with weariness, and groaned in his sleep; and it seemed to him that a divine vision came to refresh and comfort him in his dejection. But here again it is best to let him tell it in the ingenuous relation he made to the Catholic kings.

“Overcome by fatigue,” he says, “I fell asleep groaning, and I heard a voice saying:—O senseless and slow to believe and serve

thy God, the God of all ! What more did He for Moses and His servant David ? From thy birth He has ever taken the greatest care of thee ; when thou camest to the age determined in His design, He made thy name resound wonderfully over all the world. The Indies, this rich portion of the earth, He has given to thee ; thou hast presented them to whom thou wouldst, and He gave thee the right to do so. He gave thee the keys to open the gates of the Ocean, till then fastened with such strong chains ; to thy command He subjected all this extent of land, and He gave thee undying fame among Christians. Did He do more for the people of Israel, when He brought them out of the slavery of Egypt, or for David, when from a shepherd He raised him to the king of Judea ? Turn, then, again to Him, and confess thy error ; the mercy of the Lord is without end ; thy old age will not prevent thy accomplishing great deeds : many great inheritances are in the hands of the Lord.* Had not Abraham passed his hundred-and-twentieth year when he begat Isaac ? Was Sarah, his wife, young ? Thou callest with loud cries for an uncertain aid ; answer, who has given thee so many and frequent afflictions, God or the world ? The privileges and promises given by God, He does not forget nor violate ; nor after the benefit is received, does He say that such was not His intention, and that He meant otherwise ; nor does He inflict martyrdom to give color to force.† He fulfils all that He promises, and even more. Is not that His custom ? See what thy Creator has done for thee, and what He does for every one. He is showing now the reward of the toils and perils thou hast endured in serving others.

“ On hearing this, my life failed me ; I could find no reply to such true words, and could only weep for my errors. Whoever was speaking to me, ended by saying : Fear not ; have confidence ; all thy tribulations are written in marble, and not without reason.”

To explain and understand these facts, it is necessary to recall to mind the grand illusions of Christopher Columbus on the completion which he had always believed he should give to his undertaking. Events had constantly shown the vanity of those thoughts,

* From what follows, it would seem that the inheritances must be understood as *inheritances of years*.

† Literal translation of the Spanish, “ Ní dá martirios por dar color á la fuerza ;” Roselly de Lorgues translates it, “ Il ne martirize pas afin de prouver sa puissance.” (*Hist. Chr. Colomb.*, liv. iv, ch. iv.)

but his faith remained unshaken ; for, not a syllable of God's is cancelled, and he seemed to find that completion foretold in Isaiah and other parts of Holy Scripture. Fresh difficulties and insuperable obstacles arose every little while, but, of what consequence was that ? The hand of God could make likely and easy what appeared, and was truly, impossible to man. He strengthened his faith and hope by numerous instances from Holy Scripture. But now he had been drawn so far out of his way that to regain it, would require more time than he could count on at his advanced age. Here there was no room for illusion, for the necessity of nature was pressing on him. Whoever has watched his enthusiasm, and remembers how faithfully and constantly he had always maintained his ideas against all opposition from men or events, can easily imagine what it must have cost him to admit that he was conquered, and to give them up for ever. But in whatever state of mind Columbus found himself, whether elated with delight, or overwhelmed with distress, the ruling influence of his mind and heart was always Religion ; and therefore we must regard him as fully resigned to the will of God in every adversity ; and since he believed that his ideas were based on the infallible truths of the holy books, we must also suppose him earnestly endeavoring to find arguments to convince himself that even without him, not one syllable of those divine words would be lost. This endeavor increased in proportion to the difficulties he encountered ; and never had he found the way so shut to his hopes as at the present time.

In this disposition of mind, in a violent access of fever, he was seized with delirium ; and this is proved by the fact of his going out of the wheel-house, and calling on the winds for help. In the sleep subsequently brought on by fatigue, just as we often, when asleep, retain in our mind the thoughts and facts which most deeply impressed us while awake ; so it happened with him, and the arguments were presented to his mind, with which he was accustomed to persuade himself that it was wrong to doubt the result of his undertaking, for, even without him, and in spite of every obstacle, the omnipotence of God was able to direct it and bring it to the end ordained in His divine decree. When the sleep and delirium were past, reflecting on the words of rebuke and comfort presented to his soul in the depth of sleep, and remembering how often, in ancient as well as recent times, the Lord has been pleased to speak to his servants in dreams, he

imagined that it was so in his case. This can surprise no one who has carefully followed and studied his character, and remembers how easily and in what good faith the age was inclined to look for and believe the supernatural. "He is not to be measured," Irving remarks in this connection, "by the same standard with ordinary men in ordinary circumstances. It is difficult for the mind to realize his situation and to conceive the exaltations of spirit to which he must have been subjected. The artless manner in which, in his letter to the sovereigns, he mingles up the rhapsodies and dreams of his imagination, with simple facts and sound practical observations, pouring them forth with a kind of scriptural solemnity and poetry of language, is one of the most striking illustrations of a character richly compounded of extraordinary and apparently contradictory elements."* His description of this vision, Humboldt writes, is all the more pathetic for the bitter rebuke it contains, directed with bold frankness to powerful monarchs by a man unjustly persecuted. The heavenly voice proclaims the glory of Columbus. The empire of the Indies is his; he could have disposed of it as he pleased—have given it to Portugal, France, England, to any one who recognized the solidity of his undertaking. That picture of the western Ocean enchained for thousands of years, till the moment when the adventurous intrepidity of Columbus made access to it free to all nations, is equally noble and beautiful. And in another place, Humboldt advises all who wish to penetrate the real character of this extraordinary man, to read and study the account of this vision.†

For nine days after the vision, the weather continued boisterous. As soon as the wind subsided and the sea was calm, communication with the land was restored; but all efforts to extricate the caravel from the river were idle, on account of the great quantity of sand which had accumulated at its mouth during the storm. They therefore directed their attention to saving the provisions and every thing that could be transported before a return of bad weather. This was successfully accomplished through the prudence and energy of Diego Mendez. Foreseeing that it might be impossible to get the Gallego out, in his character of syndic and chief of accounts of the colony, he had been for some days preparing to save as much as

* *Columbus*, bk. xv, ch. ix.

† *Voyage aux Régions Équinoxiales du Nouveau Continent*, tom. iii, liv. ix, ch. xxviii

possible of the property. He made bags out of the Gallego's sails and filled them with the biscuit, and finding two canoes, he lashed them together with spars, so as not to be overturned by the waves, and covered them with a sort of platform capable of sustaining a great weight. As soon as the weather permitted, they began to tow the canoes laden with the sacks of biscuit, the arms, munitions, victuals,—every thing they could remove from the caravel. The casks of wine, oil, and vinegar, were thrown overboard and towed with long ropes as they floated. In this way, in two days, with seven trips, every thing was transported to the ships that could be, and nothing but the bare carcass of the caravel left in the river.

Mendez remained on shore with five men, and embarked the last of all, at night, when the work was ended. It is impossible to describe the delight of the Spaniards on finding themselves on board of the ships, with a good space of sea between them and the forests, which, a short time before, they thought destined to be their grave. The joy of their companions was little less on receiving them, and, in the exchange of congratulations, they forgot for an instant the perils which still surrounded them. The admiral could not contain his delight, as he showed by repeatedly embracing Diego Mendez, to whom the principal credit was due for the success of the difficult labor. As a reward, he raised him to the rank of captain, giving him the command of the caravel vacant by the death of the unfortunate Diego Tristan.*

* Fernando Colombo, cap. xcix-c.—Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxix.—*Narrative of Diego Mendez*.—*Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica*.—*Journal of Perras*.

CHAPTER XXII.

Departure from the coast of Veragua.—The ships, half under water, are beached on the island of Jamaica.—Agreement with the caciques for obtaining supplies.—Heroism of Diego Mendez (1503).

IN the latter part of April, the night of Easter, the wind became favorable, and the ships immediately set sail from the disastrous coast of Veragua. But the crews were quite exhausted, the ships leaked at every seam, and the few provisions that were left were spoilt. A long voyage under these circumstances could only lead to sure death; and, therefore, the admiral determined to make for Hispaniola, to give his men a little rest, and caulk and victual the ships, and then resume the voyage to Europe. The men understood that such was his intention; but when, instead of standing to the north in which direction Hispaniola lay, the admiral ordered the course to be kept due east, sailors and pilots all thought he meant to sail straight for Spain, and murmured loudly, complaining of his stubbornness in wilfully tempting Providence. But Columbus and his brother had been studying the navigation of those waters with very different eyes from the pilots, and learnt that it was necessary to gain a considerable distance to the east before they crossed the gulf which separated them from Hispaniola, so as to allow for the currents setting constantly to the west; without which precaution they would have been carried far to the westward of that island. But the admiral left them in their error and alarm, because he had grown cautious by sad experience; for, as soon as he had shown the way, a crowd of adventurers hastened to follow it, and became rich and famous at the cost of his glory and labors, and he, therefore, determined to keep the knowledge to himself as long as possible.* Porras, a bitter enemy of the admiral, as we shall see, relates in his journal, that Columbus seized all the marine

* Fernando Colombo, cap. c.—*The Admiral's Letter from Jamaica.*

charts in possession of the pilots; but does not say when or why. Alexander v. Humboldt accuses him of an abuse of power in doing this. But it appears from Porras's own report, and from Fernando's history, that there were many violent disputes among the pilots as to the course to be sailed; and we may very naturally suppose that these disputes were the reason and the occasion of the step taken by the admiral. In that case, the conduct of Columbus is fully justified by the necessity of military discipline, especially in the desperate condition they were then in. There could have been no other motive for this severe measure, for it was wholly repugnant to his meek and truthful nature to use his authority for his personal advantage to the injury of others. I am more inclined to think it unfair in him, after the seizure, to write in his report to the Catholic kings these words: "The pilots may tell the position of Veragua, if they know it; I maintain that they can give no other account or description than this: 'We have been in certain countries where there is great quantity of gold;' and that they can certify to: but they are ignorant of the way to return thither; to go there again, they would have to discover it anew."

Arriving at Puerto Bello, after only thirty leagues of voyage, he was compelled to abandon the caravel *Vizcaina*, which was so bored by worms that it was impossible any longer to keep her afloat. And the other two that were left, says Mendez, were not in much better condition, and the men could not pump and bail out the water as fast as it came in through the worm-holes. And the admiral, in his letter to the Catholic kings, wrote: "I had only two ships left, both in the same condition as the other, no boats and no provisions, to cross 7,000 miles of sea, or die on the way, with my son, my brother, and many other persons of importance. Let such as find fault, now answer, saying *from where they stand in perfect safety*, Why in such instance did you not do so and so? I wish they had been on this voyage; but I believe there is something very different in store for them, compared to which this was nothing."*

Dividing the crew of the *Vizcaina* between the two worn-out ships, they sailed slowly to the east, passed Port Retrete, discovered the *Mulata* group of islands, and went ten leagues beyond the entrance to the Gulf of Darien, several leagues further than when they were

* Apparently alluding to the last judgment.

sailing in search of the strait. Coming again to that neighborhood, Columbus was strongly tempted to try to find the desired passage; but in the condition to which his ships and men were reduced, he would not assume the responsibility of so important a decision, but called a council of the captains and pilots, who unanimously opposed the attempt as impossible against the wind and the currents.* On the 1st of May, therefore, leaving the main-land, he sailed to the north to reach Hispaniola. The east winds and the currents sweeping the ships strongly to the west, the admiral kept as close as he could to the wind; which the pilots complained of, believing they would come out to the east of the Caribbee Islands, whilst the admiral feared that in spite of every effort they would be carried to the west of Hispaniola. The event showed that his fears were well founded, for, on Wednesday, the 10th of May, they passed in sight of the Caymans, two small, low islands just north-west of Hispaniola. They called them the Tortugas (tortoises), because, when they discovered them, all the water around was so in motion with tortoises that, at first sight, they took them for small rocks surrounding and enclosing the whole shore. Making a long turn to the north, they found themselves, on the following Friday evening, thirty leagues from there, among the group of islands south of Cuba, to which Columbus had before given the name of the Queen's Gardens. He had been carried between eight and nine degrees to the west of the harbor of San Domingo.

The crews were exhausted from fatigue and hunger, for they had been kept working at the pumps without ceasing, night and day, to discharge the water that came in through a thousand holes bored by the worms, and all this time, to sustain their stomachs, they had only a little musty biscuit and some oil and vinegar.† They had been at anchor only a few hours, when, about midnight, the sea suddenly rose in such fearful tempest, that, according to the strong expression of Columbus, it seemed as though the world was on the point of coming to pieces.‡ They lost three of their anchors in a short time, and the Santiago was driven with such violence upon the admiral's ship, that the bow of one, and the stern of the other, were badly shattered and it was a wonder that they were not both

* *Testimony of Pedro de Ledesma.* Pleyto de los Colonos, iii.

† *Fernando Colombo, cap. c.*

‡ *Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.*

completely destroyed. A still greater wonder, and a visible miracle, was the safety of the admiral's ship, when, in the morning, the cable of the only remaining anchor was found so worn out by constant rubbing against the rocks under the water, that only a thread was left, so that if the darkness had continued ever so little longer, the vessel would inevitably have been lost on the rocks.*

After six days of fury, the weather moderated a little, and they resumed their course to the east, in the direction of Hispaniola. "I had now lost all my cables," says the admiral, "the ships were bored by worms worse than any honey-comb, and the men were completely discouraged."† In this condition, after struggling night and day against contrary winds and currents from the east, with great difficulty he reached Cape Cruz in the island of Cuba, and anchored near an Indian village in the province of Macaca, where he had touched on his voyage of 1494. Here they stayed eight days to rest, and in the mean time procured from the natives a small supply of cassava-bread. Making sail again, they tried to beat to the east; but the ships were visibly getting worse. Three pumps were kept at work night and day to discharge the water that came in on all sides, and if by accident one stopped working for a few moments, they had to make up for it immediately with kettles, buckets, and pitchers; for it was plain that if the water gained on them ever so little, they could not recover from it. In spite of incessant care, the water gained on the admiral's ship to such extent that he saw he would soon be unable to keep her afloat, and therefore determined to run into Jamaica for shelter. They anchored in a small bay, now called Dry Harbor; but they found no inhabitants, from whom they could obtain provisions, and there was no fresh water. They, therefore, on the following day, sailed a few leagues further east, to a harbor discovered by Columbus on his first voyage to Jamaica, and named by him Santa Gloria (it now bears the name of its discoverer, and is called the Bay of Don Cristóbal). They ran the ships, now reduced almost to skeletons, as high as they could on the beach, about a bow-shot from shore, and fastened them together side by side; and had hardly done so before they filled with water nearly to the decks. They put them in the best state of defence they could, against any sudden attack

* *Letter of the Admiral.*—Fernando Colombo, cap. c.

† *Letter from Jamaica.*

of the Indians ; and experience having shown that the seamen were restrained neither by orders nor by punishment, from abuse and violence towards the timid natives, the admiral kept the crews on board erecting barracks thatched with straw, on the deck and stern and forecastles of the ships, for shelter, and gave strict orders that no one should go ashore without special permission ; and took every precaution to avoid every thing that could give offence to the Indians, or arouse their suspicions. In the state they were in, the least exasperation of the natives might be fatal to them, as a fire-brand thrown into their wooden fortification might wrap it in flames, and leave them defenceless amid hostile thousands.*

In the rush of misfortunes, one thing had turned out happily—they were near a populous island, supplied with all the necessaries of life. A quarter of a league off, was the village of Maima, whose friendly inhabitants, as soon as they saw them, hastened in great numbers with provisions, to exchange for the articles brought by the Spaniards. It was not the first time they had done so ; for, as we have said, the admiral had visited the place before. To prevent unfairness in the bargains of the Indians and the Christians, and in the division of the victuals amongst the crews, the admiral appointed two persons to superintend all bargains, and see that all purchases of provisions were fairly distributed amongst the men. Fernando has noted in his history the prices current in that market, and they are worth recording.

“ If they brought one or two utias,” he says, “ which are animals similar to rabbits, we gave them, in return, a piece of lace ; for a loaf of bread, which they called *zabo*, made of grated roots, they received two or three pieces of green or yellow glass : if they brought things in quantity, they were given a little bell ; a small looking-glass was sometimes given to a cacique or person of importance, or a red cap, or a pair of scissors, as a present.”†

The admiral's wise measures had the desired effect of preserving harmony between the Indians and Spaniards ; but the Indians soon reached the bottom of the scant supply which they had in their cabins, or could gather in the vicinity, and so the provisions which had been furnished to the ships in such plenty during the first few days, soon began to fall short. The Spaniards now felt the most serious apprehension ; for, shut up in the two hulks, if the inhabi-

* Irving, *Columbus*, book xv, ch. x.

† Fernando Colombo, cap. ci.

tants stopped bringing provisions, their condition would be desperate. The person most concerned at this danger, was Diego Mendez, by reason of his office of commissary of subsistence; and seeing no other remedy, with his usual zeal he volunteered to search the island for provisions. At any other time, the officers and soldiers would have been eager to share in such enterprise; but now, after the proofs the Veragua Indians had given of their fierceness and bravery, and in their general physical and moral depression, they all recoiled in fear.

Mendez made the venture with only three companions, and, contrary to their evil forebodings and apprehensions, was everywhere received with the utmost cordiality. The poor Indians, not yet spoilt by the ingratitude and the example of the White Men, felt themselves fortunate in being able to lead them to their dwellings, where they set before them all they had, and performed all the rites of their simple hospitality. Finding them so well disposed, Mendez made an agreement with the cacique of a numerous tribe, that his subjects should fish and hunt, and make cassava-bread, and bring the provisions they obtained every day to the vessels; and the Spaniards would give them in exchange knives, combs, glass beads, fish-hooks, bells, and similar articles.

One of his companions was dispatched to report this first success to the admiral. He made the same agreement with another cacique three leagues further on, and dispatched another of his companions to the admiral with the joyful news. Continuing on, when he was about thirteen leagues from the ships, he came to the residence of a cacique named Huarco, who gave him a generous and festive reception, and commanded all his subjects to bring him all the provisions they could collect in three days. Mendez paid on the spot for every thing they brought, and made the same agreement as with the other two caciques concerning future supplies. Under pretext of superintending the transmission, but really to spur them on when yielding to fatigue or their habitual indolence, he also stipulated with each of the caciques for one of the Spaniards to reside among them for the purpose of receiving what was collected, and delivering the articles exchanged. He then sent his third companion with what was collected to the admiral, and to ask, as he had done in the case of the former two caciques, for an agent to be sent to the lands of Huarco. After that, in the ardor of his courage and desire for dan-

gerous enterprises by which he might win glory, he determined to continue his journey alone, and look for new friends to provide food for his people's wants. He asked the cacique for two Indians to accompany him to the end of the island, one to carry his provisions, and the other his hammock. With these he pushed boldly along the shore till he came to the extremity of the island. Here he found himself in the dominions of a powerful cacique named Ameyno, whom he made his friend at once, by his buoyant spirits and skilful address, and they exchanged names, according to the Indian custom. Ameyno had an excellent canoe, and Mendez obtained it from him by giving him in exchange a brass cup with a handle, a cassock, and one of the two shirts which constituted his whole supply of linen. The cacique afterwards gave him six Indians to work the canoe, and they parted with expressions of mutual satisfaction. On his way back, Mendez found the Spanish agents he had asked for, already at their posts, and, loading on the canoe all the provisions that were ready, he returned in triumph to the ships.

The admiral and all the Spaniards received him with open arms and the most cordial acclamations as their savior; for they were reduced to the last straits, and his arrival restored them to life. From that time, the Indians faithfully kept their promise, and from one place or another there was always abundance of provisions for all.* The danger of hostility on the part of the natives, and of famine, had been provided against better than could have been expected; but there remained the fear of the future. What was to become of them? and how were they to get away from the island? To float those hulks all bored with holes, was out of the question; it was impossible to build new ships, without any of the tools or conveniences for the work; to expect any vessel to come to the shores of that savage island in an unknown sea, was like expecting Heaven to rescue them by a miracle.

