

glorious purpose of introducing the blessings of Christian civilization among the heathen.¹⁰ She entertained a deep sense of the merits of Columbus, to whose serious and elevated character her own bore much resemblance; although the enthusiasm, which distinguished each, was naturally tempered in hers with somewhat more of benignity and discretion.

But although the queen was willing to give the most effectual support to his great enterprise, the situation of the country was such as made delay in its immediate prosecution unavoidable. Large expense was necessarily incurred for the actual maintenance of the colony;¹¹ the exchequer was liberally drained, moreover, by the Italian war, as well as by the profuse magnificence with which the nuptials of the royal family were now celebrating. It was, indeed, in the midst of the courtly revelries attending the marriage of Prince John, that the admiral presented himself before the sovereigns at Burgos, after his second voyage. Such was the low condition of the treasury from these causes, that Isabella was obliged to defray the cost of an outfit to the colony, at this time, from funds originally destined for the marriage of her daughter Isabella with the king of Portugal.¹²

¹⁰ See the letters to Columbus, dated May 14th, 1493, August, 1494, apud Navarrete, Coleccion de Viages, tom. ii. pp. 66, 154, et mult. al.

¹¹ The salaries alone, annually disbursed by the crown to persons resident in the colony, amounted to

six million maravedies. Muñoz, Hist. del Nuevo-Mundo, lib. 5, sec. 33.

¹² Idem, lib. 6, sec. 2.—Fernando Colon, Hist. del Almirante, cap. 64.—Herrera, Indias Occidentales, lib. 3, cap. 1.

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II.

Honors conferred on him.

This unwelcome delay, however, was softened to Columbus by the distinguished marks which he daily received of the royal favor; and various ordinances were passed, confirming and enlarging his great powers and privileges in the most ample manner, to a greater extent, indeed, than his modesty, or his prudence, would allow him to accept.¹³ The language in which these princely gratuities were conferred, rendered them doubly grateful to his noble heart, containing, as they did, the most emphatic acknowledgments of his "many, good, loyal, distinguished, and continual services," and thus testifying the unabated confidence of his sovereigns in his integrity and prudence.¹⁴

Among the impediments to the immediate completion of the arrangements for the admiral's departure on his third voyage, may be also noticed the hostility of Bishop Fonseca, who, at this period, had the control of the Indian department; a man of an irritable, and, as it would seem, most unforgiving temper, who, from some causes of disgust which he had conceived with Columbus previous to his second voyage, lost no opportunity of annoying

¹³ Such, for example, was the grant of an immense tract of land in Hispaniola, with the title of count or duke, as the admiral might prefer. Muñoz, *Hist. del Nuevo-Mundo*, lib. 6, sec. 17.

¹⁴ The instrument establishing the *mayorazgo*, or perpetual entail of Columbus's estates, contains an injunction, that "his heirs shall never use any other signature than

that of 'the Admiral,' *el Almirante*, whatever other titles and honors may belong to them." That title indicated his peculiar achievements, and it was an honest pride which led him by this simple expedient to perpetuate the remembrance of them in his posterity. See the original document, apud Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages*, tom. ii. pp. 221 - 235.

and thwarting him, for which his official station unfortunately afforded him too many facilities.¹⁵

CHAPTER
VIII.His third
voyage.

From these various circumstances the admiral's fleet was not ready before the beginning of 1498. Even then further embarrassment occurred in manning it, as few were found willing to embark in a service which had fallen into such general discredit. This led to the ruinous expedient of substituting convicts, whose regular punishments were commuted into transportation, for a limited period, to the Indies. No measure could possibly have been devised more effectual for the ruin of the infant settlement. The seeds of corruption, which had been so long festering in the old world, soon shot up into a plentiful harvest in the new, and Columbus, who suggested the measure, was the first to reap the fruits of it.

At length, all being in readiness, the admiral embarked on board his little squadron, consisting of six vessels, whose complement of men, notwithstanding every exertion, was still deficient, and took his departure from the port of St. Lucar, May 30th, 1498. He steered in a more southerly direction than on his preceding voyages, and on the first of August succeeded in reaching *terra firma*; thus entitling himself to the glory of being the first to set foot on the great southern continent, to which he had before opened the way.¹⁶

Discovers
terra firma.

It is not necessary to pursue the track of the

¹⁵ Muñoz, Hist. del Nuevo-Mundo, lib. 6, sec. 20. — Fernando Colon, Hist. del Almirante, cap. 64. — Zuñiga, Annales de Sevilla, año 1496.

¹⁶ Peter Martyr, De Rebus Oceanicis, dec. 1, lib. 6. — Navarrete, Coleccion de Viages, tom. ii. Doc. Dipl., nos. 116, 120. — Tercer Viage de Colon, apud Navarrete, tom. i.

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illustrious voyager, whose career, forming the most brilliant episode to the history of the present reign, has been so recently traced by a hand which few will care to follow. It will suffice briefly to notice his personal relations with the Spanish government, and the principles on which the colonial administration was conducted.

Mutiny in
the colony.

On his arrival at Hispaniola, Columbus found the affairs of the colony in the most deplorable confusion. An insurrection had been raised by the arts of a few factious individuals against his brother Bartholomew, to whom he had intrusted the government during his absence. In this desperate rebellion, all the interests of the community were neglected. The mines, which were just beginning to yield a golden harvest, remained unwrought. The unfortunate natives were subjected to the most inhuman oppression. There was no law but that of the strongest. Columbus, on his arrival, in vain endeavoured to restore order. The very crews he brought with him, who had been unfortunately reprieved from the gibbet in their own country, served to swell the mass of mutiny. The admiral exhausted art, negotiation, entreaty, force, and succeeded at length in patching up a specious reconciliation by such concessions as essentially impaired his own authority. Among these was the grant of large tracts of land to the rebels, with permission to the proprietor to employ an allotted number of the

p. 245. — Benzoni, *Novi Orbis* 3, cap. 10, 11. — Muñoz, *Hist. del*
Hist., lib. 1, cap. 10, 11. — Herre- *Nuevo-Mundo*, lib. 6, sec. 19.
ra, *Indias Occidentales*, dec. 1 lib.

natives in its cultivation. This was the origin of the celebrated system of *repartimientos*, which subsequently led to the foulest abuses that ever disgraced humanity.¹⁷

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VIII.

