

# The Life of Columbus eBook

## The Life of Columbus

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## CHAPTER II. Early Years of Columbus.

### Birth of Columbus

The question of Columbus's birthplace has been almost as hotly contested as that of Homer's. A succession of pamphleteers had discussed the pretensions of half a dozen different Italian villages to be the birthplace of the great navigator; but still archaeologists were divided on the subject, when, at a comparatively recent period, the discovery of the will in which Columbus bequeathed part of his property to the Bank of Genoa, conclusively settled the point in favour of that city. "Thence I came," he says, "and there was I born." As to the date of his birth there is no such direct evidence; and conjectures and inferences, founded on various statements in his own writings, and in those of his contemporaries, range over the twenty years from 1436 to 1456, in attempting to assign the precise time of his appearance in the world. Mr. Irving adopts the earlier of these two dates, upon the authority of a remark by Bernaldez, the curate of Los Palacios, which speaks of the death of Columbus in the year 1506, "at a good old age, being seventy years old, a little more or less." But this statement has an air of vagueness, and is, moreover, inconsistent with several passages in Columbus's own letters.[6] And the evidence of the ancient authorities who seem most to be relied on, points rather to the year 1447 or 1448 as the probable date.

[Footnote 6: "His hair," says his son Fernando, "turned white before he was thirty." This would add to his apparent age, and might have deceived Bernaldez.]

### *His education.*

His father was a wool-carder; but this fact does not necessarily imply, in a city of traders like Genoa, that his family was of particularly humble origin. At any rate, like most others, when the light of a great man's birth is thrown upon its records, real and possible, it presents some other names not altogether unworthy to be inscribed among the great man's ancestors. Christopher was not, he says in a letter to a lady of the Spanish court, the first admiral of his family—referring, evidently, to two naval commanders bearing his name, who had attained some distinction in the maritime service of Genoa and France, and the younger of whom, Colombo el Mozo, was in command of a French squadron in the expedition undertaken by John of Anjou against Naples for the recovery of the Neapolitan crown. But his relationship with these Colombos, if traceable at all, was probably only a very distant one, and his son, in admitting this, wisely says that the glory of Christopher is quite enough, without, there being a necessity to borrow any from his ancestors.



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At a very early age he became a student at the University of Pavia, where he laid the foundations of that knowledge of mathematics and natural science, which stood him in good stead throughout his life. At Genoa he would naturally regard the sea as the great field of enterprise which produced harvests of rich wares and spoils of glorious victories; and he may have heard, now and then, news of the latest conclusions of the Arabic geographers at Senaar, and rumours of explorations down the African coast, which would be sure to excite interest among the maritime population of his birthplace. It is not wonderful that, exposed to such influences, he preferred a life of adventure on the sea to the drudgery of his father's trade in Genoa. Accordingly, after finishing his academical course at Pavia, he spent but a few irksome months as a carder of wool (tector panni) and actually entered on his nautical career before he was fifteen years old.

### *Early voyages of Columbus.*

Of his many voyages, which of them took place before, and which after, his coming to Portugal, we have no distinct record; but are sure that he traversed a large part of the known world, that he visited England, that he made his way to Iceland and Friesland[7] (where he may possibly have heard vague tales of the discoveries by the Northmen in North America), that he had been at El Mina, on the coast of Guinea, and that he had seen the Islands of the Grecian Archipelago. "I have been seeking out the secrets of nature for forty years," he says, "and wherever ship has sailed, there have I voyaged." But beyond a few vague allusions of this kind, we know scarcely anything of these early voyages. However, he mentions particularly his having been employed by King Rene of Provence to intercept a Venetian galliot. And this exploit furnishes illustrations both of his boldness and his tact. During the voyage the news was brought that the galliot was convoyed by three other vessels. Thereupon the crew were unwilling to hazard an engagement, and insisted that Columbus should return to Marseilles for re-inforcement. Columbus made a feint of acquiescence, but craftily arranged the compass so that it appeared that they were returning, while they were really steering their original course, and so arrived at Carthagenia on the next morning, thinking all the while that they were in full sail for Marseilles.

[Footnote 7: The account of this voyage to the north of Europe, as commonly quoted, furnishes a singular instance of the inaccuracy of translators in the matter of figures. Columbus is there made to say, that at the Ultima Thule, which he reached, "the tides were so great as to rise and fall twenty-six fathoms," *i.e.* 156 feet. Of course this an absurdity; for no tides in Europe rise much above 50 feet. We have no record of the exact words used by Columbus, but in the extant Italian translation he is made to speak of the rise being venti sei braccia, *i.e.*



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twenty-six ells (not fathoms), or about fifty-two feet. But even this reduced estimate must be excessive. Except in the Bristol Channel there is no rise of tide in the seas of Northern Europe which at all approaches this limit. At Reikiavik (Iceland) the rise is seventeen and a half feet. In Greenland it varies from a minimum of seven feet at Julianshaab to a maximum of twelve and a half feet at Frederikshaab.]

### *Characteristics of Columbus*

Considering how much more real the hero of a biography appears if we can picture him accurately in our mind's eye, and see him "in his habit as he lived," it is singularly unfortunate that the personal appearance of Columbus has been so variously described by the old historians that it is impossible to speak with certainty on the subject. Strangely enough, too, no well-authenticated portrait of the great discoverer exists. Ferdinand Columbus, who would be a good authority, fails to give us, in describing his father, any of those little touches which make up a good literary photograph. We learn, however, that he had a commanding presence, that he was above the middle height, with a long countenance, rather full cheeks, an aquiline nose, and light grey eyes full of expression. His hair was naturally light in colour, but, as has been already stated, it turned nearly white while he was still a young man.

The peculiar characteristics of his mind are such as we might naturally expect to find in the originator of such a work as the discovery of America,—who was, indeed, one of the great spirits of the earth; but still of the same order of soul to which great inventors and discoverers have mostly belonged. Lower down, too, in mankind, there is much of the same nature leading to various kinds of worthy deeds, though there are no more continents for it to discover.

But to return to the renowned personage of whom we are speaking. There was great simplicity about him, and much loyalty and veneration. The truly great are apt to believe in the greatness of others, and so to be loyal in their relations here; while, for what is beyond here, a large measure of veneration belongs to them, as having a finer and more habitually present consciousness than most men of something infinitely above what even their imaginations can compass. He was as magnanimous as it was possible, perhaps, for so sensitive and impassioned a person to be. He was humane, self-denying, courteous. He had an intellect of that largely inquiring kind which may remind us of our great English philosopher, Bacon. He was singularly resolute and enduring. The Spaniards have a word, longanimidad, which has been well applied in describing him, as it signifies greatness and constancy of mind in adversity. He was rapt in his designs, having a ringing for ever in his ears of great projects, making him deaf to much, perhaps, that prudence might have heeded:—one to be loved by those near him, and likely by his presence to inspire favour and respect.

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### *Columbus's desire for discovery.*

At what precise period his great idea came into his mind we have no means of ascertaining. The continuous current of Portuguese discoveries had, as we have seen, excited the mind of Europe, and must have greatly influenced Columbus, living in the midst of them. This may be said without in the least detracting from his merits as a discoverer. In real life people do not spring from something baseless to something substantial, as people in sick dreams. A great invention or discovery is often like a daring leap, but it is from land to land, not from nothing to something; and if we look at the subject with this consideration fully before us, we shall probably admit that Columbus had as large a share in the merit of his discovery as most inventors or discoverers can lay claim to. If the idea which has rendered him famous was not in his mind at the outset of his career of investigation, at any rate he had from the first a desire for discovery, or, as he says himself, the wish to know the secrets of this world. It may be a question whether this impulse soon brought him to his utmost height of survey, and that he then only applied to learning to confirm his first views; or whether the impulse merely carried him along with growing perception of the great truth he was to prove, into deep thinking upon cosmographical studies, Portuguese discoveries, the dreams of learned men, the labours of former geographers, the dim prophetic notices of great unknown lands, and vague reports amongst mariners of driftwood seen on the seas. But at any rate we know that he arrived at a fixed conclusion that there was a way by the west to the Indies; that he could discover this way, and so come to Cipango, Cathay, the Grand Khan, and all he had met with in the gorgeous descriptions of Marco Polo and other ancient authorities. We may not pretend to lay down the exact chronological order of the formation of the idea in his mind, in fact, to know more about it than he would probably have been able to tell us himself. And it must not be forgotten that his enterprise, as compared with that of the Portuguese along the coast of Africa, was as an invention compared to an improvement. Each new discovery then was but a step beyond that which had preceded it; Columbus was the first to steer boldly from shore into the waste of waters, an originator, not a mere improver.

### *Columbus's theory.*

Fernando Columbus divides into three classes the grounds on which his father's theory was based; namely, reasons from nature, the authority of writers, and the testimony of sailors. He believed the world to be a sphere; he under-estimated its size; he over-estimated the size of the Asiatic continent. The farther that continent extended to the eastward the nearer it came round towards Spain. And this, in a greater or less degree, had been the opinion of the ancient geographers. Both Aristotle and Seneca thought that a ship might sail "in a few days" from Cadiz to India. Strabo, too, believed that it might be possible to navigate on the same parallel of latitude, due west from the coast of Africa or Spain to that of India. The accounts given by Marco Polo and Sir John Maundeville of their explorations towards China confirmed the exaggerated idea of the extent of Eastern Asia.

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*Cardinal ALIACO'S "Cosmographia."*

But of all the works of learned men, that which, according to Ferdinand Columbus, had most weight with his father, was the "Cosmographia" of Cardinal Aliaco. And this book affords a good illustration of the then state of scientific knowledge. Learned arguments are interspersed with the most absurd fables of lion-bodied men and dog-faced women; grave, and sometimes tolerably sound, disquisitions on the earth's surface are mixed up with the wildest stories of monsters and salamanders, of giants and pigmies. It is here that we find the original of our modern acquaintance, the sea-serpent, described as being "of huge size, so that he kills and devours large stags, and is able to cross the ocean;" and the wonders of the unknown world are enunciated with a circumstantial minuteness which must have easily won the credence of a willing disciple like Columbus. He was also confirmed in his views of the existence of a western passage to the Indies by Paulo Toscanelli, the Florentine philosopher, to whom much credit is due for the encouragement he afforded to the enterprise. That the notices, however, of western lands were not such as to have much weight with other men is sufficiently proved by the difficulty which Columbus had in contending with adverse geographers and men of science in general, of whom, he says, he never was able to convince any one. After a new world had been discovered, many scattered indications were then found to have foreshown it. "When he promised a new hemisphere," writes Voltaire, "people maintained that it could not exist, and when he had discovered it, that it had been known a long time." It was to confute such detractors that he resorted to the well known expedient for making an egg stand on end; an illustration of the meaning of originality which, by the way, was not itself original, as Brunelleschi had already employed it when his merit in devising a plan for raising the cupola of Florence cathedral was questioned.

*Evidences of A western world.*

Of the amount of evidence furnished by the testimony of sailors, it is difficult to speak with any degree of accuracy. Rumours of drift-wood, apparently carved with some savage implements; of mammoth reeds, corresponding with Ptolemy's account of those indigenous to India; even of two corpses, cast up on one of the Azores, and presenting an appearance quite unlike that of any race of Europe or Africa; all seem to have come to the willing ears of Columbus, and to have been regarded by him as "confirmations, strong as proofs of holy writ," of the great theory.



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About the year 1470 Columbus arrived at Lisbon. According to the account given by his son, and adopted by the historian Bossi, he had sailed with Colombo el Mozo (the nephew of that "first Admiral of the family" of whom we have already heard) on a cruise to intercept some Venetian merchantmen on their way home from Flanders. At break of day the battle began, off Cape St. Vincent, and lasted till nightfall. The privateer commanded by Columbus grappled a huge Venetian galley, which, after a hand-to-hand struggle, caught fire, and the flames spread to the privateer. Friends and enemies alike sought safety in the sea, and Columbus, supporting himself on an oar, succeeded, when nearly exhausted, in gaining the land, which was at some six miles distance. God preserved him, says his son, for greater things.

### *Columbus at Porto Santo.*

It was probably not long after this that he married Donna Felipa Munnis Perestrelo, who was residing at the convent of All Saints, in Lisbon, where he was a regular attendant at the services of the church. She was a daughter of that captain of Prince Henry's who has been already mentioned as the first governor of Porto Santo. On that island, after a short residence in the Portuguese capital, Columbus took up his abode, busying himself with the papers of his deceased father-in-law, and earning a livelihood by making maps and charts for sale. It is a curious fact that the great chief of American discoverers should thus have inhabited a spot which was the first advanced outpost in African discovery. He was here on the high road to Guinea, and being in constant communication with the explorers of the new regions, it was likely that he would become imbued with some of their enthusiasm for adventure.

### *The bishop of ceuta; return of the caravel.*

Shrouded in obscurity as this period of his life remains, we are only able to find vague traditions of the unsuccessful effort which Columbus made to induce the Senate of Genoa to take up his project. From the Portuguese crown he could scarcely look for help, embroiled as it was in costly wars, and having already a field for discovery along the African coast, which it would scarcely be wise to forsake for an undertaking similar in kind, but more hazardous and less definite. However, King John the Second, to whom Columbus applied, seems to have listened with attention to the exposition of his scheme, and indeed, according to the account of Fernando, to have given a sort of qualified promise of his support, but to have disagreed with Columbus as to terms. The king referred the matter to a Committee of Council for Geographical Affairs, before whom Columbus laid his plans; but it is possible that even in the fifteenth century Boards had come to regard projectors as their natural enemies, and the report of the Committee was entirely adverse to the scheme.



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for Atlantic discovery. But it seems that the king, was not satisfied yet, whereupon the Bishop of Ceuta (who had headed the opposition to Columbus in the Council) suggested that a caravel should be secretly equipped and sent out, with instructions founded on the plan laid before the committee. And this piece of episcopal bad faith was actually perpetrated. The caravel, however, returned without having accomplished anything, the sailors not having had heart to adventure far enough westward. It was not an enterprise to be carried out successfully by men who had only stolen the idea of it.

### **CHAPTER III. Columbus in Spain.**

Columbus, disgusted at the treatment he had received from the Portuguese Court, quitted Lisbon for Spain, probably in the year 1485, with his son Diego, the only issue of his marriage with Donna Felipa, now no longer living. Here he addressed himself to the Duke of Medina Sidonia, and to the Duke of Medina Celi, whose extensive possessions along the coasts of Spain were likely to incline them in favour of a maritime expedition. There is some uncertainty as to the degree of encouragement which he received from them; but long afterwards, when Columbus had succeeded, the Duke of Medina Celi wrote to the Cardinal of Spain showing that he (the duke) had maintained Columbus two years in his house, and was ready to have undertaken the enterprise, but that he saw it was one for the queen herself, and even then he wished to have had a part in it. Probably, any man in whose house Columbus resided for two years would have caught some portion of his enthusiasm, and have been ready to take up his project. It may be conjectured, however, that none of the nobles of the Spanish court would have been likely to undertake the matter without some sanction from the king or queen.

### **LETTER TO QUEEN ISABELLA.**

To the queen, accordingly, the Duke of Medina Celi addressed a letter, of which Columbus was himself the bearer, commending his enterprise to the royal favour. But the juncture was singularly inopportune for the consideration of any peaceful project. The war with the Moors was raging more and more furiously, as they were driven back, contesting every inch of ground, farther and farther from the heart of the kingdom. The court was now at Cordova, actively preparing for the campaign which was to result in that subjugation of the crescent to the cross, throughout the Peninsula, which was completed by the conquest of Granada some six years later. Amid the clang of arms and the bustle of warlike preparation, Columbus was not likely to obtain more than a slight and superficial attention to a matter which must have seemed remote and uncertain. Indeed, when it is considered that the most pressing internal affairs of kingdoms are neglected by the wisest rulers in times of war, it is wonderful that he succeeded in obtaining any audience at all.

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*Columbus at court; junta of cosmographers; decision of the junta.*

However, he was fortunate enough to find at once a friend in the Treasurer of the Household, Alonso de Quintanilla, a man who, like himself, "took delight in great things," and who obtained a hearing for him from the Spanish monarchs. Ferdinand and Isabella did not dismiss him abruptly. On the contrary, it is said, they listened kindly; and the conference ended by their referring the business to the Queen's Confessor, Fra Hernando de Talavera, who was afterwards Archbishop of Granada. This important functionary summoned a junta of cosmographers (not a promising assemblage!) to consult about the affair, and this junta was convened at Salamanca, in the summer of the year 1487. Here was a step gained; the cosmographers were to consider his scheme, and not merely to consider whether it was worth taking into consideration. But it was impossible for the jury to be unprejudiced. All inventors, to a certain extent, insult their contemporaries by accusing them of stupidity and of ignorance. And the cosmographical pedants, accustomed to beaten tracks, resented the insult by which this adventurer was attempting to overthrow the belief of centuries. They thought that so many persons wise in nautical matters as had preceded the Genoese mariner never could have overlooked such an idea as this which had presented itself to his mind. Moreover, as the learning of the middle ages resided for the most part in the cloister, the members of the junta were principally clerical, and combined to crush Columbus with theological objections. Texts of Scripture were adduced to refute his theory of the spherical shape of the earth, and the weighty authority of the Fathers of the Church was added to overthrow the "foolish idea of the existence of antipodes; of people who walk, opposite to us, with their heels upwards and their heads hanging down; where everything is topsy turvy, where the trees grow with their branches downwards, and where it rains, hails, and snows upwards." King David, St. Paul, St. Augustine, Lactantius, and a host of other theological authorities were all put in evidence against the Genoese mariner: he was confronted by the "conservatism of lawyers united to the bigotry of priests." Las Casas displays his usual acuteness when he says that the great difficulty of Columbus was, not that of teaching, but that of unteaching: not of promulgating his own theory, but of eradicating the erroneous convictions of the judges before whom he had to plead his cause. In fine, the junta decided that the project was "vain and impossible, and that it did not belong to the majesty of such great princes to determine anything upon such weak grounds of information."

Ferdinand and Isabella seem not to have taken the extremely unfavourable view of the matter entertained by the junta of cosmographers, or at least to have been willing to dismiss Columbus gently, for they merely said that, with the wars at present on their hands, and especially that of Granada, they could not undertake any new expenses, but when that war was ended, they would examine his plan more carefully.



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### *TEDIOUSNESS of Columbus's suit*

Thus terminated a solicitation at the court of Ferdinand and Isabella which, according to some authorities, lasted five years; for the facts above mentioned, though short in narration, occupied no little time in transaction. During the whole of this period, Columbus appears to have followed the sovereigns in the movements which the war necessitated, and to have been treated by them with much consideration. Sums were from time to time granted from the royal treasury for his private expenses, and he was billeted as a public functionary in the various towns of Andalusia, where the court rested. But his must have been a very up-hill task. Las Casas, who, from an experience larger even than that which fell to the lot of Columbus, knew what it was to endure the cold and indolent neglect of superficial men in small authority, and all the vast delay, which cannot be comprehended except by those who have suffered under it, that belongs to the transaction of any affair in which many persons have to cooperate, compares the suit of Columbus to a battle, "a terrible, continuous, painful, prolix battle." The tide of this long war (for war it was, rather than a battle) having turned against him, Columbus left the court, and went to Seville "with much sadness and discomfiture." During this dreary period of a suitor's life—which, however, has been endured by some of the greatest men the world has seen, which was well known by close observation, or bitter experience, to Spenser, Camoens, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Bacon—one joy at least was not untasted by Columbus, namely, that of love. His beloved Beatrice, whom he first met at Cordova, must have believed in him, even if no one else had done so; but love was not sufficient to retain at her side a man goaded by a great idea, or perhaps that love did but impel him to still greater efforts for her sake, as is the way with lovers of the nobler sort.

### *Encouragement of friends; Garcia Hernandez.*

Other friends, too, shared his enthusiasm, and urged him onward. Juan Perez de la Marchena, guardian of the monastery of La Rabida, in Andalusia, had been the confessor of Queen Isabella, but had exchanged the bustle of the court for the learned leisure of the cloister. The little town of Palos, with its seafaring population and maritime interests, was near the monastery, and the principal men of the place were glad to pass the long winter evenings in the society of Juan Perez, discussing questions of cosmography and astronomy. Among these visitors were Martin Alonzo Pinzon, the chief shipowner of Palos, and Garcia Hernandez, the village doctor; and one can fancy how the schemes of Columbus must have appeared to the little conclave as a ray of sunlight in the dulness of their simple life. Hernandez, especially, who seems to have been somewhat skilled in physical science, and therefore capable of appreciating the



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arguments of Columbus, became a warm believer in his project. It is worthy of notice that a person who appears only once, as it were, in a sentence in history, should have exercised so much influence upon it as Garcia Hernandez, who was probably a man of far superior attainments to those around him, and was in the habit of deploring, as such men do, his hard lot in being placed where he could be so little understood. Now, however, he was to do more at one stroke than many a man who has been all his days before the world. Columbus had abandoned his suit at court in disgust, and had arrived at the monastery before quitting Spain to fetch his son Diego, whom he had left with Juan Perez to be educated. All his griefs and struggles he confided to Perez, who could not bear to hear of his intention to leave the country for France or England, and to make a foreign nation greater by allowing it to adopt his project. The three friends—the monk, the learned physician, and the skilled cosmographer—discussed together the propositions so unhappily familiar to the last named member of their little council. The affection of Juan Perez and the learning of Hernandez were not slow to follow in the track which the enthusiasm of the great adventurer made out before them; and they became, no doubt, as convinced as Columbus himself of the feasibility of his undertaking. The difficulty, however, was not in becoming believers themselves, but in persuading those to believe who would have power to further the enterprise.

*Perez writes to the queen.*

Their discussions upon this point ended in the conclusion that Juan Perez, who was known to the queen, having acted as her confessor, should write to her highness. He did so; and the result was favourable. The queen sent for him, heard what he had to say, and in consequence remitted money to Columbus to enable him to come to Court and renew his suit.

*Columbus's conditions.*

He attended the court again; his negotiations were resumed, but were again broken off on the ground of the largeness of the conditions which he asked for. His opponents said that these conditions were too large if he succeeded, and if he should not succeed and the conditions should come to nothing, they thought that there was an air of trifling in granting such conditions at all. And, indeed, they were very large; namely, that he was to be made an admiral at once, to be appointed viceroy of the countries he should discover, and to have an eighth of the profits of the expedition. The only probable way of accounting for the extent of these demands and his perseverance in making them, even to the risk of total failure, is that the discovering of the Indies was but a step in his mind to greater undertakings, as they seemed to him, which he had in view, of going to Jerusalem with an army and making another crusade. For Columbus carried the chivalrous ideas of the twelfth century



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into the somewhat self-seeking fifteenth. The negotiation, however, failed a second time, and Columbus resolved again to go to France, when Alonzo de Quintanilla and Juan Perez contrived to obtain a hearing for the great adventurer from Cardinal Mendoza, who was pleased with him. Columbus then offered, in order to meet the objections of his opponents, to pay an eighth part of the expense of the expedition. Still nothing was done.

SANTANGLE'S *address*.

And now, finally, Columbus determined to go to France, and indeed had actually set off one day in January of the year 1492, when Luis de Santangel, receiver of the ecclesiastical revenues of the crown of Aragon, a person much devoted to the plans of Columbus, addressed the queen with all the energy that a man throws into his words when he is aware that it is his last time for speaking in favour of a thing which he has much at heart. He told her that he wondered that, as she always had a lofty mind for great things, it should be wanting to her on this occasion. He endeavoured to pique her jealousy as a monarch, by suggesting that the enterprise might fall into the hands of other princes. Then he said something in behalf of Columbus himself, and the queen was not unlikely to know well the bearing of a great man. He intimated to her highness that what was an impossibility to the cosmographers, might not be so in nature. Nor, continued he, should any endeavour in so great a matter be attributed to lightness, even though the endeavour should fail; for it is the part of great and generous princes to ascertain the secrets of the world. Other princes (he did not mention those of neighbouring Portugal) had gained eternal fame this way. He concluded by saying that all the aid Columbus wanted to set the expedition afloat, was but a million of maravedis (equivalent to about 308 Pounds, English money of the period); and that so great an enterprise ought not to be abandoned for the sake of such a trifling sum.