The only hope left them was to make their condition known to Ovando, the governor of San Domingo, and entreat him to send a ship to take them off. But how was a messenger from Jamaica to reach Hispaniola? The islands were separated by a gulf forty leagues in width, difficult to navigate even with large vessels, on account of the currents; and they had only light Indian canoes. Who would

* *Narrative of Diego Mendez*

venture in so frail a shell on a hazardous voyage? Columbus repeatedly assembled a council of the captains and men of most repute, but they saw no way of escape.*

Then the admiral thought of Diego Mendez, who regarded no danger where the common safety was concerned, and he placed his hope on this heroic officer's courage and entire devotion. But he would not open his whole mind at once, so terrible seemed the undertaking he wished to propose. Calling him aside, on the tenth day after his return from his glorious expedition among the savages, he addressed him in the way best fitted to stimulate his zeal, and flatter his self-love. We have the account of this singular conversation from Mendez himself.

"Diego Mendez, my son," said Columbus to him, "of all that are here, only you and I understand the great peril in which we are placed. We are few in number, whilst these savage Indians are many, and fickle and irritable by nature. On the least provocation, on a mere suspicion or caprice, they may at any moment become enemies, and can easily throw fire-brands on our ships from the shore, and consume us in our straw-thatched barracks. The arrangement which you made with them for provisions, and which at present they keep so faithfully, may not satisfy them to-morrow, and they may withhold their assistance, and without the means of compelling them, we shall be entirely at their pleasure. I have thought of a way of escaping from this danger, but I desire to hear your opinion first. It is that some one should venture to pass over to Hispaniola in the canoe you bought, and procure a ship to take us out of our perilous position. Now, tell me your opinion."

Diego Mendez replied: "I see clearly, sir, the danger we are in, and it is much greater than any one could imagine. As to passing from this island to Hispaniola in so small and frail a boat as this canoe, I believe is not only very difficult, but even impossible; for I do not know who would venture on such evident danger as crossing a gulf of forty leagues between the islands, when the sea is so boisterous."

The admiral said nothing, but his looks and even his silence told Mendez plainly that he was the only person whom he thought capable of such heroism. Mendez understood the eloquence of that

* Fernando Colombo, cap. ci.

silence and those looks, and, in a burst of generous ardor, replied :

“ Sir, I have often risked my life to save you and all those who are here, and God has preserved me in a miraculous manner. There have not been wanting maligners of my conduct, who say that your lordship entrusts to me all the affairs in which honor is to be gained, while there are others among them who would execute them as successfully as I. For this reason, it seems fair, sir, that you should summon all the rest, and propose to them this enterprise, to see if any of them is willing to undertake it ; which I greatly doubt. If they all decline, I will then risk my life for your service, as I have often done.”*

The admiral gladly consented to his request, and, on the following day, summoning all the officers, he made them the same proposition. All, with one voice, declared the undertaking impossible. Then Mendez, stepping forward, said : “ Sir, I have but one life to lose, yet I am willing to venture it for your service and for the good of all here present, and I trust that God our Lord, viewing the intention by which I am directed, will preserve me, as he has so often done before.”

The admiral arose and embraced the generous officer with gratitude and affection, saying he was not mistaken in relying on him for so difficult an undertaking ; but his confidence in God was strong that He would bring him through this fresh danger in triumph and safety.

Mendez immediately set about preparing for his expedition with his usual ardor. Drawing his canoe on shore, he fitted a keel, nailed boards along the bow and stern, to prevent the sea from breaking over it, coated it with tar, put in a mast, a sail, and provisions, and set out.

He took with him six Indian rowers, and a Spaniard who had volunteered to accompany him on his desperate expedition, and we regret not to be able to give the name of one so deserving of honor.

* The circumstantial account of the whole proceeding is taken from the narrative of Mendez himself, inserted in his testament executed at Valladolid, June 6, 1536. Although, in his account of his wonderful deeds, he shows some vanity and a desire to keep himself in sight, still the facts are told with such marks of truthfulness, and the general tenor is so much in accord with what is related by Las Casas and Fernando Columbus, that it is deserving of credit even in its details.

They followed the coast to the east as far as the end of the island, which was the nearest point to Hispaniola, and about thirty-four leagues from where they left the ships. The difficulties and dangers began on leaving the harbor, for their voyage was against the current, which is very rapid along that coast. On one occasion, they were surrounded by a fleet of Indian canoes tempted by the hope of gaining possession of their boat; but Mendez managed to escape, and came safe and sound through the first part of his voyage. They now went ashore, and wandered unsuspectingly about, waiting for the sea to become calmer before venturing upon it, when a crowd of savages fell unexpectedly upon them, took them all prisoners, and carried them off to the woods. Here it was decided to put them to death, and divide the spoils; but a quarrel springing up about the division, they referred it to a game of chance. Mendez was aware of what was going on, and while they were intent on their game, he quickly sprang from tree to tree, and kept on till he regained his canoe. Nothing is known of his companion's fate. Stepping in his canoe, Mendez quickly set his sail, and abandoning himself to the rapid current, returned to the ships, fifteen days after leaving them.

He offered the admiral to start again without delay, and only asked for a good number of men to protect him from the snares of the natives until he was ready to take to the open sea for the rest of his voyage. His undaunted courage excited the emulation of many, who offered to accompany him. The expedition was now increased to two canoes, one under command of Mendez, and the other under that of Bartholomew Fiesco, a Genoese gentleman, formerly captain of the *Vizcaina*, an officer wholly devoted to the admiral, and a man of great courage. Each was accompanied by six Spaniards, and had ten Indians to work the oars. They were to keep company till they reached Hispaniola, and then Fiesco was to return immediately to relieve the admiral's anxiety, and Mendez to keep on over land to San Domingo, to fulfil his mission to Ovando, after which he was instructed to proceed to Spain with dispatches from the admiral to their Majesties.

The Indians put into the canoes their frugal provisions of cassava-bread, gourds filled with water, and a few roots. The Christians, besides the meagre provisions of cassava-bread, had some utias meat; and each taking his sword and buckler, they started off gayly, and were followed by the wishes and prayers of their deeply-affected

countrymen. The adelantado, with a force of seventy well-armed men, escorted them along the coast. With this show of force, they saw no sign of evil intention on the part of the natives. The bold navigators, on reaching the end of the island, waited for the sea to become more tranquil, and on the third day took leave of their companions, and launched forth on the waves. The adelantado remained on the spot till at evening they were lost to view ; he then returned by short marches to the ships, stopping on the way to conciliate the natives and keep up the trade in provisions.* The dispatches which Mendez bore for the Catholic kings, consisted of the letter so often quoted, which the admiral wrote their Majesties from Jamaica, under date of July 7th, 1503. In this letter he gives them an account of his voyage, describes the rich gold-producing countries he had discovered, relates the fearful fortunes he had fought against, and entreats them to send a ship to his relief. As we have already given, and, so far as possible, in the very words of Columbus, the facts, opinions, and descriptions contained in this letter, it is not necessary to make further reference to it in this place. Written under the impressions produced by the dreadful events of this fourth voyage, it reflects with fearful accuracy the anguish that tortured him, and were it not for its great length, and that it is inconsistent with the order of the narrative, nothing could give the reader a better comprehension of his great wrongs, than to insert it entire in this history. For, with his natural ingenuousness in writing as his heart dictated, he expressed in a natural way all that he thought or felt, and thus shows himself to us as he is, in his sublime greatness and in his petty weaknesses ; and I cannot remember any other writer, however celebrated, who possesses the same power of making his writings a perfect mirror of his mind and heart. And, therefore, as no historian, however powerful, ever has been, or ever will be, able to give the alternations of hope and fear, the joy, the enthusiasm, the gratitude to God, and all the impressions and sentiments which the mind of Christopher Columbus experienced on his first voyage of discovery, as he gives us not only to understand, but to feel them, in his journal, although nothing of it remains but the short summary by Las Casas ; so I likewise believe that none will ever awake in the reader so grand and terrible an idea of his sufferings on his fourth voy-

* Fernando Colombo, cap. ci.—*Narrative of Diego Mendez.*

age, as the ingenuous simplicity of his style has given in this letter. And yet, crushed as he was under a weight of woes never before equalled, broken by age, worn out by sufferings, lost, with the remnant of his vessels, on the shores of a distant and savage island, where the inhabitants might at any moment turn against him and slaughter him at their pleasure ;—in this condition, such as no man was ever in before, his enthusiasm is in no wise extinguished, but inspires him with further hope, and a desire to resume the same toils and perils. In the belief that he had reached the land of Cathay, and remembering that its emperor had long ago asked for learned men to instruct the people in the faith of Christ, and knowing by experience the difficulty and danger of the navigation, he offered to carry thither whoever would assume the apostolate of those countries. “The emperor of Cathay asked some time since for wise men to teach him the faith of Christ. Who will offer himself for the mission? If the Lord permits me to return to Spain, I bind myself in the name of God, to take him thither safe and sound.” But it was the last flicker of the dying flame. All the rest of the letter is full of a feeling of sadness, or rather, of deep grief, which pains the heart, and forces us to tears. The conclusion is a fit seal to the agonizing matters related in the letter. “Believe me,” he says to the Catholic kings, “I am most unfortunate ; heretofore, I have wept for others ; may Heaven be merciful to me, and the earth weep for me ! Alone in my sufferings, infirm, expecting death every day, surrounded by a million cruel and savage enemies, far from the Sacraments of the holy church, my soul, if separated from my body in this place, will go down to perdition.

“Let all who have charity, and love truth and justice, weep for me. I did not undertake this voyage to gain honor or wealth ; this is certain ; for all such hope was spent before I sailed. I came before Your Highnesses with good intentions, and with great zeal ; and I lie not. If God shall please to deliver me from this place, I humbly implore Your Highnesses to permit me to go to Rome, and to make other pilgrimages.”

The candor with which this letter is written, says Alexander v. Humboldt, its strange mixture of force and weakness, of pride and touching humility, initiate us, so to speak, into the inward struggles of the great soul of Columbus.* And he recommends its study and

* *Histoire de la Géographie du Nouv. Cont.*, tom. iii, § ii.

meditation to all who wish to penetrate the character of that extraordinary man.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Desperate situation of Columbus.—Mutiny of the Porras brothers.—The Indians refuse to supply provisions.—The stratagem of the eclipse to obtain supplies from the savages (1504).

“IT might have been thought,” says Irving, “that the adverse fortune which had so long persecuted Columbus, was now exhausted. The envy which had once sickened at his glory and prosperity, could scarcely have devised for him a more forlorn heritage in the world he had discovered. The tenant of a wreck on a savage coast, in an untraversed ocean, at the mercy of barbarous hordes, who, in a moment, from precarious friends might be transformed into ferocious enemies; afflicted, too, by excruciating maladies, which confined him to his bed, and by the pains and infirmities which hardship and anxiety had heaped upon his advancing age. But he had not yet exhausted his cup of bitterness. He had yet to experience an evil worse than storm, or shipwreck, or bodily anguish, or the violence of savage hordes,—the perfidy of those in whom he confided.”*

The wrecked seamen confined in the small space of the caravels' decks, whilst anxiously looking for Fiesco's return, were slowly consuming what little strength of mind or body they had left after the labors and sufferings they had gone through. Their extreme weakness and exhaustion called for strengthening food; but the provisions brought from Europe were entirely consumed, and those furnished by the natives were such as the Indians themselves were in the habit of using, being nearly all vegetable, with the exception of the cassava-bread; and it was a great delicacy when they caught a utias to stimulate their stomachs, grown inert from their forced idleness, after being habituated to give their bodies scarce the amount of rest that nature required. With their bodies so enfeebled,

* *Columbus*, book xvi, ch. ii.

it is easy to imagine the effect of constant exposure, night and day, to the fatal influence of the climate, which was both hot and damp. But worse than the toils of the recent voyage, the nauseating food which furnished slight nutriment, or even the pestilential climate, was the constant disappointment of their expectation of Fiesco's return, which fretted their mind and corroded their heart. From all these causes, any one of which would have been enough to break down a robust body, the greater part became sick; and the few whose stronger constitution still held out, were reduced to such debility and languor as hardly to stand. Emaciated and feverish, they dragged themselves up on the guns to cast an eager look over the horizon for the canoe of Fiesco; but days and weeks went by, more than time enough for the voyage passed, and Fiesco's canoe came not in sight.

If he and Mendez had perished, what hope of escape remained? Their fear and anxiety increased, every prospect was dark and awful. Most of them sank into deep despondency, the more ignorant and rude vented their despair in hate and rage against the admiral, who had been the main cause and promoter of the voyage. But their bitterness, as is always the case with such persons, would have gone no further than hard words against the aged and infirm admiral, and acts of insubordination more or less serious, but for the wicked and foolish conduct of two officers, who gathered the different threads, and directed them all to vindictive and ambitious ends.

Among the officers were two brothers, Francisco and Diego Porras, specially recommended to the admiral by the king's treasurer, Morales, who had married their sister, and was strongly attached to her. To please him, the admiral appointed Francisco captain of the ship *Santiago*, and made Diego chief notary of the fleet.* They were both inferior to their position, and, what was worse, inordinately conceited and puffed up by their rank; but the admiral, out of regard for the person who had recommended them to him, closed his eyes, and inflicted no punishment beyond mere reproof for the mistakes they were continually making.† But, as in their vanity they thought themselves more than competent for their offices, they attributed the admiral's reprimands solely to ill-will, and conceived

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cii.

† *Letter of the Admiral to his Son Diego*, 21 Nov., 1504.

a great dislike of him. They accordingly seized this occasion, when some of the sailors were exasperated against him, to revenge themselves, and to acquire the degree of consideration which they thought the admiral unjustly denied them. Adroitly mingling in the sailors' conversation, they egged them on by the basest insinuations against the admiral. They said it was childish fancy to hope for Fiesco's return, or for help from Mendez. Their motive for leaving was something quite different from carrying tidings and dispatching assistance. The admiral could not return to Spain, because he had been banished by the Catholic kings, and for the same reason he was refused admission to Hispaniola, as they themselves had been witness, having seen him driven back from there even in face of the fearful storm which came so near swallowing them all up. Every place of exile was now the same to him, and therefore he was contented to remain in Jamaica, but he was going too far in trying to keep them all there with him. This was why he gave out that Mendez and Fiesco had gone to Hispaniola for a ship and relief, when in fact they had gone to Spain to look after his concerns and obtain permission from their Majesties for his return. Or else, why did not that vessel arrive? Why did Fiesco not return, as he promised? Even if the canoes had been really sent for assistance, the long time that had elapsed since their departure, without any tidings from them, showed but too plainly that the mes-engers had perished on the way. In that case, what else remained for them, except to seize the Indians' canoes, and attempt to reach Hispaniola themselves? But the admiral would never consent to this step, because he knew he would be driven back from Hispaniola, and also because, suffering as he was with gout, he could hardly get out of bed, to say nothing of taking that long voyage in a canoe.

Must they, on this account, be sacrificed to his interest, and perish the victims of his infirmity? This must undoubtedly be the result in a short time, for more were falling sick every day, and after a little not one of them would be able to keep his feet. They need have no fear of punishment for deserting the admiral, for the greater the peril they left him in, the better would be their reception in Hispaniola. Ovando was secretly hostile to him, and always in fear that the government of Hispaniola would be given back to him on his return to Spain. It would therefore please him and be to his advantage if the admiral was abandoned on some unknown and savage island.

In Castile, they had Fonseca, whose bitter animosity towards the admiral was well known; there was Morales, the treasurer, whose support they could count on with certainty; there was no end of people who could have no more pleasant news than that the hated Genoese was deserted and lost. They cited the instance of Roldan's mutiny, to prove that the feelings of the public and of those in power would all be against him. They carried their perfidy so far as even to insinuate that their Majesties, who, on the occasion of Roldan's rebellion, had deprived him of a part of his honors and privileges, would be glad of a further pretext for stripping him of the rest.*

By these and other like discourses, the two scoundrels inflamed the sailors' eumity, and, having aroused a hope of escape and confidence of impunity, they easily gained the mastery over the seamen's rude minds, and, feeling sure of a strong following, set about the execution of their design.

The only two to join the conspiracy, whose names are known, were Juan Sanchez, the pilot who let the captured quibian escape from his hands, and Pedro Ledesma, the sailor, who, defying the perils of the sea, swam ashore in the furious storm off the coast of Veragua, to search for the men left behind; all the others were from the lowest of the crews.

It was evident that the men's minds were greatly embittered, and the admiral had his patience and self-denial often severely tried by the insolence and contempt of discipline shown by the most reckless. Partly from necessity, and partly out of sympathy for their sufferings, he tried to comfort and encourage them by the assurance of speedy relief. He consoled himself with the thought that Fiesco must arrive very soon, and probably bring a vessel to take them off, and so end the disturbance and restore quiet and discipline. But the evil was more serious than he thought, and, contrary to his expectation, a mutiny suddenly broke out.

It was the 2nd of January, and Columbus was lying on his straw pallet suffering from a severe attack of gout, when Captain Francisco de Porras suddenly rushed in. His looks, his excitement, and, above all, his manner and the tone of his voice, indicated that something serious was decided on. "Sir," he said to the aged and infirm

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cvii.

admiral, who with difficulty raised himself on his pallet, in feverish anxiety to learn the cause and meaning of this strange intrusion,—“Sir, why are you unwilling to return to Castile, but keep us all perishing here?” This beginning astonished Columbus, to use his expressive image, “as if the rays of the sun should emit darkness.”*

Making an effort to hide his emotion and seem calm, he replied, with great affability, “that he was more impatient than any one to leave the island, both for his own sake and for that of all of those entrusted to him, and for whom he was answerable to God and to the sovereigns. But he saw no way of doing so until those who had gone in the canoes sent him a ship. He reminded Porras how often he had assembled the captains and principal persons of the fleet, to discuss the common needs and dangers, and what had been done had always been with the general approbation. If Porras had any step to propose, he would immediately assemble the council to listen to his suggestion.” To which Porras arrogantly replied: “There is no use for so many words, but embark at once, or stay in God’s name.” With that he turned his back on the admiral, and said: “For my part, I am for Castile; let those who choose, follow me.” This was the signal agreed on by the conspirators, at which all who were present, shouted in reply, “I! I! I!” Brandishing their weapons, they sprang up on every side, and seized possession of the fore-castles and cabins, some crying, “To Castile! To Castile!” and others, “Kill them! Kill them!” indicating that before leaving, it was intended to kill the admiral and his principal supporters.

At this tumult, the admiral dragged himself from his bed, and, crippled as he was, and tottering, wanted to pass out of the cabin, in the hope that his presence would quiet the mutineers; but three or four of his faithful adherents, fearing violence might be offered him, threw themselves between him and the throng, and taking him in their arms, compelled him to return to his bed. Others hastened to the *adelantado*, who, at the first sound of the tumult, seizing a spear, had rushed from his cabin, resolved, with his accustomed spirit, to withstand the fury of the mutineers, and it was with great difficulty that they deprived him of his weapon, and forced him into his brother’s cabin. They now surrounded Captain Porras, beg-

* *Letter to his Son Diego*, 25 Nov., 1504.—All the letters of Columbus hereafter quoted from, are found in the *Raccolta di Viaggi* of F. C. Marmocchi. Prato, 1840.

ging him to leave peacefully, and not create any further disturbance; it was enough that no one opposed their departure, and the death of the admiral, their aged and almost dying leader, could procure them no honor, but would certainly be severely punished by the kings of Spain.* Their timely interference prevented further outrage, and the mutineers began their preparations for leaving.