Nearly a year elapsed after the admiral's return to Hispaniola, before he succeeded in allaying these intestine feuds. In the mean while, rumors were every day reaching Spain of the distractions of the colony, accompanied with most injurious imputations on the conduct of Columbus and his brother, who were loudly accused of oppressing both Spaniards and Indians, and of sacrificing the public interests, in the most unscrupulous manner, to their own. These complaints were rung in the very ears of the sovereigns by numbers of the disaffected colonists, who had returned to Spain, and who surrounded the king, as he rode out on horseback, clamoring loudly for the discharge of the arrears, of which they said the admiral had defrauded them.¹⁸

Loud complaints
against Co-
lumbus.

There were not wanting, even, persons of high consideration at the court, to give credence and circulation to these calumnies. The recent discovery of the pearl fisheries of Paria, as well as of more prolific veins of the precious metals in Hispaniola, and the prospect of an indefinite extent of unexplored country, opened by the late voyage of Co-

¹⁷ Gomara, Hist. de las Indias, cap. 20. — Benzoni, Novi Orbis Hist., lib. 1, cap. 10, 11. — Garibay, Compendio, tom. ii. lib. 19, cap. 7. — Fernando Colon, Hist. del Almirante, cap. 73–82. — Peter Martyr, De Rebus Oceanicis, dec. 1, lib. 5. — Herrera, Indias Occidentales, dec. 1, lib. 3, cap. 16. — Mu-

ñoz, Hist. del Nuevo-Mundo, lib. 6, sec. 40–42.

¹⁸ Garibay, Compendio, tom. ii. lib. 19, cap. 7. — Peter Martyr, De Rebus Oceanicis, dec. 1, lib. 7. — Gomara, Hist. de las Indias, cap. 23. — Benzoni, Novi Orbis Hist., cap. 11.

Ferdinand Columbus mentions

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II

lumbus, made the viceroyalty of the New World a tempting bait for the avarice and ambition of the most potent grandee. They artfully endeavoured, therefore, to undermine the admiral's credit with the sovereigns, by raising in their minds suspicions of his integrity, founded not merely on vague reports, but on letters received from the colony, charging him with disloyalty, with appropriating to his own use the revenues of the island, and with the design of erecting an independent government for himself.¹⁹

Whatever weight these absurd charges may have had with Ferdinand, they had no power to shake the queen's confidence in Columbus, or lead her to suspect his loyalty for a moment. But the long-continued distractions of the colony made her feel a natural distrust of his capacity to govern it, whether from the jealousy entertained of him as a foreigner, or from some inherent deficiency in his own character. These doubts were mingled, it is true, with sterner feelings towards the admiral, on the arrival, at this juncture, of several of the rebels

that he and his brother, who were then pages to the queen, could not stir out into the courtyard of the Alhambra, without being followed by fifty of these vagabonds, who insulted them in the grossest manner, "as the sons of the adventurer, who had led so many brave Spanish hidalgos to seek their graves in the land of vanity and delusion which he had found out." *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 85.

¹⁹ Benzoni, *Novi Orbis Hist.*, lib. 1, cap. 12. — National feeling operated, no doubt, as well as avarice to sharpen the tooth of slander against the admiral. "*Ægre multi patiuntur*," says Columbus's countryman, with honest warmth, "*peregrinum hominem, et quidem e nostrâ Italiâ ortum, tantum honoris ac gloriæ consequutum, ut non tantum Hispanicæ gentis, sed et ejujusvis alterius homines superaverit.*" Benzoni, lib. 1, cap. 5.

with the Indian slaves assigned to them by his orders.²⁰

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It was the received opinion among good Catholics of that period, that heathen and barbarous nations were placed by the circumstance of their infidelity without the pale both of spiritual and civil rights. Their souls were doomed to eternal perdition. Their bodies were the property of the Christian nation who should occupy their soil.²¹ Such, in brief, were the profession and the practice of the most enlightened Europeans of the fifteenth century; and such the deplorable maxims which regulated the intercourse of the Spanish and Portuguese navigators with the uncivilized natives of the western world.²² Columbus, agreeably to these views,

Bigoted
views in re-
gard to the
heathen.

²⁰ Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 4, cap. 7, 10, and more especially lib. 6, cap. 13. — Las Casas, *Ceuvres*, ed. de Llorente, tom i. p. 306.

²¹ "La qualité de Catholique Romain," says the philosophic Vilers, "avait tout-à-fait remplacé celle d'homme, et même de Chrétien. Qui n'était pas Catholique Romain, n'était pas homme, était moins qu'homme; et eût-il été un souverain, c'était une bonne action que de lui ôter la vie." (*Essai sur la Réformation*, p. 56. ed. 1820.) Las Casas rests the title of the Spanish crown to its American possessions on the original papal grant, made on condition of converting the natives to Christianity. The pope, as vicar of Jesus Christ, possesses plenary authority over all men for the safety of their souls. He might, therefore, in furtherance of this, confer on the Spanish sovereigns imperial supremacy over all lands discovered by them, — not, how-

ever, to the prejudice of authorities already existing there, and over such nations only as voluntarily embraced Christianity. Such is the sum of his thirty propositions, submitted to the council of the Indies for the inspection of Charles V. (*Ceuvres*, ed. de Llorente, tom. i. pp. 286–311.) One may see in these arbitrary and whimsical limitations, the good bishop's desire to reconcile what reason told him was the natural rights of man, with what faith prescribed as the legitimate prerogative of the pope. Few Roman Catholics at the present day will be found sturdy enough to maintain this lofty prerogative, however carefully limited. Still fewer in the sixteenth century would have challenged it. Indeed, it is but just to Las Casas, to admit, that the general scope of his arguments, here and elsewhere, is very far in advance of his age.

