

with the absolute disposal of all its dignities and emoluments.<sup>11</sup>

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It has excited the admiration of more than one historian, that Ferdinand and Isabella, with their reverence for the Catholic church, should have had the courage to assume an attitude of such entire independence of its spiritual chief.<sup>12</sup> But whoever has studied their reign, will regard this measure as perfectly conformable to their habitual policy, which never suffered a zeal for religion, or a blind deference to the church, to compromise in any degree the independence of the crown. It is much more astonishing, that pontiffs could be found content to divest themselves of such important prerogatives. It was deviating widely from the subtle and tenacious spirit of their predecessors; and, as the consequences came to be more fully disclosed, furnished ample subject of regret to those who succeeded them.

Such is a brief summary of the principal regulations adopted by Ferdinand and Isabella for the administration of the colonies. Many of their peculiarities, including most of their defects, are to be referred to the peculiar circumstances under which the discovery of the New World was effected. Unlike the settlements on the comparatively sterile shores of North America, which were permitted to devise laws accommodated to their

Spirit of the  
colonial leg-  
islation.

<sup>11</sup> Solorzano, *Politica Indiana*, tom. ii. lib. 4, cap. 2, sec. 9.—*Riol, Informe, apud Semanario Erudito*, tom. iii. pp. 160, 161.

*History of the East and West Indies*, translated by Justamond, (London, 1788,) vol. iv. p. 277.  
— Robertson, *History of America*, (London, 1796,) vol. iii. p. 283.

<sup>12</sup> Among others see Raynal,

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necessities, and to gather strength in the habitual exercise of political functions, the Spanish colonies were from the very first checked and controlled by the over-legislation of the parent country. The original project of discovery had been entered into with indefinite expectations of gain. The verification of Columbus's theory of the existence of land in the west gave popular credit to his conjecture, that that land was the far-famed Indies. The specimens of gold and other precious commodities found there, served to maintain the delusion. The Spanish government regarded the expedition as its own private adventure, to whose benefits it had exclusive pretensions. Hence those jealous regulations for securing to itself a monopoly of the most obvious sources of profit, the dyewoods and the precious metals.

These impolitic provisions were relieved by others better suited to the permanent interests of the colony. Such was the bounty offered in various ways on the occupation and culture of land; the erection of municipalities; the right of inter-colonial traffic, and of exporting and importing merchandise of every description free of duty.<sup>13</sup> These and similar laws show, that the government, far from regarding the colonies merely as a foreign acquisition to be sacrificed to the interests of the mother country, as at a later period, was disposed

<sup>13</sup> Muñoz, *Hist. del Nuevo Mundo*, lib. 5, sec. 32, 33. — Her-cion de Viages, tom. ii., Doc. Dipl., rera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 4, cap. 11, 12. — Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages*, tom. ii., Doc. Dipl., no. 86.

to legislate for them on more generous principles, as an integral portion of the monarchy. CHAPTER  
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Some of the measures, even, of a less liberal tenor, may be excused, as sufficiently accommodated to existing circumstances. No regulation, for example, was found eventually more mischievous in its operation than that which confined the colonial trade to the single port of Seville, instead of permitting it to find a free vent in the thousand avenues naturally opened in every part of the kingdom; to say nothing of the grievous monopolies and exactions, for which this concentration of a mighty traffic on so small a point was found, in later times, to afford unbounded facility. But the colonial trade was too limited in its extent, under Ferdinand and Isabella, to involve such consequences. It was chiefly confined to a few wealthy seaports of Andalusia, from the vicinity of which the first adventurers had sallied forth on their career of discovery. It was no inconvenience to them to have a common port of entry, so central and accessible as Seville, which, moreover, by this arrangement became a great mart for European trade, thus affording a convenient market to the country for effecting its commercial exchanges with every quarter of Christendom.<sup>14</sup> It was only when laws, adapted to the incipient stages of commerce, were perpetuated to a period when that commerce had swelled

<sup>14</sup> The historian of Seville mentions, that it was the resort especially of the merchants of Flanders, with whom a more intimate inter-

course had been opened by the intermarriages of the royal family with the house of Burgundy. See Zuñiga, *Annales de Sevilla*, p. 415.

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to such gigantic dimensions as to embrace every quarter of the empire, that their gross impolicy became manifest.

The queen's  
zeal for con-  
verting the  
natives.