*Success of the address.*

These well addressed arguments, falling in, as they did, with those of Quintanilla, the treasurer, who had great influence with the queen, prevailed. She thanked these lords for their counsel, and said she would adopt it, but they must wait until the finances had recovered a little from the drain upon them occasioned by the conquest of Granada, or if they thought that the plan must be forthwith carried out, she would pledge her jewels to raise the necessary funds. Santangel and Quintanilla kissed her hands, highly delighted at succeeding; and Santangel offered to advance the money required. Upon this the queen sent an alguazil to overtake Columbus and bring him back to the court. He was overtaken at the bridge of Pinos, two leagues from Granada; returned to Santa Fe, where the sovereigns were encamped before Granada; was well received by Isabella; and finally the agreement between him and their catholic highnesses was settled with the secretary, Colama.



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*The agreement settled.*

Not much is seen of King Ferdinand in all these proceedings; and it is generally understood that he looked rather coldly upon the propositions of Columbus. We cannot say that he was at all unwise in so doing. His great compeer, Henry the Seventh, did not hasten to adopt the same project submitted to him by Bartholomew Columbus, sent into England[8] for that purpose by his brother Christopher; and it has not been thought to derogate from the English king's sagacity.

[Footnote 8: It is difficult to determine how the project brought before Henry the Seventh's notice by Bartholomew Columbus was received. Some say it was made a mockery of at the English court; others speak of it as actually accepted. Lord Bacon states that Bartholomew was taken by pirates on his voyage to England, which delayed him so much that "before he had obtained a capitulation with the king for his brother, the enterprise by him was achieved." It is probable that Henry listened with interest to Bartholomew Columbus, who was a man of much intelligence and great maritime knowledge. But it seems unlikely that the negotiation went very far, considering the rigid manner in which Columbus insisted upon his exact conditions being accepted by the Spanish court. No such bargain, at a distance, with a reserved and parsimonious monarch, was likely, therefore, to have been concluded. It appears, however, from a despatch from the Spanish ambassador to his sovereigns, dated the 25th July, 1498, that the English were not behind other nations in a thirst for discovery, "Merchants of Bristol," he says, "have for the last seven years sent out annually some ships in search of the island of Brazil and the Seven Cities." If this assertion is accurate, England must have anticipated Spain in the search for, though not in the discovery of, the western world.]

*Fate of projectors' plans.*

Those who govern are in all ages surrounded by projectors, and have to clear the way about them as well as they can, and to take care that they get time and room for managing their own immediate affairs. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if good plans should sometimes share the fate which ought to attend, and must attend, the great mass of all projects submitted to men in power. Here, however the ultimate event would justify the monarch's caution; for it would be hard to prove that Spain has derived aught but a golden weakness from her splendid discoveries and possessions in the new world.

*FERDINAND'S coldness.*

Moreover, the characters of the two men being essentially opposed, it is probable that Ferdinand felt something like contempt for the uncontrolled enthusiasm of Columbus; and, upon the whole, it is rather to be wondered that the king consented to give the powers he did, than that he did not do more. Had it been a matter which concerned his



own kingdom of Aragon, he might not have gone so far; but the expenses were to be eventually charged on Castille, and perhaps he looked upon the whole affair as another instance of Isabella's good natured sympathy with enthusiasts. His own cool and wary nature must have distrusted this "pauper pilot, promising rich realms." [9]



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[Footnote 9: “Nudo nocchier, promettitor di regni:”—Chiabrea.]

*Columbus's agreement with the court of Spain.*

The agreement between Columbus and their Catholic highnesses is to the following effect:—

The favours which Christopher Columbus has asked from the King and Queen of Spain in recompense of the discoveries which he has made in the ocean seas, and as recompense for the voyage which he is about to undertake, are the following:—

1. He wishes to be made admiral of the seas and countries which he is about to discover. He desires to hold this dignity during his life, and that it should descend to his heirs.

This request is granted by the king and queen.

2. Christopher Columbus wishes to be made viceroy of all the continents and islands.

Granted by the king and queen.

3. He wishes to have a share, amounting to a tenth part, of the profits of all merchandise, be it pearls, jewels, or any other things, that may be found, gained, bought, or exported from the countries which he is to discover.

Granted by the king and queen.

4. He wishes, in his quality of admiral, to be made sole judge of all mercantile matters that may be the occasion of dispute in the countries which he is to discover.

Granted by the king and queen, on the condition, however, that this jurisdiction should belong to the office of admiral, as held by Don Enriquez and other admirals.

5. Christopher Columbus wishes to have the right to contribute the eighth part of the expenses of all ships which traffic with the new countries, and in return to earn the eighth part of the profits.

Granted by the king and queen.

Santa Fe, in the Vega of Granada,  
April 17, 1492.

This agreement is signed by the Secretary Coloma and written by Almazan.



Then there is a sort of passport or commendatory letter intended for presentation to the Grand Khan, Prester John, or any other oriental potentate at whose territories Columbus might arrive:—

*Ferdinand and Isabella to king*— The sovereigns have heard that he and his subjects entertain great love for them and for Spain. They are moreover informed that he and his subjects very much<sup>[10]</sup> wish to hear news from Spain; and send, therefore, their admiral, Ch. Columbus, who will tell them that they are in good health and perfect prosperity.

Granada, April 30, 1492.

[Footnote 10: This crediting the unknown ruler with an anxiety for the welfare of the Spanish sovereigns is really a delicious piece of diplomatic affectation.]

*Columbus goes to Palos.*



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Armed with these royal commissions, Columbus left the court for Palos; and we may be sure that the knot of friends at the monastery were sufficiently demonstrative in their delight at the scheme on which they had pinned their faith being fairly launched. There was no delay in furnishing the funds for the expedition. From an entry in an account-book belonging to the Bishopric of Palencia, it appears that one million one hundred and forty thousand maravedis were advanced by Santangel in May, 1492, "being the sum he lent for paying the caravels which their highnesses ordered to go as the armada to the Indies, and for paying Christopher Columbus, who goes in the said armada." The town of Palos was ordered to provide two vessels.[11]

[Footnote 11: The requisition to the municipality of Palos runs thus: "In consequence of the offence which we received at your hands, you were condemned by our council to render us the service of two caravels, armed, at your own expense, for the space of twelve months, whenever and wherever it should be our pleasure to demand the same:" (30th April, 1492.) A proclamation of immunity from civil and criminal process to persons taking service in the expedition was issued at the same time. The ship of Columbus was, therefore, a refuge for criminals and runaway debtors, a cave of Adullam for the discontented and the desperate. To have to deal with such a community was not of the least of Columbus's difficulties.]

### *Order to press men.*

But there was still a weighty difficulty to be surmounted. It was no easy matter to obtain crews for such an expedition. The sovereigns issued an order authorizing Columbus to press men into the service, but still the numbers were incomplete, for the mariners of Palos held aloof, unwilling to risk their lives in what seemed to them the crazy project of a monomaniac. But Juan Perez was active in persuading men to embark. The Pinzons, rich men and skilful mariners of Palos, joined in the undertaking personally, and aided it with their money, and, by these united exertions, three vessels were manned with ninety mariners, and provisioned for a year.

### *Character of vessels and crews.*

The vessels were all of small size, probably of not more than one hundred tons' burden each, and, therefore, not larger than the American yachts, whose ocean race from New York to Cowes was regarded as an example of immense hardihood, even in the year 1867. But Columbus considered them very suitable for the undertaking. The Santa Maria, which Columbus himself commanded, was the only one of the three that was decked throughout. The official persons and the crew on board her were sixteen in number. The two other vessels were of the class called caravels, and were decked fore and aft, but not amidships, the stem and the stern being built so as to rise high out of the water. One of them, the "Pinta," was manned by a crew of thirty, commanded by Martin Alonzo Pinzon. The other, the "Nina," had Vincent Yanez Pinzon for captain, and a crew of twenty-four men. The whole number of adventurers amounted to a hundred

and twenty persons, men of various nationalities, including, by the way, among them, two natives of the British Isles.



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### CHAPTER III. First Voyage.

At length all the preparations were complete, and on a Friday (not inauspicious in this case), the 3rd of August, 1492, after they had all confessed and received the sacrament, they set sail from the Bar of Saltes, making for the Canary Islands. One can fancy how the men and the women of Palos watched the specks of white sails vanishing in the west, and how, as each frail bark in turn disappeared in the great ocean, mothers and sisters turned weepingly away as if from a last farewell at the grave of their sailor kinsmen.

Columbus was now fairly afloat, and we may say with Milton, that—

The world was all before him, where to choose.  
And Providence his guide.

His choice was made, however; and his Guide did not fail him.

*Canary islands reached.*

He was about to change the long-continued, weary, dismal life of a suitor, for the sharp intense anxiety of a struggle in which there was no alternative to success but deplorable, ridiculous, fatal failure. Speaking afterwards of the time he spent as a suitor at court, he says, "Eight years I was torn with disputes, and in a word, my proposition was a thing for mockery." It was now to be seen what mockery was in it. The following account of the voyage is mainly taken from an abridgment of Columbus's own diary made by Las Casas, who in some places gives the admiral's own words.

The little squadron reached the Canary Islands in a few days, with no event worth recording, except that the caravel "Pinta," commanded Martin Alonzo Pinzon, unshipped her rudder. This was supposed to be no accident, but to have been contrived by the owners of the vessel, who did not like the voyage. The admiral (from henceforth Columbus is called "the admiral") was obliged to stay some time at the Canary Islands, to refit the "Pinta," and to make some change in the cut of her sails. While this was being done, news was brought that three Portuguese government vessels were cruising in the offing with the intention of preventing the expedition. However, on the 6th of September, Columbus set sail from Gomera, and struck boldly out to sea, without meeting with any of his supposed enemies.

*Rumors of land seen.*

In the abridgment of the diary, under the date of the 19th of August, the admiral remarks that many Spaniards of these islands, "respectable men," swear that each year they see land; and he remembers how, in the year 1484, some one came from the island of Madeira to the King of Portugal to beg a caravel in order to go and discover that land



which he declared he could see each year, and in the same manner. Had not the admiral been conscious of the substantial originality of his proceedings, he would hardly have been careful to collect these scattered notices which might afterwards be used, as many like them were used,



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to depreciate that originality. There is no further entry in the diary until the 6th of September, when they set out from Gomera (one of the Canary Islands), on their unknown way. For many days, what we have of the diary is little more than a log-book, giving the rate of sailing, or rather two rates, one for Columbus's own private heed, and the other for the sailors. On the 13th of September it is noted that the needle declined in the evening to the north-west, and on the ensuing morning, to the north-east, the first time that such a variation had been observed, or, at least recorded by Europeans. On the 14th, the sailors of the caravel "Nina" saw two tropical birds, which they said were never wont to be seen at more than fifteen or twenty leagues from shore. On the 15th they all saw a meteor fall from heaven, which made them very sad.

### *Plains of seaweed.*

On the 16th, they first came upon those immense plains of seaweed (the fucus natans), which constitute the Mar de Sargasso, and which occupy a space in the Atlantic almost equal to seven times the extent of France. The aspect of these plains greatly terrified the sailors, who thought they might be coming upon submerged lands and rocks; but finding that the vessels cut their way well through this seaweed, the sailors thereupon took heart. On the 17th, they see more of these plains of seaweed, and thinking themselves to be near land, they are almost in good spirits, when finding that the needle declines to the west a whole point of the compass and more, their hopes suddenly sink again: they begin "to murmur between their teeth," and to wonder whether they are not in another world. Columbus, however, orders an observation to be taken at day-break, when the needle is found to point to the north again; moreover he is ready with a theory sufficiently ingenious for that time, to account for the phenomenon of variation which had so disturbed the sailors, namely, that it was caused by the north star moving round the pole. The sailors are, therefore, quieted upon this head.

### *Signs of land.*

In the morning of the same day they catch a crab, from which Columbus infers that they cannot be more than eighty leagues distant from land. The 18th, they see many birds, and a cloud in the distance; and that night they expect to see land. On the 19th, in the morning, comes a pelican (a bird not usually seen twenty leagues from the coast); in the evening, another; also drizzling rain without wind, a certain sign, as the diary says, of proximity to land.

The admiral, however, will not beat about for land, as he concludes that the land which these various natural phenomena give token of, can only be islands, as indeed it proved to be. He will see them on his return; but now he must press on to the Indies. This determination shows his strength of mind, and indicates the almost scientific basis on which his great resolve reposed.



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### *Conspiracy among the men.*

Accordingly, he was not to be diverted from the main design by any partial success, though by this time he knew well the fears of his men, some of whom had already come to the conclusion, "that it would be their best plan to throw him quietly into the sea, and say he unfortunately fell in, while he stood absorbed in looking at the stars." Indeed, three days after he had resolved to pass on to the Indies, we find him saying, for Las Casas gives his words, "Very needful for me was this contrary wind, for the people were very much tormented with the idea that there were no winds on these seas that could take them back to Spain."

### *His determination to proceed.*

On they go, having signs occasionally in the presence of birds and grass and fish that land must be near; but land does not come. Once, too, they are all convinced that they see land: they sing the "Gloria in excelsis;" and even the admiral goes out of his course towards this land, which turns out to be no land. They are like men listening to a dreadful discourse or oration, that seems to have many endings which end not: so that the hearer listens at last in grim despair, thinking that all things have lost their meaning, and that ending is but another form of beginning.

These mariners were stout-hearted, too; but what a daring thing it was to plunge, downhill as it were, into

A world of waves, a sea without a shore,  
Trackless, and vast, and wild, [Rogers]

mocked day by day with signs of land that neared not. And these men had left at home all that is dearest to man, and did not bring out any great idea to uphold them, and had already done enough to make them important men in their towns, and to furnish ample talk for the evenings of their lives. Still we find Columbus, as late as the 3rd of October, saying, "that he did not choose to stop beating about last week during those days that they had such signs of land, although he had knowledge of there being certain islands in that neighbourhood, because he would not suffer any detention, since his object was to go to the Indies; and if he should stop on the way, it would show a want of mind."

### *Signs of land again.*

Meanwhile, he had a hard task to keep his men in any order. Peter Martyr, who knew Columbus well, and had probably been favoured with a special account from him of these perilous days, describes his way of dealing with the refractory mariners, and how he contrived to win them onwards from day to day; now soothing them with soft words, now carrying their minds from thought of the present danger by spreading out large hopes before them, not forgetting to let them know what their princes would say to them



if they attempted aught against him, or would not obey his orders. With this untutored crowd of wild, frightened men around him, with mocking hopes, not knowing what each day would bring to him, on went Columbus. At last came the 11th of October, and with it indubitable signs of land. The diary mentions their finding on that day a table-board and a carved stick, the carving apparently wrought by some iron instrument. Moreover, the men in one of the vessels saw a branch of a haw tree with fruit on it.



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### *Light on shore.*

Now, indeed, they must be close to land. The sun went down upon the same weary round of waters which for so long a time their eyes had ached to see beyond, when, at ten o'clock, Columbus, standing on the poop of his vessel, saw a light, and called to him, privately, Pedro Gutierrez, a groom of the king's chamber, who saw it also. Then they called Rodrigo Sanchez, who had been sent by their highnesses as overlooker. I imagine him to have been a cold and cautious man, of the kind that are sent by jealous states to accompany and curb great generals, and who are not usually much loved by them. Sanchez did not see the light at first, because, as Columbus says, he did not stand in the place where it could be seen; but at last even he sees it, and it may now be considered to have been seen officially. "It appeared like a candle that went up and down, and Don Christopher did not doubt that it was true light, and that it was on land; and so it proved, as it came from people passing with lights from one cottage to another."

### *The promised pension.*

Their highnesses had promised a pension of ten thousand maravedis to the fortunate man who should see land first. The "Pinta" was the foremost vessel; and it was from her deck, at two o'clock in the morning, that land was first seen by Rodrigo de Triana. We cannot but be sorry for this poor common sailor, who got no reward, and of whom they tell a story, that in sadness and despite, he passed into Africa, after his return to Spain, and became a Mahometan. The pension was adjudged to the admiral: it was charged, somewhat ominously, on the shambles of Seville, and was paid him to the day of his death; for, says the historian Herrera, "he saw light in the midst of darkness, signifying the spiritual light which was introduced amongst these barbarous people, God permitting that, the war being finished with the Moors, seven hundred and twenty years after they had set foot in Spain, this work (the conversion of the Indians) should commence, so that the Princes of Castille and Leon might always be occupied in bringing infidels to the knowledge of the Holy Catholic faith."

### *Religious MOTIVIES.*

These last words are notable. They are such as Columbus himself would probably have made use of in describing this, the crowning event of his life. In the preface to his diary, which is an address to Ferdinand and Isabella, he speaks at large of the motives of their highnesses. He begins by saying how, in this present year of 1492, their highnesses had concluded their war with the Moors, having taken the great city of Granada, at the siege of which he was present, and saw the royal banners placed upon the towers of the Alhambra. He then tells how he had given information to their highnesses of the lands of India, and of a prince, called the Grand Khan, who had sent ambassadors to Rome, praying for

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doctors to instruct him in the faith; and how the Holy Father had never provided him with these doctors; and that great towns were perishing, from the belief of their inhabitants in idolatry, and from receiving amongst them "sects of perdition." After the above statement, he adds, "Your highnesses, as Catholic Christians and princes, lovers and furtherers of the Christian faith, and enemies of the sect of Mahomet, and of all idolatries and heresies, thought to send me, Christopher Columbus, to the aforesaid provinces of India to see the aforesaid princes, the cities and lands, and the disposition of them and of everything about them, and the way that should be taken to convert them to our holy faith."

### *Good faith of Columbus.*

Columbus then speaks of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain as occurring at the same time as that in which he received orders to pursue a westerly course to India, thus combining the two transactions together, no doubt as proofs of the devout intentions of their highnesses: and, indeed, throughout the document, he ascribes no motives to the monarchs but such as were religious.

The diary to which this address was prefixed is probably one of the books which their highnesses allude to in a letter to Columbus, as being in their possession, and which they assured him they had not shown to anybody. I see no reason to doubt the perfect good faith of Columbus in making such a statement as that just referred to; and it is well to remark upon it, because we shall never come to a right understanding of those times and of the question of slavery as connected with them, unless we fully appreciate the good as well as the bad motives which guided the most important persons of that era.

### *Character of the queen.*

As for Queen Isabella, there can be no doubt about her motives. Even in the lamentably unjust things in which she was but too often concerned, she had what, to her mind, was compelling reason to act as she did. Perhaps there is hardly any great personage whose name and authority are found in connection with so much that is strikingly evil, all of it done, or rather assented to, upon the highest and purest motives. Whether we refer to the expulsion of the Jews, the treatment of the Moorish converts, or the establishment of the Inquisition, all her proceedings in these matters were entirely sincere and noble-minded. Methinks I can still see her beautiful majestic face (with broad brow, and clear, honest, loving eye), as it looks down upon the beholder from one of the chapels in the cathedral at Granada: a countenance too expressive and individual to be what painters give as that of an angel, and yet the next thing to it. Now, I could almost fancy, she looks down reproachfully, and yet with conscious sadness. What she would say in her defence, could we interrogate her, is, that she obeyed the voice of heaven, taking the wise



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and good men of her day as its interpreters. Oh! that she had but persisted in listening to it, as it spoke in her own kindly heart, when with womanly pity she was wont to intercede in favour of the poor cooped-up inmates of some closely beleaguered town or fortress! But at least the poor Indian can utter nothing but blessing's on her. He might have needed no other "protector" had she lived; nor would slavery have found in his fate one of the darkest and most fatal chapters in its history.

### *Landing in the new world.*

But now, from Granada, and our fancies there, the narrative brings us back to the first land touched by Columbus. The landing of Columbus in the New World must ever be a conspicuous fact in the annals of mankind, and it was celebrated by a ceremonial worthy of the occasion. On the ensuing morning, after the light had been observed from the ships, being a Friday, the 12th of October, 1492, Columbus, clad in complete armour, and carrying in his hand the royal banner of Spain, descended upon the level shores of the small island [San Salvador, one of the Bahamas] which had first greeted him, and which he found to be very fruitful—fresh and verdant, and "like a garden full of trees." The other captains accompanied him, each of them bearing a banner with a green cross depicted upon it, and with the initials of Ferdinand and Isabella surmounted by their respective crowns—a device that well expressed the loyalty and devotion of Columbus, and had been chosen by him. These chief officers were followed by a large retinue from their crews. In numerous lines along the shore stood the simple islanders, looking on with innocent amazement.

### *Their gratitude.*

On touching land, Columbus and all the Spaniards who were present fell upon their knees, and with tears—tears of that deepest kind which men do not know the cause of—poured forth their "immense thanksgivings to Almighty God."

The man who, of all that embassy, if we may call it so, from the Old to the New World, was certainly the least surprised by all he saw, was, at the same time, the most affected. For thus it is, that the boldness of a great design is never fully appreciated by the designer himself until he has apparently accomplished his work, when he is apt, if it be indeed a great work, to look back with shuddering awe at his own audacity in having proposed it to mankind. The vast resolve which has sustained such a man throughout his long and difficult enterprise, having for the moment nothing to struggle against, dies away, leaving a strange sinking at the heart: and thus the greatest successes are often accompanied by a peculiar and bewildering melancholy. New difficulties, however, bred from success (for nothing is complete in life), soon arise to summon forth again the discoverer's energies, and to nerve him for fresh disappointments and renewed endeavours. Columbus will not fail to have his full share of such difficulties.



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*General RECONCILIATION.*

The followers of the great man, whose occasional faintheartedness must often have driven all sleep from his weary eyelids throughout the watches of the night, now began to think with remorse how much suffering they had needlessly inflicted upon their greatly-enduring leader. They sought his pardon with tears, and, subdued for the moment by his greatness when illustrated by success, expressed in loving terms their admiration, their gratitude, and their assurances of fidelity. The placable Columbus received their gracious sayings with all the warmth and tenderness that belonged to his large-hearted and amiable character.

*They take legal possession.*

The great business of the day then commenced; and Columbus, with the due legal formalities, took possession, on behalf of the Spanish monarchs, of the island Guanahani, which he forthwith named San Salvador. The gravity of the proceeding must have astonished the beholding islanders. Their attention, however, was soon turned to the Spaniards themselves; and they approached the strangers, wondering at their whiteness and at their beards. Columbus, as being the noblest looking personage there present, and also from wearing a crimson scarf over his armour, attracted especial attention, and justly seemed, as he was, the principal figure in this great spectacle.

Columbus is for the present moment radiant with success. Our interest passes now from him to the new people he was amongst. And what were they like? Were they worthy of the efforts which the Old World had made to find them? Was there mind and soul enough in them for them to become good Christians? What says the greatest of the men who first saw them? What impression did they make on him? Let him answer for himself:—

“Because they had much friendship for us, and because I knew they were people that would deliver themselves better to the Christian faith, and be converted more through love than by force, I gave to some of them some coloured caps and some strings of glass beads for their necks, and many other things of little value, with which they were delighted, and were so entirely ours that it was a marvel to see. The same afterwards came swimming to the ship’s boats where we were, and brought us parrots, cotton threads in balls, darts and many other things, and bartered them with us for things which we gave them, such as bells and small glass beads. In fine, they took and gave all of whatever they had with good will. But it appeared to me they were a people very poor in everything. They went totally naked, as naked as their mothers brought them into the world.”