²² A Spanish casuist finds the

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had, very soon after the occupation of Hispaniola, recommended a regular exchange of slaves for the commodities required for the support of the colony; representing, moreover, that in this way their conversion would be more surely effected, — an object, it must be admitted, which he seems to have ever had most earnestly at heart.

More liberal
sentiments
of Isabella.

Isabella, however, entertained views on this matter far more liberal than those of her age. She had been deeply interested by the accounts she had received from the admiral himself of the gentle, unoffending character of the islanders; and she revolted at the idea of consigning them to the horrors of slavery, without even an effort for their conversion. She hesitated, therefore, to sanction his proposal; and when a number of Indian captives were advertised to be sold in the markets of Andalusia, she commanded the sale to be suspended, till the opinion of a counsel of theologians and doctors, learned in such matters, could be obtained, as to its conscientious lawfulness. She yielded still further to the benevolent impulses of her nature, causing holy men to be instructed as far as possible in the Indian languages, and sent out as missionaries for the conversion of the natives.²³ Some of them, as Father Boil and his brethren, seem, indeed, to have been

right of his nation to enslave the Indians, among other things, on their smoking tobacco, and not trimming their beards à l'Espagnole. At least, this is Montesquieu's interpretation of it. (*Esprit des Loix*, lib. 15, chap. 3.) The doc-

tors of the Inquisition could hardly have found a better reason.

²³ Muñoz, *Hist. del Nuevo-Mundo*, lib. 5, sec. 34. — Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages*, tom. ii. *Doc. Dipl.*, no. 92. — Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 3, cap. 4.

more concerned for the welfare of their own bodies, than for the souls of their benighted flock. But others, imbued with a better spirit, wrought in the good work with disinterested zeal, and, if we may credit their accounts, with some efficacy.²⁴

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In the same beneficent spirit, the royal letters and ordinances urged over and over again the paramount obligation of the religious instruction of the natives, and of observing the utmost gentleness and humanity in all dealings with them. When, therefore, the queen learned the arrival of two vessels from the Indies, with three hundred slaves on board, which the admiral had granted to the mutineers, she could not repress her indignation, but impatiently asked, "By what authority does Columbus venture thus to dispose of my subjects?" She instantly caused proclamation to be made in the southern provinces, that all who had Indian slaves in their possession, granted by the admiral, should forthwith provide for their return to their own country; while the few, still held by the crown, were to be restored to freedom in like manner.²⁵

She sends
back the In-
dian slaves.

1500.
June 20.

After a long and visible reluctance, the queen acquiesced in sending out a commissioner to inves-

Authority to
Bobadilla.

²⁴ "Among other things that the holy fathers carried out," says Robles, "was a little organ and several bells, which greatly delighted the simple people, so that from one to two thousand persons were baptized every day." (Vida de Ximenez, p. 120.)

Ferdinand Columbus remarks with some naïveté, that "the Indians were so obedient from their

fear of the admiral, and at the same time so desirous to oblige him, that they *voluntarily* became Christians!" Hist. del Almirante, cap. 84.

²⁵ Herrera, Indias Occidentales, lib. 4, cap. 7. — Navarrete, Coleccion de Viages, tom. ii. Doc. Dipl., no. 134.

Las Casas observes, that "so great was the queen's indignation

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tigate the affairs of the colony. The person appointed to this delicate trust, was Don Francisco de Bobadilla, a poor knight of Calatrava. He was invested with supreme powers of civil and criminal jurisdiction. He was to bring to trial and pass sentence on all such as had conspired against the authority of Columbus. He was authorized to take possession of the fortresses, vessels, public stores, and property of every description, to dispose of all offices, and to command whatever persons he might deem expedient for the tranquillity of the island, without distinction of rank, to return to Spain, and present themselves before the sovereigns. Such, in brief, was the sum of the extraordinary powers intrusted to Bobadilla.²⁶

It is impossible now to determine what motives could have led to the selection of so incompetent an agent, for an office of such high responsibility. He seems to have been a weak and arrogant man, swelled up with unmeasurable insolence by the brief authority thus undeservedly bestowed on him. From the very first, he regarded Columbus in the light of a convicted criminal, on whom it was his business to execute the sentence of the law. Accordingly, on his arrival at the island, after an

at the admiral's misconduct in this particular, that nothing but the consideration of his great public services saved him from immediate disgrace." *Ceuvres*, ed. de Llorente, tom. i. p. 306.

²⁶ Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viajes*, tom. ii. Doc. Dipl. nos. 127-130. The original commission to

Bobadilla was dated March 21st, and May 21st, 1499; the execution of it, however, was delayed until July, 1500, in the hope, doubtless, of obtaining such tidings from Hispaniola as should obviate the necessity of a measure so prejudicial to the admiral.

Outrage on
Columbus.



UNTA DE ANDALU

ostentatious parade of his credentials, he commanded the admiral to appear before him, and, without affecting the forms of a legal inquiry, at once caused him to be manacled, and thrown into prison. Columbus submitted without the least show of resistance, displaying in this sad reverse that magnanimity of soul, which would have touched the heart of a generous adversary. Bobadilla, however, discovered no such sensibility; and, after raking together all the foul or frivolous calumnies, which hatred or the hope of favor could extort, he caused the whole loathsome mass of accusation to be sent back to Spain with the admiral, whom he commanded to be kept strictly in irons during the passage; "afraid," says Ferdinand Columbus bitterly, "lest he might by any chance swim back again to the island."²⁷

CHAPTER
VIII.1500.
Aug. 23.