Tied to the ships were ten canoes, which the admiral had purchased from the natives, partly for use, but also in order to deprive them of the means of making an attack on the ships. The rebels embarked in these canoes with as much excitement as though they were landing in some Spanish port. Their delight at leaving affected even those who had taken no part in the plot, and such a longing for their native land came over them, that they nearly all hastily collected their effects and threw themselves likewise into the canoes. In this way, forty-eight deserted the admiral, and there is no doubt, says Fernando, that if the rest had been well, not twenty would have stayed behind.†

On seeing their comrades leave, those that were sick wept disconsolately, giving themselves up for lost, and the few who remained faithful were not much less affected. The admiral pressed these to his heart, and had himself carried to the bedside of the sick, trying to comfort them all with such words as the time and circumstances afforded. He urged them to place their trust in God, who would soon deliver them, and promised, on his return to Spain, to cast himself at the queen's feet and tell her of their loyalty and constancy; and they would be amply rewarded for all they were now suffering.‡ Every day he visited the sick, talked with them, studied every means of restoring their courage and their hope, took an interest in their treatment, and sometimes even administered to them their remedies with his hands all drawn up with gout.§ God bestowed such abundant blessings on his endeavors, that in a short time these unfortunate men, whose hopes of recovery were well-nigh spent, their mind comforted, began to find their body improving, and it was not long before they were all restored to health.||

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxxii.—Fernando Colombo, cap. cii.—Herrera, *Hist. Gen. Ind. Occ.*, dec. i, lib. vi, cap. v.

† Fernando Colombo, l. c.

‡ Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxxii. Fernando Colombo, l. c.

§ Herrera, l. c.

|| Fernando Colombo, l. c.

In the mean time, the two Porras and their followers were coasting the island to the east, keeping the same course that Mendez and Fiesco had taken. Wherever they landed, they committed a thousand outrages on the Indians, forcibly seizing provisions and whatever they coveted; and to throw all the odium of their conduct on the admiral, said they acted by his orders; that the natives must apply to him for their pay, and if he refused, they were free to kill him. And that it was best they should kill him, for that was what he deserved, because he was an implacable enemy of the Indians, and had tyrannized over the other islands, causing the misery and death of the inhabitants. That if they did not secure his death, he would certainly do the same in Jamaica, for it was merely to subject them to his government that he had come there. Finally, that even the Christians would rejoice at his death, for they all were tired of him, and hated him.*

Arriving at the extremity of Jamaica, they waited for the sea to become calm, and then left with joy and confidence, taking a good number of Indians to serve the oars, as they were themselves unskilled in managing canoes. But they had made hardly four leagues, when a strong head-wind arose and the sea began to swell, and, becoming alarmed, they turned about to get back to land. The canoes, having bottoms nearly round and no keels, and being heavily laden, were easily tipped over by the waves, and the water often dashed over them, so that, to lessen the danger, every thing in them was thrown overboard, except their arms, and enough food to last on the way back. As the wind kept on increasing, and the danger became greater, in order to lighten the canoes, the Spaniards drew their swords, and compelled the Indians to leap into the sea, retaining only as many as were necessary to manage the canoes. The Indians were all good swimmers, but the land was too distant for them to reach by swimming, especially in a rough sea; they, therefore, exerted themselves to keep as close as possible to the canoes so as to recover breath occasionally by taking hold of them. But as their weight disturbed the balance of the canoes, and increased the danger, the Spaniards drove them off with their swords. Between those killed by blows of their swords, and those who sank exhausted under the waves, eighteen of the unfortunate savages were made to die a horrible death by the pitiless White Men.†

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cii.

† Id. l.c.—Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxxii.

Reaching the shore, they were greatly divided in opinion what course to follow. Some proposed taking the east wind and the currents on their quarter, and navigating to Cuba, from which island they thought they could easily proceed to the nearest extremity of Hispaniola. Others advised returning and making peace with the admiral, or at least seizing the arms and provisions that were left, as they had thrown every thing they had into the sea. Others, in fine, before resorting to either of these measures, wanted to wait for a favorable wind or a calm, and attempt the passage over again. The last counsel prevailed, and they remained over a month in an Indian village, near the eastern point of Jamaica, waiting for the weather, living at the expense of the natives, and paying them with cruelty and ill-usage. When the sea was calm, they took again to their canoes, but the wind soon became contrary. They waited again, and made a third attempt ; but the sea seemed to lie in wait for them, and as soon as they had gone a few miles from the shore, began to rise with threatening fury, and they were forced to return for shelter. Then they gave up the attempt in despair, and without any plan or hope, wandered westward, from village to village, like a band of outlaws, living on what they could procure by fair words or by violence, overrunning the land as a destructive scourge.*

In the narrow enclosure of the ships, the admiral and the Spaniards drew closer together, with the harmony and affection of a single family. His fatherly interest in the sick, notwithstanding his own sufferings, had not only helped their recovery by his constant watchfulness, and by the moral effect of his kindness towards his inferiors, who had always regarded him as so distant, but had also helped to restore affection and confidence, which had grown weak, and, at last, might almost be said to have died out entirely. But it had now become the law of the life of Columbus that whenever a little balm was poured on his heart's sores, a new sorrow came immediately to tear them open again.

The task of providing food for the two ships became more onerous than the Indians had anticipated ; for the Spaniards consumed in a day what would have lasted the parsimonious savages three weeks, and they were kept continually on the hunt for more. Indolent and unused to fatigue, they felt the burden too heavy to bear.

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cii.—Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxxii.

The European gewgaws had become too common to repay them for their labor. Still they continued, out of duty and fear, but with growing unwillingness, to carry out their agreement, till Porras's revolt gave the last stroke. Accustomed to regard their caciques with a sort of religious veneration, the desertion of so many persons destroyed the importance of the admiral's authority in their eyes, whilst the dread of his power was dissipated on seeing him reduced to so small a force ; the evil insinuations and calumnies of the rebels had made them hate him as an enemy ; and consequently, in spite of the admiral's carefulness, after Porras's departure, to treat them kindly in order to keep them friendly and make them adhere to their agreement, they soon began to make rarer visits and bring less provisions, and then, encouraged by their numbers and union, and the fewness of the Spaniards, either brought nothing, or demanded ten times as much as before for the little they did bring, as they had learnt from the example of the White Men. It was not possible to use force, because, to produce any effect, it would have been necessary for all able to bear arms to go out, and leave the ships, with the convalescents and the admiral, unguarded. Neither was it of any use to send some of the men in search of food, for the Indians appear to have concealed what they had, and misled the Spaniards, in the hope of starving them or compelling them to leave their island. The Christians were in great distress ; "but as God," says Fernando, "never abandons any one who entreats Him as the admiral did, He showed him how to provide for every thing, and it was in this way He remembered that there would be an eclipse of the moon early in the evening of the third day ; and through an Indian from Hispaniola, who was with us, he called a meeting of the principal Indians of the province, saying he wished to speak to them of a feast he had determined to give. When they had assembled the day preceding the eclipse, he told them, through the interpreter, that we were Christians who believed in God who dwelt in heaven, and were subject to Him ; that He cared for the good and punished the wicked ; that He had not permitted the Christian rebels to reach Hispaniola as Diego Mendez and Fiesco had done ; but they had undergone the toils and perils that were known all over the island. As to the Indians themselves, God, seeing the slight pains they took to supply provisions for our pay and ransom, was very angry at them, and had determined to punish them by famine and pestilence. Lest

they might not believe this, He would show them an evident proof in the sky, so that they might be sure that the chastisement was sent by Him. They should observe the appearance of the moon that night; they would see it come out angry and inflamed, as a sign of the evils God would send on them.

“After this discourse, the Indians went away, some in fear, and others thinking it was an idle threat. But the eclipse appearing, and increasing as the moon rose higher, the Indians became thoughtful, and in their fear ran to the ships loaded with provisions, and with tears begged the admiral to intercede for them with God in every way, not to execute His wrath against them, and promised to bring him for the future whatever he required.

“The admiral replied that he would speak to his God for a while, and shut himself up whilst the eclipse was increasing, and they were calling on him for help. When the admiral saw that the eclipse was greatest and about to diminish, he came out of his room, saying, that he had supplicated his God, and prayed for them, and had promised in their name that henceforth they would be good, and treat the Christians well, bringing them food and necessaries, and God had forgiven them, in token of which they would see the anger and inflammation pass away from the moon. As this occurred while he was speaking, they gave great thanks to the admiral, and praise to his God. Thenceforth, they were always diligent in furnishing whatever we required, constantly praising the Christians' God; for, the eclipses which they had previously seen, they believed had been to their injury, not understanding the phenomenon; and, not knowing that it occurs at stated times, nor believing it possible to know on earth what will take place in the sky, they were sure that the God of the Christians had revealed it to the admiral.”*

* Fernando Colombo, cap. ciii.—The fact is told also by Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.* lib. ii, cap. xxxiii.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Mendez and Fiesco reach Ovando, and report the admiral's condition.—Ovando sends to inquire into the state of things.—The admiral offers the rebels pardon.—They reject it.—Battle between them and the adelantado (1504).

RELIEVED from danger of starvation, the Spaniards were again absorbed in anxiety for Fiesco's return, and every canoe that they saw on the horizon, they imagined to be the vessel sent to take them off. Eight months had elapsed since the departure of the two messengers, and nothing had been heard of them. Some said the canoes must have been swamped in the currents, and all on board have perished; others, admitting that they might have made the dangerous crossing, remembered that from the nearest point of Hispaniola, where they probably landed, it was a long way to San Domingo, over precipitous mountains, in the midst of hostile and unsubdued savages, and fancied treacherous attacks, desperate contests, and the slaughter of their comrades. The fatigue of the journey, the inclemency of the climate, fevers, sickness, and every possible misfortune, presented themselves to their terrified imagination, to increase their fears and drive them to despair. Those who had hoped the longest, and always tried to find new ways to account for the delay in hearing from them, now gave way to alarm and apprehension. The winds, the waves, and the dangers of which they had before made so little, now seemed enormous in their eyes. To complete their despair, the Indians reported the wreck of a vessel, the pieces of which had been driven by the current on the shore of Jamaica. What ship could it be? Doubtless the one sent to their relief.

The report of the wrecked vessel was started by the rebels, in order to deprive those who had remained with the admiral, of all hope of escape, either out of hatred and revenge, or else to induce them to make common cause with themselves.* The effect was serious, for many, now assured that no relief would be sent them, blamed the admiral

* Fernando Colombo, cap. civ.

for all their distress, and conspired to kill him, and, seizing the canoes which had been lately procured from the Indians, try as a desperate attempt, the passage to Hispaniola. The head of this conspiracy was one Master Bernal of Valencia, apothecary of the fleet, and his principal confederates were Alonzo of Zamora, an esquire, and Pedro of Villatoro; the former belonging to the crew of the admiral's ship, and the latter to that of the *Santiago*.* The mutiny was on the point of breaking out, and Columbus had no suspicion of it; but Providence watched in his defence, and came to his aid just before the blow fell.†

One evening, at dusk, as the crews were leaning as usual on the ships' sides, silently straining their gaze over the Ocean's immensity, they thought they discovered something at a distance resembling a sail. Anxiously as one sentenced to death looks for a reprieve, the eyes of all were fixed on that point, refusing to hope, for fear of being again disappointed. It was a small caravel, sailing swiftly towards them. It is impossible even to imagine their feelings when they were certain that it was a Spanish vessel making directly for them. But it was a very small vessel, and kept at a distance from the ships, and only a small-boat approached with a few oarsmen and the captain. Every eye was fixed on him with inexpressible anxiety. As the boat approached, they recognized in the captain, Diego de Escobar, who had been one of Roldan's most active confederates, condemned to death under the admiral's administration, but pardoned by Bobadilla. The sight of this messenger foreboded no good. Coming alongside of the ships, Escobar delivered a letter from Ovando for the admiral, with a cask of wine and a quarter of pork, which the governor of Hispaniola sent him as a present; and then drawing a little off, he said to the admiral, from a distance, "that he was sent by the governor to express his sorrow for his misfortunes, and his regret at not having in port any vessel of sufficient size to bring him off with his men; but would send one as soon as possible." He then notified him, if he wished to write to the governor, to do so at once, as he wanted to leave immediately.‡

There was something extremely singular in this embassy; but

*Fernando Colombo, cap. civ.—Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxxiii.—*Letter of the Admiral to his Son Diego*, 20 Dec., 1504.

† Fernando Colombo, l. c.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.* dec. i, lib. vi, cap. vii.

‡ Fernando Colombo, l. c.

there was no time to lose in conjectures, after the intimation of the messenger, that he would leave immediately. Columbus hastened, therefore, to write a reply to Ovando in friendly terms, thanking him for what he had done, depicting the horror and danger of his situation, and expressing entire confidence in his promise of relief. He recommended Mendez and Fiesco to his protection, and assured him that he had not sent them to San Domingo with any ambitious view, or for any other purpose than that of making his condition known, and asking for relief.* On receiving the letter, Escobar returned immediately to his caravel, and spreading all sail, disappeared in the gathering gloom of the night.

This sudden departure of Escobar, and his avoidance of all communication with them, filled the Spaniards with suspicion and alarm. They knew him for the admiral's bitter enemy, sent as one interested in the admiral's destruction, and could argue only evil from his mysterious behavior. Columbus observed their gloomy looks, and feared the outburst of another storm. As he alone, and apart from the others, had communicated with Escobar, he was able to give what account he pleased of their conference, and therefore, to relieve his frightened companions from their suspicions, he met them with a cheerful countenance, saying he was satisfied with the explanation sent by Ovando, and was sure that ships would soon arrive to take them off. To give his words more weight, he added, that he had refused to leave with Escobar, because the caravel was too small to carry all his companions, and he would not separate his lot from theirs; but had requested Escobar to depart in haste, so as to lose no time in dispatching the ships to take them all; and also because he feared that any delay might lead to communication with the rebels, and difficulties from them. These assurances, given with a firm look and frank voice, produced the desired effect, revived the seamen's hopes, and dissolved the conspiracy which was on the point of breaking out.

But under this apparent calmness of countenance, a storm was raging in the heart of Columbus. Ovando, a short distance away, with all the means at his disposal, had left him for eight months in danger and uncertainty, exposed to attack from the Indians, to the mutiny of his men, the sufferings of famine, and in

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxxiv.

prey to his own desperation ; and when, at last, he took a step towards his relief, sent a messenger, the sight of whom was an insult ; and for relief of 130 persons dying of hunger, presented a cask of wine and a quarter of pork. No, Escobar was sent not to ascertain his wants, but as a spy to learn if famine and the savages had yet killed him. It was not regard for his misfortunes and danger that troubled Ovando, but the fear that he might escape from his desperate situation, and return to Spain, to report the richness of his last discoveries, and, as a recompense, regain the government of Hispaniola.*

Las Casas, who was then in San Domingo, took the same view. He writes that Escobar was selected, because Ovando knew that his old enmity would make his heart impervious to any feeling of pity for the admiral ; that he was forbidden to go on board of the vessels, or to land, to hold communication with, or receive letters from, any one except the admiral ; in short, that he was merely a spy to ascertain the state of affairs.†

Some have thought Ovando could be defended, or at least excused, by ascribing his conduct towards Columbus to excess of caution. He was absent, they say, from San Domingo for several months, occupied in the interior against the natives who had revolted, and had no vessel in the harbor capable of transporting Columbus and his men to Spain. It would, consequently, have been necessary to let them remain for some time in Hispaniola, which had been prohibited by their Majesties, and would, moreover, lead to serious danger. There were still many powerful enemies of the admiral at San Domingo, and nothing was more natural than that his presence should revive old animosities, and occasion disturbance. There was even greater danger that the admiral, remembering what he had been, and what he always believed he had the right to be, on the island, would interfere in public affairs, and try to form a party. This must have appeared to Ovando more likely, on account of a public rumor, that the admiral, disgusted with Spain, wanted to transfer to his native Genoa, or some other power, the countries he had discovered. This rumor must have had great weight on public opinion, since Columbus alludes to it in his letter to the Catholic sovereigns, to contradict it as a gross absurdity.‡ For these reasons, Ovando

* Fernando Colombo, cap. civ.

† Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxxii.

‡ In the letter written at Jamaica, and forwarded through Mendez.

may have thought it best for Columbus to remain quietly at Jamaica, till a ship should arrive from Spain. Meanwhile, in his judgment, the admiral was in no danger, for he was sufficiently provided with arms and men to defend himself, and sure of sufficient food from the agreement made by Mendez with the Indians; as it must be supposed that Mendez had told him of the result of his negotiations with the natives. Ovando, they say, may have acted on such reasoning, believing that he reconciled his conscience with his interest by a measure which excited the reprobation of his countrymen while he lived, and left an indelible stain on his memory after death.* These suppositions might have weight in Ovando's favor, if the rest of his conduct towards Columbus could be as favorably explained. But if he was waiting for a vessel of sufficient burden to take Columbus and his men directly to Spain, why send Escobar to him? Certainly not for the purpose of comforting him by the assurance of relief; for that should have been done on first learning of his distress, without waiting so many months before moving a step. But even if that had been his motive, why choose as bearer of the joyful news the admiral's chief enemy, the main author of his misfortunes? Here was an officer, who, in just punishment of his felony, had been sentenced to death by Columbus; and now to send him, restored to rank and honor, as a messenger to the admiral, who had been robbed of his privileges and dignities, was more than an insult; it was the greatest cowardice. Why, too, that mysterious prohibition to approach the ships as though infected with a plague, but to come, see, and go, like a spy? But there is no end of the questions to be asked, to which it would be idle to expect a favorable answer. The rest of the story will show whether or not the infamy ascribed to Ovando is in accordance with his character.

And now, let us go back a little, and relate the voyage of Mendez and Fiesco. Leaving the coast of Jamaica, they sailed all day in a direct line to Hispaniola, animating the Indians to row with all their strength. There was not a breath of wind, the sky was clear, the sea perfectly calm, so that the heat soon became intolerable. The sun above burnt to the brain with its hot rays, the sea beneath blinded them with their reflection. The Indians, exhausted by heat and fatigue, often plunged into the water to refresh themselves, and

* Irving, *Columbus*, lib. xvi, ch. iv.

returned to the oars with new vigor. Thus flying over the sea, by evening they lost sight of land. At night, they divided into watches, and while half slept, the others worked ; the Indians at the oars, and the Spaniards on guard with weapon in hand, ready to defend themselves in case of any perfidy on the part of their savage companions.

The sultriness of the day continued through the night, and after watching and toiling in this way, they were all exhausted at the return of day. But the two captains, giving them a collation and a short respite, tried to animate them by word and example, from time to time taking a turn themselves at the oars. But a new source of suffering was added, which completely undid the poor Indians. In the fatigue and exhaustion of the previous day and night, they had freely satisfied their thirst, without thought of the future, and were now without a drop of water to moisten their lips. As the sun rose higher, their thirst increased, and the sight of water all around made it less tolerable. At noon, they lost all courage and could not hold an oar. Then the two captains, seeing the impossibility of enduring the torment of thirst any longer, pretended to find two casks of water, which they had put aside for this emergency, and economizing the precious stock, doled out a sip now and then to their companions, and especially to the Indian rowers, and encouraged them by the assurance that they would soon come to the little island of Navasa, which lay in their way, and was only eight leagues from Hispaniola. They kept on rowing as well as they could, with their eyes fixed on the horizon, anxiously looking for the island. The day passed, and night came on, without any sign of land in any direction. According to their calculation, they had come a sufficient distance from Jamaica to reach Navasa ; and they began to fear they had deviated from their course. If it was so, their fate was decided,—they would perish with thirst before arriving at Hispaniola.

The night was dark, which increased their fear of missing the island ; for it was so small and low that they might easily pass close to it in the dark, without discovering it. The Indians and Christians were again divided into two parties, one to row and keep guard, whilst the other slept ; but the torture of thirst prevented any one from closing an eye. The water of the casks was nearly gone, and the captains permitted the Indians to wet their lips more rarely. The poor savages occasionally tried to refresh their burnt palates with

the water of the sea ; but the momentary relief was followed by greater burning. One of them died, unable to endure the torture of fatigue, heat, and thirst, and his body was thrown into the sea ; others lay panting at the bottom of the canoes ; and the few that still kept up were so troubled in mind and exhausted in body, that the oars scarce moved, and the advance grew ever slower. In this condition, they were enveloped in the obscurity of the second night, without seeing any indication of land. Then occurred what was so frequent in the life of Columbus,—that when all seemed lost, and no way of escape, Providence came to their aid in an unexpected manner. Diego Mendez, who could hardly conceal the anguish and despair which now seized even his heart, stood upright in the canoe, straining his eyes around the horizon, which was gradually brightening with the pale light that precedes the rising of the moon. As it rose, he saw it come out from behind a black mass rising above the surface of the sea, and, imagining what it must be, called out, *Land ! Land !* That cry was like an electric shock to every heart, and roused them all to new life. Those who had given way to despair and exhaustion, were at once on their feet, and all eyes were directed to the point where the moon was rising. It was the island of Navasa, so small and low, that but for the rising of the moon, it would have been impossible to detect it in the obscurity of the hour. The error as to the distance they had come, grew out of miscalculation of the speed of the canoes, from not taking into account the fatigue of the rowers struggling against the currents. Revived by the hope of safety, and animated by the voice and delight of the captains, the poor savages, collecting all their strength, took hold of the oars with feverish energy, and rowed with such good-will that at day-break they touched land. All sprang ashore, and—with the fervor we may imagine—thanked God whom they adored for saving them when beyond all hope.