*Character of the Indians.*



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Then Columbus goes on to say that these Indians were well made, with very good countenances, but hair like horsehair, their colour yellow; and that they painted themselves. They neither carried arms, nor understood such things, for when he showed them swords, they took hold of them by the blade, and hurt themselves. Their darts were without iron; but some had a fish's tooth at the end. In concluding his description, he says, "they ought to make faithful servants, and of good understanding, for I see that very quickly they repeat all that is said to them, and I believe they would easily be converted to Christianity, for it appeared to me that they had no creed."

### *Their houses and implements.*

A little further on, the admiral says of the people of a neighbouring island, that they were more domestic and tractable than those of San Salvador, and more intelligent, too, as he saw in their way of reckoning for the payment of the cotton they brought to the ships. At the mouth of the Rio de Mares, some of the admiral's men, whom he had sent to reconnoitre, brought him word that the houses of the natives were the best they had seen. They were made, he says, like "Alfanques (pavilions), very large, and appeared as royal tents without an arrangement of streets, except one here and there, and within they were very clean, and well swept, and their furniture very well arranged. All these houses were made of palm branches, and were very beautiful. Our men found in these houses many statues of women, and several heads fashioned like masks, and very well wrought. I do not know, he adds, whether they have these for the love of the beautiful, or for purposes of worship." The Spaniards found also excellent nets, fish-hooks, and fishing-tackle. There were tame birds about the houses, and dogs which did not bark. "Mermaids," too, the admiral saw on the coasts, but thought them "not so like ladies as they are painted."

Speaking of the Indians of the coast near the Rio del Sol, he says that they are "very gentle, without knowing what evil is, neither killing nor stealing." He describes the frank generosity of the people of Marien, and the honour they thought it to be asked to give anything, in terms which may remind his readers of the doctrines maintained by Christians in respect of giving.

### *Discovery of tobacco; its peculiar effects.*

It is interesting to observe the way in which, at this point of the narrative, a new product is introduced to the notice of the old world, a product that was hereafter to become, not only an unfailing source of pleasure to a large section of the male part of mankind, from the highest to the lowest, but was also to distinguish itself as one of those commodities for revenue, which are the delight of statesmen, the great financial resource of modern nations, and which afford a means of indirect taxation that has, perhaps, nourished



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many a war, and prevented many a revolution. Two discoverers, whom the admiral had sent out from the Puerto de Mares (one of them being a learned Jew, who could speak Hebrew, Chaldee, and some Arabic, and would have been able to discourse, as Columbus probably thought, with any of the subjects of the Grand Khan, if he had met them), found that the men of the country they came to investigate, indulged in a “fumigation” of a peculiar kind. The smoke in question was absorbed into the mouth through a charred stick, and was caused by burning certain herbs wrapped in a dry leaf, which outer covering was called “tabaco.” Las Casas, who carefully describes this process of imbibing smoke, mentions that the Indians, when questioned about it, said that it took away fatigue, and that he has known Spaniards in the island of Hispaniola who adopted the same habit, and who, being reprovved for it as a vice, replied that it was not in their power to leave it off. “I do not know,” he adds, “what savour or profit they found in them” (tabacos). I cannot help thinking that there were several periods in his own life, when these strange fumigations would have afforded him singular soothing and comfort. However that may be, there can be no doubt of the importance, financially and commercially speaking, of this discovery of tobacco; a discovery which, in the end, proved more productive to the Spanish Crown, than that of the gold mines of the Indies.

The excellent relations that existed between the expedition of Columbus and the inhabitants of Cuba may be seen from the fact that these two Christians, who were the first witnesses of tobacco smoking, and who travelled with only two Indian attendants, were everywhere well and reverently received.

*Gold ORNAMENT’S observed.*

Resuming the thread of the history, it remains to be seen what more Columbus did and suffered in this voyage. The first Indians he met with had some few gold ornaments about them—poor wretches, if they had possessed the slightest gift of prophecy, they would have thrown these baubles into the deepest sea;—and they were asked whence came this gold? From a race, they said, living southwards, where there was a great king, who had much gold. On another occasion, other Indians being asked the same question, answered, “Cubanacan, Cubanacan.” They meant the middle of Cuba; but their word at once suggested to Columbus the idea that he was now upon the traces of his long-looked-for friend, Kublai Kaan, the Khan of Khans. Indeed, it is almost ludicrous to see, throughout, how Columbus is possessed with the notions borrowed from his reading of Marco Polo and other travellers. He asks for “his Cipango,” as Herrera slyly puts it; and the natives at once point out to him the direction where that is. They thought he meant Cibao, where afterwards the best mines of gold were found.

*Further explorations.*



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The admiral, bent on discovery, and especially on finding the terra firma, which adjoined "his" India, did not stay long anywhere. Proceeding southwards from San Salvador, he discovered an island, or rather a group of islands, to which he gave the name of Santa Maria de la Concepcion; he then discovered Cuba, and coasted along the northeastern part of that island; and afterwards, in due course, came to Hispaniola, called by the natives Hayti, in which island he landed upon the territory of King Guacanagari where he was received most cordially.

Various conjectures have been made as to the different results which would have followed, both for the New and for the Old World, if Columbus had steered a little to the northward, or the southward, of the course which he actually took. One thing, however, is obvious, that in arriving at Hispaniola he came to a central point, not only of the West Indies, but of the whole of the New World, and a point, therefore, most felicitously situated for the spreading of future discovery and conquest.

### *Insubordination of mariners.*

It may be mentioned here, that Martin Alonzo Pinzon had wilfully parted company from the admiral while on the coast of Cuba: covetousness being probably the cause of this most undutiful proceeding. But, indeed, there is another instance of the insubordination of the mariners, which makes the wonder only still greater how Columbus could have brought them across the Atlantic at all.

### *Wreck of admiral's vessel.*

One evening the admiral, after paying a visit to Guacanagari, seeing the sea quite calm, betook himself to rest. As he had not slept for two days and a night, it is probable his slumber was deep. Meanwhile, the steersman, contrary to the distinct orders of the admiral, gave the helm to a common sailor, a youth. All the sailors went to sleep. The sea was as calm "as water in a dish." Little by little the ship drifted on to a shoal. Directly they touch, the sailor-boy at the helm starts from his dream, and gives the alarm. The admiral jumps up first (for the responsibility of command seldom goes quite to sleep); then the officer whose watch it ought to have been hurries up, and the admiral orders him to lower the boat which they carried on the poop, and to throw out all anchor astern. Instead of obeying the admiral, this cowardly villain, with others like him, sprang into the boat and made off for the other vessel, which was about half a league off. The other vessel would not receive them, and they rowed back again. But it was too late. The admiral did what he could in the emergency: he cut down the mast, lightened the vessel as best he might, took out his people and went with them to the other caravel, sending his boat to Guacanagari to inform him of the misfortune.

### *Kindness of Indian chief.*



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The good Guacanagari was moved to tears by this sad affair. He gave not only sympathy, however, but assistance. His people went out with their canoes, and in a few moments cleared the vessel of all the goods in it. Guacanagari was very careful that nothing should be lost. He himself stood guard over the things which had been taken out of the ship. Then he sent comforting messages to the admiral, saying that he would give him what he had to make up for the loss. He put all the effects under shelter, and placed guards round them. The wrecker's trade might flourish in Cornwall; but, like other crimes of civilization, it was unknown in St. Domingo. The admiral was evidently touched to the heart, as well he might be, by the kindness of these Indians. He thus expresses himself, "They are a loving, uncovetous people, so docile in all things, that I assure your highnesses I believe in all the world there is not a better people, or a better country; they love their neighbours as themselves, and they have the sweetest and gentlest way of talking in the world, and always with a smile."

*A colony founded.*

The admiral resolved to found a colony in Guacanagari's land, "having found such good will and such signs of gold." In relating this, the Spanish historian, Herrera, makes some curious reflections. He looks upon the loss of the vessel as providential, in order that the true faith might be preached in that country. Then he says, how providence causes its work to be done, not on high motives only, but also on the ordinary ones which influence mankind. He concludes by observing that providence dealt with the Indians as a prudent father who has an ugly daughter, but makes up for her ugliness by the help of a large dowry. By the ugliness in this case he means the seas to be traversed, the hunger to be endured, and the labours to be undertaken, which he considers no other nation but the Spaniards would have encountered, even with the hope of greater booty.

With the timber of the unfortunate "Santa Maria" Columbus built a fort, and called it La Navidad, because he entered the port near there, on Christmas-day. He remained on very friendly terms with the good Cacique Guacanagari; and might have established himself most advantageously in that part of the country, if he could have been content, to be a settler.

*The admiral returns.*

But from the first moment of his discovery he doubtless had an anxious desire to get back to Spain, and to tell what he knew; and at times, perhaps, was fearful lest his grand secret, through some mischance to the expedition, should still perish with him. The great discoverer, therefore, now prepared to return homewards. He left his fort in trust to a small body of his followers,[12] whom he commended to the good offices of Guacanagari, not forgetting to impress upon them the excellent advice, to do no violence to man or woman, and, in short, to make their actions conformable to the idea (which the Indians first entertained of them) that they had come from heaven: then,

having received the necessary provisions for his vessel from the friendly cacique, the admiral set sail for Spain on the 4th of January, 1493.



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[Footnote 12: They were forty in number, and it would be strange to find, but for the well-known fact that nothing brings men of different races together more than maritime and commercial enterprise, that, in this small list there is an Irishman, “Guillermo Ires” (Qy. William Herries, or Rice) “natural de Galney, en Irlanda;” and an Englishman, “Tallarte de Lajes” (Qy. Arthur Lake) “ingles.”—NAVAREETE, Col. Dip., Num. 13.]

### CHAPTER V. Homeward bound.

Pinzon’s explanation.

For two days Columbus stood to the east-ward, but was met by a head-wind which prevented him from making much progress. On doubling the promontory of Monte Christo, however, the look-out at the mast-head made an announcement which was worth more than a fair wind to the voyagers, since it assured them that the homeward voyage of the “Nina” was not to be made without a consort; that the chance of the tidings of success being safely conveyed to Europe was not to depend upon the fortunes of a single ship. For, sailing down swiftly before the breeze which had detained Columbus, the “Pinta” hove in sight and the two vessels steered together into the bay of Monte Christo, which Columbus had recently quitted. Pinzon, as soon as the weather permitted, went on board the admiral’s caravel to account for his desertion, which he stated to have been the accidental result of a storm which had driven him out of his course and out of sight of his leader. The admiral accepted this explanation, as a quarrel with Pinzon, whose townsmen and relations formed a large proportion of the crews, might cause a mutiny which would be fatal to the undertaking; but he did not fail to note in his diary his conviction of Pinzon’s bad faith. The fact was, that Pinzon had heard from the natives of a certain island, whence all the gold was said to come, and he had wished to anticipate Columbus in the discovery of this El Dorado, and to secure the profits for himself. He had not found this home of the gold, but had met with some natives from whom he had obtained, by barter, a large quantity of the precious metal. Half of this he had appropriated: the other half he had distributed among his crew as a bribe to them to say nothing about the matter.

*Affray with aborigines.*

After a few days spent in refitting the vessels, and preparing for the homeward voyage, the Nina. and her consort again set sail, coasting St. Domingo in an easterly direction as far as the Gulf of Samana. It was in this neighbourhood that the first affray with the aborigines took place, in consequence of an attack made by them upon an exploring expedition which Columbus had sent out. But so anxious was he to preserve a good understanding with the natives, that he did not leave the scene of the encounter until he had come to an amicable agreement with them. Another instance of the wise and humane policy by which he was actuated, is to be found in the fact, that on discovering that Pinzon had carried on board six natives to be taken to Spain, and there sold as

slaves, he insisted on their release, dismissing them, moreover, with presents of such glittering toys as their kinsmen would be likely to appreciate, and as might predispose them in favour of the Europeans.



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*Search for Amazonians.*

On the 16th of January, Columbus left the Gulf of Samana on his homeward course, from which, however, he deviated at first in the hope of finding the island, peopled with Amazons, described by Marco Polo, of which he had understood the natives of St. Domingo to give him intelligence. Such a discovery would be, he considered, a conclusive proof of the identity of his new country with Marco Polo's Indies, and when four natives offered to act as his guides, he thought it worth while to steer (in the direction of Martinique) in quest of the fabulous Amazonians. But the breeze blew towards Spain; home-sickness took possession of the crews; murmurs arose at the prolongation of the voyage among the currents and reefs of those strange seas; and, in deference to the universal wish of his companions, Columbus soon abandoned all idea of further discovery, and resumed his course for Europe.

*Storm encountered.*

At first the voyage was tranquil enough, though the adverse trade-winds, and the bad sailing of the Pinta,[13] retarded the progress of both vessels.

[Footnote 13: This was occasioned by the defective condition of her mast, whereupon the admiral remarks in his diary, that "if Pinzon had exerted himself as much to provide himself with a new mast in the Indies, where there are so many fine trees, as he had in running away from him in the hope of loading his vessel with gold, they would not have laboured under that inconvenience."]

But on the 12th of February a storm overtook them, and became more and more furious, until, on the 14th, it rose to a hurricane, before which Pinzon's vessel could only drift helplessly, while the Nina was able to set a close-reefed foresail, which kept her from being buried in the trough of the sea. In the evening both caravels were scudding under bare poles, and when darkness fell, and the signal light of the "Pinta" gleamed farther and farther off, through the blinding spray, until at last it could be seen no more, when his panic-stricken crew gave themselves up to despair, as the winds howled louder and louder, and the seas burst over his frail vessel—then, indeed, without a single skilled navigator to advise or to aid him, Columbus must have felt himself alone with the tempest and the night. But his brave heart bore him up, and his wonderful capacity for devising expedients on sudden emergencies did not forsake him. As the stores were consumed, the Nina felt the want of the ballast which Columbus had intended to take on board at the Amazonian Island. "Fill the empty casks with water," he said, "and let them serve as ballast," an expedient which has grown common enough now, but which then was probably original.

*The promised PILGRIMAGE*



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Nor, while he did all that human skill could suggest for the safety of his vessel, did Columbus neglect to invoke the aid of that Higher Power, at whose special instigation he believed himself to have undertaken the expedition. With his whole crew he drew lots to choose one of their number to perform a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The admiral was chosen. Twice more were lots drawn with a similar object, and once again the lot fell to the admiral. Afterwards, he and all the crew made a vow to go in procession, clothed in penitential garments, to the first church, dedicated to the Virgin, which they should meet with on arriving at land; and this vow, as we shall see presently, was followed by quite unexpected consequences.

*Narrative inclosed in cask.*

When the chances of weathering the storm had become small indeed, Columbus determined that, if possible, the tidings of his discovery should not perish with him. He wrote a short account of his voyage on parchment, and this he enclosed in wax, and placed in a cask,[14] which he committed to the waves. Thinking, probably, that his crew would interpret this as an abandonment of all hope, he concealed from them the real nature of the contents of the cask, so that they believed that their commander was performing some religious rite which might assuage the fury of the elements.

[Footnote 14: About the year 1852 a paragraph went the round of the English press announcing the discovery of this cask on the African coast, by the barque "Chieftain," of Boston (Mass). Lamartine has accepted this story as correct, but it has never been authenticated, and there is a strong presumption in favour of its having been invented by some ingeniously circumstantial newspaper correspondent.]

*The pilgrims captured.*

On the 15th of February the storm abated to some extent, and at last they came in sight of some land on the E.N.E., which the pilots held to be the Rock of Lisbon, but which the admiral more accurately determined to be one of the Azores. Vainly endeavouring, however, to make head against the wind and the sea, they lost sight of this island, but came in sight of another, lying more to the south, round which they sailed on the night of the 17th, but lost an anchor in endeavouring to bring up near the land. On the following day they cast anchor, and succeeded in communicating with the inhabitants, from whom they learned that they had reached the island of St. Mary, belonging to the Portuguese. The governor sent amicable messages to Columbus, and announced his intention of visiting him. But when, in fulfilment of their vow, half the crew went, barefoot and in their shirts, on a pilgrimage to the chapel of St. Mary, which was not far from the harbour, the governor and his satellites lay in ambush on the road, and captured the whole band of pilgrims. The crowns of Portugal and Castile

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were still at peace, but it appears that this “man, dressed in a little brief authority,” thought that the capture would gratify his sovereign. The remonstrances of the admiral were of no avail; and as the weather would not allow of his remaining in his present anchorage, he was forced to stand out to sea, and to run nearly to St. Michael’s, with a crew which comprised only three able seamen. On the 21st of February he returned to St. Mary’s, and eventually, as the governor was unable to seize Columbus himself, he decided on recognizing the royal commission which he produced, and restoring his crew. On the 24th the “Nina” again steered for Spain, but another tempest supervened, and continued with more or less fury for more than a week.

### *Arrival in the Tagus.*

In this last storm, which raged with destructive violence along the west coast of the whole Continent of Europe, and which drove the “Pinta” almost helplessly towards a lee-shore, the dangers of the voyage reached their climax. “I escaped,” says the admiral, “by the greatest miracle in the world.” Fortunately, however, his seamanship was equal to the emergency, and on the afternoon of the fourth of March he came to anchor in the Tagus. To the King of Portugal, who happened to be at no great distance, he sent a despatch announcing his arrival and the result of his voyage, and, in reply, received a pressing invitation to court. With this he thought proper to comply, “in order not to show mistrust, although he disliked it,” and was received by the king with the highest honours. This must have been almost too much of a triumph for a generous mind, considering that the court before which he was displaying the signs of a new world had refused the opportunity of securing the discovery for itself. The king, however, now took occasion to put in a claim to the newly found countries, basing it on that papal bull which has been mentioned in a previous chapter but, although Columbus, in the interest of his sovereigns, took care to repudiate this claim as decidedly as possible, his royal host continued to entertain him with the utmost consideration.

### *Reception at Palos.*

Possibly mistrusting the seamanship of his subordinates, Columbus refused the offer of safe conduct and means of transport to Spain by land; and on the 13th of March, in the teeth of a north-westerly wind and a heavy sea, left the Tagus for the bar of Saltes, and safely reached his starting-point at Palos on the 15th, again a Friday. The enthusiasm and excitement aroused by the success of the expedition were unbounded. At Palos, especially, where few families had not a personal interest in some of the band of explorers, the little community was filled with extraordinary delight. Not an individual member of the expedition but was elevated into a hero,—not a debtor or a criminal whom the charter of immunity had led, rather than bear the ills he had, to fly to others that he knew not of,—but had expiated his social misdeeds, and had become a person of consideration and an object of enthusiasm. The court was at Barcelona.

Immediately on his arrival Columbus despatched a letter to the king and queen, stating in general terms the success of his project; and proceeded forthwith to present himself in person to their highnesses.



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### *Bad faith of Pinzon.*

Almost at the same time, the "Pinta," which had been separated from her consort in the first storm which they encountered, made the port of Bayonne, whence Pinzon had forwarded a letter to the sovereigns, announcing "his" discoveries, and proposing to come to court and give full intelligence as to them. Columbus, whom he probably supposed to have perished at sea, he seems to have ignored utterly, and when he received a reply from the king and queen, directing him not to go to court without the admiral, chagrin and grief overcame him to such an extent that he took to his bed; and if any man ever died from mental distress and a broken heart, that man was Martin Alonzo Pinzon.

### *Solemn reception.*

Herrera tells us that the admiral now "entered into the greatest reputation," and the historian goes on to explain to his readers what the meaning of "reputation" is. "It does not consist," he tells us, "in success, but in doing something which cannot be easily comprehended, which compels men to think over and over again about it." And certainly, this definition makes the word particularly applicable to the achievement of Columbus.

The court prepared a solemn reception for the admiral at Barcelona, where the people poured out in such numbers to see him that the streets could not contain them. A triumphal procession like his the world had not yet seen: it was a thing to make the most incurious alert, and even the sad and solitary student content to come out and mingle with the mob. The captives that accompanied a Roman general's car might be strange barbarians of a tribe from which Rome had not before had slaves. But barbarians were not unknown creatures. Here, with Columbus, were beings of a new world. Here was the conqueror, not of man but of nature, not of flesh and blood but of the fearful unknown, of the elements, and, more than all, of the prejudices of centuries. We may imagine the rumours that must have gone before his coming. And now he was there. Ferdinand and Isabella had their thrones placed in the presence of the assembled court. Columbus approached the monarchs, and then, "his countenance beaming with modest satisfaction," knelt at the king's feet, and begged leave to kiss their highnesses' hands. They gave their hands; then they bade him rise and be seated before them. He recounted briefly the events of his voyage—a story more interesting than the tale told in the court of Dido by Aeneas, like whom he had almost perished close to home, and he concluded his unpretending narrative by showing what new things and creatures he had brought with him.

### *Marks of approbation.*

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Ferdinand and Isabella fell on their knees, giving thanks to God with many tears; and then the choristers of the royal chapel closed the grand ceremonial by singing the “Te Deum.” Afterwards men walked home grave and yet happy, having seen the symbol of a great work, something to be thought over for many a generation. Other marks of approbation for Columbus were not wanting. The agreement between him and the sovereigns was confirmed. An appropriate coat of arms, then a thing of much significance, was granted to him in augmentation of his own. In the shield are conspicuously emblazoned the Royal Arms of Castile and Leon. Nothing can better serve to show the immense favour which Columbus had obtained at court by his discovery than such a grant; and it is but a trifling addition to make, in recounting his now honours, that the title of Don was given to him and his descendants, and also to his brothers. He rode by the king’s side; was served at table as a grandee; “All hail!” was said to him on state occasions; and the men of his age, happy in that, had found out another great man to honour.

*Grant by the pope.*

The more prosaic part of the business had then to be attended to. The Sovereigns applied to the Pope Alexander the Sixth, to confer on the crowns of Castile and Leon the lands discovered and to be discovered in the Indies. To this application they soon received a favourable answer. The Pope granted to the Princes of Castile and Leon, and to their successors, the sovereign empire and principality of the Indies, and of the navigation there, with high and royal jurisdiction and imperial dignity and lordship over all that hemisphere. To preserve the peace between Spain and Portugal, the Pontiff divided the Spanish and Portuguese Indian sovereignties by an imaginary line drawn from pole to pole, one hundred leagues west of the Azores and the Cape de Verde Islands.

*Second voyage planned.*

Meanwhile the preparations were being made for a second voyage to be undertaken by the admiral. After the arrival of the apostolic bulls, and before the departure of Columbus from Barcelona, the nine Indians brought by him were baptized. Here, parenthetically, we may take note of something which, if the fact did correspond with what the Spaniards thought about it, would, indeed, be notable. One of the Indians, after being baptized, died, and was, we are told, [Herrera] the first of that nation, according to pious belief, who entered heaven.

We cannot help thinking of the hospitable and faithful Guacanagari, and imagining that, if his race had been like him, some one might already have reached the regions of the blessed. I do not, however, refer to this passage of Herrera for its boldness or its singularity, but because it brings before us again the profound import attached to baptism in those times, and may help to account for many seeming inconsistencies in the conduct of the Spaniards to the Indians.



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### *Colonial department.*

In the conduct, however, of Ferdinand and Isabella towards the Indians there was nothing equivocal, but all that they did showed the tenderness and religious care of these monarchs for their new subjects. A special department for the control of colonial affairs was placed under the charge of Juan de Fonseca, an eminent ecclesiastic who was high in the royal favour, and on whom was eventually conferred the title of Patriarch of the Indies. But, unfortunately for the poor savages whose fate he was now to influence so largely, Fonseca's character had in it but little of the mild and forbearing spirit of Christianity. A shrewd man of business, a hard task-master, an implacable enemy, he displayed, during his long administration of Indian affairs, all the qualities of an unscrupulous tyrant, and was instrumental in inflicting on the islanders keener miseries than ever have been brought by conqueror upon a subject race.