This excess of malice served, as usual, however, to defeat itself. So enormous an outrage shocked the minds of those most prejudiced against Columbus. All seemed to feel it as a national dishonor, that such indignities should be heaped on the man, who, whatever might be his indiscretions, had done so much for Spain, and for the whole civilized world; a man, who, in the honest language of an old writer, "had he lived in the days of ancient Greece or Rome, would have had statues raised,

²⁷ Fernando Colon, *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 86. — Garibay, *Compendio*, tom. ii. lib. 19, cap. 7. — Peter Martyr, *De Rebus Oceanicis*, dec. 1, lib. 7. — Gomara, *Hist. de*

las Indias, cap. 23. — Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 4, cap. 10. — Benzoni, *Novi Orbis Hist.*, lib. 1, cap. 12.

PART
II.Deep regret
of the
sovereigns.

and temples and divine honors dedicated to him, as to a divinity!"²³

None partook of the general indignation more strongly than Ferdinand and Isabella, who, in addition to their personal feelings of disgust at so gross an act, readily comprehended the whole weight of obloquy, which its perpetration must necessarily attach to them. They sent to Cadiz without an instant's delay, and commanded the admiral to be released from his ignominious fetters. They wrote to him in the most benignant terms, expressing their sincere regret for the unworthy usage which he had experienced, and requesting him to appear before them as speedily as possible, at Granada, where the court was then staying. At the same time, they furnished him a thousand ducats for his expenses, and a handsome retinue to escort him on his journey.

Reception of
Columbus.

1500.

Columbus, revived by these assurances of the kind dispositions of his sovereigns, proceeded without delay to Granada, which he reached on the 17th of December. Immediately on his arrival he obtained an audience. The queen could not repress her tears at the sight of the man, whose illustrious services had met with such ungenerous requital, as it were, at her own hands. She endeavoured to cheer his wounded spirit with the most earnest

²³ Benzoni, *Novi Orbis Hist.*, lib. 1, cap. 12. — Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 6, cap. 15.

Ferdinand Columbus tells us, that his father kept the fetters in which he was brought home, hang-

ing up in an apartment of his house, as a perpetual memorial of national ingratitude, and, when he died, ordered them to be buried in the same grave with himself. *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 86.

assurances of her sympathy and sorrow for his misfortunes. Columbus, from the first moment of his disgrace, had relied on the good faith and kindness of Isabella; for, as an ancient Castilian writer remarks, "she had ever favored him beyond the king her husband, protecting his interests, and showing him especial kindness and good-will." When he beheld the emotion of his royal mistress, and listened to her consolatory language, it was too much for his loyal and generous heart; and, throwing himself on his knees, he gave vent to his feelings, and sobbed aloud. The sovereigns endeavoured to soothe and tranquillize his mind, and, after testifying their deep sense of his injuries, promised him, that impartial justice should be done his enemies, and that he should be reinstated in his emoluments and honors.²⁹

Much censure has attached to the Spanish government for its share in this unfortunate transaction; both in the appointment of so unsuitable an agent as Bobadilla, and the delegation of such broad and indefinite powers. With regard to the first, it is now too late, as has already been remarked, to ascertain on what grounds such a selection could have been made. There is no evidence of his being indebted for his promotion to intrigue or any undue influence. Indeed, according to the testimony of one of his contemporaries, he was

Vindication
of the sove-
reigns.

²⁹ Garibay, Compendio, tom. ii. lib. 19, cap. 7. — Peter Martyr, De Rebus Oceanicis, dec. 1, lib. 7. — Fernando Colon, Hist. del Almirante, cap. 86, 87. — Herrera, Indias Occidentales, dec. 1, lib. 4, cap. 8-10. — Benzoni, Novi Orbis Hist., lib. 1, cap. 12.

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II.

reputed "an extremely honest and religious man"; and the good bishop Las Casas expressly declares, that "no imputation of dishonesty or avarice had ever rested on his character."³⁰ It was an error of judgment; a grave one, indeed, and must pass for as much as it is worth.

But in regard to the second charge, of delegating unwarrantable powers, it should be remembered, that the grievances of the colony were represented as of a most pressing nature, demanding a prompt and peremptory remedy; that a more limited and partial authority, dependent for its exercise on instructions from the government at home, might be attended with ruinous delays; that this authority must necessarily be paramount to that of Columbus, who was a party implicated; and that, although unlimited jurisdiction was given over all offences committed against him, yet neither he nor his friends were to be molested in any other way than by temporary suspension from office, and a return to their own country, where the merits of their case might be submitted to the sovereigns themselves.

This view of the matter, indeed, is perfectly conformable to that of Ferdinand Columbus, whose solicitude, so apparent in every page, for his father's reputation, must have effectually counterbalanced any repugnance he may have felt at impugning the conduct of his sovereigns. "The only ground of complaint," he remarks, in sum-

³⁰ Oviedo, Hist. Gen. de las Ind., P. 1, lib. 3, cap. 6. — Las Casas, lib. 2, cap. 6, apud Navarrete, tom. i., introd., p. 99.

ming up his narrative of the transaction, "which I can bring against their Catholic Highnesses is, the unfitness of the agent whom they employed, equally malicious and ignorant. Had they sent out a suitable person, the admiral would have been highly gratified; since he had more than once requested the appointment of some one with full powers of jurisdiction in an affair, where he felt some natural delicacy in moving, in consequence of his own brother having been originally involved in it." And, as to the vast magnitude of the powers intrusted to Bobadilla, he adds, "It can scarcely be wondered at, considering the manifold complaints against the admiral made to their Highnesses."³¹

Although the king and queen determined without hesitation on the complete restoration of the admiral's honors, they thought it better to defer his reappointment to the government of the colony, until the present disturbances should be settled, and he might return there with personal safety and advantage. In the mean time, they resolved to send out a competent individual, and to support him with such a force as should overawe faction, and enable him to place the tranquillity of the island on a permanent basis.