Navasa was not so much an island as a mass of rocks, scarce half-a-league in circumference, without a tree or bush. It had no springs, but here and there, in the hollow of the rocks, they found a little rain-water, which they passed from rock to rock looking for and drinking. In vain the more prudent endeavored to restrain the rest, and warned them of the danger they ran ; their burning thirst rendered them deaf to all advice. The Spaniards, who had suffered least, restrained themselves to some extent ; but the poor Indians,

whose exertions had augmented their thirst till it became a burning fever, threw themselves on the fresh water with a sort of frenzy, and drank so greedily that some of them died almost instantly, and more became seriously ill. When their thirst was quenched, they began to look for food, and found some shell-fish among the weeds, cast on the beach by the tide. Here and there, they found a few chips of wood, with which they made a fire, and cooked the fish, which they ate with the greatest appetite and relish. The rest of the day was devoted to repose, which was all the pleasanter from the sight of Hispaniola, with its lofty mountains delineated on the horizon at eight leagues' distance. At sunset, they continued their voyage in the cool of the evening, and, refreshed by their rest, rowed bravely all night, and the next morning came to Cape Tiburou, the nearest point of Hispaniola, on the fourth day after leaving Jamaica.*

The inhabitants thronged to welcome them and supply them with food, and they remained there two days to rest themselves, among hospitable natives. Bartholomew Fiesco proposed to return, as he had promised, to report to the admiral the safe arrival of his messenger; but both Spaniards and Indians had suffered so much in coming, that nothing could induce them to repeat the voyage in a canoe. Although Mendez was suffering from a quartan fever, brought on by what he had endured in the last few days, he was impatient of delay, and taking six Indians of the island, he resolutely entered his canoe to continue the voyage to San Domingo, still 130 leagues distant. After proceeding eighty leagues against opposing currents, on arriving in the harbor of Azua, he learnt that Ovando had gone to Xaragua, fifty leagues from there, in the interior. The intrepid Spaniard at once decided to quit his canoe, and in his feverish condition, proceeded alone, on foot, through forests and over mountains, till he came to Xaragua, achieving one of the most perilous expeditions ever undertaken by a devoted follower for the safety of his commander.†

Ovando received Mendez with great kindness, expressed much concern for the admiral's misfortune, and promised to relieve him as soon as possible. Mendez waited, expecting to see the promise fulfilled; but days, weeks, months, passed by, and although he kept

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cv.—*Narrative of Diego Mendez*.

† Irving, *Columbus*, bk. xvi, ch. v.



constantly insisting on the admiral's desperate situation, he could get nothing but a repetition of the same promise. As to its fulfilment, Ovando always gave as an excuse, that he had no vessel large enough to carry off the admiral and his men. The faithful Mendez urged that he should at least be suffered to proceed to San Domingo, to make some provision himself with the money and rents which the admiral had there, for his condition admitted of no delay; but the governor always had some excuse at hand for refusing permission.

It is believed by some that Ovando wanted to gain time in the hope that the admiral would perish in his distress; and it must be admitted that there is nothing in his whole conduct to contradict such perfidy. But it is more likely that he suspected the admiral's shipwreck had been cunningly contrived as a plausible pretext for coming to Hispaniola, and that Mendez had a secret mission to prepare the ground for him; and with this suspicion, he wanted to keep Mendez with him, till the present war with the Indians of Xaragua should be ended, when he could personally provide against any danger, and dispose of all his forces in case of any movement in the colony in the admiral's favor.* But even this favorable construction does not clear Ovando of blame, for in a case of such serious danger, as that in which Mendez represented the admiral and his men, if he suspected fraud, the commonest prudence would suggest the immediate dispatch of some one, as in the case of Escobar long afterwards to ascertain the real state of matters, for if they were as reported, to delay assistance was clearly to refuse it altogether.

Finally, after seven months, which to the generous heart of Mendez must have seemed as many centuries, the war being ended, Ovando gave him the permission he asked for. The intrepid officer at once set out, alone and on foot, as he had come, although he had to travel for seventy leagues across forests and mountains infested with Indians exasperated against the White Men by the war and by Ovando's cruelty.†

Whilst Mendez was working so hard to procure help for the admiral, Ovando himself decided to do something for him, and to encourage him he dispatched Escobar, his bitterest enemy in Hispaniola, and for the support of himself and 130 men,—the num-

* Charlevoix, *Hist. Saint-Domingue*, liv. iv. † *Narrative of Diego Mendez*.

ber of the crews,—he sent a cask of wine and a quarter of salt pork !

Although the coming of Escobar and his mysterious behavior gave the admiral a very low notion of Ovando's good-will, still, now that his messenger had reached Hispaniola and made his situation known, he could not doubt but what sooner or later a ship would come to his relief. He, therefore, turned his thoughts upon the rebels to reduce them to obedience, and be ready to embark with all his men, and, knowing that most of them had been led astray in consequence of their hopeless condition, he believed the best argument to bring them back was the prospect of speedy relief.

He, therefore, sent two of his men who had been in communication with the rebels, to inform them of the visit of Escobar with dispatches from the governor of Hispaniola promising to send a ship to take them all off. With the kind compassion of a father for their transgression, he offered, if they would return at once to their duty, to forget the past, treat them with the same kindness as those who had remained faithful, and take them with him on the ships he was expecting. To assure them of the truth of what he asserted, he sent them some of the pork brought by Escobar.

As soon as Francisco de Porras saw the ambassadors, he knew why they had been sent, and went to meet them, with two of his most trusted leaders, in order to prevent their being heard by the others, fearing that these, tired of their vagabondage, and thinking what was before them, might be won over by fair words, and, at the prospect of pardon, desert him. When Porras and the two others had heard the admiral's message, they retired to one side and consulted together.

Conscious of the great evil they had done, unable to imagine a magnanimity of pardon which could surpass their crime, and measuring the faith of others by their own unfaithfulness, they resolved not to trust the admiral's offers, and told the messengers they had no desire to return on board, but preferred to live in freedom on the island. But they bound themselves to act peacefully and orderly, if the admiral would solemnly promise, in case two vessels arrived, to let them have one ; or if only one was sent, to give them the half of it ; and in the mean time divide with them his remaining provisions, as the sea had swallowed up all theirs. When told that these demands could not be considered, they insolently replied that if they

were not granted willingly, they were able to enforce them. With this threat the ambassadors were dismissed.* But it was not long before the rest of the rebels ascertained the nature of the conference, and were in a great ferment of excitement over the proffered amnesty, and the news that they would soon leave the island. Then Porras used all his eloquence, and told the most impudent lies, to bind them to him, and remove the danger, which threatened, of a general desertion. He assured them that the admiral's offers were mere bait with which his cruel and vindictive disposition sought to capture them, in order to take his revenge on them when he should get them in his power. He, therefore, exhorted them to persist in their bold resistance to his tyranny, holding up to them the example of Roldan and his followers, who, by distrusting him and his offers, and continuing their resistance, had in the end succeeded in getting him removed from command and sent in chains as a prisoner to Spain. Their cause was as good, and their hope of success as great, for they had strong support at court. Still the fact remained that Escobar had arrived with dispatches from Ovando. But his bold impudence was equal to making them doubt even of this fact. That he succeeded so easily, proves, at the same time, the ignorance of the age, and the extent of the seamen's superstition regarding Columbus and his astronomical lore. Porras asserted, with the greatest certainty in the world, that it had not been a real caravel, but a phantom raised by the admiral's necromancy, in which art he had the greatest skill; and as a proof, he said it was seen only at dusk, communicated with the admiral only, and at the coming on of night it wholly vanished. If it had really been a ship, the men of his crew would have tried to talk with their brethren; the admiral, his son, and his brother would not have lost the chance of escaping to San Domingo; and finally, it would have made some stay in the harbor, and not have left so mysteriously almost as soon as it arrived.†

By these and other like frauds, Porras succeeded in bringing the rebels back to his side, and restoring some of the courage they had lost. Fearing, however, that on reflection, or on further offers of the admiral, they might yield, he determined to involve them in

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cvi.—Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. xxxv.

† Fernando Colombo. l. c.—Las Casas, l. c.

some act of violence serious enough to make them lose all hope of pardon. After exciting their anger by further discourse, he persuaded them to march silently towards the ships, and by a sudden assault get possession of all the victuals, and take the admiral prisoner. With this design, he had brought them as far as the village of Maima, only a quarter of a league from the ships, when the admiral, informed of their approach and of their intention, was aware of the danger that threatened him. Confined by his sufferings to his tent, he sent his brother Bartholomew to see if he could persuade them with fair words, but with sufficient force to repress, at need, any violence.

The adelantado, who was a man rather of deeds than of words, took with him fifty men, resolute and prepared for any thing, but most of them pale and weak from sickness and long confinement on ship-board. Arriving with them on a hill, a bow-shot distant from the village in which were the rebels, he sent forward the same two who had gone on the former embassy, to renew the offers of peace, and have Porras consent to confer with him quietly. But Porras and the other chiefs, seeing that their men were equal in number to those of the adelantado, and superior in strength (for they were all strong sailors, invigorated by their strolling life in the open air and in the forests, while Don Bartholomew's, besides being weakened by sickness and long idleness, were mostly gentlemen and civilians, who are usually more delicate by nature and habits); therefore, having the victory in their grasp, persuaded the men to repel the ambassadors, and begin an immediate assault on the forces of the adelantado. They observed that they were only a handful of soldiers for show, images of warriors, who would be put to flight at the first onset. Deluded by these words, the rebels refused to listen to the messengers, and seizing their arms, and brandishing swords and lances, rushed in close squadron against the soldiers of the adelantado with cries of *Slay, Slay!* Six of them, supposed to be the bravest and strongest, bound themselves by oath not to separate from, but to support, one another, and attack the adelantado, for they knew the whole strength of the battle lay in his person, and if he was killed the rest would be easily got rid of. But although Don Bartholomew's men were inferior in physical strength to the rebels, they had the advantage of position, the experience and bravery of their leader, the sense of honor, and that strength which even the weak

derive from the consciousness of doing their duty and of having God and justice on their side. The result was, consequently, quite different from what the rebels had hoped, and they were so well received on their first attack that four or five were left dead, mostly those who had agreed to aim at the person of Don Bartholomew. The latter, who was tall and unusually powerful, dealt his blows on his assailants so well that he soon laid out Juan Sanchez of Cadiz, the same who had let the quibian of Veragna slip from his hands, and one Juan Barber, who had been the first to draw his sword against the admiral in this rebellion, and he severely wounded several others. Francisco Porras hastened to his men's assistance, and struck Bartholomew a blow with his sword that cut through his shield and wounded his hand. But the sword remained fixed in the shield, and before he could withdraw it, Don Bartholomew seized hold of him, and, aided by many of his men, made him prisoner after an obstinate struggle. At this sight, the rebels lost all hope of conquering, now that their chief was taken, and thought only of flight. Don Bartholomew wanted to pursue them, but some of his chief officers dissuaded him, saying the punishment was well, but ought not to be carried too far; and, on the other hand, it would not do to become separated or too much fatigued, on account of the danger from the Indians in the vicinity. In fact, a multitude of them, armed after their fashion, stood watching, in silent surprise, the battle between the White Men, but without seeming to favor either side.

The adelantado followed the prudent counsel, and returned in triumph to the ships, with Porras and several of his followers as prisoners. He was received by the admiral with all possible affection and gratitude, and all united in thanksgiving to God, recognizing His special assistance in enabling them to gain so easy and complete a victory over a stronger force.*

When the battle was over, and the adelantado gone, the Indians went to the field and gazed on the bodies of the beings they had at first thought immortal. They examined with the greatest curiosity the wounds made by the Christians' arms. Among the rebels wounded was Pedro Ledesma, of Herculean strength and courage, who, on the coast of Veragua, had braved the fury of the Ocean in tempest, and

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cvii.—Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxxv.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. vi, cap. xi.

the rocks of the beach, to get news of the Spaniards left on shore. He had fallen in a ditch, and remained there all that day and until late the next day, without any one knowing it, except the Indians, who, supposing him dead, and not understanding how our swords cut, out of curiosity opened his wounds with a stick. His principal wounds were, one in the head, exposing the brain ; another in the shoulder, nearly cutting off the arm, which hung useless ; a third in the side, cutting to the bones ; and a fourth along the foot, from the heel to the toes, so that he seemed to have a sandal or slipper under his sole. With all these injuries, as the Indians opened his wounds to examine them in their cruel curiosity, he was roused by the pain, and, with his thundering voice, cried : " Let me be ! If I get up, I will . . ." The sound of his voice frightened the Indians so that they fled desperately, thinking all the killed were after them. By this means, news of him reached the ships, and he was at once sent for, and carried, for want of better, to a thatched cottage near by, where the dampness and insects, says Fernando, were enough to finish him. Having no other medicament at hand, they rubbed his wounds with oil, and these were so numerous, that besides those we have mentioned, the surgeon said he found new ones every day during the first week that he visited him. And yet he got well. It would seem incredible, but for the testimony of Fernando Columbus, who saw it all, and of Las Casas, who knew Ledesma later, and conversed with him, and obtained from him his account of the battle. This singular man was afterwards killed in Seville, by the dagger of an assassin.*

Of the adelantado's party only two were wounded : himself, as we said, in the hand, and Pedro di Terreros, captain of the Gallego, who received an apparently slight wound from a lance, hardly equal to the smallest of those which Ledesma was all perforated with ; but from which he died a few days later, in spite of the most careful treatment, and to the surprise and great grief of every one.

The battle was fought on Sunday, May 19th. The next day, the fugitives sent a petition to the admiral, signed by every one, humbly begging him to have pity on them, for they repented of what they had done, and wanted to return to duty, and made the most ample promises for the future, swearing by the cross and the gospel

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cvii.—Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxxv.

that their promises were sincere ; and they accompanied their oath with this imprecation, which deserves to be preserved by reason of its originality : “ They hoped, if they broke their oath, that no priest or Christian should ever confess them ; that no penance should help them ; that they should be deprived of the church’s sacraments ; that their souls, after death, should receive no relief from bulls or indulgences ; that, instead of being buried in consecrated ground, their bodies should be thrown in the open field like those of renegades and heretics ; and that no pope, cardinal, archbishop, bishop, or Christian priest should give them absolution.”*

The admiral granted their prayer, and pardoned all except Francisco Porras, their leader, whom he kept a prisoner. As it was difficult to maintain so many persons on board without fresh quarrels, and victuals were becoming scarce, he placed all the late rebels under the command of a discreet and faithful officer, and, giving him a quantity of European objects, sent him around the island to trade them for food, and to keep the men in restraint, till the arrival of the vessels, which they were expecting from day to day.

At length, after a year of anxious expectation, two vessels appeared in sight of the harbor. One of them had been hired and victualled at Columbus’s expense, by the faithful and indefatigable Mendez, and had just arrived at Hispaniola on the regular yearly voyage between the Indies and Europe ; the other was sent by Ovando. Las Casas, who was a witness of the facts, relates that the public indignation against Ovando for abandoning the admiral to his terrible fate, rose so high that ill-concealed allusions to him were made from the pulpits, and the faithful were publicly asked to pray to God for the admiral and his men ; so that when he saw that Mendez had a vessel ready, whatever may have been his secret thought, he exerted himself and equipped a second, and gave the command of it to the same Diego de Salcedo, to whom Mendez had entrusted his,—a person strongly attached to the admiral, formerly his squire, and now his agent at San Domingo.

When Mendez had faithfully discharged this first part of his mission, and seen the vessels sail, he embarked for Spain to carry out the rest of the admiral’s instructions. †

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxv.—Fernando Colombo, cap. cvii.—*Narrative of Diego Mendez.*

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxxv.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ovando's administration in Hispaniola.—Oppression of the natives.—Massacre of Xaragua.—The hunt of the Indians.—War in the mountains of Higüey.—Desperate bravery of the mountaineers.—The giant Cotabanama.—The end of the war (1503-04).

BEFORE speaking of the return of Columbus to Hispaniola, it is proper to stop and cast a rapid glance at the state of that island since the beginning of Ovando's administration ; for, as he had been sent to repair the mistakes and faults with which the admiral's administration was charged, an examination of the results of his work will lead to an inexorable condemnation, or a better justification of the action of Christopher Columbus.

It is unnecessary to remind the reader how discredited and even detested a residence in Hispaniola had become in the minds of Spaniards. The appointment of Ovando as governor had revived the old illusion of the ease with which wealth might be obtained from the inexhaustible treasures of the New World : an effect, however, not unusual with our foolish custom of ascribing to the fault of one man what is the fault of the things themselves, whereby we expect a remedy of the evil by a change of men. Consequently, where the admiral, in his last expedition, had to pick from the galleys colonists and laborers for Hispaniola ; with Ovando, on the contrary, it was a scramble of persons asking to follow him, trusting to secure that fortune with him, which under the admiral had proved for so many only suffering and death. He had with him, in consequence, a crowd of adventurers, greedy speculators, credulous dreamers, and ruined spendthrifts, expecting to make or regain a fortune in a few days, almost upon landing.

They had hardly stepped ashore, writes Las Casas, an eye-witness, who took part in this expedition, before they all hurried off to the mines only eight leagues distant ; the roads were crowded with them. Every one carried on his back a bag with biscuit and miner's tools.

The hidalgos, having no servants, bravely carried their own load. Those who had horses for the journey, were lucky, for they could bring back a greater load of gold. They devoured the road, each one anxious to be the first to arrive at the *Promised Land*, where they imagined they could gather gold like fruit from the trees.* When they came to the mines, they were dismayed to find that it was necessary to dig painfully into the bowels of the earth, and most of them were unaccustomed to such hard labor ; that it required experience and sagacity to detect the veins of ore, and patience and perseverance in the search ; and in fine, that when they were worn out they must count among the probabilities that no ore was found. For some days their ardor supported them, and they continued painfully to dig the ground, but no gold was found. And so, their provisions being soon consumed, they were driven by hunger to return, exhausted by toil, and vexed by disappointment, over the same road they had travelled a few days before elated with hope. They reached San Domingo famished, dejected, and desperate. The little money they had brought from Spain soon gave out, and they fell into squalid misery. Some were obliged to sell even the clothes they had on, for a morsel of bread to keep them from starving. Some succeeded in getting employment from the old settlers, and in this way had enough to sustain life ; but the general state of the colony had fallen so low that very few had this good fortune ; and the most of them, without acquaintances, entirely dependent on public charity, were tortured by hunger and shame. As mental prostration always increases bodily suffering, so some slowly wasted and died of consumption ; others, of violent fevers ; and in a very short time more than a thousand perished.