### *Home of the gold.*

Jealous of the rivalry of Portugal, the sovereigns took every means of hastening the preparations for a second voyage to be undertaken by the admiral. Twelve caravels and five smaller vessels were made ready, and were laden with horses and other animals, and with plants, seeds, and agricultural implements for the cultivation of the new countries. Artificers of various trades were engaged, and a quantity of merchandize and gaudy trifles, fit for bartering with the natives, were placed on board. There was no need to press men into the service now; volunteers for the expedition were only too numerous. The fever for discovery was universal. Columbus was confident that he had been on the outskirts of Cathay, and that the scriptural land of Havilah, the home of gold, was not far off. Untold riches were to be acquired, and probably there was not one of the 1500 persons who took ship in the squadron that did not anticipate a prodigious fortune as the reward of the voyage. Nor was one of the great objects of these discoveries uncared for. Twelve missionaries, eager to enlighten the spiritual darkness of the western lands, were placed under the charge of Bernard Buil, a Benedictine monk, who was specially appointed by the Pope, in order to ensure an authorized teaching of the faith, to superintend the religious education of the Indians.

### *The admiral's instructions.*

The instructions to Columbus, dated the 29th of May, 1493, are the first strokes upon that obdurate mass of colonial difficulty which at last, by incessant working of great princes, great churchmen, and great statesmen, was eventually to be hammered into some righteous form of wisdom and of mercy. In the course of these instructions, the admiral is ordered to labour in all possible ways to bring the dwellers in the Indies to a knowledge of the Holy Catholic Faith. And that this may the more easily be done, all the armada is to be charged to deal "lovingly" with the Indians; the admiral is to make them presents, and to "honour them much;" and if by chance any person or persons should

treat the Indians ill, in any manner whatever, the admiral is to chastise such ill-doers severely.



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Even at this early period of his administration, Fonseca appears to have made some attempts to thwart the admiral's wishes, attempts which Columbus, now at the zenith of royal favour, had no difficulty in baffling. As regards the household, for instance, Fonseca demurred to the number of footmen which the admiral proposed for his domestic establishment. The admiral appealed to the sovereigns, who allowed his claim, and reproved Fonseca for objecting.

### CHAPTER VI. Second Voyage of Discovery.

On the 25th of September, all the preparations being complete, the squadron left Cadiz for the Canary Islands, and, after taking in provisions there, sailed from Ferro on the 13th of October. The voyage was singularly prosperous. There was but one storm, and that of not more than a few hours' duration; and favouring breezes wafted them over calm seas with a rapidity that brought the ships within sight of land on the 3rd of November, having made the voyage "by the goodness of God, and the wise management of the admiral, in as straight a track as if they had sailed by a well-known and frequented route." It was Sunday, and accordingly the name of Dominica was given to the first island to which the admiral came.

#### *Island of Guadaloupe.*

From Dominica, where no aborigines were found, the admiral stood northward, naming one small island Maria Galante, after his own flagship, and calling a second and much larger one Guadaloupe, after a certain monastery in Estramadura. This island was peopled by a race of cannibals; and, in the houses of the natives, human flesh was found roasting at the fire. An exploring party from one of the ships penetrated into the interior, but so thickly was it wooded that they lost their way in the jungle, and only regained the ships after four days' wanderings, and when their safety was despaired of by their companions, who feared that they had become food for the savages. Fortunately, however, the men of the island were absent on some warlike expedition, and the white men only met with women and children in the course of their dangerous explorations.

#### *Destruction of la Navidad.*

Anxious to revisit the colony at La Navidad, the admiral proceeded north-westward as speedily as possible, and after passing and naming Montserrat, Antigua, St. Martin, and Santa Cruz, arrived at a beautiful and fertile island which he called St. John, but which has since received the name of Porto Rico. Here were found houses and roads constructed after a civilized fashion; but proofs that the inhabitants were cannibals abounded everywhere. On the 22nd of November the admiral reached the eastern end of Hispaniola, and sailed along the northern shore toward La Navidad, where a profound disappointment awaited him. The little colony which he had founded had been

entirely destroyed. The fort was razed to the ground. Not one of the settlers was alive to tell the tale.



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### *Licentiousness of settlers.*

The account which Guacanagari gave to Columbus, and which there seems no reason to doubt, is, that the Spanish who had been left at La Navidad took to evil courses, quarrelled amongst themselves, straggled about the country, and finally were set upon, when weak and few in numbers, by a neighbouring Indian chief named Caonabo, who burned the tower and killed or dispersed the garrison, none of whom were ever discovered. It was in Caonabo's country that the gold mines were reported to exist, and it is probable that both the cupidity and the profligacy of the colonists were so gross as to draw down upon them the not unreasonable vengeance of the natives. Guacanagari, the friendly cacique, who had received the admiral amicably on his first voyage, declared that he and his tribe had done their utmost in defence of the Europeans, in proof of which he exhibited recent wounds which had evidently been inflicted by savage weapons. He was, naturally, scarcely so friendly as before, but communication with him was made easy by the aid of one of the Indians whom Columbus had taken to Spain, and who acted as interpreter. Guacanagari was willing that a second fort should be built on the site of the first, but the admiral thought it better to seek a new locality, both because the position of the old fort had been unhealthy, and because the disgusting licentiousness of the settlers had offended the Indians to such an extent that whereas they had at first regarded the white men as angels from heaven, now they considered them as debased profligates and disturbers of the peace, against whom they had to defend their honour and their lives.

### *Colony founded at Isabella.*

Sailing along the coast of Hayti, Columbus selected a site for his projected settlement, about forty miles to the east of the present Cape Haytien. This he called Isabella, after his royal mistress. Here the ships of his squadron discharged their stores, and the Spaniards laboured actively in the construction of the first town built by Europeans in the New World. But the work did not progress prosperously. Diseases prevailed among the colonists. The fatigues and discomforts of a long sea voyage were not the best preparations for hard physical labour. The number of men which the admiral had brought out with him was disproportionate to his means of sustaining them. Provisions and medicines began to fail. And, worst of all, none of the golden dreams were realized, under the influence of which they had left Spain. Only small samples of the precious metal could be procured from the natives, and the vaguely indicated gold mines of Cibao had not been reached. Anxiety, responsibility, and labour began to tell upon the iron constitution of the admiral, and for some time he was stretched upon a bed of sickness.

### *Columbus despatch to the court of Spain.*



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Some idea of the difficulties which had to be encountered at this period may be conceived from an account of the state of his colony which Columbus sent home in January 1494. It is in the form of instructions to a certain Antonio de Torres, the Receiver of the Colony, who was to proceed to the court of Spain and inform the Monarchs of such things as were written in these instructions, and doubtless to elucidate them by discourse, as in the present day we send a despatch to be read by an ambassador to the foreign minister of the power we are treating with. There remains a copy, made at the time, of this document, and of the notes in the margin containing the resolutions of the sovereigns. The original, thus noted, was taken back to Columbus. It is a most valuable document, very illustrative of the cautious and wise dealing of the catholic sovereigns.

The document begins with the usual strain of complimentary address to great personages, "Their Highnesses hold it for good service" is the marginal remark.

The next paragraph consists of a general statement of the discoveries that have been made. "Their Highnesses give much thanks to God, and hold as very honoured service all that the admiral has done."

Then follow the admiral's reasons why he has not been able to send home more gold. His people have been ill: it was necessary to keep guard, &c. "He has done well" is in the margin.

He suggests the building of a fortress near the place where gold can be got. Their Highnesses approve; and the note in the margin is, "This is well, and so it must be done."

Then comes a paragraph about provisions, and a marginal order from the sovereigns, "that Juan de Fonseca is to provide for that matter."

Again, there comes another paragraph about provisions, complaining, amongst other things, that the casks, in which the wine for the armada had been put, were leaky. Their Highnesses make an order in the margin, "that Juan de Fonseca is to find out the persons who played this cheat with the wine casks, and to make good from their pockets the loss, and to see that the canes" (sugar canes for planting, possibly) "are good, and that all that is here asked for, be provided immediately."

### *Castilian interpreters.*

So far, nothing can run more pleasantly with the main document than the notes in the margin. Columbus now touches upon a matter which intimately concerns the subject of slavery. He desires his agent to inform their Highnesses that he has sent home some Indians from the Cannibal Islands as slaves, to be taught Castilian, and to serve afterwards as interpreters, so that the work of conversion may go on. His arguments in

support of this proceeding are weighty. He speaks of the good that it will be to take these people away from cannibalism and to have them baptized, for so they will gain their souls, as he expresses it. Then, too, with regard to the other Indians,



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he remarks, "we shall have great credit from them, seeing that we can capture and make slaves of these cannibals, of whom they (the peaceable Indians) entertain so great a fear." Such arguments must be allowed to have much force in them; and it may be questioned whether many of those persons who, in these days, are the strongest opponents of slavery, would then have had that perception of the impending danger of its introduction which the sovereigns appear to have entertained, from their answer to this part of the document. "This is very well, and so it must be done; but let the admiral see whether it could not be managed there" (i.e. in the Cannibal Islands) "that they should be brought to our Holy Catholic Faith, and the same thing with the Indians of those islands where he is."

### *Slavery proposed.*

The admiral's despatch goes much further: in the next paragraph he boldly suggests that, for the advantage of the souls of these cannibal Indians, the more of them that could be taken the better; and that, considering what quantities of live-stock and other things are required for the maintenance of the colony, a certain number of caravels should be sent each year with these necessary things, and the cargoes be paid for in slaves taken from amongst the cannibals. He touches again on the good that will be done to the cannibals themselves; alludes to the customs duties that their Highnesses may levy upon them; and concludes by desiring Antonio de Torres to send, or bring, an answer, "because the preparations here (for capturing these cannibals) may be carried on with more confidence, if the scheme seem good to their Highnesses."

### *The proposal rejected.*

At the same time that we must do Columbus the justice to believe that his motives were right in his own eyes, it must be admitted that a more distinct suggestion for the establishment of a slave-trade was never proposed. To their honour, Ferdinand and Isabella thus replied: "As regards this matter, it is suspended for the present, until there come some other way of doing it there, and let the admiral write what he thinks of this."

This is rather a confused answer, as often happens, when a proposition from a valued friend or servant is disapproved of, but has to be rejected kindly. The Catholic sovereigns would have been very glad to have received some money from the Indies: money was always welcome to King Ferdinand; the purchase of wine, seeds, and cattle for the colonists had hitherto proved anything but a profitable outlay; the prospect of conversion was probably dear to the hearts of both these princes, certainly to one of them: but still this proposition for the establishment of slavery was wisely and magnanimously set aside.

### *Fort st. Thomas founded.*



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While Antonio de Torres was absent from Hispaniola, laying these propositions before Los Reyes, Columbus was busy about the affairs of the colony, which were in a most distracted state. Scant fare and hard work were having their effect; sickness pervaded the whole armament; and men of all ranks and stations, hidalgos, people of the court and ecclesiastics, were obliged to labour manually under regulations strictly enforced. The rage and vexation of these men, many of whom had come out with the notion of finding gold ready for them on the sea shore, may be imagined; and complaints of the admiral's harsh way of dealing with those under him (probably no harsher than was absolutely necessary to save them), now took their rise, and pursued him ever after to his ruin. A mutiny, headed by Bernal Diaz, a man high in authority, was detected and quelled before the mutineers could effect their intention of seizing the ships. Diaz was sent for trial to Spain. The colonists, however, were somewhat cheered after a time by hearing of gold mines, and seeing specimens of ore brought from thence; and the admiral went himself and founded the Fort of St. Thomas, in the mining district of Cibao. But the Spaniards gained very little real advantage from these gold mines, which they began to work before they had consolidated around them the means of living; in fact, dealing with the mines of Hispaniola as if they had been discovered in an old country, where the means of transit and, supplies of provisions can, with certainty, be procured.

### *Desire for discovery.*

There was also another evil, besides that of inconsiderate mining, and, perhaps, quite as mischievous a one, which stood in the way of the steady improvement of these early Spanish colonies. The Catholic sovereigns had unfortunately impressed upon Columbus their wish that he should devote himself to further discovery, a wish but too readily adopted and furthered by his enterprising spirit. The hankering of the Spanish monarchs for further discovery was fostered by their jealousy of the Portuguese. The Portuguese were making their way towards India, going eastward. They, the Spaniards, thought they were discovering India, going westward. The more rapidly, therefore, each nation could advance and plant its standard, the more of much-coveted India it would hereafter be able to claim. Acting upon such views, Columbus now proceeded onwards, bent upon further discovery, notwithstanding that his little colonies at Isabella and St. Thomas must have needed all his sagacity to protect them, and all his authority to restrain them.

### *A council appointed.*

He nominated a council to manage the government during his absence, with his brother Don Diego as president of it; he appointed a certain Don Pedro Margarite as captain-general; and then put to sea on the 24th of April, 1494.

## CHAPTER VII.



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In the course of the voyage that then ensued, the admiral made many important discoveries, amongst them Jamaica, and the cluster of little islands called the "Garden of the Queen." The navigation amongst these islands was so difficult, that the admiral is said to have been thirty-two days without sleeping. Certain it is, that after he had left the island called La Mona, and when he was approaching the island of San Juan, a drowsiness, which Las Casas calls "pestilential," but which might reasonably be attributed to the privations, cares, and anxieties which the admiral had now undergone for many months, seized upon him, and entirely deprived him for a time of the use of his senses.

The object in going to San Juan was to capture cannibals there, and Las Casas looks upon this lethargical attack as a judgment upon the admiral for so unjust a manner of endeavouring to introduce Christianity. The mariners turned the fleet homewards to Isabella, where they arrived the 29th of September, 1494, bearing with them their helpless commander.

### *Illness of Columbus.*

On Columbus's arrival at Isabella, where he remained ill for five months, he found his brother, Bartholomew Columbus, whose presence gladdened him exceedingly. His brothers were very dear to the admiral, as may be gathered from a letter to his eldest son Diego, in which he bids him make much of his brother Ferdinand, the son of Beatrice, "for," says he, "ten brothers would not be too many for you. I have never found better friends, on my right hand and on my left, than my brothers." Afterwards came Antonio de Torres with provisions, and all things needful for the colony. But nothing, we are told, delighted the admiral so much as the despatches from court, for he was a faithful, loyal man, who loved to do his duty to those who employed him, and to have his faithfulness recognized.

### *Disorganization of the colony.*

Peace or delight, however, was not at any time to be long enjoyed by Columbus. He found his colony in a sad state of disorganization: the Indians were in arms against the Spaniards; and Father Buil, Don Pedro Margarite, and other principal persons had gone home to Spain in the ship which had brought Bartholomew Columbus.

The admiral, before his departure, had given a most injudicious command to Margarite, namely, to put himself at the head of four hundred men and go through the country, with the twofold object of impressing upon the natives a respect for the power of the Spaniards, and of freeing the colony from supporting these four hundred men. The instructions to Margarite were, to observe the people and the natural productions of the country through which he should pass; to do rigorous justice, so that the Spaniards should be prevented from injuring the Indians, or the Indians the Spaniards; to treat the



Indians kindly; to obtain provisions by purchase, if possible, if not, by any other means; and to capture Caonabo and his brothers, either by force or artifice.



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### *Oppression of Indians.*

The proceedings of the men under Margerite were similar to those of the Spaniards formerly left at La Navidad. They went straggling over the country: they consumed the provisions of the poor Indians, astonishing them by their voracious appetites; waste, rapine, injury and insult followed in their steps; and from henceforth there was but little hope of the two races living peaceably together in those parts, at least upon equal terms. The Indians were now swarming about the Spaniards with hostile intent: as a modern historian describes the situation, "they had passed from terror to despair;" and but for the opportune arrival of the admiral, the Spanish settlements in Hispaniola might again have been entirely swept away.

Caonabo, the cacique who, in former days, had put to death the garrison at La Navidad, was now threatening that of St. Thomas, the fort which the admiral had caused to be built in the mining district of Cibao. Guatignana, the cacique of Macorix, who had killed eight Spanish soldiers and set fire to a house where there were forty ill, was now within two days' march of Isabella, besieging the fort of Magdalena. Columbus started up forthwith, went off to Magdalena, engaged the Indians, and routed them utterly.

### *Transmission of slaves,*

He took a large part of them for slaves, and reduced to obedience the whole of the province of Macorix. Returning to Isabella, he sent back, on the 24th of February, 1495, the four ships which Antonio de Torres had brought out, chiefly laden with Indian slaves. It is rather remarkable that the very ships which brought that admirable reply from Ferdinand and Isabella to Columbus, begging him to seek some other way to Christianity than through slavery, even for wild man-devouring Caribs, should come back full of slaves taken from amongst the wild islanders of Hispaniola.

Caonabo, not daunted by the fate of Guatignana, still continued to molest St. Thomas. The admiral accordingly sallied out with two hundred men against this cacique. On the broad plains of the Vega Real the Spaniards found an immense number of Indians collected together, amounting, it is said, to one hundred thousand men. The admiral divided his forces into two bands, giving the command of one to his brother Bartholomew, and leading the other himself; and when the brothers made an attack upon the Indians at the same time from different quarters, this numerous host was at once and utterly put to flight. In speaking of such a defeat, the modern reader must not be lavish of the words "cowardly," "pusillanimous," and the like, until, at least, he has well considered what it is to expose naked bodies to firearms, to the charge of steel-clad men on horseback, and to the clinging ferocity of bloodhounds.

### *SLAUGHTER of natives.*



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A “horrible carnage” ensued upon the flight of the Indians. Many of them, less fortunate, perhaps, than those who were slain, being taken alive, were condemned to slavery. Caonabo, however, who was besieging the fortress of St. Thomas at the time of the battle on the Vega Real, remained untaken. The admiral resolved to secure the person of this cacique by treachery; and sent Ojeda (who afterwards became a conspicuous actor in the sad drama of conquest and depopulation in the West Indies) to cajole Caonabo into coming to a friendly meeting. There are some curious instructions of Columbus’s to Margarite in 1494, respecting a plot to take this formidable Caonabo. They are as thoroughly base and treacherous as can well be imagined. This time the admiral’s plan was completely successful.

### *Cunning capture of Indian chief.*

The story which was current in the colonies, of the manner in which Ojeda captured the resolute Indian chief, is this. Ojeda carried with him gyves and manacles, the latter of the kind called by the Spaniards, somewhat satirically, esposas (wives), and all made of brass or steel, finely wrought, and highly polished. The metals of Spain were prized by the Indians in the same way that the gold of the Indies was by the Spaniards. Moreover, amongst the Indians, there was a strange rumour of talking brass, that arose from their listening to the church bell at Isabella, which, summoning the Spaniards to mass, was thought by the simple Indians to converse with them. Indeed the natives of Hispaniola held the Spanish metals in such estimation that they applied to them an Indian word, Turey, which seems to have signified anything that descends from heaven. When, therefore, Ojeda brought these ornaments to Caonabo, and told him they were Biscayan Turey, and that they were a great present from the admiral, and that he would show him how to put them on, and that when they were put on Caonabo should set himself on Ojeda’s horse and be shown to his admiring subjects, as, Ojeda said, the kings of Spain were wont to show themselves to theirs, the incautious Indian is said to have fallen entirely into the trap. Going with Ojeda, accompanied by only a small escort, to a river a short distance from his main encampment. Caonabo, after performing ablutions, suffered the crafty young Spaniard to put the heaven-descended fetters on him, and to set him upon the horse. Ojeda himself got up behind the Indian prince, and then whirling a few times round, like a pigeon before it takes its determined flight, making the followers of Caonabo imagine that this was but display, (they all the while keeping at a respectful distance from the horse, an animal they much dreaded,) he darted off for Isabella, and after great fatigues, now keeping to the main track, now traversing the woods in order to evade pursuit, brought Caonabo bound into the presence of Columbus. The unfortunate cacique was afterwards sent to Spain [He died on the voyage, however.] to be judged there; and his forces were presently put to flight by a troop of Spaniards under the command of this same Ojeda. Some were killed; some taken prisoners; some fled to the forests and the mountains; some yielded, “offering themselves to the service of the Christians, if they would allow them to live in their own ways.”



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### *Gold tribute imposed.*

Never, perhaps, were little skirmishes, for such they were on the part of the Spaniards, of greater permanent importance than those above narrated, which took place in the early part of the year 1495. They must be looked upon as the origin in the Indies of slavery, vassalage, and the system of repartimientos. We have seen that the admiral, after his first victory, sent off four ships with slaves to Spain. He now took occasion to impose a tribute upon the whole population of Hispaniola. It was thus arranged. Every Indian above fourteen years old, who was in the provinces of the mines, or near to these provinces, was to pay every three months a little bellful of gold; all other persons in the island were to pay at the same time an arroba of cotton for each person. Certain brass or copper tokens were made—different ones for each tribute time—and were given to the Indians when they paid tribute and these tokens, being worn about their necks, were to show who had paid tribute.

### *Remarkable Indian scheme.*

A remarkable proposal was made upon this occasion to the admiral by Guarionex, cacique of the Vega Real, namely, that he would institute a huge farm for the growth of corn and the manufacture of bread, stretching from Isabella to St. Domingo (i. e. from sea to sea) which would suffice to maintain all Castile with bread. The cacique would do this on condition that his vassals were not to pay tribute in gold, as they did not know how to collect that. But this proposal was not accepted, because Columbus wished to have tribute in such things as he could send over to Spain.

This tribute is considered to have been a most unreasonable one in point of amount, and Columbus was obliged to modify his demands upon these poor Indians, and in some instances to change the nature of them. It appears that, in 1496, service instead of tribute was demanded of certain Indian villages; and as the villagers were ordered to make (and work) the farms in the Spanish settlements, this may be considered as the beginning of the system of repartimientos, or encomiendas, as they were afterwards called.

### *Views of Columbus on slavery.*

We must not, however, suppose that Indian slavery would not have taken place by means of Columbus, even if these uprisings and defeats of the Indians in the course of the year 1495 had never occurred. Very early indeed we see what the admiral's views were with regard to the Indians. In the diary which he kept of his first voyage, on the 14th of October, three days after discovering the New World, he describes a position which he thinks would be a very good one for a fort; and he goes on to say, "I do not think that it (the fort) will be necessary, for this people is very simple in the use of arms (as your highnesses will see from seven of them that I have taken in order to bring them to you, to learn our language and afterwards to take them back); so that when your

highnesses command, you can have them all taken to Castille or kept in the island as captives.”



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Columbus was not an avaricious, nor a cruel man; and certainly he was a very pious one; but early in life he had made voyages along the coast of Africa, and he was accustomed to a slave trade. Moreover, he was anxious to reduce the expenses of these Indian possessions to the Catholic sovereigns, to prove himself in the right as to all he had said respecting the advantages that would flow to Spain from the Indies, and to confute his enemies at Court.

Those who have read the instructions to Columbus given by the Catholic monarchs will naturally be curious to know how the news of the arrival of these vessels laden with slaves, the fruit of the admiral's first victory over the Indians, was received by the Sovereigns, recollecting how tender they had been about slavery before. This, however, was a very different case from the former one. Here were people taken in what would be called rebellion—prisoners of war. Still we find that Ferdinand and Isabella were heedful in their proceedings in this matter. There is a letter of theirs to Bishop Fonseca, who managed Indian affairs, telling him to withhold receiving the money for the sale of these Indians that Torres had brought with him until their Highnesses should be able to inform themselves from men learned in the law, theologians and canonists, whether with a good conscience these Indians could be ordered to be sold or not. The historian Munoz, who has been indefatigable in his researches amongst the documents relating to Spanish America, declares that he cannot find that the point was decided; and if he has failed, we are not likely to discover any direct evidence about the decision. We shall hereafter, however, find something which may enable us to conjecture what the decision practically came to be.

### *Distress of natives.*

Many of the so-called free Indians in Hispaniola had, perhaps, even a worse fate than that which fell to the lot of their brethren condemned to slavery. These free men, seeing the Spaniards quietly settling down in their island, building houses, and making forts, and no vessels in the harbour of Isabella to take them away, fell into the profoundest sadness, and bethought them of the desperate remedy of attempting to starve the Spaniards out, by not sowing or planting anything. But this is a shallow device, when undertaken on the part of the greater number, in any country, against the smaller. The scheme reacted upon themselves. They had intended to gain a secure though scanty sustenance in the forests and upon the mountains; but though the Spaniards suffered bitterly from famine, they were only driven by it to further pursuit and molestation of the Indians, who died in great numbers, of hunger, sickness, and misery.