The person selected was Don Nicolas de Ovando, comendador of Lares, of the military order of Alcantara. He was a man of acknowledged prudence and sagacity, temperate in his habits, and

Commission
to Ovando.

³¹ Fernando Colon, Hist. del Almirante, cap. 86.

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II.

plausible and politic in his address. It is sufficient evidence of his standing at court, that he had been one of the ten youths selected to be educated in the palace as companions for the prince of the Asturias. He was furnished with a fleet of two and thirty sail, carrying twenty-five hundred persons, many of them of the best families in the kingdom, with every variety of article for the nourishment and permanent prosperity of the colony; and the general equipment was in a style of expense and magnificence, such as had never before been lavished on any armada destined for the western waters.³²

1501.
Sept.

The new governor was instructed immediately on his arrival to send Bobadilla home for trial. Under his lax administration, abuses of every kind had multiplied to an alarming extent, and the poor natives, in particular, were rapidly wasting away under the new and most inhuman arrangement of the *repartimientos*, which he established. Isabella now declared the Indians free; and emphatically enjoined on the authorities of Hispaniola to respect them as true and faithful vassals of the crown. Ovando was especially to ascertain the amount of losses sustained by Columbus and his brothers, to provide for their full indemnification, and to secure the unmolested enjoyment in future of all their lawful rights and pecuniary perquisites.³³

³² Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, dec. 1, lib. 4, cap. 11. — Fernando Colon, *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 87. — Benzoni, *Novi Orbis Hist.*, lib. 1, cap. 12. — *Mem. de la Acad. de Hist.*, tom. vi. p. 385.

³³ Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 4, cap. 11-13. — Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages*, tom. ii., Doc. Dipl., nos. 138, 144. — Fernando Colon, *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 87.

Fortified with the most ample instructions in regard to these and other details of his administration, the governor embarked on board his magnificent flotilla, and crossed the bar of St. Lucar, February 15th, 1502. A furious tempest dispersed the fleet, before it had been out a week, and a report reached Spain that it had entirely perished. The sovereigns, overwhelmed with sorrow at this fresh disaster, which consigned so many of their best and bravest to a watery grave, shut themselves up in their palace for several days. Fortunately, the report proved ill-founded. The fleet rode out the storm in safety, one vessel only having perished, and the remainder reached in due time its place of destination.³⁴

The Spanish government has been roundly taxed with injustice and ingratitude for its delay in restoring Columbus to the full possession of his colonial authority; and that too by writers generally distinguished for candor and impartiality. No such animadversion, however, as far as I am aware, is countenanced by contemporary historians; and it appears to be wholly undeserved. Independent of the obvious inexpediency of returning him immediately to the theatre of disaffection, before the embers of ancient animosity had had time to cool, there were several features in his character, which make it doubtful whether he were the most competent person, in any event, for an emergency demanding at once the greatest coolness, consummate

Groundless
imputations
on the gov-
ernment.

³⁴ Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 5, cap. 1.

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address, and acknowledged personal authority. His sublime enthusiasm, which carried him victorious over every obstacle, involved him also in numerous embarrassments, which men of more phlegmatic temperament would have escaped. It led him to count too readily on a similar spirit in others,— and to be disappointed. It gave an exaggerated coloring to his views and descriptions, that inevitably led to a reaction in the minds of such as embarked their all on the splendid dreams of a fairy land, which they were never to realize.³⁵ Hence a fruitful source of discontent and disaffection in his followers. It led him, in his eagerness for the achievement of his great enterprises, to be less scrupulous and politic as to the means, than a less ardent spirit would have been. His pertinacious adherence to the scheme of Indian slavery, and his impolitic regulation compelling the labor of the hidalgos, are pertinent examples of this.³⁶ He was, moreover,

³⁵ The high devotional feeling of Columbus, led him to trace out allusions in Scripture to the various circumstances and scenes of his adventurous life. Thus he believed his great discovery announced in the Apocalypse, and in Isaiah; he identified, as I have before stated, the mines of Hispaniola with those which furnished Solomon with materials for his temple; he fancied that he had determined the actual locality of the garden of Eden in the newly discovered region of Paria. But his greatest extravagance was his project of a crusade for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre. This he cherished from the first hour of his discovery, pressing it in the most urgent manner on the sovereigns, and making

actual provision for it in his testament. This was a flight, however, beyond the spirit even of this romantic age, and probably received as little serious attention from the queen, as from her more cool and calculating husband. Peter Martyr, *De Rebus Oceanicis*, dec. 1, lib. 6.—*Tercer Viage de Colon*, apud Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages*, tom. i. p. 259.—tom. ii., *Doc. Dipl.*, no. 140.—Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 6, cap. 15.

³⁶ Another example was the injudicious punishment of delinquents by diminishing their regular allowance of food, a measure so obnoxious as to call for the interference of the sovereigns, who prohibited it altogether. (Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages*, tom. ii., *Doc. Dipl.*

a foreigner, without rank, fortune, or powerful friends; and his high and sudden elevation naturally raised him up a thousand enemies among a proud, punctilious, and intensely national people. Under these multiplied embarrassments, resulting from peculiarities of character and situation, the sovereigns might well be excused for not intrusting Columbus, at this delicate crisis, with disentangling the meshes of intrigue and faction, in which the affairs of the colony were so unhappily involved.

I trust these remarks will not be construed into an insensibility to the merits and exalted services of Columbus. "A world," to borrow the words, though not the application of the Greek historian, "is his monument." His virtues shine with too bright a lustre to be dimmed by a few natural blemishes; but it becomes necessary to notice these, to vindicate the Spanish government from the imputation of perfidy and ingratitude, where it has been most freely urged, and apparently with the least foundation.