So far as the Spaniards were concerned, Ovando sustained his reputation as an able and prudent governor, but he was an exterminating scourge for the poor Indians. This is more deserving of note, because one of the main charges against Columbus was excessive severity towards the natives. Let us see now how Ovando treated them. It should be remembered that when Columbus was obliged to assign lands to Roldan's rebel followers, he agreed, in 1499, with the neighboring caciques, that they were to send a certain number of their subjects to help in the cultivation of those lands, in lieu of

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxxvi.

tribute.* This arrangement, as we then remarked, if carried out with moderation and charity, would have been a great aid to the Spaniards, without being too burdensome to the Indians; and, what is more, would have produced excellent results in the future, by gradually accustoming the savages to labor: but in the hands of depraved and heartless men, it became one of the most odious and unjust proceedings in all history,—the *Repartimientos*, or division of the Indians amongst the Spaniards. The evil began, as we saw, under Bobadilla, who extended that special agreement to a general system of government, obliging the caciques generally to allot a certain number of Indians to every Spaniard for work in the mines; and, at last, in order to prevent evasion, he made an enumeration of all the natives, divided them into classes, and distributed them amongst the colonists. The oppression which ensued was shown then; and it was also said that Isabella, horrified at the atrocious inhumanity, ordered Ovando immediately to free all those unfortunate beings.† The order was worthy of Isabella's great heart, but its immediate execution without caution, involved the ruin of the colony, because the Indians, prostrated in mind as well as body under the weight of such labors and cruelties, at the unexpected announcement of freedom, threw down their tools, and returning to the idle repose of their forests, refused all aid whatever to the Christians. Ovando wrote to Spain the fatal consequence to the colony of the complete freedom granted to the Indians; he said he was unable to exact tribute, because the Indians, naturally indolent and improvident, neither could nor would exert themselves so as to be able to pay it; that the only means of restraining their vices and irregularity, was to keep them occupied at some work; that under the new order of things, they kept at a distance from the Spaniards, and no longer attended the instructions on the truths of religion. The two sovereigns replied, enjoining Ovando to leave nothing undone to attach the natives to the Spanish nation and the Catholic faith; to make them work in moderation, if this was absolutely necessary for their good, but to temper authority with mild persuasion, to pay them liberally for their work, and to have them instructed in religion on the appointed days. The reply was just and prudent, and adapted to the necessity and condition of the case; but the small opening it

* See book ii, ch. viii.

† See bk. ii, ch. xiv.

left for infringing on the liberty of the Indians, was enough to bring matters to a worse state than ever. Ovando, using the power conferred by this letter to its full extent, allotted every Spaniard a certain number of Indians, according to his rank or his own caprice, and ordered the caciques to furnish the number he had allotted to each. They were to be paid by their employers, and to be instructed in the Christian religion. But the pay was only just enough to serve as an excuse for saying they were paid, and in the matter of religion, all that was done in the way of instruction was merely to subject them to the ceremony of baptism.

The term of labor was first fixed at six months, and then extended to eight months in the year. The cruelty of the colonists to the savages working in the fields and the mines, in Bobadilla's time, shows what we should expect now that the colonists added to their habitual inhumanity, the feeling of revenge for the loss suffered in consequence of the savages' refusal to assist them in their work in any way. Las Casas says that they often kept them several days' journey from their wives and children, forced to most painful labors; and when, exhausted with fatigue, they sat down for a little rest, they were made to get up and work by being beaten worse than beasts of burden. For food, they had only cassava-bread, which was not substantial enough for men laboring so hard; or if occasionally something else was given them, as a piece of pork, it was in such miserable proportion that there was hardly a mouthful for each one. Las Casas, an eye-witness of all these horrors, relates, that when the Spanish overseers of the work sat at meal, the famished Indians, under the table, scrambled, like dogs, for the smallest bone that fell to the ground. They seized it, gnawed it, sucked it, and when they could get nothing more off with their teeth, they broke and ground it between stones, and spread it on their cassava-bread. Those that worked in the fields never tasted either flesh or fish: a little cassava-bread and a few roots were all their food. While thus deprived of the nourishment necessary to preserve their health and strength, they were required to perform labors beyond the strength of the most vigorous constitution. If the Indians, to escape from this incessant toil and barbarous usage, sought refuge in the mountains, they were hunted out like wild animals, punished in the most inhuman manner, and put in irons to prevent further attempts to escape. Many perished long before their term of labor had expired; the others, whose strength

lasted till the six or eight months were up, were permitted to return to their homes until their turn came again ; but their homes were forty, sixty, or even eighty leagues off, and all they had to sustain them on the journey was a little fish with cassava-bread and some roots. The most of them were too feeble to complete the journey, and died on the way of exhaustion and despondency, by the side of a brook or under the shade of a tree, where they had sought shelter from the sun's burning rays. I have found many dead, says Las Casas, along the roads, and others at the point of death, who repeated with a feeble voice in their agony : " I am hungry, I am hungry ! " Those who reached their homes, generally found them deserted. In the months of their absence, their wives and children were dead or scattered ; the fields they had sown, from which they hoped to quiet the gnawing hunger that had tormented them for months, had been neglected, and were overrun with weeds. Losing all courage and strength, nothing was left for them but to lie down at the threshold of their dwellings and wait for death.*

" It is impossible," says Irving, " to pursue any further the picture drawn by the venerable Las Casas, not of what he had heard, but of what he had seen ; nature and humanity revolt at the details. Suffice it to say, that so intolerable were the trials and sufferings inflicted upon this weak and unoffending race, that they sank under them, dissolving, as it were, from the face of the earth. Many killed themselves in despair, and even mothers overcame the powerful instinct of nature, and destroyed the infants at their breasts, to spare them a life of wretchedness. Twelve years had now elapsed since the discovery of the island, and several hundred thousand of its native inhabitants had perished, miserable victims to the grasping ambition of the White Men."†

To complete the picture, we must add a few words on Ovando's military enterprises, and examine how far the reputation some historians give him for prudence, justice, and mercy, in this respect, corresponds with truth.

Behechio, the ruler of the rich and fertile province of Xaragua, was dead, and, as he left no son, his sister Anacoana, the noble friend and generous entertainer of the White Men, had succeeded

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xiv. † Irving, *Columbus*, bk. xvii, ch. i.

to the government. But those strangers had turned out quite different from her expectation, and the calamities they had brought on her country, the excesses committed throughout her territory by Roldan's followers, and the distress she had suffered from the love of her fair daughter Higuanoa for the young Spaniard Fernando de Guevara, had, by degrees, lessened, destroyed, and at last turned to hatred, her former friendship and admiration for them. This hatred was continually fed by the handful of Roldan's followers who had received lands in the vicinity of her capital, and, continuing the life they had led under their former chief, gave themselves up to every baseness and violence, and under the baneful system of *repartimientos*, oppressed the inferior caciques and their subjects in the most tyrannical and capricious manner. If quarrels arose between the Spaniards and Indians, they were reported to the governor as dangerous mutinies, and the slightest resistance to open injustice and extortion was represented as an act of rebellion. As the Indians of this province were more intelligent, less savage, and of a nobler character than the other islanders, they felt more keenly the insults and vexations to which they were constantly subjected; and therefore, it was one continual complaint to Ovando against these recalcitrant savages, and representation of the danger to the security and stability of the government. These complaints continually repeated, and each confirming the rest, in their state of suspicion in regard to the Indians, gradually gained ground with the government, and Ovando and his counsellors became convinced that a general conspiracy to overthrow the Spanish rule, was hatching in that province. Ovando determined to lose no time, but to march immediately into that province and meet the threatening danger. He set out at the head of 300 men, on foot, armed with swords, arquebuses, and bows, and seventy mounted men, with cuirasses, shields, and lances; and to avoid suspicion, gave out that he was making a friendly visit to Anacoana, to make arrangements with her about the payment of tribute.

When Anacoana heard of the governor's intended visit, she summoned her tributary caciques and principal subjects to assemble in her capital to pay him homage. When he arrived, she assumed a joyful countenance, and met him, attended by the same great train, and gave him the same festive reception with music, songs, and dance, as when the adelantado came, and the first Spaniards were so

astonished and delighted with their entertainment. On this occasion, as then, the festival in honor of the chief of the White Men lasted several days.* Ovando was given the largest house in the capital for his residence, and his men were quartered in houses near by. Whilst Anacoana was endeavoring, with all her power of fascination, to win the good-will and friendship of Ovando, he was cherishing the suspicion that she was secretly planning his massacre and that of all his men. Historians are silent as to the grounds of this suspicion; but it was undoubtedly some perfidy of the band of rebels established in the neighborhood, who apprehended, from Ovando's coming, and the friendship and confidence that might grow up between Anacoana and him, he might learn the false part they had been acting, and their calumnies and licentiousness. Hence, they resolved to excite his suspicion and fear, in order to prevent any confidence or trust in the queen. Such conduct on their part is not surprising, but that a man, like Ovando, used to affairs and worldly intrigues, should have been so easily taken in, and, what is worse, at once carry out his anger and vengeance so brutally. Anacoana and her people certainly hated the Spaniards with a mortal hatred, and if it had been feasible, it would have been their greatest delight to fall upon them. But it was not to be supposed that a few naked Indians should think of attacking a large force of steel-clad troops whose weapons they had felt or heard of from others. Even if he was not misled, the example repeatedly set by the admiral and the adelantado should have convinced him that to guard against the best-laid schemes of the Indians, it was sufficient to seize upon their caciques and detain them as hostages.† He judged it better to strike such terror into the minds of the poor savages that he would be ever after sure of their subjection and fidelity. He announced that, in return for the pleasing spectacle of their national games which the Indians had given, he invited them, on a certain day, to witness a representation by his soldiers of some of the fine entertainments in use in the White Men's country. He promised, among other diversions, a joust or combat with sticks,—a chivalrous game which the Spaniards had learnt from the Moors of Granada. The joust was to take place after dinner, in the public square in front of the house where the governor was lodged. The Spaniards had secret instructions that

* Oviedo, lib. v, cap. i.

† Irving, *Columbus*, bk. xvii, ch. ii.

the cavalry should enter the lists, not with sticks or pointless lances, as customary in the game appointed, but with edged and pointed weapons ; and the infantry, also armed with daggers and swords, and scattered in little groups here and there in the square, should pretend to be mere spectators of the exhibition, but be ready at the concerted signal. The novelty of the spectacle drew the Indians from every direction, and before the time set, the square was filled. The caciques were assembled in Ovando's very house, which commanded the spot of the joust. They were all unarmed, and every face breathed an entire confidence wholly inconsistent with the treachery they were accused of. Meanwhile, Ovando, with revolting coolness, to prevent all suspicion, and remove all appearance of evil designs, was amusing himself at a game of battledore with some of his principal officers.

When the cavalry came on the square, the caciques, eager for the spectacle, went to Ovando, and asked him to order the joust to begin.* Anacoana, who was present with her beautiful daughter Higuanoa and a numerous train of the principal women, joined the caciques in their request, and Ovando, seeming to yield to their wishes, left his game, and placed himself at a window from which he could see the whole square. Finding every one in place and, all arranged as he had ordered, he gave the fatal signal. Some say it was by taking hold of a plate of gold which he wore suspended about his neck ;† others, by laying his hand on the cross of Alcantara, embroidered on his habit.‡ At the signal a trumpet sounded, and in an instant the soldiers on foot and mounted, arms in hand, rushed to the duty assigned them. The infantry at the entrances prevented escape, and the cavalry rode over the unarmed and naked multitude. The mind revolts at the horrid butchery which ensued. Men and women, old and young, wherever the steel fell it fell well, whomever the horses trampled they trampled well ; wounded, mutilated, torn, dead, however they left them behind, one thing the Spanish soldiers looked to—to deal blows and to slaughter. While this fearful massacre was going on in the square, Diego Velasquez and Rodrigo Mexiatriillo, with a strong force, surrounded the house in which were Anacoana and the caciques. They dragged the queen to

* Oviedo, lib. iii, cap. xii.

† Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. ix.

‡ Charlevoix, *Hist. Saint-Dom.*, liv. xxiv.—Herrera, dec. i, lib. vi, cap. iv.

prison in irons, and tying the caciques to the posts supporting the roof, subjected them to horrible torture. And as the pain forced from one of them a confirmation of the supposed conspiracy, after this confession, treating them as savages, all form of a more regular trial, even for appearance' sake, was regarded as superfluous, and setting fire to the house, they left them tied there to be burnt alive in the flames.*

In the terror and confusion of the massacre, some few succeeded in making their escape, and, reaching the beach, proceeded in canoes to the little island of Guanabo, eight leagues off; but were soon overtaken, and condemned to the lingering death of slavery.

For the sake of humanity, we wish we could discredit this atrocious infamy of Ovando and his followers; but the circumstances of the horrible carnage have been described most minutely by the venerable bishop Las Casas, who resided on the island at the time, and often conversed with the principal authors of the tragedy; and other testimony, equally certain and credible, confirms the account in all its cruelty. Diego Mendez, who was then at Xaragua, and was doubtless present at the atrocious spectacle, incidentally mentions in his will the fact that there were eighty-four caciques burnt by Ovando. But the strongest evidence of all is that of the historian Oviedo, because he was a great admirer and panegyrist of Ovando, and extols his prudence, charity, justice, and even his paternal government of the Indians. He relates the same fact and most of the details given by Las Casas, and adds the revolting circumstance that just before the massacre, in the presence of the victims doomed to so horrible a death, Ovando and his officers amused themselves at a game of battledore. He had a good opportunity to know the truth, for he visited the province of Xaragua some years afterwards, and may have heard the account from the very authors of the slaughter, or their companions, or from the relatives of the victims, or even from one of those who survived the massacre.†

Anacoana was taken in irons to San Domingo, and there, after a mockery of a trial, in which she was found guilty in confessions wrung from her subjects by torture, and on the accusations of their butchers, she was ignominiously hanged, in the presence of the

* Herrera, dec. i, lib. i, cap. v.

† Oviedo, lib. iii, cap. xii.—Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. ix—*Relacion de Diego Mendez*.

whom she had so long and generously befriended. Oviedo has attempted to cast a stain on the reputation of that unfortunate woman, accusing her of great dissoluteness of character ; but his weapon is blunted, because it is well known that he was easily inclined to defame the Indian princes who fell victims to the ingratitude and injustice of his countrymen. His charge is, moreover, contradicted by all the other contemporary historians, who not only represent Anacoana as remarkable for her physical beauty and mental powers, but all concur in saying that she was adored by her subjects, and exercised a sort of empire over them, even in her brother's life-time, when she was merely a princess. This love and veneration of a whole people does not well accord with the charge of being a woman of corrupt habits, especially among a people of such simple and innocent habits as the natives of Hispaniola.

A clear proof of her genius and clearness of mind, was her conduct in regard to the White Men. So long as her husband, the fierce Caonabo, lived, she was all on fire for war, and, as a worthy companion of that bold warrior, placed herself completely at her country's service, and the mountains and forests echoed the fervid areytos which she composed to excite the heart of his savages. But with his fall, she saw that it was impossible for her naked and inexperienced Indians to prevail against those fatal strangers, and discreetly stifling her hate and rancor towards those who had made her a widow and robbed her of her throne, she advised her brother to conform to the times and recognize the supremacy of those invincible beings, and by the example of her grace and courtesy showed him how to win their friendship.

This woman, who would not cherish a hope of revenge when the Spaniards wandered unarmed over her territories, in small bands, with perfect security, was now put to death on the charge of conspiring against an armed force of 400 men, seventy of whom were mounted,—a force more than sufficient to destroy the largest army that the savages could raise !

After the massacre of Xaragua, the executions were kept up in the province, on the pretence of putting down insurrection, for almost always on the Spaniards' approach, the naked inhabitants, flying in fear to hide in some mountain cavern, were accused of assembling to plot a new conspiracy. The Spaniards first set fire to their deserted houses and villages, and then pursued the fugitives till they captured

and killed them. This inexorable cruelty only increased their fear and multiplied the fugitives, and every flight was followed by fire, pursuit, and massacre. There was no recess in the forests or mountains so hidden that the Spanish pursuers did not discover, and when discovered, did not become the tomb of the unfortunate men that were hiding in it. This war, or rather, carnage, lasted six months, at the end of which, most of the villages being destroyed and burnt, thousands of the inhabitants having perished of fear, famine, and the sword, the survivors reduced to the lowest misery and most abject submission,—the Spaniards at last considered that order was restored in Xaragua, and Ovando, to commemorate his grand triumph, founded, on the shore of a beautiful lake, a city by the name of *Santa Maria de la Verdadera Paz* (St. Mary of True Peace), and gave it for its arms, an olive-branch, an iris, and a cross.* I know of no bloody hypocrisy that can compare with this.

Of the five kingdoms or provinces into which Hispaniola was divided, only Higüey remained still free and independent of Spanish rule, and to this portion of the island Ovando turned his attention, as soon as he felt secure against the pretended danger from Xaragua. We have said that the natives of Higüey were a fierce and warlike people, because, exposed to frequent incursions of the Caribs, the necessity of repelling those savage enemies had taught them to handle arms and fearlessly resist the danger. They were ruled by the cacique Cotabanama. Las Casas, who knew him, says he was the tallest among his tall countrymen, and could with difficulty find his equal in other nations. But his Herculean proportions were more wonderful than his stature. Across the shoulders he measured more than thirty inches, and all the rest was in the same proportion. The size and weight of his weapons were worthy of such a giant.

Some Spaniards, in wild sport, had set a dog on a cacique of Higüey, which bit him horribly, and he died soon after of his wounds and fright. In vain the savages demanded and expected satisfaction for the cowardly crime. The governor of San Domingo remained deaf, in the hope that time would heal all. But they wanted blood for blood, and wrongly measuring their means by their courage, they rose in arms, and surprising a boat with eight Spaniards at

* Oviedo, lib. iii, cap. xii.

the little island of Saona, near Higüey, put them all to death with wild delight.

Ovando quickly sent Juan de Esquivel at the head of 400 men, to punish those who had committed the deed ; and Cotabanama, assembling as many of his warriors as possible, prepared for a vigorous resistance. Esquivel first tried to accomplish his purpose by friendly proposals, but Cotabanama distrusted his words, and preferred to appeal to arms, confiding in his knowledge of the country, in his numbers, and the valor of his men. And, in fact, they gave such proofs of courage and constancy, as not only to confirm, but increase their fame as a brave race, firm in every danger. But military skill and discipline, and, above all, the arms of the Europeans, rendered all their efforts vain, and, beaten and dispersed on every side, they were obliged to seek refuge in the thick of their forests and in the inaccessible cliffs of their mountains. The Spaniards pursued them into their hiding-places, and repeated all the horrors of Xaragua, killing indiscriminately women and children, and burning alive the chiefs that fell into their hands. Their greatest fury fell on the little island of Saona, the place where the eight Spaniards were murdered. Descending on it in a strong force, and quickly beating the few savages who thought of resisting, they scoured the island in search of the inhabitants, who fled hither and thither to hide from their fury. At one time, they found 700 of every age, sex, and condition shut up in a sort of enclosure, and, rushing in, armed with swords and poniards, they were like so many famished lions among a flock of lambs and sheep, and there were in a short time six or seven hundred corpses swimming in blood under their blows. The few inhabitants who escaped the first fury, had their life spared, but were carried into slavery ; and from that day, says Las Casas, the island was a vast solitude.*

When the Indians found that not even the bowels of the earth could save them from the fury of the White Men, they offered to submit, and begged for peace. This was granted on condition of cultivating a large tract of land, and furnishing an enormous quantity of cassava-bread by way of tribute. On the conclusion of peace, Cotabanama visited the Spanish camp and changed his name for that of the hostile commander, which, in the Indian customs,

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. ix.

is the surest and most inviolable pledge of loyal friendship. And the Indians called their cacique Juan de Esquibel, and gave the name of Cotabanama to the Spanish commander. The latter constructed a wooden fort in an Indian village on the sea-shore, and leaving there a garrison of nine men, under Martin de Villaman, returned with all the rest to San Domingo, every one taking with him the number of slaves which he received as his share of the rich booty.

But it was the peace of the wolf and the lamb. Villaman, not satisfied with seeing them toiling from morning to night to cultivate the entire extent of the territory required of them, insisted on their also carrying the harvested grain on their backs to the distant city of San Domingo. That was not in the agreement, and they refused; and he began to treat them with extreme rigor and harshness. He allowed his men unbridled license with the women; so much so, that neither girls nor married women could save themselves.* For some time, those fierce savages yielded to these oppressions and injuries, but at last their patience was exhausted, and preferring a quick death to this continued agony, they rose again, and slaughtering the infamous garrison, prepared for a last desperate struggle.