### *Spanish commissioner.*

About this period there arrived in the Indies from the Court of Spain a Commissioner of Inquiry, his mission being doubtless occasioned by the various complaints made against the admiral by Father Buil, Margarite, and the Spaniards who had returned from

Hispaniola. The name of this commissioner was Juan Aguado, and his powers were vouched for by the following letter from the sovereigns:—



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“The King and the Queen.

“Cavaliers, Esquires and other persons, who by our command are in the Indies: we send you thither Juan Aguado, our Gentleman of the Chamber, who will speak to you on our part: we command that you give him faith and credence.

“I the King: I the Queen.

“By command of the King and Queen, our Lords.

“HENAND Alvarez.

“Madrid, the ninth of April, one thousand four hundred and ninety-five.”

### *Plots to undermine and ruin the admiral*

The royal commissioner arrived at Isabella in October, 1495, and his proceedings in the colony, together with the fear of what he might report on his return, quickened the admiral's desire to return to Court, that he might fight his own battles there himself. For the tide of his fortune was turning, and this appeared by several notable signs. Strong as was the confidence which the Sovereigns reposed in him, the representations of Margarite and Buil—the rough soldier and the wily Benedictine—had produced their effect. They complained of the despotic rule of Columbus; of the disregard of distinctions of rank which he had manifested by placing the hidalgos on the same footing as the common men, as regards work and rations, during the construction of the settlement; and of his mania for discovery, which made him abandon the colony already formed, in the unremunerative search for new countries. The commissioner who was sent to investigate these charges, as well as to report on the condition of the colony, found no difficulty in collecting evidence to substantiate them. An unsuccessful man is generally persuaded that somebody else has caused his failure. And the “somebody else,” in the case of the colonists, was, by universal consent, the foreign sea captain who had deluded Spanish hidalgos by his wild projects, and had become a grandee under false pretences. The Indians, too, who were glad to lay their miseries at the door of somebody, and who were told that Aguado was the new admiral, and had come to supplant the old one, were not slow to add their quota to the charges against Columbus. To rebut these accusations, as well as to protest against the issue of licences, to private adventurers, to trade in the new countries independently of the admiral (a measure which, in violation of Columbus's charter, had lately been adopted by Fonseca) he quitted Isabella on the 10th of March, 1496, in the “Nina,” while Aguado took ship in another caravel. Many of the colonists, who had been rudely awakened from their golden dreams, seized this opportunity of returning to Spain; and the Cacique Caonabo was also on board, probably with a view of impressing upon him an overwhelming conviction of Spanish power, and of the futility of any efforts to resist it.

### *Wretched voyage home*

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The voyage was a miserable one. Contrary winds prevailed until provisions began to run short, and rations were doled out in pittances which grew scantier and scantier until all the admiral's authority was needed to prevent his ravenous shipmates from killing and eating the Caribs who were on board,—in retribution, so ran the grim jest, for their cannibalism. At last, when famine was imminent, after a voyage of three months' duration, the two caravels entered the Bay of Cadiz on the 11th of June, 1496.

### *Reception at court.*

After about a month's delay, Columbus received a summons to proceed to the Court, which was then at Burgos. In the course of his journey thither he adopted the same means of dazzling the eyes of the populace, by the display of gold and the exhibition of his captives, as on his return from his first voyage; but so many unsuccessful colonists had returned, sick at heart and ruined in health, to tell the tale of failure to their countrymen, that this triumphal procession was very unlike the last as regards the welcome accorded by the public. However the Sovereigns seem to have given the admiral a kind reception, and instead of placing him on his defence against the charges which had been brought forward by Father Buil, they listened with sympathy to his story of the difficulties which had beset him, and heard with sanguine satisfaction of the recent discovery of the mines from which it was said that the natives procured most of the gold that had been found in their possession, and which promised an incalculably rich harvest. Presently, in apparent confirmation of this belief, one Pedro Nino, a captain of the admiral's, announced his arrival at Cadiz, with a quantity of "gold in bars" on board his ship. It was not until great expectations had been raised at Court, and the wildest ideas conceived of the magnitude of this supposed first instalment of the riches of the newly found gold mines, that it turned out that this Nino was merely a miserable maker of jokes, and that the "gold in bars" was only represented by the Indians who composed his cargo, whose present captivity was secured by "bars," and whose future sale was to furnish gold. This absurdity naturally caused Columbus and his friends no slight mortification, and added a fresh weapon to the shafts of ridicule which his enemies wore for ever launching at his extravagant theories and his expensive projects.

## CHAPTER VIII.

During the two years that elapsed from the Admiral's leaving Hispaniola in 1496 to his return there in 1498, many things happened on both sides the Atlantic, which need recording. In 1496 we find, that Don Bartholomew Columbus sent to Spain three hundred slaves from Hispaniola. He had previously informed the Sovereigns that certain caciques were killing the Castilians, and their Highnesses had given orders in reply, that all those who should be found guilty should be sent to Spain. If this meant the common Indians as well as the caciques, then it seems probable that the question about selling them with a safe conscience was already decided.



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*Criminals sent to the Indies.*

In 1497, two very injudicious edicts were published by the Catholic Sovereigns, upon the advice, as we are told, of Columbus; one, authorizing the judges to transport criminals to the Indies; the other, giving an indulgence to all those who had committed any crime (with certain exceptions, among which heresy, lese majeste, and treason, find a place) to go out at their own expense to Hispaniola, and to serve for a certain time under the orders of the admiral. The remembrance of this advice on his part, might well have shamed Columbus from saying, as he did three years afterwards, in his most emphatic manner, "I swear that numbers of men have gone to the Indies who did not deserve water from God or man." It is but fair, however, to mention, that Las Casas, speaking of the colonists who went out under these conditions, says, "I have known some of them in these islands, even of those who had lost their ears, whom I always found sufficiently honest men."

*"Repartimientos."*

In 1497, letters patent were issued from the Sovereigns to the admiral, authorizing him to grant repartimientos of the lands in the Indies to the Spaniards. It is noticeable that in this document there is no mention of Indians, so that they had not come to form portion of a repartimiento at this period. The document in question is of a formal character, expressed in the style of legal documents of the present day, by virtue of which the fortunate Spaniard who gets the land is "to have, and to hold, and to possess," and so forth; and is enabled "to sell and to give, and to present, and to traffic with, and to exchange, and to pledge, and to alienate, and to do with it and in it all that he likes or may think good."

While the acts of legislation above narrated, which cannot be said to have been favourable to good government in the Indies, were being framed at the Court of Spain, Don Bartholomew Columbus was doing much in his administration of Hispaniola that led to very mischievous results.

Before the admiral left the island, he had discovered some mines to the southward, and had thought of choosing a port in their vicinity, where he might establish a colony. He had spoken about this in his letters to the Government at home. As he entered the Bay of Cadiz on his return, he met some vessels there, which were bound for Hispaniola, and which contained letters from their Highnesses approving of his suggestion. By these ships, therefore, he sent orders to his brother to make this southern settlement; and the "Adelantado" accordingly proceeded southwards, and fixed upon a port at the entrance of the river Ozama. He sent for artisans from Isabella, and commenced building a fortress, which he called St. Domingo, and which afterwards became the chief port of the island.

*Xaragua penetrated; tribute imposed upon the Indians.*



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There was one part of Hispaniola into which the Spaniards had not yet penetrated: it was called Xaragua, and was reigned over by a Cacique named Bohechio, whose sister, Anacaona, the wife of Caonabo, and a noted beauty, seems also to have had much authority in those parts. The Adelantado, after seeing the works at St. Domingo commenced, resolved to enter the kingdom of Xaragua, whither he proceeded at the head of one hundred men. Arriving at the river Neyba, he found an immense army of Indians drawn up there to oppose his progress. Don Bartholomew made signs to them that his errand was peaceful; and the good-natured Indians accepting his proffers of amity, he was conducted some thirty leagues further to the city of Xaragua, where he was received with processions of dancing and singing women, and feasted magnificently. After having been well entertained by these Indians, the "Adelantado" proceeded to business, and, in plain terms, demanded tribute of them. Bohechio pleaded that there was no gold in his dominions, to which the Adelantado replied that he did not wish to impose tribute upon any people, except of the natural production to be found in their country. It was finally settled that Bohechio should pay tribute in cotton and cazabi-bread. He acceded to this agreement very willingly; and the Adelantado and this cacique parted on the most friendly terms.

Don Bartholomew then returned to Isabella, where he found that about three hundred men had died from disease, and that there was great dearth of provisions. He distributed the sick men in his fortresses, and in the adjacent Indian villages, and afterwards set out on a journey to his new fort of St. Domingo, collecting tribute by the way. In all these rapid and energetic proceedings of the Adelantado, and still more from causes over which he had no control, the Spaniards must have suffered much; and, doubtless, those complaints on their part, which were soon to break out very menacingly, were not unheard at the present time.

If the Spaniards, however, complained of the labours which Don Bartholomew imposed upon them, the Indians complained still more, and far more justly, of the tribute imposed upon them. Several of the minor chiefs, upon this occasion of collecting tribute, complained to the great Cacique Guarionex, and suggested a rising of the Indians. This cacique seems to have been a peaceful, prudent man, and well aware of the power of the Spaniards. But he now consented to place himself at the head of an insurrection, which, however, the lieutenant-governor, soon made aware of it, quelled at once by a battle in which he was victorious over Guarionex, taking him and other principal persons captive. The chief movers of the revolt were put to death; but Guarionex was delivered up to his people, who flocked by thousands to his place of imprisonment, clamouring for his restitution.

*Discontent of the SPANISH colonists.*

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About this time messengers came from Bohechio and Anacaona, informing the Adelantado that the tribute of that country was ready for him, and he accordingly went to fetch it. During his absence from the seat of government, and under the less vigorous administration of Don Diego Columbus, who had been left at the head of affairs at Isabella, those discontents among the Spaniards, which had no doubt been rife for a long time, broke out in a distinct manner. I allude to the well-known insurrection of Roldan, whom the admiral, on his departure, had left as chief justice in the island. The disputes between the chief justice and the governor were to form the first of a series of similar proceedings to take place afterwards in many colonies even down to our own times. It may be imagined that the family of Columbus were a hard race to deal with; and any one observing that the admiral was very often engaged in disputes, and almost always in the right, might conjecture that he was one of those persons who pass through life proving that all people about them are wrong, and going a great way to make them so. This would have been an easy mode of explaining many things, and therefore very welcome to a narrator, but it would not be at all just towards Columbus to saddle upon him any such character. Here were men who had come out with very grand expectations, and who found themselves pinched with hunger, having dire storms to encounter, and vast labours to undergo; who were restrained within due bounds by no pressure of society; who were commanded by a foreigner, or by members of his family, whom they knew to have many enemies at court; who thought that the Sovereigns themselves could scarcely reach them at this distance; and who imagined that they had worked themselves out of an law and order, and that they deserved an Alsatian immunity. With such men (many of them, perhaps, "not worthy of water,") the admiral and his brothers had to get useful works of all kinds done; and did contrive to get vessels navigated, forts built, and some ideas of civilization maintained. But it was an arduous task at all times: and this Roldan did not furnish the least of the troubles which the admiral and his brothers had to endure.

### *Insurrection of Roldan.*

Roldan, too, if we could hear him, would probably have something to say. He wished, it appears, to return to Spain, as Father Buil and Margarite had done; and urged that a certain caravel which the Governor Don Bartholomew Columbus had built, might be launched for that purpose. Such is the account of Ferdinand Columbus, who maintains that the said caravel could not be lunched for want of tackle. He also mentions that Roldan complained of the restless life the Adelantado led his men, building forts and towns; and said that there was no hope of the admiral coming back to the colony with supplies. Without going into these squabbles—and indeed it is very difficult when a quarrel of this kind arises, taking it up at



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the point where it breaks out, to judge it upon that only, since the stream of ill-will may have run underground for a long time—suffice it to say, that Roldan and his men grew more and more insubordinate; were not at all quelled by the presence of the Adelantado on his return from Xaragua; and finally quitted Isabella in a body. The Adelantado contrived to keep some men faithful to him, promising them, amongst other things, two slaves each. Negotiations then took place between the Adelantado and Roldan, which must be omitted for the present, to enter upon the further dealing of Don Bartholomew with the Indians.

### *Flight of Guarionex.*

These poor, islanders were now harassed both by the rebels and by the loyal Spaniards, whom the Adelantado could not venture to curb much, for fear of their going over to the other party. The Indians were also tempted by Roldan to join him, as he contended that tribute had been unjustly imposed upon them. From all these difficulties, Guarionex made his escape by flying to the territories of Maiobanex, the cacique of a hardy race, who inhabited the hilly country towards Cabron. This flight of Guarionex was a very serious affair, as it threatened the extinction of tribute in that cacique's territory; and Don Bartholomew accordingly pursued the fugitive. After some skirmishes with the troops of Maiobanex, in which, as usual, the Spaniards were victorious, the Adelantado sent a messenger to Maiobanex, telling him that the Spaniards did not seek war with him, but that he must give up Guarionex, otherwise his own territory would be destroyed by fire and sword. Maiobanex replied, that everyone knew that Guarionex was a good man, endowed with all virtue, wherefore he judged him to be worthy of assistance and defence, but that they, the Spaniards, were violent and bad men, and that he would have neither friendship nor commerce with them.

### *Maiobanex and his guest.*

Upon receiving this answer, the Adelantado burnt several villages, and approached nearer to the camp of Maiobanex. Fresh negotiations were entered into: Maiobanex convoked an assembly of his people; and they contended that Guarionex ought to be given up, and cursed the day when first he came amongst them. Their noble chief, however, said, "that Guarionex was a good man, and deserved well at his hands, for he had given him many royal gifts when he came to him, and had taught him and his wife to join in choral songs and to dance, of which he made no little account, and for which he was grateful: wherefore, he would be party to no treaty to desert Guarionex, since he had fled to him, and he had pledged himself to take care of the fugitive; and would rather suffer all extremities than give detractors a cause for speaking ill, to say that he had delivered up his guest." The assemblage of the people being dismissed, Maiobanex informed his guest that he would stand by him to the last.



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*Their capture.*

The fugitive cacique, however, finding that Maiobanex's people were ill-disposed towards him, quitted, of his own accord, their territory; but by so doing, he was not enabled to save his generous host, who, with his family, was surprized and taken; and Guarionex himself being shortly afterwards captured and put in chains at Fort Concepcion, the two caciques probably shared the same prison. Thus concludes a story, which, if it had been written by some Indian Plutarch, and the names had been more easy to pronounce, might have taken its just place amongst the familiar and household stories which we tell our children, to make them see the beauty of great actions.

### CHAPTER IX.

#### COLUMBUS'S THIRD VOYAGE.

A good starting-point for that important part of the narrative which comes next—namely, the discovery of the American continent by Columbus—will be a recital of the first clause in the instructions given by Ferdinand and Isabella to the admiral, in the year 1497, previously to his undertaking his third voyage—a voyage which, though not to be compared to his first one, is still very memorable, on account of the discoveries he made, and the sufferings he experienced in the course of it.

The first clause of the instructions is to the effect, that the Indians of the islands are to be brought into peace and quietude, being reduced into subjection “benignantly;” and also, as the principal end of the conquest, that they be converted to the sacred Catholic Faith, and have the holy Sacraments administered to them.

It will be needless to recount the vexations of that “much-enduring man,” Columbus, before his embarkation. Suffice it to say, that he set sail from the port of San Lucar on the 30th of May, 1498, with six vessels, and two hundred men, in addition to the sailors that were necessary to navigate the vessels. In the course of his voyage he was obliged to avoid a French squadron which was cruising in those seas, as France and Spain were then at war. From Gomera, one of the Canary islands, he despatched three of his ships directly to Hispaniola, declaring in his instructions to their commanders, that he was going to the Cape Verde islands, and thence, “in the name of the Sacred Trinity,” intended to navigate to the south of those islands, until he should arrive under the equinoctial line, in the hope of being “guided by God to discover something which may be to His service, and to that of our Lords, the King and Queen, and to the honour of Christendom;” “for, I believe,” he adds, “that no one has ever traversed this way, and that this sea is nearly unknown.”

*Cape Verde islands.*



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With one ship, therefore, and two caravels, the great admiral made for the Cape Verde islands, “a false name,” as he observes, for nothing was to be seen there of a green colour. He reached these islands on the 27th of June, and quitted them on the 4th of July, having been in the midst of such a dense fog all the time, that, he says, “it might have been cut with a knife,” Thence he proceeded to the south-west, intending afterwards to take a westerly direction. When he had gone, as he says, one hundred and twenty leagues, he began to find those floating fields of sea-weed which he had encountered in his first voyage. Here he took an observation at nightfall, and found that the north star was in five degrees. The wind suddenly abated, and the heat was intolerable; so much so, that nobody dared to go below deck to look after the wine and the provisions. This extraordinary heat lasted eight days. The first day was clear, and if the others had been like it, the admiral says, not a man would have been left alive, but they would all have been burnt up.

*Columbus sails westward.*

At last a favourable breeze sprang up, enabling the admiral to take a westerly course, the one he most desired, as he had before noticed in his voyages to the Indies that about a hundred miles west of the Azores there was always a sudden change of temperature.[15]

[Footnote 15: I suppose he came into or out of one of those warm ocean rivers which have so great an effect in modifying the temperature of the earth—perhaps into the one which comes from the south of Africa through the Gulf of Mexico, to our own shores, and on which we so much depend.]

*Trinidad seen.*

On Sunday, the 22nd of July, in the evening, the sailors saw innumerable birds going from the south-west to the north-east, which flight of birds was a sign that land was not far off. For several successive days birds were seen, and an albatross perched upon the admiral's vessel. Still the fleet went on without seeing land, and, as it was in want of fresh water, the admiral was thinking of changing his course, and, indeed, on Thursday, the 31st of July, had commenced steering northwards for some hours, when, to use his own words, “as God had always been accustomed to show mercy to him,” a certain mariner of Huelva, a follower of the admiral's, named Alonzo Perez, happened to go up aloft upon the maintop-sail of the admiral's ship, and suddenly saw land towards the south-west, about fifteen leagues off. This land which he described was in the form of three lofty hills or mountains. It would be but natural to conjecture that, as Columbus had resolved to name the first land he should discover “Trinidad,” it was by an effort of the will, or of the imagination, that these three eminences were seen first; but it is exceedingly probable that such eminences were to be seen from the point whence Alonzo Perez first saw land.[16]

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[Footnote 16: Cape Cashepou is backed by three peaked mountains, of which a representation is given in Day's West Indies, vol 2, p. 31.]

The sailors sang the "Salve Regina," with other pious hymns in honour of God and "Our Lady," according to the custom of the mariners of Spain, who, in terror or in joy, were wont to find an expression for their feelings in such sacred canticles.

*The pearl coast.*

The admiral's course, when he was going northwards, had been in the direction of the Carib islands, already well known to him; but with great delight he now turned towards Trinidad, making for a cape which, from the likeness of a little rocky islet near it to a galley in full sail, he named "La Galera." [17] There he arrived "at the hour of complines," but, not finding the port sufficiently deep for his vessels to enter, he proceeded westwards.

[Footnote 17: This point is sometimes placed at the north-east of Trinidad; but wrongly so. It is now Cape Galeota.—See Humbolt's Examen Critique, vol. i. p. 310.]

[Illustration: Map of *the pearl coast*. From about 50 miles west of the island of Margarita to just east of Trinidad and Tobago; from about 50 miles north of Grenada to 50 miles south of the Orinoco River.]

*First view of American continent*

The first thing noticeable as he neared these shores, was that the trees grew well on the margin of the sea. There were houses and people,—and very beautiful lands, which reminded him, from their beauty and their verdure, of the gardens of Valencia as seen in the month of March. It was also to be observed that these lands were well cultivated.

On the following morning he continued in a westerly direction in search of a port, where he might take in water, and refit his ships, the timber of which had shrunk, from extreme heat, so that they sadly needed caulking. He did not find a port, but came to deep soundings somewhere near Point Alcatraz, where he brought to, and took in fresh water. This was on a Wednesday, the first of August. From the point where he now was, the low lands of the Orinoco must have been visible, and Columbus must have beheld the continent of America for the first time.[18] He supposed it to be an island of about twenty leagues in extent, and he gave it the somewhat insignificant name of Zeta.

[Footnote 18: The northern part of the continent had been discovered by Sebastian Cabot, on the 24th of June, 1497.]

The same signs of felicity which greeted his eyes on his first sight of land, continued to manifest themselves. Farms and populous places[19] were visible above the water as

he coasted onwards; with the trees flourishing close to the sea—a sure sign of the general mildness of the weather, wherever it occurs.

[Footnote 19: “Vido muchas labranzas por luengo de Costa y muchas Poblaciones.”—*Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, Ms., lib. i cap. 132.*]



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The next day he proceeded westwards along the southern part of Trinidad, until he arrived at the westernmost point, which he called "La punta de Arenal;" and now he beheld the gulf of Paria, which he called "La Balena" (the gulf of the whale). It was just after the rainy season, and the great rivers which flow into that gulf were causing its waters to rush with impetuosity out of the two openings [20] which lead into the open sea. The contest between the fresh water and the salt water produced a ridge of waters, on the top of which the admiral was borne into the gulf at such risk, that, writing afterwards of this event to the Spanish court, he says, "Even to-day I shudder lest the waters should have upset the vessel when they came under its bows."

[Footnote 20: The Boca del Drago and the Boca de la Sierpe.]

*Columbus mistakes the continent for islands.*

Previously to entering the gulf, the admiral had sought to make friends with some Indians who approached him in a large canoe, by ordering his men to come upon the poop, and dance to the sound of a tambourine; but this, naturally enough, appears to have been mistaken for a warlike demonstration, and it was answered by a flight of arrows from the Indians.

The admiral, still supposing that he was amongst islands, called the land to the left of him, as he moved up the gulf, the island of Gracia; and he continued to make a similar mistake throughout the whole of his course up the gulf, taking the various projections of the indented coast for islands. Throughout his voyage in the gulf, Columbus met with nothing but friendly treatment from the natives. At last he arrived at a place which the natives told him was called Paria, and where they also informed him that, to the westward, the country was more populous. He took four of these natives, and went onwards, until he came to a point which he named Punto de Aguja (Needle Point), where, he says, he found the most beautiful lands in the world, very populous, and whence, to use his own words, "an infinite number of canoes came off to the ships."

Proceeding onwards, the admiral came to a place where the women had pearl bracelets, and, on his enquiring where these came from, they made signs, directing him out of the Gulf of Paria towards the island of Cubagua. Here he sent some of his men on shore, who were very well received and entertained by two of the principal Indians. It is needless to dwell upon this part of the narrative. Very few of the places retain the names which the admiral gave them, and, consequently, it is difficult to trace his progress. He began to conjecture, from the immense amount of fresh water brought down by the rivers into the Gulf of Paria, that the land which he had been calling the island of Gracia was not an island, but a continent, of which fact he afterwards became more convinced. But little time was given him for



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research of any kind. He was anxious to reach Hispaniola, in order to see after his colonists there, and to bring them the stores which he had in charge; and so, after passing through the "Boca del Drago," and reconnoitring the island of Margarita, which he named, he was compelled to go on his way to Hispaniola. We are hardly so much concerned with what the admiral saw and heard, as with what he afterwards thought and reported. To understand this, it will be desirable to enter somewhat into the scientific questions which occupied the mind of this great mariner and most observant man.