It is more difficult to excuse the paltry equipment with which the admiral was suffered to undertake his fourth and last voyage. The object proposed by this expedition was the discovery of a passage to the great Indian Ocean, which, he inferred sagaciously enough from his premises,

97.) Herrera, who must be admitted to have been in no degree insensible to the merits of Columbus, closes his account of the various accusations urged against him and his brothers, with the remark,

that, "with every allowance for calumny, they must be confessed not to have governed the Castilians with the moderation that they ought to have done." *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 4, cap. 9.

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II.

though, as it turned out, to the great inconvenience of the commercial world, most erroneously, must open somewhere between Cuba and the coast of Paria. Four caravels, only, were furnished for the expedition, the largest of which did not exceed seventy tons' burden; a force forming a striking contrast to the magnificent armada lately intrusted to Ovando, and altogether too insignificant to be vindicated on the ground of the different objects proposed by the two expeditions.³⁷

The admiral's despondency.

Columbus, oppressed with growing infirmities, and a consciousness, perhaps, of the decline of popular favor, manifested unusual despondency previously to his embarkation. He talked, even, of resigning the task of further discovery to his brother Bartholomew. "I have established," said he, "all that I proposed,—the existence of land in the west. I have opened the gate, and others may enter at their pleasure; as indeed they do, arrogating to themselves the title of discoverers, to which they can have little claim, following as they do in my track." He little thought the ingratitude of mankind would sanction the claims of these adventurers so far as to confer the name of one of them on that world, which his genius had revealed.³⁸

³⁷ Garibay, *Compendio*, tom. ii. lib. 19, cap. 14.—Fernando Colón, *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 88.—Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 5, cap. 1.—Benzoni, *Novi Orbis Hist.*, cap. 14.

³⁸ It would be going out of our way to investigate the pretensions of Amerigo Vespucci to the honor of first discovering the South

American continent. The English reader will find them displayed with perspicuity and candor by Mr. Irving, in his "Life of Columbus." (Appendix, No. 9.) Few will be disposed to contest the author's conclusion respecting their fallacy, though all may not have the same charity as he, in tracing its possible origin to an editorial blunder,

The great inclination, however, which the admiral had to serve the Catholic sovereigns, and especially the most serene queen, says Ferdinand Columbus, induced him to lay aside his scruples, and encounter the perils and fatigues of another voyage. A few weeks before his departure, he received a gracious letter from Ferdinand and Isabella, the last ever addressed to him by his royal mistress, assuring him of their purpose to maintain inviolate all their engagements with him, and to perpetuate the inheritance of his honors in his family.³⁹ Comforted and cheered by these assurances,

CHAPTER
VIII.

His fourth
and last
voyage.

instead of wilful fabrication on the part of Vespucci; in which light, indeed, it seems to have been regarded by the two most ancient and honest historians of the event, Las Casas and Herrera. There is no reason to suspect him, however, of pretending to any thing beyond the discovery of Paria, or of anticipating in any degree the important consequence destined to result from such pretensions. — The character and claims of Vespucci are farther discussed with much ingenuity and careful examination of authorities by Mr. Cushing in his "Reminiscences of Spain," (vol. ii. p. 210. et seq.) The author's conclusions, which leave the vexed question of priority of discovery unsettled, are altogether favorable to the integrity of the Florentine.

Since the appearance of Mr. Irving's work, Señor Navarrete has published the third volume of his "Coleccion de Viages y Descubrimientos," &c., containing, among other things, the original letters recording Vespucci's American voyages, illustrated by all the authorities and facts, that could come within the scope of his indefatiga-

ble researches. The whole mass of testimony leads irresistibly to the conclusion, that Columbus is entitled to the glory of being the original discoverer of the southern continent, as well as islands of the western hemisphere. (Coleccion de Viages, tom. iii. pp. 183 - 334.)

I regret that the portion of M. de Humboldt's recent work, which relates to the Florentine navigator, has not yet reached this country. The researches of this eminent scholar can scarcely fail to illuminate the darkest topic.

³⁹ Fernando Colon, Hist. del Almirante, cap. 87. — Herrera notices this letter, written, he says, "con tanta humanidad, que parecia extraordinaria de lo que usavan con otros, y no sin razon, pues jamas nadie les hizo tal servicio." Indias Occidentales, lib. 5, cap. 1.

Among other instances of the queen's personal regard for Columbus, may be noticed her receiving his two sons, Diego and Fernando as her own pages, on the death of Prince John, in whose service they had formerly been. (Navarrete, Coleccion de Viages, tom. ii., Doc. Dipl., 125.)

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II.

Remarkable
fate of his
enemies.

the veteran navigator, quitting the port of Cadiz, on the 9th of March, 1502, once more spread his sails for those golden regions, which he had approached so near, but was destined never to reach.

It will not be necessary to pursue his course further than to notice a single occurrence of most extraordinary nature. The admiral had received instructions not to touch at Hispaniola on his outward voyage. The leaky condition of one of his ships, however, and the signs of an approaching storm, induced him to seek a temporary refuge there; at the same time, he counselled Ovando to delay for a few days the departure of the fleet, then riding in the harbour, which was destined to carry Bobadilla and the rebels with their ill-gotten treasures back to Spain. The churlish governor, however, not only refused Columbus admittance, but gave orders for the instant departure of the vessels. The apprehensions of the experienced mariner were fully justified by the event. Scarcely had the Spanish fleet quitted its moorings, before one of those tremendous hurricanes came on, which so often desolate these tropical regions, sweeping down every thing before it, and fell with such violence on the little navy, that out of eighteen ships, of which it was composed, not more than three or four escaped. The rest all foundered, including those which contained Bobadilla, and the late enemies of Columbus. Two hundred thousand *castel-*