Ovando immediately sentenced the whole of Higüey to fire and the sword, and collecting the largest force of White Men that had as yet ever been seen in the New World, he sent them all against that unhappy province, giving the command to the same Juan de Esquibel who had directed the former war. A strong force of Indians, collected from various places in the other provinces, perhaps forcibly compelled, or perhaps stupidly vain of the honor, accompanied the Christians in the character of allies. As soon as the Spaniards appeared on the frontier, great fires were seen kindled on every height,—the usual warning they gave one another of an enemy's approach. The old men, the women, and the children were quickly sent to hide in the caves, and all the men able to bear arms remained for the struggle. The Spaniards entered on a vast plain, free from trees, where they could use their horses to advantage. On entering, they laid hands on some straggling savages, from whom they endeavored to ascertain the enemy's force and plans; but neither promises nor threats could induce them to speak. They then tried torture, and subjected them

* Las Casas, lib. ii, cap. ix.

to horrible torment; but the brave savages would not permit a word to escape them that could injure their brethren. They continued to advance at random, but with great caution and prudence, knowing the people they had to deal with, especially now that they were driven to desperation. The first body of savages they met, were waiting for them in a village, and were composed of inhabitants of different burghs. They were entirely naked, and their arms consisted of the usual bows, and arrows pointed with little pieces of bone or fish's fin. The savages began the battle with great courage and fierceness, but the sharp swords and the fire-arms of the Spaniards, the horses, and military discipline and skill, were not long in prevailing over their nakedness. They retreated, but even in retreat showed their fierce nature; and some were seen to draw the arrows of the Spanish cross-bows out of their bodies, and hurl them in impotent fury at the advancing enemy, and fall dead in the effort.

Higuey is a mountainous region, and the inhabitants had natural forts in the deep precipices and cliffs which cut off the path to their villages and hiding-places; and the Spaniards, in consequence, encountered enormous difficulties and fatigue. Having no other guide, they compelled their prisoners to show them the road, and tortured them with unheard-of cruelty to make them discover where their brethren had found refuge. They tied ropes around their necks, and drove them forward with blows. Some of the poor martyrs led the way in rage, and when they came to the brink of a precipice, threw themselves headlong over it, in the hope of dragging after them the Spaniards who held them tied. Wherever a spot was found where the savages had taken refuge, the same fate awaited all who were there: decrepit old men, innocent infants, pregnant and nursing women, were alike condemned to perish; Spanish blades never stopped striking and slaying so long as life remained.

Cotabanama had fortified himself, with his main force, in his capital, on a mountain a league-and-a-half from the shore. When Esquibel came to the foot of the mountain, he found two roads leading up it, one easy and open, that seemed inviting, and the other all closed up by rocks and branches of trees thrown athwart it. They had never seen an Indian road so free from brush as the former, and Esquibel, who was a prudent and wary officer, knew there must be some stratagem here. In fact, the ingenuity of the Indians had made them clean and level this road with care, and leave the other

rough, and throw trees across it to make it more impracticable, in the hope of drawing the Spaniards into an ambuscade, for the easy and broad road led to a place where they were lying in wait for their enemy. Esquibel accordingly meting them with the same stratagem, quietly took the impracticable road, and at first it was very difficult to open a passage, but the obstacles did not last more than half-a-league, after which the road was free. Then, taking breath after their work, in the same silence, but with great rapidity, they continued to advance till they came to the entrance of the village. Leaving the village in their rear, they now followed the other road, and descending rapidly, took the Indians in ambush by surprise, and made a horrible slaughter.

The cries and yells of these Indians brought to their aid those who were in the village, and bows and arrows being of little use in the necessity and narrowness of the time and place, they took stones and threw a shower of them on the Spaniards from every side. But the struggle was too unequal. The Spaniards replied with arquebuses and cross-bows from a distance, and those near by, with swords and lances; but not for this did the Indians lose courage, but keeping up a furious yelling all the time, they pressed on the Spaniards, and the sight of the wounded and dead falling at their side seemed to inspire them with fresh fury, and despair of conquering made them careless of life, and only intent on wounding and killing an enemy. This battle of naked men fighting with stones against trained soldiers fully armed and covered with all possible defences, lasted from two o'clock in the afternoon till evening, and only ended when it was too dark for the two parties to discover each other. Las Casas, who witnessed the bravery of the Indians, admits that they did incredible prodigies of valor; but they were unarmed and used stones and arrows without any regularity, and every thing was left to the desperate valor of the individual.

The next morning, not an Indian was seen. After the desperate effort of the day before, they were disheartened, and fled for refuge to the most hidden and inaccessible recesses of the mountains. The Spaniards, separating into small parties, set out in pursuit of them, and began what in bloody derision they called the "hunt of the Indians." The latter resorted to every possible stratagem and took every imaginable precaution to escape detection, such as running a long distance, each one stepping in the track of the one before, so

as to make it look as though only one person had passed, and remove all suspicion that the path led to a place of refuge; but the Spanish pursuers acquired such skill that the slightest sign enabled them to scent their game. It is revolting to relate the horrors committed by the Spaniards on that hunt, and no one would believe the story, if it had not been told by an eye-witness and a Spaniard, who by his cry of horror at their enormities, and by the infamy he freely and strongly casts on their authors, proves how the hearts of good Spaniards bled on their account. But we must not forget that the greatest part of the colonists was taken from the dregs of society, the refuse of prisons and galleys; and in the thunder of savage yells, the few harmonious voices were unheard and indistinct. It was desired to inspire such general terror that the whole tribe would surrender at discretion, and no means to accomplish this design was too repulsive. One of the most common cruelties was to cut off a prisoner's hands and send them as bloody messages to his relatives and friends, calling on them to surrender. Las Casas says that the number of those whose hands were cut off was past belief. The most of them fell exhausted by the pain and loss of blood, and died on the way.

The Spaniards seemed to delight in trying new and ingenious ways of torturing the Indians. They erected gibbets so low that the victim's feet touched the ground, in order that by less strain of the body on the noose, the agony might be longer and greater. Among other atrocities, Las Casas relates, that at one time they hanged thirteen together, in memory of Christ and the twelve apostles; and while the poor creatures were hanging half-dead, they cut them to pieces with their swords, to try their strength and the quality of their weapons; they then piled dry straw around them, and, lighting it, made a gay bonfire of the dead and dying. The gallows was the ordinary punishment of the poor people. The caciques and more important persons were reserved for a more select death,—on gridirons, to which they were fastened, and broiled over a slow fire. I once saw five of these gridirons, says the good bishop, with a chief fastened on each one, and the screams of the sufferers were a torment to hear. The captain, annoyed by their yells, which kept him from sleeping, gave orders to strangle them. But the sheriff in charge of the execution had no notion of their ending so plebeianly, and with his own hands stuffed all their mouths with chips, so that the captain should

not be annoyed by their cries, and then returned to poke the fire and enjoy their lingering death.*

The history of the venerable Las Casas is filled with such facts and details, and others still more horrid and revolting. "All these things," he says, "and others revolting to human nature, I saw, and I saw them with my own eyes; and now I hardly dare relate them, almost tempted not to believe myself, and to think they occurred in a dream."†

But neither fears of torture, nor the constant cruel executions, were able to overcome the Indians' fidelity to their cacique; and Esquibel saw that he would have to depopulate the whole province before he could completely subjugate it, if the natives knew that Cotabanama was alive and at large. That cacique had retired with his wife and children to the little island of Saona, where he was living in a vast cavern in the midst of a labyrinth of rocks and forests. A caravel arriving from San Domingo with provisions for the camp, Esquibel determined to make use of it to hunt the cacique. He knew that Cotabanama kept a watchful look-out, and that Indian sentinels were posted on every height of the island, to watch each movement of the caravel. He, therefore, embarked at night, with fifty soldiers, and arrived at Saona a little before daylight, anchored behind a high rock which intercepted all view of the caravel, and landed forty men before the cacique's sentinels had any suspicion of their presence. Two of these sentinels, taken by surprise, fell into the Spaniards' hands, and were taken before Esquibel, who poniarded one of them on the spot, with his own hand, in order to let the other see what he had to expect unless he blindly obeyed orders; and he had the second one put in irons to act as guide.

Knowing that the cacique was concealed not far off, the Spaniards were soon on his tracks, every one anxious for the distinction of arresting him. The road forking, all kept to the right, except Juan Lopez, a soldier of great intrepidity, and one of the most experienced and cruel hunters of the Indians, who alone took the path to the left. This path wound around hills covered with such thick brush that it was impossible to see any thing half-a-bow-shot off. Coming to the entrance of a narrow pass between two walls of rocks and thick trees, Lopez found himself face to face with twelve Indian

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. ix.

† *Id.* lib. ii, cap. xxvii.

warriors armed with bow and arrows, coming in his direction, and marching, as was their custom, in single file, one after another. Trusting to the watchfulness of their sentinels, and not supposing there was a White Man on the island, the warriors stood as if petrified with surprise and fear, and not daring to move, supposing that there were many more behind. They might have easily transfixed him with their arrows, but they lost their presence of mind. The Spaniard, aware of the effect of surprise and fear on the savages, boldly advanced and asked where Cotabanama was; and they replied, in a tremble, that he was in their rear, and drew aside to let him pass. As soon as the cacique was ware of a Spaniard, he laid his hand on his bow; but Lopez rushed upon him, and struck him with his sword before he had time to draw the string. The other Indians, struck with a panic, all fled. Cotabanama, frightened at the blood pouring from his wound, cried, "I am Juan de Esquivel," calling for defence and safety on the pledge of friendship exchanged with the Spanish commander in exchanging names. But Lopez's only answer was to seize him by the hair with his left hand, and with his right hand to raise his sword to run it to the hilt into his body, if the cacique had not pushed it aside with his hand, and, grappling with the Spaniard, he threw him on the ground. The struggle was long and violent, for both were of athletic strength. The sword lay beneath them, and Cotabanama, though bleeding profusely from his wound, pressed with his whole weight on his adversary, and tried to grasp him by the neck, and strangle him. But in the mean time, the Spaniards who had taken the other road were close by, and, attracted by the noise of the contest, ran to the spot, and found their comrade panting and half-strangled in the powerful grasp of the Indian giant. They all fell upon the unhappy cacique, bound him like a wild beast, and dragged him, all bleeding, to a village near by. They discovered his secret cavern, but his wife, informed by the fugitive Indians of his capture, had fled with her children to hide in another part of the island. They found in the cavern an iron chain which had been used to hold some Indian prisoners, who had succeeded in breaking it, and attacking the three Spaniards guarding them, had killed them, and taken refuge on the island. Near the chain were hung the swords of the three Spaniards, which the Indians had brought to the cacique as trophies of their valor. This chain was put on Cotabanama's hands.

The hunters thought they deserved some diversion after the labor of discovering and capturing this rich prey, and the diversion chosen was this. In the village square, to which they dragged the prisoner, they raised a pyramid of trunks of trees, laid crosswise like a gridiron, on which they determined to broil the giant. But, on further reflection, they renounced the pleasure of this sacrifice, because they thought such death too obscure for one of his rank. They, therefore, put him on board of the caravel and conveyed him, in chains, to San Domingo. On his arrival in that city, the streets were crowded with those who flocked to see the giant, of whom report told such terrible marvels; but he was no longer recognizable after all he had suffered from loss of blood, ill-treatment, and anguish of heart. But neither his appearance, which indicated that he had only a few more days to live, nor the thought that he had been placed beyond the ability of doing any harm, could arouse in Ovando a sentiment of pity or generosity towards his vanquished enemy, whose only crime had been the defending of his people and his territory; and he had him ignominiously hanged in a public square of San Domingo, like the vilest criminal. Thus perished the last sovereign prince of Hayti, and his death terminated the attempts of the Indians to maintain their independence and liberty. Of the flourishing population who lived in happiness on the island when the White Men came, scarce one-sixth remained. All the rest had perished, some by the edge of the sword, some by blows of clubs, many by starvation in the mountains and caves to which they had fled. Those that survived, stupefied by the accumulation of evils that had fallen on them, with the resignation of despair, succumbed to a slow death under the weight of labor and ill-treatment, in the fields, the mines, or whatever they were condemned to by the cruelty of their taskmasters.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Departure from Jamaica.—Short stay at San Domingo.—Columbus returns to Spain.—His sickness, poverty, and distress.—Isabella's death (1504).

LET us now return to the Bay of Santa Gloria, where the castaways were hurrying on board of the two vessels that were to take them off. The admiral embarked on one with those who had kept faithful, and the rebels on the other; and on the 28th of June, they took to the open sea. They were scarcely out of the bay when the wind became adverse, and the same crossing which Mendez with the frailest canoes had been able to make in three days, cost the admiral no less than a month of fatigue and effort, with two good caravels furnished with every thing needed. Finally, on the 3rd of August, they touched land at the little island Beata. From there to San Domingo the currents are so strong that ships are often obliged to remain whole months at anchor, waiting for a strong wind from a favorable point. In apprehension of this, Columbus dispatched a letter overland to Ovando, to advise him of his arrival, and dispel the suspicions he knew he entertained as to his coming. But, contrary to its usual practice, the wind did not keep them long in waiting, and, resuming their voyage August 13th, 1504, desirous enough of rest, as Fernando says,* they entered the harbor of San Domingo.

The report of the admiral's arrival spread quickly through the city, and the people flocked from all sides to look at him again. This was the same people that, a short time before, had loaded him with curses and revilings, and applauded his fall and imprisonment with savage delight. But now the greatness of his misfortune seemed to overcome his enemies' hatred, and every countenance expressed sympathy. Even Ovando went out to meet him, accom-

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cviii.

panied by the principal persons of the colony, gave him a most courteous reception, and claimed him as a guest in his house. But this was the peace of the scorpion, to use Fernando's expression; for, whilst he made a great show of friendship and compassion, he was hypocritically seeking for a chance to wound him. Nor is this any wonder, considering the kind of man he was, and the opposition between his interests and the admiral's.

His appointment as governor of the New World had been fixed for two years, as it was said, for the purpose of quieting the excited feelings of the colonists, and preparing them for the return of Christopher Columbus. He well knew that this was a device to beguile the admiral and Isabella his protector, and that in the mind of Ferdinand it was settled that Columbus should never go back as governor of the New World; but yet he could not but look with an eye of jealousy on the returning affection of the colony for him, because whatever ground Columbus recovered, was a lessening of his own chances for a prolonged administration. A man of fine education and an experienced courtier, Ovando knew how to hide the gall of his mind under an amiable smile. On the other hand, Queen Isabella had complained greatly of his refusal to allow Columbus to enter his harbor, when he sought shelter from an impending storm, and, consequently, it was to his interest by present hospitality to cause his former harshness to be forgotten.

Whilst, then, he was making these demonstrations of friendship and sympathy, on the pretext that Porras's revolt had occurred within the limits of his jurisdiction, and the right to take cognisance of the facts therefore belonged to him, he set free that rebel, who was a prisoner on board of the caravel, referring his case in Spain to Fonseca and the other directors of Indian affairs. He also talked of trying and punishing such of the admiral's men as had taken up arms in his defence, and gone out to battle, wounding and killing several of their countrymen. The admiral strongly resented this enormous pretence of Ovando's, and to convince him of his error, read to him their Majesties' letters patent of March 14th, 1502, conferring on him absolute power, and civil and criminal jurisdiction over all that took part in his expedition, from the day of sailing till their return. Ovando listened with much courtesy and attention, and then, with a fine smile, remarked that this authority was limited to his vessels and such new lands as he should discover, but did not

extend to Jamaica, which depended on the government of San Domingo.* But the matter went no further.

This hypocritical war on him under the mask of cordial hospitality, and finding himself constantly watched at every step and word, and not only himself, but all those that stood faithfully by him, made him wish to shorten his stay at San Domingo as much as possible. A still stronger motive for leaving and hurrying back to Spain, was his grief at the state to which his dear island was reduced, that he might see the queen and appeal to her justice for a remedy. Whoever will consider Columbus's tenderness of heart, and remembers his fatherly affection for Hispaniola, as the one who generated it to the knowledge of mankind, and always hoped to be able to regenerate it to the benefits of civilization and religion, will easily understand how his heart must have bled at the wretched spectacle now presented by this unhappy island.

He, accordingly, hastened his departure. With the small amount of his revenues which he found collected, he patched and equipped the vessel which had brought him from Jamaica, and chartered another. Most of those who had accompanied him on his expedition, chose to remain in Hispaniola, and as they were destitute of every thing, ragged, and in complete want, he supplied their needs out of his own purse; and, likewise, advanced the money for the passage of such as preferred to return to their country. He made no distinction between those who had been faithful to him and the others who had sought to take away his life; but regarded all with the same eye of a father, embraced all in the warmth of his charity. On the ship he had chartered, he sailed with his son Fernando and his domestics; and embarked on the other such of his companions as wished to return, and placed it under the command of his brother Bartholomew. They sailed on the 12th of September, but before they were two leagues from port, a sudden squall carried away the mast of the admiral's caravel. He then went on board of the other ship with his party, and continued the voyage, sending the damaged caravel back to San Domingo. After this first peril, the weather became fair, and continued so for more than a month, leading them to hope for a prosperous termination of that disastrous expedition. But, on the 18th of October, a furious storm came on, and when it

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cviii. — *Letter of Columbus to his Son Diego.*

began to be calm after that, and their hopes had returned, a sudden whirlwind broke the main-mast into four pieces. The admiral was confined to his bed by his usual attack of gout. The adelantado's energy and skill, aided by the admiral's suggestions, repaired the damage by raising the yard for a mast and strengthening it with planks from the fore and after cabins fastened around it with strong lines. They suffered still greater damage in another storm a few days later, which sprang the fore-mast. In this crippled state, but with no new danger, they finally, on the 7th of November, cast anchor in the port of San Lucar di Barrameda.*

From there, Columbus had himself conveyed to Seville, whence, after a short rest, he hoped to repair to the court. But, safe from sea, troubles of another kind awaited him on land; all comfort and repose was to be denied him during the few months that remained of his painful life. As to his physical sufferings, it is sufficient to remember that he returned to Spain at the commencement of a winter which, all the historians of the time tell us, was the most severe in Spain within the memory of man. We may imagine the effect of its severity on one who in a warm climate had been constantly confined to his bed with most painful spasms in the joints, which never left him a moment of repose day or night. But great as were his bodily pains, they were never equal to his mental distress.

Ovando had been ordered not only to reinstate Columbus, and the agents he appointed, in all his rights on the revenues and commerce of Hispaniola, but also to examine his accounts and ascertain the damages he had sustained by his imprisonment and the sequestration of his property, so that he might be fully repaid and indemnified. But we have already frequently seen how the royal orders in Columbus's favor were carried out. He was freely and openly defrauded of his rights, and the little that was collected remained mostly in Ovando's hands. Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, Columbus's agent, forwarded his complaint to the court, and the queen, ever solicitous for the concerns of Columbus, under date of November 27, wrote to the governor repeating the order to settle the admiral's claims in accordance with right and justice; but as usual, her words were thrown to the wind.†

* Fernando Colombo, cap. cviii.—Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxxvi.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. vi, cap. xii.

† Navarrete, tom. ii, Doc. cli, clii.

His agents became discouraged, and no longer ventured to complain, but contented themselves with what they could collect. In his short stay at San Domingo, he discussed this matter with Ovando, and had, as he expresses it, a violent quarrel with him,* but the queen's star was now setting, and the complaints he might make in person in Spain would no longer be regarded.