*The admiral's reasoning about the continent.*

The discovery of the continent of America by Columbus, in his third voyage, was the result of a distinct intention on his part to discover some new land, and cannot be attributed to chance. It would be difficult to define precisely the train of ideas which led Columbus to this discovery. The Portuguese navigations were one compelling cause. Then the change, already alluded to, which Columbus had noticed in his voyages to the Indies, on passing a line a hundred leagues west of the Azores, was in his mind, as it was in reality, a circumstance of great moment[21] and significance. It was not a change of temperature alone that he noticed, but a change in the heavens, the air, the sea, and the magnetic current.

[Footnote 21: It is the opinion of *Humboldt*, as mentioned before, that the celebrated division, made by Alexander the Sixth between the Castilian and Portuguese monarchs, was adopted in reference to these phenomena which Columbus had noticed: and, if the line of no variation were a "constant," no better marine boundary could well be suggested.]

In the first place, the needles of the compass, instead of north-easting, north-wested at this line; and that remarkable phenomenon occurred just upon the passage of the line, as if, Columbus says, one passed a hill. Then, the sea there was full of sea-weed like small pine-branches, laden with a fruit similar to pistachio nuts. Moreover, on passing this imaginary line, the admiral had invariably found that the temperature became agreeable, and the sea calm. Accordingly, in the course of this voyage, when they were suffering from that great heat which has been mentioned, he determined to take a westerly course, which led, as we have seen, to his discovering the beautiful land of Paria.[22]

[Footnote 22: Las Casas, who had other authentic information about this voyage besides the manuscripts of Columbus, says, that the admiral intended to have gone southwards, after he had taken a westerly course, on quitting the place where he was becalmed. Had he done so, which the state of his ships would not permit, he might have been the discoverer of Brazil.]

*Peculiar theory of the shape of the earth.*



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Now Columbus was one of those men of divining minds, who must have general theories on which to thread their observations; and, as few persons have so just a claim to theorize as those who have added largely to the number of ascertained facts (a privilege which they generally make abundant use of), so Columbus may well be listened to, when propounding his explanation of the wonderful change in sea, air, sky, and magnetic current, which he discerned at this distance of a hundred leagues from the Azores.

His theory was, that the earth was not a perfect sphere, but pear-shaped; and he thought that, as he proceeded westwards in this voyage, the sea went gradually rising, and his ships rising too, until they came nearer to the heavens. It is very possible that this theory had been long in his mind, or, at any rate, that he held it before he reached the coast of Paria. When there, new facts struck his mind, and were combined with his theory. He found the temperature much more moderate than might have been expected so near the equinoctial line, far more moderate than on the opposite coast of Africa. In the evenings, indeed, it was necessary for him to wear an outer garment of fur. Then, the natives were lighter coloured, more astute, and braver than those of the islands. Their hair, too, was different.

Then, again, he meditated upon the immense volume of fresh waters which descended into the Gulf of Paria. And, in fine, the conclusion which his pious mind came to, was, that when he reached the land which he called the island of Gracia, he was at the base of the earthly Paradise. He also, upon reflection, concluded that it was a continent which he had discovered, the same continent of the east which he had always been in search of; and that the waters, which we now know to be a branch of the river Orinoco, formed one of the four great rivers which descended from the garden of Paradise.

Very different were the conjectures of the pilots. Some said that they were in the Sea of Spain, others, in that of Scotland, and, being in despair about their whereabouts, they concluded that they had been under the guidance of the Devil. The admiral, however, was not a man to be much influenced by the sayings of the unthoughtful and the unlearned. He fortified himself by references to St. Isidro, Beda, Strabo, St. Ambrose, and Duns Scotus, and held stoutly to the conclusion that he had discovered the site of the earthly Paradise. It is said, that he exclaimed to his men, that they were in the richest country in the world.

Columbus did not forget to claim, with all due formalities, the possession of this approach to Paradise, for his employers, the Catholic Sovereigns. Accordingly, when at Paria, he had landed and taken possession of the coast in their names, erecting a great cross upon the shore, which, he tells Ferdinand and Isabella, he was in the habit of doing at every headland, the religious aspect of the conquest being one which always had great influence with the admiral, as he believed it to have with the Catholic monarchs. In communicating this discovery, he reminds them how they bade him go on with the enterprise, if he should discover only stones and rocks, and had told him that

they counted the cost for nothing, considering that the Faith would be increased, and their dominions widened.



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*Graceful rearing of natives; beauty of the land.*

It was, however, no poor discovery of mere “rocks and stones” which the admiral had now made. It will be interesting to see his first impressions of the men and the scenery of this continent which he had now, unconsciously, for the first time, discovered. He says, “I found some lands, the most beautiful in the world, and very populous.” The lands in the island of Trinidad he had previously compared to Valencia, in Spain, during the month of March. It is also noticeable that he had observed that the fields were cultivated. Of the people, he says, “They are all of good stature, well made, and of very graceful bearing, with much and smooth hair;” and he mentions that on their heads they wore the beautiful Arab head-dress (called keffeh), made of worked and coloured handkerchiefs, which appeared in the distance as if they were silken.

The description given by Columbus of the natives whom he encounters in his voyages is almost always favourable. Indeed, the description of any man or thing depends as much on the person describing, as on the thing or person described. Those little differences in look or dress, which excite the ready mockery of the untravelled rustic, appear very slight indeed to the man who, like Columbus or Las Casas, has seen many lands, and travelled over many minds. The rude Spanish common soldier perceived a far greater difference between himself and the Indian, than did the most accomplished man who visited the Indies, when he made to himself a similar comparison. Occasionally, in a narrow nature, however cultivated, the commonest prejudices hold their ground; but, in general, knowledge sees behind and beyond disgust, and suffices to conquer it.

*The earthly Paradise.*

Columbus, however, found the men, the country, and the products, equally admirable. It is somewhat curious that he does not mention his discovery of pearls to the Catholic monarchs, and he afterwards makes a poor excuse for this. The real reason I conjecture to have been a wish to preserve this knowledge to himself, that the fruits of this enterprise might not be prematurely snatched from him. His shipmates, however, were sure to disperse the intelligence; and the gains to be made on the Pearl Coast were, probably, the most tempting bait for future navigators to follow in the track of Columbus, and complete the discovery of the earthly Paradise.

*Illness of Columbus.*

Of the delights of this Paradise Columbus himself was to have but a slight and mocking foretaste. He had been constantly ill during the voyage, suffering from the gout and from an inflammation in his eyes which rendered him almost blind. His new colony in Hispaniola demanded his attention, and must often have been the cause of anxious thought to him; and the grave but glowing enthusiast made his way to St. Domingo, and afterwards returned to Spain, to be vexed henceforth by those mean miseries and small

disputes which afflicted him for the remainder of his days—miseries the more galling, as they were so disproportionately small in comparison with the greatness of such a man, and with the aims and hopes which they effectually hindered.



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### CHAPTER X.

Slaves and logwood; plan of slave barter.

It was on the 30th of August, 1498, that Columbus arrived at Hispaniola, where he found the state of his colony far from cheering, the defection of Roldan and his followers having put everything into confusion. The admiral supposed at first that the enmity of Roldan's party was chiefly directed against his brother, the Adelantado, and the admiral hoped that, now he had arrived, some agreement would speedily be concluded with Roldan, of which he might inform the catholic sovereigns by the vessels which he purposed to send back immediately to Spain. This was very far, however, from being the case. These vessels, five in number, left the port of St. Domingo bearing no good news of peace and amity amongst the Spaniards, but laden with many hundreds of Indian slaves, which had been taken in the following manner. Some cacique failed to perform the personal services imposed upon him and his people, and fled to the forests; upon which, orders were given to pursue him, and a large number of slaves were captured and put into these ships. Columbus, in his letters to the sovereigns, enters into an account of the pecuniary advantage that will arise from these slave-dealing transactions, and from the sale of logwood. He estimates, that "in the name of the sacred Trinity" there may be sent as many slaves as sale could be found for in Spain, and that the value of the slaves, for whom there would be a demand to the number of four thousand, as he calculated from certain information, and of the logwood, would amount to forty cuentos (i. e. forty million maravedis). The number of slaves who were sent in these five ships was six hundred, of which two hundred were given to the masters of the vessels in payment of freight. In the course of these letters, throughout which Columbus speaks after the fashion of a practised slave-dealer, he alludes to the intended adoption, on behalf of private individuals, of a system of exchange of slaves for goods wanted from the mother country. The proposed arrangement was as follows:—The masters of vessels were to receive slaves from the colonists, were to carry them to Spain, and to pay for their maintenance during the voyage; they were then to allow the colonists so much money, payable at Seville, in proportion to the number of slaves brought over. This money they would expend according to the orders of the colonists, who would thus be able to obtain such goods as they might stand in need of. It was upon the same occasion of writing home to Spain that the admiral strongly urged upon the Catholic Sovereigns that the Spanish colonists should be allowed to make use of the services of the Indians for a year or two until the colony should be in a settled state, a proposal which he did not wait for their highnesses' authority to carry out, and which led to a new form of the repartimiento. But this brings us back to Roldan's story, being closely connected with it.



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### *Contention with Roldan.*

After great trouble and many attempts at agreement, in which mention is more than once made of slaves, the dispute between Roldan's party, rebels they might almost be called, and Columbus, was at last, after two years' negotiation, brought to a close. Roldan kept his chief-justiceship; and his friends received lands and slaves. It brings to mind the conclusion of many a long war in the old world, in which two great powers have been contending against each other, with several small powers on each side, the latter being either ruined in the course of the war, or sacrificed at the end. The admiral gave repartimientos to those followers of Roldan who chose to stay in the island, which were constituted in the following manner. The admiral placed under such a cacique so many thousand matas (shoots of the cazabi), or, which came to the same thing, so many thousand montones (small mounds a foot and a half high, and ten or twelve feet round, on each of which a cazabi shoot was planted); and Columbus then ordered that the cacique or his people should till these lands for whomsoever they were assigned to. The repartimiento had now grown to its second state—not lands only, but lands and the tillage of them. We shall yet find that there is a further step in this matter, before the repartimiento assumes its utmost development. It seems, too, that in addition to these repartimientos, Columbus gave slaves to those partizans of Roldan who stayed in the island. Others of Roldan's followers, fifteen in number, chose to return to Spain; they received a certain number of slaves, some one, some two, some three; and the admiral sent them home in two vessels which left the port of St. Domingo at the beginning of October, 1499.

### *The queen's Anger; partial release of slaves.*

On the arrival in Spain of these vessels, the Queen was in the highest degree angered by the above proceedings, and said that the admiral had received no authority from her to give her vassals to anyone. She accordingly commanded proclamation to be made at Seville, Granada, and other places, that all persons who were in possession of Indians, given to them by the admiral, should, under pain of death, send those Indians back to Hispaniola, "and that particularly they should send back those Indians, and not the others who had been brought before, because she was informed that the others had been taken in just war." The former part of this proclamation has been frequently alluded to, and no doubt it deserves much praise; but from the latter part it is clear that there were some Indians who could justly, according to Queen Isabella, be made slaves. By this time, therefore, at any rate the question had been solved, whether by the learned in the law, theologians and canonists, I know not, but certainly in practice, that the Indians taken in war could be made slaves. The whole of this



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transaction is very remarkable, and, in some measure, inexplicable, on the facts before us. There is nothing to show that the slaves given to Roldan's followers were made slaves in a different way from those who had been sent over on former occasions, both by the admiral and his brother, for the benefit of the crown. And yet the Queen, whom no one has ever accused of condescending to state craft, seems to deal with this particular case as if it were something quite new. It cannot be said that the crown was favoured, for the question is put upon the legitimacy of the original capture; and to confirm this, there is a letter from the Sovereigns to one of their household, from which it may be inferred, though the wording is rather obscure, that they, too, gave up the slaves which had come over for them on this occasion.

Every body would be sorry to take away any honour from Isabella; and all who are conversant with that period must wish that her proclamation could be proved to have gone to the root of the matter; and that it had forbidden the sending Indians to Spain as slaves, on any pretext whatever.

*The admiral's enemies working at court.*

To return to the affairs of Hispaniola. Columbus had now settled the Roldan revolt and other smaller ones; he had now, too, reduced the Indians into subjection; the mines were prospering; the Indians were to be brought together in populous villages, that so they might better be taught the Christian faith, and serve as vassals to the crown of Castile; the royal revenues (always a matter of much concern to Columbus) would, he thought, in three years amount to sixty millions of reals; and now there was time for him to sit down, and meditate upon the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem, or the conversion of Cathay. If there had been any prolonged quiet for him, such great adventures would probably have begun to form the staple of his high thoughts. But he had hardly enjoyed more than a month of repose, when that evil came down upon him, which "poured the juice of aloes into the remaining portion of his life."

The Catholic sovereigns had hitherto, upon the whole, behaved well to Columbus. He had bitter enemies at court. People were for ever suggesting to the monarchs that this foreigner was doing wrong. The admiral's son, Ferdinand, gives a vivid picture of some of the complaints preferred against his father. He says, "When I was at Granada, at the time the most serene Prince Don Miguel died, more than fifty of them (Spaniards who had returned from the Indies), as men without shame, bought a great quantity of grapes, and sat themselves down in the court of the Alhambra, uttering loud cries, saying, that their Highnesses and the admiral made them live in this poor fashion on account of the bad pay they received, with many other dishonest and unseemly things, which they kept repeating. Such was their effrontery that when the Catholic king came forth they all surrounded

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him, and got him into the midst of them, saying, 'Pay! pay!' and if by chance I and my brother, who were pages to the most serene Queen, happened to pass where they were, they shouted to the very heavens saying, 'Look at the sons of the admiral of Mosquitoland, of that man who has discovered the lands of deceit and disappointment, a place of sepulchre and wretchedness to Spanish hidalgos:' adding many other insulting expressions, on which account we excused ourselves from passing by them."

### *Serious dissatisfaction.*

Unjust clamour, like the above, would not alone have turned the hearts of the Catholic sovereigns against Columbus; but this clamour was supported by serious grounds for dissatisfaction in the state and prospects of the colony: and when there is a constant stream of enmity and prejudice against a man, his conduct or his fortune will, some day or other, offer an opportunity for it to rush in upon him.

### *Columbus superseded.*

However this may be, soon after the return of the five vessels from St. Domingo, mentioned above, which first told the news of the revolt of Roldan, Ferdinand and Isabella appear to have taken into serious consideration the question of suspending Columbus. He had, himself, in the letters transmitted by these ships, requested that some one might be sent to conduct the affairs of justice in the colony; but if Ferdinand and Isabella began by merely looking out for such an officer, they ended in resolving to send one who should take the civil as well as judicial authority into his own hands. This determination was not, however, acted upon hastily. On the 21st of March, 1499, they authorized Francis de Bobadilla "to ascertain what persons have raised themselves against justice in the island of Hispaniola, and to proceed against them according to law." On the 21st of May, 1499, they conferred upon this officer the government, and signed an order that all arms and fortresses in the Indies should be given up to him. On the 26th of the same month, they gave him the following remarkable letter to Columbus:-

"Don Christopher Columbus, our Admiral of the Ocean: We have commanded the Comendador Francis de Bobadilla, the bearer of this that he speak to you on our part some things which he will tell you: we pray you give him faith and credence, and act accordingly.

"I the King, I the Queen,  
"By their command,  
"Miguel Perez de Almazan,"

### *Harsh treatment of Columbus and his brothers*



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Bobadilla, however, was not sent from Spain until the beginning of July, 1500, and did not make his appearance in Hispaniola till the 23rd of August of the same year. Their Highnesses, therefore, must have taken time before carrying their resolve into execution; and what they meant by it is dubious. Certainly, not that the matter should have been transacted in the coarse way which Bobadilla adopted. It is a great pity, and a sad instance of mistaken judgment, that they fixed upon him for their agent. I imagine him to have been such a man as may often be met with, who, from his narrowness of mind and distinctness of prejudice, is supposed to be high-principled and direct in his dealings; and whose untried reputation has great favour with many people: until, placed in power some day, he shows that to rule well requires other things than one-sidedness in the ruling person; and is fortunate if he does not acquire that part of renown which consists in notoriety, by committing some colossal blunder, henceforth historical from its largeness.

*Columbus sent home by Bobadilla in chains.*

The first thing that Bobadilla did on arriving at St. Domingo was to take possession of the admiral's house (he being at the fort La Concepcion), and then to summon the admiral before him, sending him the royal letter. Neither the admiral nor his brothers attempted to make any resistance; and Bobadilla, with a stupid brutality, which I suppose he took for vigour, put them in chains, and sent them to Spain. There is no doubt that the Castilian population of Hispaniola were rejoiced at Bobadilla's coming, and that they abetted him in his violence. Accusations came thickly against Columbus: "the stones rose up against him and his brothers," says the historian Herrera, emphatically, The people told how he had made them work, even sick men, at his fortresses, at his house, at the mills, and other buildings; how he had starved them; how he had condemned men to be whipped for the slightest causes, as, for instance, for stealing a peck of wheat when they were dying of hunger. Considering the difficulties he had to deal with, and the scarcity of provisions, many of these accusations, if rightly examined, would probably have not merely failed in producing anything against Columbus, but would have developed some proofs of his firmness and sagacity as a governor. Then his accusers went on to other grounds, such as his not having baptized Indians "because he desired slaves rather than Christians:" moreover, that he had entered into war unjustly with the Indians, and that he had made many slaves, in order to send them to Castile. It is highly unlikely that these latter charges were preferred by a single colonist, unless, perhaps, by some man in religious orders. The probability is, that they came from the other side of the water; and this does give considerable strength to the report, that the displeasure of the court with respect to the Admiral's proceedings against the Indians had to do with his removal from the government of the Indies. If so, it speaks largely for the continued admirable intentions of the Spanish court in this matter.



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Poor Columbus! His chains lay very heavily upon him. He insisted, however, upon not having them taken off, unless by royal command, and would ever keep them by him, ("I always saw them in his room," says his son Ferdinand), ordering that they should be buried with him. He did not know how many wretched beings would have to traverse those seas, in bonds much worse than his, with no room allowed them for writing, as was his case,—not even for standing upright; nor did he foresee, I trust, that some of his doings would further all this coming misery. In these chains Columbus is of more interest to us than when in full power as governor of the Indies; for so it is, that the most infelicitous times of a man's life are those which posterity will look to most, and love him most for. This very thought may have comforted him; but happily he had other sources of consolation in the pious aspirations which never deserted him.

We have come now to the end of Columbus's administration of the Indies. Whatever we may think of his general policy, we cannot but regret his removal at the present time, when there appeared some chance of solidity in his government: though we must honestly admit, that the Catholic Sovereigns, with such evidence as they had before them, were far from wrong in recalling him, had it been done in a manner worthy of his and of their greatness.

### CHAPTER XI.

Reaction at court.

The career of Columbus had already been marked by strong contrasts. First, a "pauper pilot," then the viceroy of a new world; alternately hoping, and fearing, despondent, and triumphant, he had passed through strange vicissitudes of good and evil fortune. But no two events in his life stand out in stronger contrast to each other than his return to Spain after his first voyage, and his return now. He was then a conqueror; he was now a prisoner. He was then the idol of popular favour; he was now the unpopular victim of insidious maligners. In truth, the contrast was so startling as to strike home to the hearts of the common people, even of those—and there were many such—who had lost kinsmen or friends in that fatal quest for gold which the admiral had originated and stimulated. The broad fact was this: Columbus had given Spain a new world; Spain loaded him with fetters in return. There was a reaction. The current of public opinion began to turn in his favour. The nation became conscious of ingratitude to its benefactor. The nobility were shocked at the insult to one of their own order. And no sooner had the Sovereigns learned from Columbus of his arrival, and of his disgrace, than they issued immediate orders for his liberation, and summoned him to their court at Grenada, forwarding money to enable him to proceed there in a style befitting his rank. They then received him with all possible signs of distinction; repudiated Bobadilla's arbitrary proceedings; and promised the admiral compensation and satisfaction. As a mark of their disapprobation of the way in which Bobadilla had acted under their

commission, they pointedly refused to enquire into the charges against Columbus, and dismissed them as not worthy of investigation.



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But though the Sovereigns acted thus promptly on the admiral's behalf, there is no doubt that one of them, at least, was in no wise displeased at his being removed from his government. At each fresh discovery, Ferdinand had repented more and more of the concession by which Columbus was to receive an eighth part of the profits of the newly-found countries, and to be their governor-general. He probably apprehended that this viceroy, when once master of the boundless wealth which was supposed to be nearly within his grasp, would become more powerful than his master, and might finally throw off his allegiance altogether. But here was an opportunity, without any flagrant breach of faith, of eluding the bargain, by refusing, on very plausible grounds of policy, to reinstate Columbus immediately in his viceroyalty. Isabella, who had always been his firm friend, would probably have refused to acquiesce in, any scheme for absolutely depriving him of his rights, but it was sufficiently obvious that just at present, while the colonists were excited against him, it would be prudent that some one else should take the reins of government.

*Columbus pleads his cause before the queen.*

The Queen granted Columbus a private audience. He told his story with much simple eloquence—so pathetically, indeed, that his warmhearted mistress is said to have been moved to tears at the recital. He described the difficulties which he had encountered and the machinations of the enemies who had been constantly thwarting him. He pleaded that he had been obliged to create a line of conduct for himself, having to deal with an entirely new combination of circumstances without any precedent to guide him. And he implored the Queen to believe that the accusations which had, of late, poured in against him, were prompted by the disappointed ambition and the jealousy of his enemies, and had not any solid foundation in fact.

Isabella replied in a very sensible speech, telling him that, while she fully appreciated his services, and knew the rancour of his enemies, she was afraid that he had given some cause for complaint. “Common report,” she said,[Charlevoix.] “accuses you of acting with a degree of severity quite unsuitable for an infant colony, and likely to excite rebellion there. But the matter as to which I find it hardest to give you my pardon, is your conduct in reducing to slavery a number of Indians who had done nothing to deserve such a fate. This was contrary to my express orders. As your ill fortune willed it, just at the time when I heard of this breach of my instructions, everybody was complaining of you, and no one spoke a word in your favour. And I felt obliged to send to the Indies a commissioner to investigate matters, and give me a true report; and, if necessary, to put limits to the authority which you were accused of overstepping. If you were found guilty of the charges, he was to relieve you of the government

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and to send you to Spain to give an account of your stewardship. This was the extent of his commission. I find that I have made a bad choice in my agent; and I will take care to make an example of Bobadilla, which shall serve as a warning to others not to exceed their powers. I cannot, however, promise to re-instate you at once in your government. People are too much inflamed against you, and must have time to cool. As to your rank of admiral, I never intended to deprive you of it. But you must bide your time and trust in me.”

### *The queen's decision; Bobadilla's tyranny*

It was arranged that the appointment of the new governor should be for two years only, at the expiration of which period, as Isabella thought, the administration of the colonies might be again entrusted to Columbus; while Ferdinand doubtless considered that some pretext might be found in the meantime for omitting to re-appoint him at all. And though Columbus may have been told verbally that it was their Highnesses' intention to re-instate him after the lapse of two years, it is noteworthy that the document appointing Ovando makes no mention of any limitation of the term of his (Ovando's) government. The words are, “that he is to be governor as long as it is their Highnesses' will and pleasure.” Bobadilla, fortunately for the islanders, was forthwith to be superseded; for, if Columbus had chastised them with whips, Bobadilla was chastising them with scorpions. His first object was the discovery of gold; and to secure this he took a census of the natives, and assigned them all as slaves to the colonists. A large proportion of the latter, as we have seen, were simply the scourgings of Spanish prisons; and the brutality with which these men treated their wretched helots was very terrible. Some estimate of the amount of pressure employed may be formed from the fact that, although Bobadilla had reduced the royalty payable to the Sovereigns from one-third to one-eleventh of the gold found, this smaller proportion produced a larger revenue. In other words, about four times as much gold was discovered under Bobadilla's system as under that of Columbus.