By an ordinance of 1503, we find Diego Colon made *contino* of the royal household, with an annual salary of 50,000 maravedies. *Ibid.*, Doc. Dipl., no. 150.

lanos of gold, half of which belonged to the government, went to the bottom with them. The only one of the fleet which made its way back to Spain was a crazy, weather-beaten bark, which contained the admiral's property, amounting to four thousand ounces of gold. To complete these curious coincidences, Columbus with his little squadron rode out the storm in safety under the lee of the island, where he had prudently taken shelter, on being so rudely repulsed from the port. This evenhanded retribution of justice, so uncommon in human affairs, led many to discern the immediate interposition of Providence. Others, in a less Christian temper, referred it all to the necromancy of the admiral.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Peter Martyr, *De Rebus Oceanicis*, dec. 1, lib. 10. — Garibay, *Novi Orbis Hist.*, cap. 12. — Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 5, cap. 2. — Fernando Colon, *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 88. — Benzoni, *Novi Orbis Hist.*, cap. 12. — Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 5, cap. 2.

CHAPTER IX.

SPANISH COLONIAL POLICY.

Careful Provision for the Colonies. — License for Private Voyages. — Important Papal Concessions. — The Queen's Zeal for Conversion. — Immediate Profits from the Discoveries. — Their moral Consequences. — Their geographical Extent.

PART
II.

A CONSIDERATION of the colonial policy pursued during Isabella's lifetime has been hitherto deferred to avoid breaking the narrative of Columbus's personal adventures. I shall now endeavour to present the reader with a brief outline of it, as far as can be collected from imperfect and scanty materials; for, however incomplete in itself, it becomes important as containing the germ of the gigantic system developed in later ages.

Careful provision for the colonies.

Ferdinand and Isabella manifested from the first an eager and enlightened curiosity in reference to their new acquisitions, constantly interrogating the admiral minutely as to their soil and climate, their various vegetable and mineral products, and especially the character of the uncivilized races who inhabited them. They paid the greatest deference to his suggestions, as before remarked, and liberally supplied the infant settlement with whatever could contrib-

ute to its nourishment and permanent prosperity.¹ Through their provident attention, in a very few years after its discovery, the island of Hispaniola was in possession of the most important domestic animals, as well as fruits and vegetables of the old world, some of which have since continued to furnish the staple of a far more lucrative commerce than was ever anticipated from its gold mines.²

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IX.

Emigration to the new countries was encouraged by the liberal tenor of the royal ordinances passed from time to time. The settlers in Hispaniola were to have their passage free ; to be excused from taxes ; to have the absolute property of such plantations on the island as they should engage to cultivate for four years ; and they were furnished with a gratuitous supply of grain and stock for their farms. All exports and imports were exempted from duty ; a striking contrast to the narrow policy of later ages. Five hundred persons, including scientific men and artisans of every description, were sent out and maintained at the expense of government. To provide for the greater security and quiet of the island, Ovando was authorized to

Liberal
grants.

¹ See, in particular, a letter to Columbus, dated August, 1494 ; (apud Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viajes*, tom. ii., Doc. Dipl., no. 79.) also an elaborate memorial presented by the admiral in the same year, setting forth the various necessities of the colony, every item of which is particularly answered by the sovereigns, in a manner showing how attentively they considered his suggestions. — *Ibid.*, tom. i. pp. 226 - 241.

² Abundant evidence of this is furnished by the long enumeration of articles subjected to tithes, contained in an ordinance dated October 5th, 1501, showing with what indiscriminate severity this heavy burden was imposed from the first on the most important products of human industry. *Recopilacion de Leyes de los Reynos de las Indias*, (Madrid, 1774,) tom. i. lib. 1, tit. 16, ley 2.

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II.

gather the residents into towns, which were endowed with the privileges appertaining to similar corporations in the mother country; and a number of married men, with their families were encouraged to establish themselves in them, with the view of giving greater solidity and permanence to the settlement.³

With these wise provisions were mingled others savouring too strongly of the illiberal spirit of the age. Such were those prohibiting Jews, Moors, or indeed any but Castilians, for whom the discovery was considered exclusively to have been made, from inhabiting, or even visiting, the New World. The government kept a most jealous eye upon what it regarded as its own peculiar perquisites, reserving to itself the exclusive possession of all minerals, dyewoods, and precious stones, that should be discovered; and, although private persons were allowed to search for gold, they were subjected to the exorbitant tax of two thirds, subsequently reduced to one fifth, of all they should obtain, for the crown.⁴

The measure which contributed more effectually than any other, at this period, to the progress of discovery and colonization, was the license granted, under certain regulations, in 1495, for voyages undertaken by private individuals. No use was made of this permission until some years later, in 1499.

³ Navarrete, Coleccion de Viages, tom. ii., Doc. Dipl., no. 86, April 10th, 1495. — Nos. 103, 105-108, April 23d, 1497. — No. 110, May 6th, 1497. — No. 121, July 22d, 1497. — Herrera, Indias Occidentales, dec. 1, lib. 4, cap. 12.

⁴ Navarrete, Coleccion de Viages, tom. ii., Doc. Dipl., nos. 86, 121. —

Herrera, Indias Occidentales, lib. 3, cap. 2. — Muñoz, Hist. del Nuevo-Mundo, lib. 5, sec. 34.

The exclusion of foreigners, at least all but "Catholic Christians," is particularly recommended by Columbus in his first communication to the crown. Primer Viage de Colon.

The spirit of enterprise had flagged, and the nation had experienced something like disappointment on contrasting the meagre results of their own discoveries with the dazzling successes of the Portuguese, who had struck at once into the very heart of the jewelled east. The reports of the admiral's third voyage, however, and the beautiful specimens of pearls which he sent home from the coast of Paria, revived the cupidity of the nation. Private adventurers now proposed to avail themselves of the license already granted, and to follow up the track of discovery on their own account. The government, drained by its late heavy expenditures, and jealous of the spirit of maritime adventure beginning to show itself in the other nations of Europe,⁵ willingly acquiesced in a measure, which, while it opened a wide field of enterprise for its subjects, secured to itself all the substantial benefits of discovery, without any of the burdens.