The little which his agents had been able to collect had enabled Diego Mendez to provide the vessel which he sent to Jamaica, and secure his passage to Europe with the admiral's dispatches. When Columbus discussed the unpleasant subject with Ovando in person, he could get together only 4,000 castellanos, whereas he was assured on all sides that there ought to have been eleven or twelve thousand.† There were, at least 10,000,000 maravedis due him annually, as he asserts and swears in his letter to his son Diego.‡ The 4,000 castellanos were soon spent in providing the ships for his return to Europe, and for the wants of his men, loyal or rebellious, who were on his hands, and all whose wants he had to relieve. Hence, on arriving in Europe, he was entirely without money, and compelled to ask for a loan from any one who would aid him.§ He, therefore, repeatedly urged his son Diego to be saving of the little money he sent him, as he was living for the present by the aid of others. The names of Francisco Bibarol, Francesco Grimaldi, Francesco Doria, and two other Italians, Pantaleone and Agostino, who by their signatures and money relieved the wants of the discoverer of the New World, are deserving of grateful mention.||

In this penury, and still more distressed by apprehension of the future, unable to proceed to the court to present his claims and arguments in person, he wrote letters on letters from his bed to their Majesties, to his friends, and especially to his son Diego, claiming his just rights which were so shamefully trampled on, recommending himself to the active zeal of his friends and his son, and suggesting means and arguments for obtaining justice. Not less loud was his complaint of the injustice to his crew, left as they were, in rags and starving in the streets of Seville, without any portion of so many months' pay that was due. These unfortunate men, sent from one office to another, put off from day to day, ashamed and disheartened,

* *Letter to his Son Diego*, Dec. 13, 1504. † *Ib.* ‡ Dated Nov. 21, 1504.

§ *Letters to his Son*, Dec. 1 and 21, 1504.

|| See his letters to his son Diego, of Dec. 13 and 29, 1504.

with no acquaintances or protectors, continually applied to him, and while he acknowledged that many of them deserved something quite different from reward, he looked on them all with the eye of a father, and in his greatest distress, used the little money he was able to obtain for his own needs, to relieve their sufferings. And when in despair of ever drawing any thing out of the offices in Seville, they resolved to apply directly to the court, he did all in his power, by letters, and by the intervention of his friends, to have their just claims allowed.*

But yet the least of his troubles was the enormous damage inflicted on his interests: what most afflicted him and drew from him the strongest complaint, was the loss of his offices and dignities, their rights and privileges. The government of the Indies was the trophy of his victories, and so long as he was deprived of that, he felt humiliated, as though a stain was attached to his name; and this alone, laying every other consideration aside, was enough to rob his soul of repose; † and he demanded his reinstatement with untiring persistence.

Another reason for wishing to be reinstated in the government of the Indies, was the abuses he had seen committed in Hispaniola under his successors' administration. The Indians were as his own children; with infinite labor he had generated them to the knowledge of the Old World, and his heart bled at the slaughter that was made of them. He had hoped to regenerate them to the faith of Christ, and they were killed like dogs; he had hoped to attract and enamour them with the beauties and truths of the Gospel, and fresh examples and reasons were daily put before their eyes, to make them abominate the religion and name of Christian. "The Indies are lost," he cried out in his grief, "the fire is at a thousand points;" ‡ and his letters are filled with prayers that a remedy may be applied in time.

As soon as he arrived in Spain he had written a long letter to the king on the affairs of the Indies, and made such suggestions as seemed to him suited to the seriousness of the evil, but no reply was made to him; § only through his son fair words were sent him. He was distressed at this silence, and longed for an answer. "I shall be much pleased to receive a letter from Their Highnesses, and be in-

* Letters of Nov. 21 and 28, and Dec. 29.

† Letter of Dec. 1.

‡ Letter to his Son Diego, Dec. 1, and *passim*.

§ *Memoria* for his son Diego, in Marmocchi's *Raccolta*.

formed of their orders," he wrote on the 21st of November ; " I desire with all my heart an answer from Their Highnesses, and that you would take pains to obtain it," he repeated on the 28th ; " You must get an answer from Their Highnesses to my letters," he writes on the 1st of December : but the days went by, and he never received it.

He had returned to Spain in great dread of his enemies, knowing that there was too much ground for their charges and calumnies. The principal object of his expedition, the discovery of a passage at the Isthmus of Darien, had failed ; and the secondary object, the collection of gold, had likewise miscarried. He had, indeed, discovered the gold-mines of Veragua, which promised to be an inexhaustible fountain of wealth to Spain, but he brought back only words and hopes to Europe. He would have wished to bring gold too, but " I did not wish," he says, " to plunder the country and make the natives discontented. A good administration must first be established there, and then all the gold can be had without loss or scandal."*

His anxiety about his reception at the court, is shown by the delight he expressed to his son at the fair words just mentioned. " I have read your letter with the greatest pleasure, and what the King our Lord says ; for which you will kiss the King's hands. There is no doubt that I have served Their Highnesses with enough zeal and diligence to win paradise ; and if on any occasion I have committed an error, it has been because my knowledge and powers did not permit me to do more. Our Lord God, in such cases, requires of men a good will, and no more."†

Above all, he feared that the malice of his enemies and the boldness of the rebels might be able to distort the violent scenes which occurred in Jamaica, and turn them to an accusation against him, as in the case of Roldan's revolt, which made it all the easier for his enemies, and more dangerous for him, after the example and result of that event. The present rebels had stronger support than the former, because they had not only all the former rebels on their side, who would be glad to find further proofs that they were in the right, and have a chance to gratify their spite against

* *Memoria* for his son Diego, in Marmocchi's *Raccolta*.

† Letter of Nov. 21, 1504.

the hated Genoese; but there was also the relationship of Porras to Morales, the king's treasurer. Columbus wrote to the treasurer, sending him a copy of the petition of the Jamaica rebels, confessing their fault and imploring his pardon,* and asked as a favor, that he would not decide on what the rebels said without hearing him also; and soon afterwards, he wrote him again, and after that, he charged his son to remind him of this request. But in the meanwhile, Porras, the head and soul of the rebellion, moved about freely, because all the acts and writings in his case remained on board of the caravel which had to return to San Domingo, after springing her main-mast, and the officials in charge of Indian affairs refused to take up his case on the pretext that it was accompanied by no papers.

On all these accounts, as the silence of the sovereigns continued, which increased his suspicion and fear, he determined, at any cost, to proceed to the court, although his illness was so serious, and the excessive cold of that winter aggravated it so, that he knew and admitted that he exposed himself to the danger of remaining by the way.† To make his removal less painful, he determined to ask the canons of the Seville cathedral for the new mortuary litter lately constructed for bringing the body of Cardinal Mendoza. The good canons, assembled in chapter on the 26th of November, to discuss his request, consented on condition that Francisco Pinedo, treasurer of the navy, would be security that the litter was returned to the cathedral in good condition.‡ The credit of the discoverer of the New World had fallen so low that he was required to give security for the loan of a bier!§ The litter was got ready, and every thing prepared for him to enter, but the weather was so cold, and his infirmities so great, that he was obliged to yield to the remonstrance of his friends and give up the journey, "in order not to put his life in evident peril."||

Confined to his bed, he tried to complete in writing what he was unable to express orally to their Majesties, and wrote a long letter to his son, although his malady permitted him to write only at night, as his hands were not strong enough in the day-time; and he pointed out to him the course to be followed, the arguments and means

* Letter, Nov. 21.

† Ibid. Nov. 21, 28

‡ Ibid. Nov. 21.

§ Navarrete. *Col. Dipl.*, No. cliv.

| Letters, Dec. 1

to be used to overcome the cruel injustice done him. "The Indies are going to destruction," he cries, "the fire is at a thousand points; I have had nothing, and I receive nothing of the revenue I own there; no one will risk a claim for me in that country; I live on loans." Whilst he was groaning under the weight of so many physical and mental sufferings, a new blow inflicted a mortal wound on his soul. The letter to his son, from which we have just quoted, begins with these sad words: "Messengers arrive every day in numbers, and the news they bring me is so extraordinary that my hair stands up on my head, at hearing things so contrary to what my soul would wish." These words refer to the despairing reports which were circulated concerning the health of Queen Isabella; but when he was writing them, the soul of that holy woman had already flown to a better world, to receive the reward of her labors and sufferings in this life. She was already past hope when Columbus landed at San Lucar; and the terrible announcement, and the news that she was daily growing worse, undoubtedly aggravated his mental and physical sufferings. Columbus was informed of her death on December 3rd, and at once wrote to his son Diego a memorial of what he thought should be done at that moment. "It is important above all," the memorial begins, "to recommend the Queen our Lady to God with all your heart and with great devotion. Her life was always Catholic and holy, and directed in all things to His holy service; and for this reason we ought to believe that she is in His holy glory, without a shadow of longing for this harsh and painful world. The next thing is to apply yourself with zeal in every thing and everywhere for the service of the King our Lord, and labor to make him forget his grief. His Highness is the head of Christendom. Think of the proverb which says: When the head suffers, all the members languish. Therefore, all good Christians ought to pray for his health, so that he may live long; and we who are under greater obligation to serve him than others, ought to do it with more zeal and diligence."

"It is impossible," Irving observes, "to read this mournful letter without being moved by the simply eloquent yet artless language in which Columbus expresses his tenderness for the memory of his benefactress, his weariness under the gathering cares and ills of life, and his persevering and enduring loyalty towards the sovereign who was so ungratefully neglecting him. It is in these unstudied

and confidential letters that we read the heart of Columbus.*

The sickness which brought Isabella to her grave had been for a long time coming on, and, in the opinion of many, was caused by the fatigue of being so much on horseback in the Moorish war, particularly during the long and glorious siege of Malaga. But the latent germ was developed and matured by the great sorrows which afflicted her heart in such quick succession. After the death of Prince Juan, her only son, the hope of his parents and of the nation, there remained to solace her grief her eldest daughter, Isabella, for whom she had the greatest affection, and this daughter's son Miguel, by his uncle's death heir presumptive of the crown. But the infanta Isabella soon afterwards died too, and was quickly followed to the tomb by her little son. The afflicted mother had only the infanta Juana, married to the archduke Philip the Fair; and the unfortunate condition of this daughter in her ill-omened marriage, and the decay of her mental faculties, was an additional source of sorrow. Consequently, with all the splendor of the court, surrounded by the trophies of a glorious and successful reign, loved, or rather, adored, by all her subjects, Isabella led a most unhappy life, sunk day and night in a deep sadness which consumed her soul.† The mental depression she had fallen into, fomented and increased her bodily illness, so that it was regarded as incurable on its first manifestation. Her death was worthy of the holy and spotless life she had always led. "Let my body," she wrote in her last will, "be interred in the Monastery of St. Francis, in the Alhambra of Granada, in a sepulchre in the level ground, without other monument than a plain stone with the mortuary inscription. But I desire and direct, if my Lord the King selects for his own burial a church or monastery in any other part of my kingdom, that my body be carried thither and laid by the side of His Highness, so that the union which we enjoyed in our life, and which we hope our souls, through the mercy of God, may enjoy in heaven, shall be represented here by the union of our bodies in the earth." These words, as one of her panegyrists well remarks,‡ whilst they prove her humility of heart, give us the most delicate expression of conjugal love, united

* Irving, *Columbus*, bk. xviii, ch. ii.

† L. Marinei Siculi, *De Rebus Hisp. Memorabilibus*, lib. xxi.—Petri Martyri's, *Op. Ep.*, lib. xviii, cap. clxxiii.

‡ *Elogio de la Reina Católica*, por Diego Clemencia.

to the sweetest piety and tenderest melancholy. She died at Medina del Campo, November 26th, at the age of fifty-four years. It does not fall within my task to tell with what sorrow and distress all Spain followed the course of her illness, and wept over her death; nor yet to record her singular merits as queen, which not only made her most celebrated among all the women that have worn a crown, but place her on a level with the greatest monarchs recorded in history. Let it suffice for us to record what she did for the discovery of the New World, and her right to have her name indissolubly joined to that of Christopher Columbus.

The last remembrance left of her in connection with affairs of the New World, is her grief and indignation, when she heard of the horrors committed by Ovando. She was on her death-bed when the information was brought to her, and, speaking of it with indignation to Don Alvaro, the presiding justice, she said: "I intend Ovando for a position such as shall never have been occupied."* And when she saw that there was no hope of saving her life, with her dying lips she asked and obtained from King Ferdinand a promise that Ovando should be relieved from his government without delay.

But Ovando understood too well how to win Ferdinand's favor, by sending him increased revenues from the island; and for four years more he continued to tyrannize over the unfortunate natives of Hispaniola without interference.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Columbus has himself conveyed to the court.—His application is useless.—His death (1505-06).

WITH Isabella's death fell the only barrier that protected Columbus against the assaults of his enemies; and Fonseca and the others had an open field to act as their envy and hatred moved them. Columbus was aware of the danger, and on the very day that he learnt of the death of his protector, he sent Don Fernando, Don Bartholo-

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. iv, cap. iv.

mew, and Carvajal in haste to the court, to help Don Diego and the friends who were pleading his cause, in order that they might all together press around the king before the perfidy of his enemies had succeeded in controlling all his movements. In the memorial to Don Diego, which we have quoted from, well knowing that the best, and perhaps the only, means of influencing Ferdinand was his interest ; leaving his own rights in the back-ground, he instructed his son to insist especially on the disorderly condition of the government of Hispaniola, where there was a great quantity of gold belonging to the crown, and no one to take the trouble to send it to Europe ; and that he was freely defrauded on every side. That it was most important to take prompt measures, as the colonists were, for the most part, persons who would not stop at any risks, and some day or other would break out into such excesses that the evil would be past remedy. Repeating the proverb, that the owner's eye fattens the horse, he showed that no one could satisfy the want of a good government there so well as himself, as he had a direct interest in the good administration of those provinces ; and declares that always, as everywhere and in every thing, so long as his soul is not separated from his body, he will serve his Majesty with zeal and love.

While Don Fernando, Don Bartholomew, and Carvajal were on their way to court, Columbus wrote a letter about his voyage, for the Holy Father, who, as he had learnt, complained that he had not written to him. He sent a copy of the letter to Don Diego to be shown to the king and Fonseca, before it was dispatched, so as to prevent false imputations.*

In this anxiety, Columbus ended the year 1504, and began the new year, with no other comfort or hope than the zeal and activity of his sons and brother, and his few friends. Don Diego had resisted the desire of flying to his father's embrace, and had remained at court, the better to watch and defend his interest. For this his father was grateful, and gave him great praise.† Don Fernando was quite young ; yet his conduct during the fatigues and disasters of the voyage, proved that he possessed with all his vivacity, the calm judgment and good sense of a grown man.‡ Moreover, how-

* *Letters to Don Diego*, 21, 29 Dec., 1504, and 18, Jan., 1505.

† *Ibid*, 21 Nov., 1504.

‡ *Ibid*, 1. December.

ever little he was able to do, at least his report of the admiral's last voyage by a youth who had participated in such fearful events, could not fail to produce a great effect. It is sufficient to mention the name of Don Bartholomew; it would be superfluous to speak of his singular affection for his brother, and tell with what energy he labored in his cause. With regard to those not of his family, a frightful void had been made about Columbus in the last days of his life, in his final battle for his rights, when confined to his bed, and living on debt. Diego Mendez, the heroic officer, who had given so many proofs of his wonderful self-denial on the fourth voyage; Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, his trusty agent in Hispaniola; and a certain Geronimo, of whom, unfortunately, we know nothing beyond his name;—these, so far as appears from his letters to his son, are all that were actively and zealously working in his cause! If there had been others, there is no reason for his not mentioning them, as he speaks repeatedly of these three. Of powerful friends on whom he could rely, he mentions only Fr. Deza, the learned Dominican who had been his defender against the wise ignorance of his examiners at the Salamanca conference. His return from his fourth voyage was just at the time of Deza's promotion from the see of Palencia to the archbishopric of Seville.* Immediately after his return to Spain, Columbus sent his son to him, to remind him of his former friendship and protection, and beg him to take means to repair his wrongs; † he recommended to him his poor seamen who were angrily claiming from the court the pay that was due them; ‡ and after the death of Isabella, he again and more earnestly invoked his powerful aid, reminding him that it was owing to him that their Highnesses possessed the Indies, and he had retained him in Castile when he was determined to go away.§

Fonseca was elected to succeed Deza as bishop of Palencia, and transferred from Cordova. He was in Flanders at the time. Columbus was perfectly aware that he was the soul of the perfidious war made on him; but determined to try to tame the beast by a careful demonstration of joy on the occasion, and an act of great humiliation; and, on the 18th of January, he wrote to his son: "If the Bishop of Palencia has arrived, or when he arrives, tell him

* Ortiz de Zuniga, *Anales*, 1504, § iii.

† *Letter*, 21 Dec., 1504.

‡ *Ibid*, 29 Dec.

§ *Ibid*, 21 Dec.

how rejoiced I am at his advancement, and if I come to the court, I will stay with His Grace, will he will he, and that we must renew our former brotherly ties ; and that he cannot withdraw from it, for my services will make it so."

For a time, Columbus took comfort in the hope that the queen had mentioned him in her will, and, at first, it was so reported. He charged his son most earnestly to ascertain the truth from Fr. Deza ; but in this also he was disappointed. The queen had not remembered him in any way. As her silence is too contrary to the love and veneration she had always felt for him, and her interest in his affairs to the very last, we must attribute it to the delicacy of her noble heart, which was unwilling to seem to impose her wishes on her husband ; but I have no doubt that, with her dying words to Ferdinand, she fulfilled the last duties of a tender friendship, and of a loyal and just sovereign towards the discoverer of the New World.

Meanwhile, the ships returned to Europe on their annual voyage from the Indies, laden with gold ; but with nothing for the admiral. " Never was such injustice known," he wrote to his son ; " 60,000 pesos left for me have disappeared."* In the same letter he wrote : " His Highness may believe that he will find there is a hundred for one, in the increase of his dominions, his power, and his revenues, for what he gives me, and that what has been done can stand no comparison with what can yet be done." And, for the fourth and fifth time, he begs that he may be heard before bishops are sent to Hispaniola, " in order that it may not happen again, as always before, that when they think they are settling things, they are upsetting them instead." But neither his request concerning bishops was listened to, nor did the king pay any attention to his protestation of devotion, his prayers, or his claims.

The way in which the government treated the discoverer of the New World, caused much talk in Seville, and every person of sense and feeling, who was not bound by some tie of interest to his enemies, condemned the indignity with greater severity in proportion as he comprehended more fully the importance and difficulty of the discovery he had conceived and executed. We have an instance of this in the conduct of Amerigo Vespucci towards Colum-

* *Letter*, 5 February, 1505.

bus. Their acquaintance dated from the time of preparing for the admiral's second voyage, one of the ships for which was furnished by Giannotto Berardi of Florence, a wealthy ship-owner in Spain, by whom Vespucci was employed as book-keeper. Vespucci had a strong natural bent for adventure and the glory of voyages and discoveries, and seized the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the wonderful man, who, by his marvellous voyage, had filled the world with his fame; and was ever after bound to him by the ties of affection and veneration. Afterwards, yielding to his natural inclination, he gave up banks and registers, and joined Ojeda on his expedition to the lands which Columbus discovered on his third voyage.* Affairs connected with navigation called Vespucci to court whilst Columbus was lying neglected and discouraged at Seville: and before leaving, he visited the admiral to make a proffer of his services wherever they could be of most use. Columbus gave him a letter to Don Diego, in which, relating how Vespucci had always tried to be civil to him, he calls him a very polite man, to whom fortune had been unfriendly as to many others, and whose labors had not been as fruitful as expected. He frequently repeats that Amerigo showed a strong desire to be of use to him, and would do every thing for that purpose. He tells his son to advise with his uncle Bartholomew how they can employ Vespucci, but secretly, so that it may not be suspected.† Columbus was reduced to this, that it might injure any one to be known as his friend! It is supposed that Vespucci's offer was to give his testimony that the lands discovered by the admiral on his third voyage were really of inexhaustible richness; and thus, by raising the value of his services, somewhat improve his fallen fortune. But it was the fate of Christopher Columbus that the account given by Vespucci to the Spanish court on the marvellous wealth and beauty of the lands discovered in the West Indies, was of no assistance to him, and the same account made by Vespucci in writing to his friends, when published robbed him of the glory of leaving his name to the countries discovered at the cost of so great labor and distress.

The admiral's pains were somewhat mitigated by the end of the winter, and the mild days of spring brought such relief that in May he at last believed he might carry out his wish of proceeding to the

* See bk. ii, ch. ix.