### *Ovando as governor*

But when the Sovereigns heard of the cruelties which that system involved, they urged forward the departure of Ovando, whom they had selected as governor, and who, to judge from his previous career, was a man eminently fitted to rule justly and mercifully. He was well known to Ferdinand and Isabella, having been chosen by the Queen as one of the companions for her eldest son, Prince John. With regard to his personal appearance, we are told that he was of moderate stature, and had a “vermilion-coloured beard,” which fact hardly conveys much to our minds; but it is added, in general terms, that his presence expressed authority. With respect to his mental qualifications, we learn that he was a friend to justice, an honourable person both in words and deeds, and that he held all avarice and covetousness in much aversion. He was humble, too,

they say, and when he was appointed Commendador Mayor of the Order of Alcantara, he would never allow himself to be addressed by the title of "Lordship," which belonged to that office.



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*His instructions.*

Previous to Ovando's departure from court, the monarchs were particular in giving him instructions both verbal and written. Among these instructions was one which Isabella especially insisted on, namely, "that all the Indians in Hispaniola should be free from servitude and be unmolested by anyone, and that they should live as free vassals, governed and protected by justice, as were the vassals of Castile." Like the vassals in Spain, the Indians were to pay tribute; they were also to assist in getting gold, but for this they were to be paid daily wages. Other commands were given at the same time for the conversion of the Indians, and to insure their being treated kindly.

*Advice to Ovando on the duties of A governor.*

Respecting the general government of the country, it was arranged that on Ovando's going out, all those who received pay from the government in the Indies, as well those who had accompanied Bobadilla as those who had come out originally with Columbus, should return to Spain, and that a new set to replace them should go out with Ovando. This was done because most of these soldiers and officials had necessarily been connected with the late troubles in the colony, and it would be a good plan to start afresh, as it were. At the same time it was provided that no Jews, Moors, or new converts were to go to the Indies, or be permitted to remain there; but negro slaves "born in the power of Christians, were to be allowed to pass to the Indies, and the officers of the royal revenue were to receive the money to be paid for their permits." This is the first notice with respect to negroes going to the Indies. These instructions were given in the year 1501.

On Ovando's arrival in the colony, Bobadilla was to undergo the ordeal of a "residencia," a kind of examination well known and constantly practised in Spain, to which Authorities were subject on going out of office—being of the nature of a general impeachment. It is satisfactory to find, that amongst the orders given to Ovando, there are some for the restitution of the admiral's property, and the maintenance of his mercantile rights.

Just before Ovando took leave of the king, he received a formal lecture upon the duties of a governor. The King, the Queen, and a privy councillor, Antonio de Fonseca, were the persons present; and, as I imagine, the latter addressed Ovando on the part of their Highnesses. As it is not often that we have an opportunity of hearing a didactic lecture on the modes and duties of government given in the presence of a great master of that art, and probably looked over, if not prepared, by him, we must enter the royal cabinet, and hear some part of this discourse.



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The first point which Fonseca impresses upon Ovando is, that before all things, he is to look to what concerns the reverence of God and His worship. Then he is to examine into the life and capacity of the men about him, and to put good men into office; taking care, however, not to leave all the authority in the hands of subordinates (here we may well imagine Ferdinand nodded approvingly), to the diminution of his own power, “nor to make them so great that they shall have occasion to contrive novelties,” in order to make themselves greater. Also, let there be change of authorities, so that many may have a share of profit and honour, and be made skilful in affairs.

That he should use moderation in making repartimientos and tributes, not overtaxing the people, which moderation would be furthered by his taking care that his personal and his household expenses were within due bounds. (Here, I fancy, the monarchs looked at each other, thought of their own frugal way of living, and Isabella smiled.)

That he should not make himself judge in a cause, but let culprits be tried in the ordinary way. Thus he will avoid unpopularity, for “the remembrance of the crime perishes: not so that of the punishment.” (This aphorism must, I think, have been composed by Ferdinand himself. His writing is always exceedingly concise and to the purpose.)

That he should not listen to tale-bearers, (parleros) either of his own household or to those out of it; nor take vengeance upon anybody who had spoken ill of him, it being “an ugly thing to believe that anybody could speak ill of one who did ill to no one, but good to all,” That it is one of the conditions of bad governors, “moved therein by their own consciences” to give heed to what they hear is said of them, and to take ill that, which if it had been said, they had better not have heard. Rather let injurious sayings be overcome by magnanimity.

That it would be good for him to give free audience to all, and to hear what they had to say; and if their counsel turned out ill, not to look coldly upon them for that. The same in war, or in any other undertaking: his agents must not have to fear punishment for failure, nor calumny for success: “for there were many persons who, to avoid the envy of their superiors, sought rather to lose a victory than to gain it,” (Here Ferdinand ought to have looked a little ashamed, being conscious that his own practice by no means came up to what he perceives to be noble and wise policy in the matter.)

That he (Ovando) should look to what example he gives both in word and deed,—-governors living, as in a theatre, in the midst of the world. If he does ill, even those who follow him in that, will not the less disesteem him.

That although it is necessary for him to know the life of everyone, yet he must not be over-inquisitive about it, nor rout up offences which are not brought before him officially. “Since if all offences were looked into, few men, or none, would be without punishment.” Besides, for secret faults men may correct themselves: if those faults are

made known, and especially if they are punished in excess, shame is lost, and men give way to their bad impulses.

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That he is to encourage those who work, and to discourage the idle, as the universal Father does.

That, as regards liberality, he should so conduct himself, that men should not dare to ask him for things which they would know he must deny: this would be a great restraint upon them, and a great proof of good reputation in a governor.

That, in fine, all that had been said consisted in this, that he was to govern as he would be, governed: and that "it behoved him to be intent in business, to show courage in difficulties, and management in all things, brevity in executing useful determinations, yet not as if carried away by passion, but always upon good counsel; considering much what a charge was upon him, for this thought would be useful to him at all times: and above all things he was to take heed (in order that the same thing might not happen to him which had happened to the admiral) that when any occasion for dealing briefly with an offence occurred, he should have swift recourse to punishment, for in such cases the remedy ought to be like a thunderbolt."

After reading the above, we cannot say that the Catholic monarchs were inattentive to the government of their Indian possessions, nor can the sagacity which directed that attention be for a moment questioned. Indeed that sagacity is so remarkable, that it may naturally occur to the learned reader to inquire, whether Machiavelli's "Prince" had yet been published, and whether King Ferdinand could have read that much-abused manual of crafty statesmen. It was, however, about twelve years after this memorable audience granted by Ferdinand and Isabella to Ovando that "The Prince" is alluded to by Machiavelli, and described as a small unpublished work.

*He arrives at st. Domingo.*

Charged with these instructions, then, Nicholas de Ovando left the port of San Lucas on the 13th of February, 1502, to take possession of his new government, having under him a gallant company of two thousand five hundred persons, a large proportion of them being hidalgos. On his way he met with a terrible storm, in which one of his largest vessels foundered, and he had some difficulty in reaching St. Domingo at all. This, however, he succeeded in doing on the 15th of April, and entered at once upon the reforms which he was commissioned to institute.

*Ovando's administration*

He announced the residencia of Bobadilla, and placed Roldan under arrest. He exerted himself to found settlements along the coast, and at first, no doubt, he endeavoured to carry out the merciful directions which he had received with regard to the Indians. But, like Bobadilla, he was a knight of a religious order, with a certain narrow way of looking at things incident to his profession, with no especial culture that we know of, and with little originality of character. In these respects he presented a remarkable contrast



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to Columbus, who was a man of various accomplishments, large minded, enthusiastic, fluent, affectionate, inventive. And so, whereas Columbus had always treated the natives with consideration and humanity, Ovando soon began to rule them with a rod of iron. We must not linger too long over his administration of what we may call Columbus's kingdom, but there is one sad episode which it is worth while to recount, if only to make the policy of Columbus stand out in brighter relief.

### *An Indian reception.*

When Anacaona, the Queen of Xaragua, had received the admiral's brother, Don Bartolome, on a former occasion, the Spaniards affirmed her to be a wise woman, of good manners, and pleasant address; and she is said to have earnestly entreated her brother to take warning by the fate of her husband, Caonabo, and to love and obey the Christians. As she was now to play the hostess again, this time to Ovando, we may refer to the account of her former reception of a Spanish governor, the Adelantado, of which there are some details furnished by Peter Martyr.

After mentioning that the queen and her brother received the lieutenant with all courtesy and honour, he says: "They brought our men to their common hall, into which they come together as often as they make any notable games or triumphs, as we have said before. Here, after many dancings, singings, maskings, runnings, wrestlings, and other trying of masteries, suddenly there appeared in a large plain near unto the hall, two great armies of men of war, which the king for his pastime had caused to be prepared, as the Spaniards use the play with reeds, which they call Juga de Canias. As the armies drew near together, they assailed the one the other as fiercely as if mortal enemies with their banners spread should fight for their goods, their lands, their lives, their liberty, their country, their wives and their children, so that within the moment of an hour, four men were slain, and many wounded. The battle also would have continued longer, if the king had not, at the request of our men, caused them to cease."

### *Ovando visits Xaragua.*

At this time, in the year 1503, some of Roldan's former partizans were settled in the province of Xaragua, and were a great trouble to the colony. Herrera says, in a quiet sarcastic way, "they lived in the discipline they had learnt from Roldan;" and the governing powers of Xaragua found them "intolerable." He also adds that Anacaona's people were in policy, in language, and in other things superior to all the other inhabitants of the island. As might be expected, there were constant disturbances between these Spaniards and the adjacent Indians; and the Spaniards took care to inform the governor that their adversaries, the Indians of Xaragua, intended to rebel. Perhaps they did so intend. Ovando resolved, after much consultation, to take a journey to Xaragua. It must be said, in justice to Ovando, that this does not look as if he



thought the matter were a light one. Xaragua was seventy leagues from St. Domingo. The governor set out well accompanied, with seventy horsemen and three hundred foot soldiers.

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### *His reception by Anacaona.*

Anacaona, who had some suspicion of his intentions, summoned all her feudatories around her "to do honour" to him, when she heard of his coming. She went out to meet Ovando with a concourse of her subjects, and with the same festivities of singing and dancing as in former days she had adopted when she went to receive the Adelantado. Various pleasures and amusements were provided for the strangers, and probably Anacaona thought that she had succeeded in soothing and pleasing this severe looking governor, as she had done the last. But the former followers of Roldan were about the governor, telling him that there certainly was an insurrection at hand, that if he did not look to it now, and suppress it at once, the revolt would be far more difficult to quell when it did break out. Thus they argued, using all those seemingly wise arguments of wickedness which from time immemorial have originated and perpetuated treachery. Ovando listened to these men; indeed he must have been much inclined to believe them, or he would hardly have come all this way. He was now convinced that an insurrection was intended.

### *Pretended tournament; massacre of Indian chiefs.*

With these thoughts in his mind, he ordered that, on a certain Sunday, after dinner, all the cavalry should get to horse, on the pretext of a tournament. The infantry, too, he caused to be ready for action. He himself, a Tiberius in dissembling, went to play at quoits, and was disturbed by his men coming to him and begging him to look on at their sports. The poor Indian queen hurried with the utmost simplicity into the snare prepared for her. She told the governor that her caciques, too, would like to see this tournament, upon which, with demonstrations of pleasure, he bade her come with all her caciques to his quarters, for he wanted to talk to them, intimating, as I conjecture, that he would explain the festivity to them. Meanwhile, he gave his cavalry orders to surround the building; he placed the infantry at certain commanding positions; and told his men, that when, in talking with the caciques, he should place his hand upon the badge of knighthood which hung upon his breast, they should rush in and bind the caciques and Anacaona. It fell out as he had planned. All these deluded Indian chiefs and their queen were secured. She alone was led out of Ovando's quarters, which were then set fire to, and all the chiefs burnt alive. Anacaona was afterwards hanged and the province was desolated.

Humanity does not gain much, after all, by this man's not taking the title of "Lordship" which he had a right to.

Finally, the governor collected the former followers of Roldan in Xaragua, and formed a town of their settlement, which he named "the city of the true peace" (La villa de la vera Paz), but which a modern chronicler well says might more properly have been named "Aceldama, the field of blood." I observe that the arms assigned to this new settlement were a dove with the olive-branch, a rainbow, and a cross.



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### FERDINAND'S *letter to Columbus*

But it is time to return to Columbus, who in the mean time was chafing at the inactivity which had been forced upon him. His was a restless spirit, perhaps too restless for an organizer, who ought to possess an inexhaustible amount of patience, and to be able to wait as well as to labour. He had formed a theory that some strait existed through which a passage might be made from the neighbourhood of St. Domingo to those regions in Asia from which the Portuguese were just beginning to reap a large profit, and which must be very near that home of the gold which had always occupied his thoughts. He pressed the Sovereigns to provide him with ships for an expedition having for its special object the discovery of this strait; and on the occurrence of some delay as to the equipment of vessels for the purpose, he seems to have written to Ferdinand, reproaching him with the treatment which he had received, and with the want of confidence manifested towards him now. To this Ferdinand answered in a letter which was certainly well calculated to soothe the Admiral's indignation. It was to the following effect, "You ought to be convinced of our displeasure at your captivity, for we lost not a moment in setting you free. Your innocence is well known; you are aware of the consideration and friendship with which we have treated you; the favours which you have received from us shall not be the last that you will receive; we assure to you your privileges, and are desirous that you and your children may enjoy them. We offer to confirm them to you again, and to put your eldest son in possession of all your offices, whenever you wish....We beg you to set out as soon as possible."

### *New enterprise.*

On the 9th of May the preparations were complete, and Columbus set sail from Cadiz with his brother, Don Bartholomew, and his second son, Fernando. As an instance of the admiral's chivalrous love of adventure, it may be mentioned that upon hearing that the Portuguese fortress of Arzilla, on the African coast, was besieged by the Moors, he first proceeded thither, quite voluntarily, to its relief. When he reached it, however, he found that the siege had been raised; and his services were not, therefore, called into requisition.

### *Columbus refused shelter; destructive tornado.*

After a singularly prosperous voyage, he reached Martinique on the 13th of June. His instructions from the Sovereigns expressly interdicted him from visiting St. Domingo; but, on finding that his largest ship required some repairs to make her seaworthy, he boldly disregarded the prohibition, and sent a boat to ask Ovando to furnish him with another vessel in place of the damaged one, and to allow his squadron to take refuge in the harbour during a hurricane which he foresaw to be imminent. Ovando refused both requests. His commission set forth that Columbus was not to visit



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the island; and the contingency of hurricanes was not provided for. Besides, the governor believed that this prediction of a hurricane was a mere pretext of the admiral's for obtaining admission to the harbour. To an eye unaccustomed to tropical changes, the weather appeared to be "set fair." Scarcely a ripple passed over the sea; scarcely a breath stirred the luxuriant foliage on shore. Ovando repulsed with scorn the admiral's suggestion that, at any rate, the departure of the fleet for Spain should be delayed. This fleet was the richest in cargo that had ever left the islands. It contained all the gold which had been wrung out of the natives by Bobadilla's harsh measures. Of one nugget, especially, the old chroniclers speak in the most glowing terms. According to them, it was the largest piece of virgin gold ever discovered. It had been found accidentally, by an Indian woman at the mines, while listlessly moving her rake to and fro in the water one day during dinner time. Its value was estimated at 1,350,000 maravedis; [About 416 English Pounds] and in the festivities which took place on the occasion, it was used as a dish for a roast pig, the miners saying that no king of Castile has ever feasted from a dish of such value. We do not find that the poor Indian woman had any part in the good fortune. Indeed, as Las Casas observes, she was fortunate if she had any portion of the meat, not to speak of the dish. Bobadilla had purchased the nugget for Ferdinand and Isabella, and had shipped it with other treasure valuable enough to go a long way towards compensating the sovereigns for all their expenditure on the new colony—if the fleet could only reach Spain in safety.

But on the second day after its departure the Admiral's prediction became terribly verified. A tornado of unexampled fury swept over the seas; and those on shore could judge of the fate that was likely to befall the unfortunate squadron, as many of the buildings and trees on the island were levelled with the ground by the force of the tempest. Of all the ships, only one—and that the frailest of the fleet—was able to accomplish the voyage to Spain. A few vessels managed to return, in dire distress, to the island; but by far the greater number foundered at sea. The historians of the period do not fail to remark that, while the ship which reached Spain safely was the one carrying the admiral's property, a special providence decreed that his enemies—Bobadilla, Roldan, and their associates in cruelty and plunder—should perish with their ill-gotten gains.

Like Cassandra, Columbus witnessed the discomfiture of the disbelievers in his prophecy: like her he was denied the right of sanctuary upon the occurrence of the disaster which he had foretold. Repulsed from port by Ovando, however, the admiral sailed along the coast, and succeeded in bringing his own ship under the lee of the land when the storm came on. But the three other caravels were in no little danger (particularly the disabled one, which was commanded by the Adelantado), and some days elapsed before the little squadron was re-united in the port of Azua, to the west of San Domingo.

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JAMIAICA *passed*.

Thence he proceeded to Jaquimo, on the extremity of the same coast, and after refitting his ships, set sail for Jamaica on the 14th of July, 1502. Passing that island, he met with light and varying winds, and contrary currents, in the archipelago of reefs and keys which he had previously named the Queen's Garden.

*Insubordination of crews.*

For about nine weeks he made so little progress that his crews began to clamour for the abandonment of the expedition. The ships were worm-eaten and leaky. Provisions were running short. The seamen had seen their commander thrust away from what might be called his own door; and the sight of his powerlessness had strengthened their independence until it amounted to insubordination. Fortunately, however, before the discontent broke out into open mutiny, a breeze sprang up from the east, and the admiral easily persuaded his unruly crews that it was better to prosecute their voyage than to remain beating about the islets waiting to return home.

They were soon gladdened by the sight of the pine-clad slopes of the little island of Guanaja, lying about forty miles from Truxillo, on the coast of Honduras. Here there appeared a canoe, much more like the ships of the old world than any they had seen before, manned by twenty-five Indians who had come from the continent on a trading voyage among the islands. Their cargo consisted of cotton fabrics, iron-wood swords, flint knives, copper axe-heads, and a fruit called by the natives cacao, to which the Spaniards were now introduced for the first time, but the merits of which, as a beverage, they were not slow to appreciate. The admiral treated these people with much kindness, and won their confidence at once by presenting them with some of the glittering toys which never failed to dazzle a barbarian eye.

*An Indian pilot.*

One old Indian, whom Columbus selected as apparently the most intelligent of the band, consented to accompany him as pilot, and indicated, by signs, his knowledge of a land, not far distant, where there were ships, and arms, and merchandize, and, in fact, all the marks of civilization which were displayed to him by the Spaniards themselves, and with which he professed to be perfectly familiar. Whether he intended to mislead Columbus, or whether, like most of his race, he was merely proud of being impassive, and of being able to repress all indication of astonishment at startling novelties, it is certain that his demeanour and his signs were interpreted by the admiral to indicate an acquaintance with a country, rich and civilized, lying towards the east; which country could, of course, be no other than the long sought-for kingdom of the Grand Khan. Had Columbus, in pursuance of his first intention, steered to the west, a few hours would have brought him to the coast of Yucatan; and the riches of Mexico would have rewarded his discovery.

But this savage, like his evil destiny, crossed his path at the critical moment, and turned him from the road to fortune.



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*Cape GUACIAS A Dios.*

Steering along the coast of Honduras, on the 12th of September, he reached Cape Gracias a Dios, to which he gave this name in pious thankfulness for the southerly turn taken by the land at that point, so that the east winds, which had hitherto obstructed him, were now favourable to his course along the coast. A month later he entered several bays on the Isthmus of Panama, where he was able to procure provisions and to refit his vessels, but failed to obtain any intelligence either of the kingdom of the Khan, or of the strait which he fancied would lead him there. The natives whom he encountered were generally disposed to be friendly; but, in one instance, when the depth of water in a creek obliged him to moor his vessels close to the shore, an attack of the Indians was only repulsed by the use of artillery, the thunder and lightning of which seemed always to possess, in the eyes of the savages, a supernatural and therefore awful character. On another occasion, when a conference was held with one of the tribes, great alarm was caused by a notary, who attended to take notes of the conversation. The savages had never before seen the operation of writing; and they regarded it as a spell which was to have some magic effect upon them, and which they must neutralize by various mystic fumigations which they believed to act as counter-charms. "They were themselves skilled sorcerers," says Columbus,—whose credulity in such matters was only that of his age.

*Easterly course abandoned; the Bethlehem river.*

It was not until the 5th of December that the admiral could resolve to abandon his easterly course, although the conviction had been gradually forcing itself upon him that the condition of his ships was such as to render a prosecution of his voyage almost impossible. He had scarcely turned back, intending to found a settlement on the river Veragua, before he encountered a storm which tried his worm-eaten caravels very severely. The thunder and lightning wore incessant; the waterspouts (the first they had seen) threatened to engulf them; huge crests of waves burst in phosphorescent floods over them; and their escape, if we consider the smallness of the caravels, and the force of a tropical cyclone, was little less than miraculous. At last, after eight days' tossing to and fro, the admiral gained the mouth of a river, which he named the Bethlehem, because he entered it on the day of the Epiphany.

*A settlement formed.*

In this neighbourhood there was a powerful cacique, named Quibia, whose territory contained much gold, and with whom, therefore, the Spaniards were anxious to treat. But he outwitted them. Offering to supply them with guides to conduct them to his gold mines, he really sent them, not to his own mines, but to those of a rival cacique, of Urira. Here, however, they succeeded in acquiring, by barter and



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by actual discovery, large quantities of the precious metal, which seemed to be so abundant, that the admiral made sure that he had come to the very Aurea Chersonesus from which Solomon had obtained the gold for the temple at Jerusalem. He had seen more signs of gold here in two days, he said, than he had seen in St. Domingo in four years. His first step was to form a settlement to provide a depot for the gold which might be collected. A convenient site was found near the mouth of the river Bethlehem, and by the end of March the Adelantado had built a village of huts, in which it was proposed that he should remain, with about eighty followers, while Columbus returned to Spain for supplies.

### *Attack by Indians.*

But rumours soon reached the Adelantado of a projected attack on the settlement by the natives, and he took measures to seize Quibia in his own palace. The Indians, dismayed at the capture of their cacique, offered large quantities of gold for his ransom, but the Adelantado preferred to keep him as a hostage for peace. However, as he was being conveyed down the river, on board one of the boats, he managed, although bound hand and foot, and in the custody of one of the most powerful of the Spaniards, to spring overboard and to make his escape, swimming under water to the shore. Henceforward, as might have been expected, there was war to the knife between the natives and the settlers. An attempt was made to burn down the village by means of blazing arrows. A boat's crew of eleven Spaniards, who had proceeded some distance up the river, were attacked by savages in canoes, and only one man escaped to carry to the settlement the news of the massacre of his companions.

### *Settlement abandoned.*

The admiral, with three of the caravels, was in the offing, awaiting a wind favourable for his departure, but the dry weather had made the river so shallow that it was impossible for the caravel left with the settlers to cross the bar, and as they had no boat strong enough to weather the surf, it seemed impossible for them to carry to him tidings of their condition. They were in despair; for if they were left, they knew that they were left to perish. The admiral, on his part, had become uneasy, not knowing that their failure to communicate with him was owing to the fact that their only seaworthy boat had been destroyed by the Indians. His own boats were small and scarcely weathertight. But some of Quibia's family who had been taken on board the squadron as prisoners, had made their escape by swimming to the shore, three miles off; and this feat encouraged a bold pilot of Seville, named Ledesma, who was on board the admiral's caravel, to attempt a similar exploit. Never was bearer of reprieve for the condemned more welcome. Ledesma communicated with the Adelantado, and conveyed to the admiral intelligence of the desperate state of affairs. The result was, that when in a few days the wind moderated, all the settlers were taken on board the squadron, which now only

consisted of three ships, as it was found necessary to abandon the caravel which had been left inside the harbour bar.