The ships fitted out under the general license were required to reserve one tenth of their tonnage for the crown, as well as two thirds of all the gold, and ten per cent. of all other commodities which they should procure. The government promoted these expeditions by a bounty on all vessels of six hundred tons and upwards, engaged in them.⁶

⁵ Among the foreign adventurers were the two Cabots, who sailed in the service of the English monarch, Henry VII., in 1497, and ran down the whole coast of North America, from Newfoundland to within a few degrees of Florida,

thus encroaching, as it were, on the very field of discovery preoccupied by the Spaniards.

⁶ Muñoz, *Hist. del Nuevo-Mundo*, lib. 5, sect. 32. — Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages*, Doc. Dipl., no. 86.

PART
II.Their suc-
cess.

With this encouragement the more wealthy merchants of Seville, Cadiz, and Palos, the old theatre of nautical enterprise, freighted and sent out little squadrons of three or four vessels each, which they intrusted to the experienced mariners, who had accompanied Columbus in his first voyage, or since followed in his footsteps. They held in general the same course pursued by the admiral on his last expedition, exploring the coasts of the great southern continent. Some of the adventurers returned with such rich freights of gold, pearls, and other precious commodities, as well compensated the fatigues and perils of the voyage. But the greater number were obliged to content themselves with the more enduring, but barren honors of discovery.⁷

The active spirit of enterprise now awakened, and the more enlarged commercial relations with the new colonies, required a more perfect organiza-

Indian de-
partment.

⁷ Columbus seems to have taken exceptions at the license for private voyages, as an infringement of his own prerogatives. It is difficult, however, to understand in what way. There is nothing in his original capitulations with the government having reference to the matter, (see Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages*, Doc. Dipl., no. 5;) while, in the letters patent made out previously to his second voyage, the right of granting licenses is expressly reserved to the crown, and to the superintendent, Fonseca, equally with the admiral. (Doc. Dipl., no. 35.) The only legal claim which he could make in all such expeditions as were not conducted under him, was to one eighth of the tonnage, and this was regularly provided for in the general license. (Doc. Dipl., no.

86.) The sovereigns, indeed, in consequence of his remonstrances, published an ordinance, June 2d, 1497, in which, after expressing their unabated respect for all the rights and privileges of the admiral, they declare, that whatever shall be found in their previous license repugnant to these shall be null and void. (Doc. Dipl., 113.) The hypothetical form in which this is stated shows, that the sovereigns, with an honest desire of keeping their engagements with Columbus, had not a very clear perception in what manner they had been violated.

Peter Martyr, *De Rebus Oceanicis*, Dec. 1, lib. 9.—Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 4, cap. 11.—Benzoni, *Novi Orbis Hist.*, cap. 13.

tion of the department for Indian affairs, the earliest vestiges of which have been already noticed in a preceding chapter.⁸ By an ordinance dated at Alcalá, January 20th, 1503, it was provided that a board should be established, consisting of three functionaries, with the titles of treasurer, factor, and comptroller. Their permanent residence was assigned in the old alcazar of Seville, where they were to meet every day for the despatch of business. The board was expected to make itself thoroughly acquainted with whatever concerned the colonies, and to afford the government all information, that could be obtained, affecting their interests and commercial prosperity. It was empowered to grant licenses under the regular conditions, to provide for the equipment of fleets, to determine their destination, and furnish them instructions, on sailing. All merchandise for exportation was to be deposited in the alcazar, where the return cargoes were to be received, and contracts made for their sale. Similar authority was given to it over the trade with the Barbary coast and the Canary Islands. Its supervision was to extend in like manner over all vessels which might take their departure from the port of Cadiz, as well as from Seville. With these powers were combined others of a purely judicial character, authorizing them to take cognizance of questions arising out of particular voyages, and of the colonial trade in general. In this latter capacity they were to be assisted by the

⁸ Part I. Chap. 18, of this History.

PART
II.Casa de
Contratacion.

advice of two jurists, maintained by a regular salary from the government.⁹

Such were the extensive powers intrusted to the famous *Casa de Contratacion*, or House of Trade, on this its first definite organization; and, although its authority was subsequently somewhat circumscribed by the appellate jurisdiction of the Council of the Indies, it has always continued the great organ by which the commercial transactions with the colonies have been conducted and controlled.

Important
papal con-
cessions.

The Spanish government, while thus securing to itself the more easy and exclusive management of the colonial trade, by confining it within one narrow channel, discovered the most admirable foresight in providing for its absolute supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs, where alone it could be contested. By a bull of Alexander the Sixth, dated November 16th, 1501, the sovereigns were empowered to receive all the tithes in the colonial dominions.¹⁰ Another bull, of Pope Julius the Second, July 28th, 1508, granted them the right of collating to all benefices, of whatever description, in the colonies, subject only to the approbation of the Holy See. By these two concessions, the Spanish crown was placed at once at the head of the church in its transatlantic dominions,

⁹ Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viajes*, tom. ii., Doc. Dipl., no. 148. — Solorzano y Pereyra, *Política Indiana*, (Madrid, 1776,) lib. 6, cap. 17. — Linage de Veitia, *Norte de la Contratacion de las Indias Occidentales*, (Sevilla, 1672,) lib. 1, cap. 1. — Zuñiga, *Annales de Se-*

villa, año 1503. — Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 5, cap. 12. — Navagiero, *Viaggio*, fol. 15.

¹⁰ See the original bull, apud Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viajes*, tom. ii. apend. 14, and a Spanish version of it, in Solorzano, *Política Indiana*, lib. 4, cap. 1, sec. 7.