† *Letter*, 5 February, 1505.

court, which was then at Segovia.* He arrived exhausted with fatigue, sunk in melancholy, and worn out by labor more than years. His brother Bartholomew was with him, but, with the exception of his sons and his few friends, no one seemed aware of his presence. Yet at the court were most of those same persons who at Barcelona, a few years before, had vied in exalting the wonders of his genius, striven for the honor of pressing his hand that they might claim the honor of his friendship. But such is the usual custom of courts, and it is seldom that the crowd of courtiers fail to find in the sovereign's words, or in the bare interpretation of his thoughts, the rule and law of their enthusiasm or their hostility.

King Ferdinand received him with protestations of great affection; but under the show of courtesy it was easy to discover the coldness of his heart. The admiral stayed to give him a detailed account of his voyage; described the great extent of the new countries he had discovered, and the incredible wealth of the region of Veragua; related the revolt of Porras, and the distress suffered on the voyage. Ferdinand listened to all attentively, but coldly; and Columbus, with his heart frozen by that coldness, felt more bitterly than ever the loss of Isabella, who showed by her enthusiasm and her tears, that she comprehended all that he had done and suffered.

Some days later, the admiral formally renewed his claims in writing. The letter was conceived in respectful, but firm and frank terms, such as the consciousness of his achievements and of his rights might dictate. I give the commencement as a sample:

“Most Potent King:

“God our Lord sent me hither miraculously to serve Your Highness. I say miraculously, for I had presented my undertaking to the king of Portugal, who was more intent on discoveries than any one else, and yet in my case, his eyes, ears, and all his senses were so closed that in fourteen years I was unable to make him understand my meaning. I say miraculously also, because I received from three princes letters of invitation, which the Queen (whom may God have in His glory) saw, and Doctor Villalano read. . . .”† The reply was worthy of King Ferdinand's wily and treacherous policy. He said he was well aware how much Spain owed to Columbus; but

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxxvii.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. vi, cap. xiii.

† Navarrete, *Col. D* pl. i, No. lviii.

his claim embraced so many things, as titles, government, pecuniary rights, accounts, indemnification, and various other points, that it was necessary to submit the matters in question to the judgment of some prudent and competent person. The admiral consented, and proposed for arbitrator Father Deza, who was both his friend and a favorite of the sovereign. But in accepting this arbitration, he declared distinctly that he meant to submit to his judgment only what concerned his revenues and rights on the articles and merchandise that came from the Indies. As to his titles and his right to the government of the Indies, he did not consider himself bound to submit the matter to any discussion, for the instruments publicly drawn up, and the signature of the king and queen, clearly showed what he was entitled to. Nothing is known of the arbitration; most probably it fell through, on account of the exclusion of the main matter King Ferdinand wanted to have included.

The admiral again and again supplicated and insisted on his claims, and the king always replied with his usual smile of courtesy, and in general terms promised that he would look into them; "but as to actions," says Las Casas, "the king not merely showed him no signs of favor, but, on the contrary, placed every obstacle in his way; and, at the same time, was never wanting in complimentary expressions."

The poor old man, tired, disheartened, in despair at the failure to obtain his rights from justice, tried to see if he could succeed any better by leaving every thing to the king's generosity. He went to him, and declared himself averse to processes and law-suits; that he was prepared to place all his privileges and deeds in the king's hands, and accept, instead of the revenues secured by them, such sum as his Majesty should deem suitable. Only he begged the affair might be settled promptly, in order that he might retire to some quiet corner to seek the repose demanded by his fatigues and infirmities.

King Ferdinand replied that he had no intention of depriving himself of his services; that he wished to give him full satisfaction; that he could not forget that he owed the Indies to him; and that he not only wanted to give him what legally belonged to him in virtue of his privileges, but even to compensate him out of the estates of the crown.*

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. vi, cap. xiv.

After so clear and formal a promise, it would be a want of all respect to raise further doubts, and it was necessary to await in silence. In this position, Columbus followed the court for many months, always expecting, but never seeing any thing, except that the king was always generous in fine words and great regards. Meanwhile, as the obligation to the admiral belonged more especially to the queen, his claim was submitted to the *Junta de Descargos*, a sort of tribunal appointed on the death of every king, for the purpose of executing his last will and discharging his debts. But the judges were appointed by the king, and Ferdinand's wishes were too well known for them to decide in favor of Columbus; and on the other hand, the admiral's rights were so clear that they could not satisfy the king's wishes without great scandal. The tribunal examined the case twice over, without coming to any decision. "It was believed," says Las Casas, "that if Ferdinand could have done so with a quiet conscience and without disgracing his name, he would have utterly disregarded every privilege which he and the queen had granted the admiral, and which had been so justly merited.* We may pass over the fear of conscience, which we know from other facts that Ferdinand was perfectly competent to regulate as his interest required; but we admit the force of the other apprehension. But all his wiles and precautions have failed to protect him from the infamy which has justly attached to his name.

Still, as an extenuating circumstance of his odious conduct, we must confess that even without his unlimited ambition, his suspicious character, and his want of faith, any sovereign would hesitate about restoring to Columbus all his dignities, privileges, and rights. The extent of the countries discovered immeasurably surpassed what had been expected or believed possible, and they were constantly increasing, till it was impossible to tell where they might end. Those regions were not only of immense extent, but they were also rich beyond any thing ever heard of. Spain, in her littleness and poverty, was nothing in comparison; and here was a subject placed in a position of more power and wealth than the sovereign himself. The loyalty of Christopher Columbus was beyond a shadow of suspicion; but would his successors be able to resist the temptation of throwing off the yoke of subjection, especially favored, as in this instance, by their enormous distance?

* *Hist. Ind.* lib. ii, cap. xxxvii.

But the immutable rules of justice exclude all laws of suspicion and fear, and if the instinct of self-preservation and his prudence as sovereign counselled Ferdinand to provide for future possibilities, it was not by breach of faith, perjury, and the blackest ingratitude that he ought to have secured the safety of his crown.

The health of Columbus received another blow from this constant dragging himself after the court, always expecting and ever disappointed ; and he was again confined to his bed at Valladolid. The sweet illusious and glorious dreams of other days had vanished ; his mind could find no ground for comfort or hope ; and his body was worn out by so many troubles. Reduced to this condition, he thought his personal withdrawal might soften his enemies' fierceness and Ferdinand's hard heart, and he wrote another strong appeal to the king, surrendering all his rights and privileges into his hands, and only asking that his son Diego might be appointed to the government of which he had been so unjustly deprived. He felt that his life's flame was nearly spent, and his whole thought was bent on securing to his family at least the glorious trophies of his discoveries.

"It is a matter that concerns my honor," he wrote to him. "Your Majesty may do as you think proper with all the rest ; give or take, as may appear for your advantage, and I shall be satisfied. I believe that the worry caused by the delay of my suit is the main cause of my ill-health." At the same time, he had his son Diego present a petition to the king, making the same requests as his father, and offering to accept for councillors in the government of Hispaniola such persons as his Majesty should choose to appoint, and be guided in every thing by their advice.

Ferdinand received this petition with his usual acknowledgment of the merits of Columbus, and his firm intention of rewarding him, as he deserved, for his services to Spain ; but went no step beyond this general assurance. "The more they appealed to him," says Las Casas, "the more favorably he replied ; but he always continued his system of putting them off, in the hope of tiring out their patience, and making them renounce their privileges, and accept titles and estates in Castile in compensation for them." In fact, he tried the admiral with the offer of the fief of Carrion de los Condes with a pension from the crown. Columbus indignantly refused the impudent offer ; but after that proposal, he lost all hope of getting justice from Ferdinand ; and from his couch of suffering, he relieved

himself in a letter to his faithful friend Archbishop Diego Deza, in these words :

“ It seems that His Highness does not think fit to fulfil the promises which I received from him and the Queen (who is now in the bosom of glory) under the faith of their word and their seal. To contend against his will would be contending against the wind. I have done all that I ought to have done, and leave the rest to God.”*

“ The cold and calculating Ferdinand,” Irving says, “ beheld this illustrious man sinking under infirmity of body, heightened by that deferred hope which maketh the heart sick. A little more delay, a little more disappointment, and a little longer infliction of ingratitude, and this loyal and generous heart would cease to beat ; he should then be delivered from the just claims of a well-tryed servant, who, in ceasing to be useful, was considered by him to have become importunate.”†

A momentary gleam of hope shone on the dying old man, on hearing that the infanta Juana had arrived from Flanders, with her husband, Archduke Philip, to take possession of the kingdom of Castile. He hoped to find in the daughter a little of the magnanimous protection and justice which he had always found in her mother's great soul. King Ferdinand went with all the court to receive the new queen at Laredo ; and Columbus would gladly have gone with them, to renew at the feet of the daughter the assurance of the loving obedience he had always had for her mother ; but a violent relapse confined him to his bed worse than ever. He sent his brother Bartholomew in his stead, to present his homage and congratulations to the new sovereigns, giving him a letter expressing his great grief that he was not able to come in person to prove his devotion, but begging them to count him amongst their most faithful subjects. That for the moment he was a prey to cruel torture, but he nursed the hope of being yet in a condition to render them great service. He concluded by expressing a hope of seeing himself restored by them to his honors and estates, of which he had been unjustly deprived.‡

This was the last effort of that ardent and indomitable spirit,

* Navarrete, *Col. de Viajes*, tom. i.

† Columbus, bk. xviii, ch. iiii.

‡ Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, Supl. i, No. lxii.

which, aroused by a dazzling light of hope, forgetful of the prostration of years and infirmities, on its very death-bed, yielded to the seductions of hope and the confidence of youth, and spoke of new and extraordinary enterprises it would have undertaken.

The two sovereigns arrived on the 7th of May, and a few days later gave audience to Don Bartholomew. They received him with great kindness, gave much attention to the claims of the admiral, and led him to hope that his matter would be attended to, as soon as possible.*

Meanwhile, the misfortunes of Columbus were nearing their end. The momentary fire which for a brief space revived him, was extinguished. The *adelantado* had hardly left him when nature asserted her claims, and age and suffering weighed heavier than before on his enfeebled body. His illness grew daily more alarming, and soon there was no doubt of the mortal result that it would soon produce. On the 19th of May, the admiral himself perceived his hour approaching, and, calm and tranquil, with the faith and resignation of the righteous, he prepared for the great passage. But before he attained to this calm resignation, how many thoughts must have crowded his mind in that last struggle between life and death, and all full of inexpressible grief! The long years spent in running from one place to another to beg audience of kings, ministers, and grandees of the kingdom; the mockery and scorn with which he was received and repelled on every side; the struggles he underwent in support of his ideas; the fatigue and perils, and distress he suffered in carrying them out; and the grandeur of his achievements, and the enthusiasm he had aroused on every side! And now, after enriching Spain with so many regions and such treasures as no human tongue ever told of; after changing, by his discoveries, the face of the known world, doubling the known space of the globe,—he was now groaning in abandonment and contempt in a wretched lodging-house, and had to beg for a loan of money to buy a cot to die on! And those who had ridiculed his undertaking, were triumphing in wealth and ease, in power and honor!

Sending for a notary, Columbus placed in his hands a codicil. After his will of 1498, of which we gave a full report in its place, he had written another will in 1502, which he confided to the care

* Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. vi, cap. liv.

of his friend Father Gasper Goricio, a Carthusian of Seville ; but of this second will we have not been able to speak, as it never came to light. The family kept it always jealously concealed, and most probably it was destroyed soon after the death of Christopher Columbus. The reason of this, I believe, has been rightly conjectured by Spotorno. When Columbus drew up the will of 1498, his star was still shining brightly at the court and in Spain ; and he used expressions full of gratitude and affection for his sovereigns and for Spain, and desired and commanded his sons to nurse like sentiments. But when he drew the will of 1502, his star had begun to sink. They had imprisoned him, robbed him of his government, opened the field to every adventurer that came forward to follow in his tracks and snatch from him the fruits of his fatigues and his glory, and on every side he saw sure signs of his increasing misfortune. Distressed by the present, without hope for the future, before starting on the new voyage which he intended to make around the world, he determined to make a new will. In that distressed state of mind, instead of enthusiasm for the greatness and glory of Spain, which we find in his first will, the poor old man, in this second will, was probably unable to refrain from speaking bitterly of the ingratitude and injustice of which he was the victim. It was on this account that his family hid this will from every eye. Even in the codicil we see the great bitterness which poisoned his soul. In the will of 1498, he had magnified the generosity of the king and queen, who courageously took up so great an enterprise as his discovery ; but in the codicil he boldly asserts that he " had made them a present of the Indies, as a thing of his own ;"* and having to mention the line of division between Spanish and Portuguese possessions, he indignantly rejects the agreement between Spain and Portugal, and claims the dividing line proposed by him, and established by the Supreme Pontiff.

The codicil was all in his hand, and bore date of the 25th of August of the previous year, 1505. Among the subscribing witnesses, particular mention should be made of Bartholomew Fiesco, the brave captain who accompanied Diego Mendez in crossing on a frail canoe from Jamaica to Hispaniola. He named, as executors of his will, his son Diego, his brother Bartholomew, and Juan de

* Navarrete, *Col. Dipl.*, No. clviii.

Porras, treasurer-general of Biscay. The codicil declared and confirmed the dispositions concerning his heirs and the entail in his family which were so fully set out when speaking of the will of 1498,* that it is unnecessary to dwell on them here. Even concerning his recommendations and scruples about Beatriz Enriquez, the mother of his son Fernando, I see no reason for adding any thing to what was said in the ninth chapter of the first book.†

With a delicacy of thought which shows how scrupulous his conscience was in the slightest duties, and how grateful his memory of the least kindness, after signing the codicil, he notes in his own hand, certain small sums which he desires his heir to pay to some persons who at various times had given him some little aid, or to their children and heirs, if they were no longer living; and, out of exquisite delicacy, he had ordered these sums to be paid without making known from whom they came. Amongst others, there was a poor Jew of Lisbon, whose name even he had forgot, though he distinctly recalled the pleasure the Jew had given him so many years before, and in the note, he described him as a poor Jew of Lisbon living near the Jewry Gate.‡

In continuation, he gives his son much advice how his property should be administered, particularly recommending him to keep a monthly account of the household expenses in his own hand; because, he said, want of regularity in this matter involves loss of money, and converts servants into so many enemies.§

After scrupulously fulfilling all the obligations of loyalty, affection, or justice, he turned all his thoughts to Heaven; and asking, of his own accord, for the consolations of religion, with the calm

* See book ii, ch. i.

† There is still another codicil attributed to Columbus, called the *military*, because made in the form and under the circumstances allowed by law to soldiers on the point of death. It is written on a fly-leaf of an *Office of Our Lady*, said to have been presented to Columbus by Pope Alexander VI. This book is in the Corsini library at Rome, and was purchased at a book-stall for four sous. This codicil is dated May 4, 1506, and by it, Christopher Columbus, on the failure of lawful heirs, makes the Republic of Genoa his general legatee and devisee. But the proofs that it is apocryphal seem to me so clear that I think it enough to mention it in a note.

‡ *Memoria ó apuntacion del Codicilo, de mano propria del Almirante. Col. Dipl. N. clxviii.*

§ *Memorial ajustado sobre la propiedad mayorasga que fundó D. Cr. Colon. § cexlviii.*



DEATH OF
COLUMBUS
VALLEJO
1892

resignation of a saint, he awaited his end. His last words were those of Christ expiring on the cross, "Into thy hands, O Lord! I commend my spirit."*

He died May 20th, the feast of the Ascension, 1506, at Valladolid, at the age of about seventy years.

The chains in which he had been brought back as a prisoner from the New World, which he had always kept hung up in his room, as a memorial of the reward bestowed for his services, he directed to be placed in his sepulchre after death, and his will was punctually executed. No one seemed aware of his passing away. The event of the day was the arrival of the young sovereigns, and the death of the discoverer of the New World passed without notice within the walls of the city where he died. A local chronicle, *Crónica de Valladolid*, which extends from 1333 to 1539, and collects every trifling detail of what occurred in the city, has not a word of mention of the death of Christopher Columbus, for the year 1506.†

But the oblivion with which the malice of his enemies succeeded in surrounding his person, was soon dispelled by the brilliant splendor of his fame, to which time gave ever increasing strength and vigor. The discoveries in the New World constantly grew in importance and extent, and the report of every new country discovered, shed additional rays of light on the name of him who first pointed out and opened the way to those regions. King Ferdinand himself was forced to yield to the growing influence of his fame, and ordered a monument erected to the man he had caused to expire in poverty and anguish in a lodging-house, with the inscription :

POR CASTILLA Y POR LEON
NUEVO MUNDO HALLO COLON—

For Castile and Leon
A New World found Columbus.

His body was laid, with modest obsequies, in the church of St. Francis, of the Minors Observantines, in Valladolid; but was soon after carried with pomp to the church of the Carthusians near Seville, and placed in the chapel of St. Ann. But even this was not a per-

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii, cap. xxxviii.—Fernando Colombo, cap. cviii.—Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, dec. i, lib. vi, cap. xv.

† See Roselly de Lorgues, *Hist. de Chr. Colombe*. liv. iv, ch. ix, §. 3.

manent resting-place. June 2nd, 1537, Doña Maria of Toledo, widow of Don Diego, son of Christopher Columbus, obtained from Charles V. permission to translate those sacred bones to San Domingo in Hispaniola. Her demand was founded on the expressed wish of the admiral himself. As this wish of Christopher Columbus is not mentioned in any document, it is supposed that the devout woman must have given a broad interpretation to the clause in his will of 1498, where he says: "My heir shall have a church erected on the island of Hispaniola . . . he shall also raise a chapel where Masses may be devoutly celebrated for the repose of my soul." However this may be, it is certain that no more suitable spot could have been selected for their resting-place. They were deposited, with great solemnity, in the largest chapel of the cathedral of San Domingo.

Nearly three centuries later, San Domingo came into the possession of France. The Spaniards, who were obliged to depart, could not bear to abandon to another nation the venerated bones of the discoverer of the New World, and wished to carry with them the treasure they piously prized. On the 20th of December, 1795, the day fixed for the sad ceremony, the clergy, the governor, and the people all assembled in the church, and disinterring those bones again, celebrated most solemn obsequies with all possible pomp, and then bore them to the sea. A vessel suited for the funeral ceremony received them, and transported them to Havana in Cuba, where the clergy, the governor, and the people repeated the funeral ceremonies with the same pomp, and deposited them in the largest temple of the city.

And now, in the year 1877, the telegraph announces to the world that, in excavating near the high altar of the cathedral of San Domingo, by a happy chance, they discovered the casket and bones of Christopher Columbus.* An authentic recognition of them was made in the presence of all the ecclesiastical, military, and civil authorities, and an immense crowd of people who thronged from every side to contemplate the last remains of the great Genoese.—And the translation of 1795?—In the first place, it should be known that, at various times, alterations have been made in the great chapel of the cathedral of San Domingo, and the altar has changed its place

* Belgrano Luigi, *Relazione alla Società Ligure di Storia patria sulla recente scoperta delle osse di Cristoforo Colombo.*

repeatedly; and also that in the same chapel were buried Don Diego, the son and direct successor of Christopher Columbus, and Don Luis, his grandson, and second successor in the government of the Indies. Now Mgr. Rocco Cocchia, bishop of Oropesa, and apostolic delegate to San Domingo, undertook to repair that chapel, and during this work, the casket was discovered with that precious deposit. The dates were clear, showing that it was really the casket which held the bones of the discoverer of the New World; but opposed to this is the fact of the translation of 1795. To make sure, then, of the fact discovered and remove all doubt, they continued the excavations, and searched the casket which held the bones of the other two admirals. Only one of them was found, which was clearly inscribed with the name of Don Luis Columbus, third admiral of the Indies. It was then clear, that, in 1795, for want of attention, the casket of Don Diego had been raised and transported to Havana, on the supposition that it was Christopher Columbus's. But at San Domingo, it was always reported that the casket transported to Havana was not that of the Great Admiral of the Ocean.

THE END.



ERRATA.—VOL. II.

Page 6, 5th line, for which, read whom.

Page 145, 25th line, for it, read them.

Page 193, 2nd line, for trail, read trial.

Page 228, 6th line, for to her, read other.

Page 267, last line, for al-, read all.

Page 321, last line, for the, read those.

Page 355, 2nd line, for will he will he, read will he nill he.



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