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And there was no time to spare. The rough weather had severely tried the crazy and worm-eaten vessels; and anxiety and want of rest were having their effect on Columbus. Making his way first to Porto Bello, where he was obliged to leave another caravel as no longer seaworthy, on the 31st of May he quitted the coast at a point on the west of the Gulf of Darien, and steered northward towards Cuba. A collision between his two remaining ships rendered them still more unfit to cope with the squalls and breakers of the Archipelago; but at last, in the middle of June, with his crews in despair, nearly all his anchors lost, and his vessels worm-eaten so as to be "as full of holes as a honey-comb," he arrived off the southern coast of Cuba, where he obtained supplies of cassava bread from friendly natives.

### CHAPTER XII.

Failing to make head against the wind so as to reach Hispaniola, Columbus shaped his course for Jamaica, and there, in the harbour which he had named Santa Gloria on his former visit, his voyage was perforce brought to a conclusion. As his ships could not float any longer, he ran them on shore, side by side, and built huts upon the decks for housing the crews. Such a habitation, like the Swiss lake dwellings, afforded remarkable advantages of position in case of attack by a hostile tribe.

#### *Supply of provisions.*

The admiral's first care was to prevent any offence being given to the aborigines which might give cause for such an attack. Knowing, by sad experience, the results of permitting free intercourse between the Spaniards and the natives, he enforced strictly a rule forbidding any Spaniard to go ashore without leave; and took measures for regulating the traffic for food so as to prevent the occurrence of any quarrel. Diego Mendez, who had been his lieutenant, and had shown himself the boldest of his officers throughout this voyage, volunteered to proceed into the interior of the island to make arrangements for the periodical supply of provisions from some of the more remote tribes, as it was certain that the sudden addition to the population would soon exhaust the resources of the immediate neighbourhood. This service Mendez performed with great adroitness, and a regular market was established to which the natives brought fish, game and cassava bread, in exchange for Spanish toys and ornaments.

#### *A messenger sent to Ovando; remarkable despatch to the sovereigns.*



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Although the Spaniards were thus secure from starvation for the present, their position was most critical. The journey to the easternmost extremity of Jamaica would probably not be unattended with difficulty and danger, for it must be effected through the midst of Indian tribes, hostile to each other, and therefore probably not unanimous in being friendly towards strangers. But the most formidable obstacle to communication with the government of Hispaniola was the strait of forty leagues' breadth, full of tumbling breakers and rushing currents, which separated the two islands. However, it was necessary that the attempt should be made; and Diego Mendez, though he considered it to be "not merely difficult, but impossible, to cross in so small a vessel as a canoe," volunteered for the service, after all the other Spaniards had declined to undertake it. He was to be the bearer of a letter from the admiral to Ovando, asking him to send a vessel to release the castaways from their imprisonment, and of a despatch to the Sovereigns, giving a detailed account of the Admiral's voyage and a glowing description of the riches of Veragua. This despatch is very characteristic of the writer, bearing, as it does, the marks of strong enthusiasm, of almost fanatical superstition, of confidence in the midst of despair, and of exultation in the face of ruin. Describing his reflections during the storm at the mouth of the river Bethlehem, he breaks into the following rhapsody, which, probably in perfect good faith, dwells on the contrast between the goodness of God and the bad faith of man, in a way which ought to have touched Ferdinand nearly. It is worth quoting at full length, as an example of the wild fervour of a rapt enthusiast.

"Wearied and sighing," writes Columbus, "I fell into a slumber, when I heard a piteous voice saying to me, 'O fool, and slow to believe and serve thy God, who is the God of all! What did He more for Moses, or for His servant David, than He has done for thee? From the time of thy birth He has ever had thee under His peculiar care. When He saw thee of a fitting age, He made thy name to resound marvellously throughout the earth, and thou wert obeyed in many lands, and didst acquire honourable fame among Christians. Of the gates of the ocean sea, shut up with such mighty chains, He delivered to thee the keys; the Indies, those wealthy regions of the world, He gave thee for thine own, and empowered thee to dispose of them to others, according to thy pleasure. What did He more for the great people of Israel, when He led them forth from Egypt? Or for David, whom, from being it shepherd, He made a king in Judaea? Turn to Him, then, and acknowledge thine error: His mercy is infinite. He has many and vast inheritances yet in reserve. Fear not to seek them. Thine age shall be no impediment to any great undertaking. Abraham was above a hundred years when he begat Isaac; and was Sarah youthful? Thou urgest despondingly for succour. Answer!



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Who hath afflicted thee so much, and so many times, God, or the world? The privileges and promises which God hath made to thee He hath never broken,[23] neither hath He said, after having received thy services, that His meaning was different, and to be understood in a different sense. He fulfils all that He promises, and with increase. Such is His custom. I have shown thee what thy Creator hath done for thee, and what He doeth for all. The present is the reward of the toils and perils thou hast endured in serving others.' I heard this," adds Columbus, "as one almost dead, and had no power to reply to words so true, excepting to weep for my errors. Whoever it was that spoke to me finished by saying, 'Fear not! All these tribulations are written in marble, and not without cause.'"

[Footnote 23: A sarcasm to "catch the conscience of the king."]

*Religious enthusiasm.*

"Though this be madness, there is method in it;" but still, the whole character of Columbus forbids us to assume that this alleged vision was merely an ingenious device for remonstrating with the Sovereigns. It must not be forgotten that in those times the popular belief as to such matters was very different from that which obtains now; and that Columbus was as credulous as his contemporaries on the subject of the supernatural. It was easy for an imagination like his to be wrought upon so as to give to "airy nothings," to the "thousand phantasies that crowd into the memory," the character of special revelations from heaven. In this very despatch his religious fervour is displayed again and again. Jerusalem, according to the prophecy, was to be rebuilt by the hand of a Christian. He would be that Christian. Prester John, so said tradition, had asked for missionaries to instruct him in the true faith. He would conduct them to the kingdom of this unknown potentate. Then he goes on to deplore his own hard case; "surrounded by cruel and hostile savages; isolated, infirm, expecting each day will be my last; severed from the holy sacraments of the Church, so that my soul, if parted here from my body, must be for ever forgotten....If it should please God to deliver me hence, I humbly supplicate your majesties to permit me to repair to Rome, and perform other pilgrimages." Columbus, then, being really convinced of the fatal consequences of not being within reach of formal communion with the Church, must have felt that he was risking more than his mere bodily life when he wandered into those unknown countries; that he staked both body and soul on his success.

*Capture of Mendez; escape and safe arrival.*



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Laden with these despatches, Mendez and a Spanish comrade set out along the coast in a canoe manned by six Indians. The party arrived safely at the easternmost Cape of Jamaica (now called Point Morant); but while awaiting calm weather for crossing the strait to Hispaniola, they were attacked by a tribe of savages, who overpowered them by sheer force of numbers, and carried them off as captives. The beads and toys, however, which Mendez had taken with him to barter with the natives, were too attractive not to claim the chief share of the attention of his conquerors; and while they were settling the division of the spoil he managed to effect his escape to his canoe, and to return in it in safety to Santa Gloria. As soon as a second canoe could be procured, Mendez was ready to make a second attempt, but on this occasion he stipulated that he should be accompanied to the easternmost point of Jamaica by a force sufficient to protect him from the hostile tribes. Accordingly, on the 7th July, 1503, the Adelantado, with an armed escort, proceeded along the shore; while Mendez, with six Spaniards and ten Indians, in one canoe, and Fieschi (a Genoese, who had commanded one of the caravels), with a like number in the other, made their way by sea to Point Morant.

After waiting a short time for fine weather, the two canoes started for Hispaniola, and reached a little island called Navazza on the third day, both Spaniards and Indians having suffered terribly from the want of water, with which they were insufficiently supplied. Another day's labour at the oar brought them to Cape Tiburon, where Mendez left his companions and proceeded alone to St. Domingo. Here he was informed that the governor had left for Xaragua; and thither he made his way alone, through fifty leagues of wild forest country, to represent to Ovando the necessity of sending relief to the admiral, and that speedily. Ovando seems to have temporized. He dreaded the return of Columbus, as likely to excite the seditious to a revolt against his own government. And so far from taking active steps in the matter himself, it was only with reluctance that he authorized Mendez to proceed to St. Domingo to purchase a caravel on behalf of Columbus, in which Fieschi might return to Santa Gloria, and bring him off.

*Suspense of the admiral; mutiny of Porras.*

Meanwhile, month after month passed by, and the unfortunate castaways at Santa Gloria had no tidings from Hispaniola, and were even ignorant whether their messengers had succeeded in reaching that island. At last, in January, 1504, the murmurs against the inaction of Columbus broke out into open mutiny. Francesco Porras, the captain of one of the caravels, headed the mutineers, and going to the admiral, who was confined to his bed by the gout, told him that he, the admiral, evidently was afraid to return to Spain; but that the people had determined to remain no longer to perish,



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and intended to depart at once. On this there arose shouts from the followers of Porras, "To Castile! We follow!" The admiral made a temperate speech, pointing out the danger of attempting to leave the island in mere canoes, and the absurdity of supposing that he had not a common interest with them in all respects. But Porras was as persistent in his desire to go, as Columbus in his determination to stay; and, taking possession of the canoes which had been purchased from the natives, the mutineers set out on their journey towards Hispaniola, leaving the admiral and his brother with scarcely any adherents except those whom sickness incapacitated for undertaking the journey.

### *Bad conduct of mutineers.*

The progress of Porras and his followers through the island was marked by a series of outrages on the natives which completely neutralized the effect of the admiral's conciliatory policy. They seized forcibly on whatever provisions could be found, and mockingly referred the owners to Columbus for payment. Three attempts to cross over to Hispaniola failed in consequence of rough weather. On one occasion the canoes were in so much danger of being swamped that the Spaniards cast everything on board into the sea; and, as this did not lighten the canoes sufficiently, they then proceeded to force overboard their unfortunate companions, the Indians, who swam after them for a long time, but sank one by one, being prevented by the swords of the Spaniards from approaching. Abandoning, as hopeless, their design of reaching Hispaniola, the mutineers then proceeded to roam over the island, quartering themselves on the Indians, and committing every possible excess.

Of course the influence of this conduct on the relations between Columbus and the natives, was soon apparent. The trinkets and beads, which had once been so precious in their eyes, had first lost the charm of novelty, then the value of rarity. The circulating medium became so depreciated that provisions were scarcely procurable. And, similarly, the personal veneration which the natives had first evinced for the white men, had given way to contempt and to hatred, when familiarity had shown how worthless were these "superior beings." The Indians refused to minister to their wants any longer; and famine was imminent.

### *Eclipse predicted by Columbus.*

But just at this last extremity, the admiral, ever fertile in devices, bethought him of an expedient for re-establishing his influence over the Indians. His astronomical knowledge told him that on a certain night an eclipse of the moon would take place. One would think that people living in the open air must be accustomed to see such eclipses sufficiently often, not to be particularly astonished at them. But Columbus judged—and as the event proved, judged rightly—that by predicting the eclipse he would gain a reputation as a prophet, and command



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the respect and the obedience due to a person invested with supernatural powers. He assembled the caciques of the neighbouring tribes. Then, by means of an interpreter, he reproached them with refusing to continue to supply provisions to the Spaniards. "The God who protects me," he said, "will punish you. You know what has happened to those of my followers who have rebelled against me; and the dangers which they encountered in their attempt to cross to Haiti; while those who went at my command, [24] made the passage without difficulty. Soon, too, shall the divine vengeance fall on you; this very night shall the moon change her colour and lose her light, in testimony of the evils which shall be sent upon you from the skies."

[Footnote 24: This was a gratuitous assumption: as the admiral had as yet no tidings of the success of Mendez.]

### *Result of prediction.*

The night was fine: the moon shone down in full brilliancy. But, at the appointed time, the predicted phenomenon took place, and the wild howls of the savages proclaimed their abject terror. They came in a body to Columbus, and implored his intercession. They promised to let him want for nothing if only he would avert this judgment: as all earnest of their sincerity they collected hastily a quantity of food, and offered it at his feet. At first, diplomatically hesitating, Columbus presently affected to be softened by their entreaties. He consented to intercede for them; and, retiring to his cabin, performed, as they supposed, some mystic rite which should deliver them from the threatened punishment. Soon the terrible shadow passed away from the face of the moon; and the gratitude of the savages was as deep as their previous terror. But, being blended with much awe, it was not so evanescent as gratitude often is; and henceforward there was no failure in the regular supply of provisions to the castaways.

### *Despatch from Ovando.*

Eight months had passed away without any tidings of Mendez, when, one evening there hove in sight a small caravel which stood in towards the harbour of Santa Gloria, and anchored just outside. A boat which put off from the caravel brought on shore her commander, a certain Diego de Escobar, whom Columbus recognized as a person whom he had sentenced to be hanged as it ringleader in Roldan's mutiny, and who had been pardoned by Bobadilla. The proceedings of this person—whose reprieve must have now seemed to the admiral particularly injudicious—were singular enough. Standing at a distance from Columbus, as if the admiral had been in quarantine, he shouted, at the top of his voice, a message from Ovando, to the effect that he (the governor) regretted the admiral's misfortunes very keenly, that he hoped before long to send a ship of sufficient size to take him off. He added, that in the meantime, Ovando begged him to accept a slight mark of his friendship.

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The “slight mark of his friendship” was—a side of bacon, which, with a small cask of wine and a letter from Ovando he delivered to the admiral; and rowed off as fast as possible. The whole scheme of this visit, which was probably planned by Ovando with the object of ascertaining the real condition and designs of Columbus, was in the last degree insulting to him and tantalizing to his companions, with whom D’Escobar would not permit any communication to be held. However, the admiral wrote a civil reply to Ovando, describing piteously the hardships of his condition, and disclaiming any ulterior design with regard to the government of Hispaniola. Carrying this missive, D’Escobar set sail at once, and was out of sight, on his return voyage, before the morning of the day after his arrival.

### *Overtures to mutineers.*

This mysterious visit was by no means satisfactory to the admiral’s companions. As he alone had held communication with D’Escobar, he was free to give them whatever account he chose of his interview; and this liberty, it may be parenthetically observed, he did not scruple to exercise somewhat at the expense of strict truth. He represented himself as having refused to depart with D’Escobar, because the caravel was too small to carry them all away, and he was determined to share their lot, confident in Ovando’s assurance of speedy succour. He made overtures for a reconciliation to Porras, and endeavoured to persuade the mutineers to return on board the ships. But these overtures were scornfully repulsed and the admiral’s messengers were sent back with threats of force. As for the caravel, Porras had little difficulty in persuading his credulous followers that it was merely an apparition which Columbus had conjured up by magic arts; and such was the reputation for sorcery which the admiral had acquired by his astronomical observations, that even the sight and taste of some tangible bacon (half of that present from Ovando of which we have heard) which he sent as a peace offering to the mutineers, failed to convince them of the material character of the supposed phantom ship.

### *Resort to arms.*

Soon, however, the differences between the rival parties were brought to an issue. The Adelantado received information that Porras was planning a descent on the ships, with the object of seizing the stores and capturing the admiral. Resolving to anticipate this attack, he placed himself at the head of fifty[25] devoted partisans of Columbus, and sallied out to engage the mutineers. A furious struggle ensued; but the Adelantado performed prodigies of valour, and his followers were better supplied with fire-arms than the rebels; so that the latter sustained a complete defeat, and their leader Porras was carried off as a prisoner to the ships.

[Footnote 25: It would appear from this number that either there had been some defection from the ranks of the mutineers or that more than half the Spaniards had remained faithful to the admiral.]



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*The mutineers conquered.*

The natives, who had been spectators of the affray, were much perplexed. Wiser people than these poor savages have looked with sorrowful wonder on the appeal to brute force to decide the quarrels of nations; and the Indians, when they saw strife and death among the beings whom they had formerly considered as heaven-descended and immortal, felt that their estimate of these attributes ought to be lowered. But when curiosity impelled them to examine the corpses of the Spaniards who had been killed in the encounter, after minutely inspecting several bodies, they came to that of Ledesma—whose name may be remembered as that of the gigantic pilot of Seville who swam through the surf at Bethlehem to the Adelantado's relief—who had now fallen, covered with wounds, fighting on behalf of the mutineers. As the savages proceeded to thrust their fingers into his wounds, Ledesma, who had fainted from pain, recovered consciousness, and uttered a stentorian yell which put the Indians to flight, says an ancient chronicler, "as if all the dead men were at their heels." And as Ledesma eventually recovered, notwithstanding his having received wounds sufficient to kill three ordinary persons, the natives must have been inspired by a proper respect for the almost miraculous vitality of the white men.

*Porras A prisoner.*

The victory gained by the Adelantado was conclusive. The rebels at once submitted to the admiral, who consented to pardon them; reserving only their ringleader, Porras, for future punishment. It was arranged that they should not again take up their habitation on board the ships, but Columbus sent ashore a trusty lieutenant as their commander, and supplied them at the same time with European articles to barter for food with the natives. And so the two bands of castaways—one on ship and one on shore—awaited the promised succour, with the weariness of hope deferred.

## CHAPTER XIII.

It was not till the 28th of June, 1504, when just a year had elapsed since their arrival at Santa Gloria, that the Spaniards were gladdened by the sight of the two caravels which had been sent—one by Mendez, the other by Ovando—to their relief. Their embarkation, as may be supposed, was quickly effected; but adverse winds made the voyage to Hispaniola a long one, and the two vessels did not reach St. Domingo before the 13th of August.

*Conflicting jurisdiction.*

Much to the surprise of the admiral, he found himself treated with the most punctilious courtesy by Ovando, who even proceeded to the harbour, with a numerous suite, to receive him in state upon his arrival. However, differences soon arose as to the

conflicting jurisdictions of the viceroy and the governor; especially with regard to the case of Porras, whom Ovando, in opposition to the admiral's wish, insisted upon



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releasing from custody. Moreover he even announced his intention of instituting a general enquiry as to the events which had taken place in Jamaica, in order to decide whether Porrás and his associates had been justified in their rebellion. Columbus disputed the right of Ovando to take upon himself the office of judge in such a matter; and remarked that his own authority as viceroy must have sunk very low indeed, if it did not empower him to punish his officers for mutinying against himself. This dispute was unfortunate as regards the private interests of the admiral, for the revenues arising from his property in the island had been collected under the authority of the governor, who, upon the occurrence of this quarrel, was easily able to raise difficulties in the way of his obtaining a fair account of the proceeds. But he was all the more anxious to return to Spain; and, within a month from his arrival at St. Domingo, he started homeward in the caravel which had brought him from Jamaica.

### *Falling fortunes.*

But even in this last voyage he was forced to “make head against a sea of troubles.” His evil star was in the ascendant. Twice his vessel nearly foundered. Twice her masts were sprung in successive tempests. His own health was succumbing to the acute attacks of gout which had become more and more frequent for the last few years. And so, prostrated by sickness, nearly ruined in means, and now hopeless of encouragement from the Sovereigns, the discoverer of the New World arrived at Seville, on the 7th of November, 1504, in as miserable a plight as his worst enemy could have wished.

He could scarcely expect to be received with much favour at court. He had failed in the search for that strait leading to the kingdom of the Grand Khan, the discovery of which had been the special object of his expedition; he had lost his ships; he had brought home wonderful stories of golden lands, but no gold. Porrás[26] was at large, and had influence at court, which enabled him to stimulate the existing prejudice against Columbus.

[Footnote 26: It seems just possible that, as the original narrative of the mutiny of Porrás was written by Fernando Columbus, who would naturally take his father's side, something is to be said for Porrás which has not been said for him by historians.]

### *Death of the queen.*

Poor, old, infirm, he had now to receive intelligence which was to deepen all his evils. He remained at Seville, too unwell to make a journey himself, but sent his son Diego to court, to manage his affairs for him. The complaints of the admiral, that he had no news from court, are quite touching. He says, he desires to hear news each hour. Couriers are arriving every day, but none for him: his very hair stands on end to hear things so

contrary to what his soul desires. He alludes, I imagine, to the state of the Queen's health; for, in



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a memorandum of instructions to his son, written at this period, the first thing, he says, to be done is, "to commend affectionately, with much devotion," the soul of the Queen to God. Could the poor Indians but have known what a friend to them was dying, one continued wail would have gone up to heaven from Hispaniola and all the western islands. The dread decree, however, had gone forth, and on the 26th of November, 1504, it was only a prayer for the departed that could have been addressed; for the great Queen was no more. If it be permitted to departing spirits to see those places on earth they yearn much after, we might imagine that the soul of Isabella would give "one longing, lingering look" to the far West.

### *Oppression of the Indians.*

And if so, what did she see there? How different was the aspect of things from what governors and officers of all kinds had told her: how different from aught that she had thought of, or commanded! She had insisted that the Indians were to be free: she would have seen their condition to be that of slaves. She had declared that they were to have spiritual instruction: she would have seen them less instructed than the dogs. She had ordered that they should receive payment for their labour: she would have found that all they received was a mockery of wages, just enough to purchase once, perhaps, in the course of the year, some childish trifles from Castile. She had always directed that they should have kind treatment and proper maintenance: she would have seen them literally watching under the tables of their masters, to catch the crumbs which fell there. She would have beheld the Indian labouring at the mine under cruel buffetings, his family, neglected, perishing, or enslaved. She would have marked him on his return, after eight months of dire toil, enter a place which knew him not, or a household that could only sorrow over the gaunt creature who had returned to them, and mingle their sorrows with his; or, still more sad, she would have seen Indians who had been brought from far distant homes, linger at the mines, too hopeless, or too careless, to return.

### *Petitions of Columbus; injustice of the king.*

Turning from what might have been seen by Queen Isabella, had her departing gaze pierced to the outskirts of her dominions, we have to record the closing scene of the strange eventful history of Columbus, who did not long survive his benefactress. Ever since his return from his fourth voyage to the Indies, he had done little else than memorialize, and petition, and negotiate about his rights. But Ferdinand, who had always looked coldly on his projects, was disposed to regard his claims with still less favour. Columbus professed himself willing to sacrifice the arrears of revenue due to him, but urged strenuously his demand that his son Diego should be made viceroy of the Indies, in accordance with the terms of the grant making that dignity hereditary in his family. Ferdinand did not refuse absolutely: the breach of faith would have been too

flagrant. But he procrastinated, and ended by referring the matter to the significantly named Board of Discharges of the Royal Conscience, which board regulated its proceedings by the known wishes of the king, and procrastinated too.



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The proverb, "Fear old age, for it does not come alone," was especially applicable to Columbus, while suffering sickness without the elasticity to bear it, poverty with high station and debt, and all the delay of suitorship, not at the beginning, but at the close, of a career. A similar decline of fortune is to be seen in the lives of many men; of those, too, who have been most adventurous and successful in their prime. Their fortunes grow old and feeble with themselves; and those clouds, which were but white and scattered during the vigour of the day, sink down together, stormful and massive, in huge black lines, across the setting sun.

### *Death of Columbus*

Shortly after the arrival of Philip and his queen in Spain, Columbus had written to their Highnesses, deploring his inability to come to them, through illness, and saying that, notwithstanding his pitiless disease (the gout), he could yet do them service the like of which had not been seen. Perhaps he meant service in the way of good advice touching the administration of the Indies; perhaps, for he was of an indomitable spirit, that he could yet make more voyages of discovery. But there was then only left for him that voyage in which the peasant who has seen but the little district round his home, and the great travellers in thought and deed, are alike to find themselves upon the unknown waters of further life. Looked at in this way, what a great discoverer each of us is to be! But we must not linger too long, even at the deathbed of a hero. Having received all the sacraments of the Church, and uttering as his last words, "In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum," Columbus died, at Valladolid, on Ascension Day, the 20th of May, 1506. His remains were carried to Seville and buried in the monastery of Las Cuevas; afterwards they were removed to the cathedral at St. Domingo; and, in modern times, were taken to the cathedral at Havana, where they now rest.

## **THE END.**

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