It would not be giving a fair view of the great objects proposed by the Spanish sovereigns in their schemes of discovery, to omit one which was paramount to all the rest, with the queen at least, — the propagation of Christianity among the heathen. The conversion and civilization of this simple people form, as has been already said, the burden of most of her official communications from the earliest period.<sup>15</sup> She neglected no means for the furtherance of this good work, through the agency of missionaries exclusively devoted to it, who were to establish their residence among the natives, and win them to the true faith by their instructions, and the edifying example of their own lives. It was with the design of ameliorating the condition of the natives, that she sanctioned the introduction into the colonies of negro slaves born in Spain. This she did on the representation, that the physical constitution of the African was much better fitted than that of the Indian, to endure severe toil under a tropical climate. To this false principle of economizing human suffering, we are indebted for that foul stain on the New World, which has grown deeper and darker with the lapse of years.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viajes*, tom. ii., Doc. Dipl., no. 45, et loc. al. — Las Casas, amidst his unsparing condemnation of the guilty, does ample justice to the pure and generous, though alas! unavailing efforts of the queen. See

*Ceuvres*, ed. de Llorente, tom. i. pp. 21, 307, 395, et alibi.

<sup>16</sup> Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, lib. 4, cap. 12. — A good account of the introduction of negro slavery into the New World, comprehending the material facts, and

Isabella, however, was destined to have her benevolent designs, in regard to the natives, defeated by her own subjects. The popular doctrine of the absolute rights of the Christian over the heathen seemed to warrant the exaction of labor from these unhappy beings to any degree, which avarice on the one hand could demand, or human endurance concede on the other. The device of the *repartimientos* systematized and completed the whole scheme of oppression. The queen, it is true, abolished them under Ovando's administration, and declared the Indians "as free as her own subjects."<sup>17</sup> But his representation, that the Indians, when no longer compelled to work, withdrew from all intercourse with the Christians, thus annihilating at once all hopes of their conversion, subsequently induced her to consent, that they should be required to labor moderately and for a reasonable compensation.<sup>18</sup> This was construed with their usual latitude by the Spaniards. They soon revived the old system

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defeated.

some little known, may be found in the fifth chapter of Bancroft's "History of the United States"; a work in which the author has shown singular address in creating a unity of interest out of a subject which, in its early stages, would seem to want every other unity. It is the deficiency of this, probably, which has prevented Mr. Grahame's valuable History from attaining the popularity, to which its solid merits justly entitle it. Should the remaining volumes of Mr. Bancroft's work be conducted with the same spirit, scholarship, and impartiality as the volume before us, it cannot fail to take a permanent rank in American literature.

<sup>17</sup> Herrera, Indias Occidentales, lib. 4, cap. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Dec. 20th, 1503.—Ibid. lib. 5, cap. 11.—See the instructions to Ovando in Navarrete, (Coleccion de Viages, tom. ii., Doc. Dipl., no. 153.) "Pay them regular wages," says the ordinance, "for their labor," "como personas libres como lo son, y no como siervos." Las Casas, who analyzes these instructions, which Llorente, by the by, has misdated, exposes the atrocious manner in which they were violated, in every particular, by Ovando and his successors. Œuvres, ed. de Llorente, tom. i. p. 309. et seq.

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of distribution on so terrific a scale, that a letter of Columbus, written shortly after Isabella's death, represents more than six sevenths of the whole population of Hispaniola to have melted away under it!<sup>19</sup> The queen was too far removed to enforce the execution of her own beneficent measures; nor is it probable, that she ever imagined the extent of their violation, for there was no intrepid philanthropist, in that day, like Las Casas, to proclaim to the world the wrongs and sorrows of the Indian.<sup>20</sup> A conviction, however, of the unworthy treatment of the natives seems to have pressed heavily on her heart; for in a codicil to her testament, dated a few days only before her death, she invokes the kind offices of her successor in their behalf in such strong and affectionate language, as plainly indicates how intently her thoughts were occupied with their condition down to the last hour of her existence.<sup>21</sup>

Immediate  
profits from  
the discov-  
eries.

The moral grandeur of the maritime discoveries under this reign must not so far dazzle us, as to lead to a very high estimate of their immediate results in an economical view. Most of those articles

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. ubi supra. — Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 36, MS., apud Irving, vol. iii. p. 412. — The venerable bishop confirms this frightful picture of desolation, in its full extent, in his various memorials prepared for the council of the Indies. Œuvres, ed. de Llorente, tom. i. passim.

<sup>20</sup> Las Casas made his first voyage to the Indies, it is true, in 1498, or at latest 1502; but there is no trace of his taking an active part in denouncing the oppressions

of the Spaniards earlier than 1510, when he combined his efforts with those of the Dominican missionaries lately arrived in St. Domingo, in the same good work. It was not until some years later, 1515, that he returned to Spain and pleaded the cause of the injured natives before the throne. Llorente, Œuvres de Las Casas, tom. i. pp. 1-23. — Nic. Antonio, Bibliotheca Nova, tom. i. pp. 191, 192.

<sup>21</sup> See the will, apud Dormer, Discursos Varios, p. 381.

which have since formed the great staples of South American commerce, as cocoa, indigo, cochineal, tobacco, &c., were either not known in Isabella's time, or not cultivated for exportation. Small quantities of cotton had been brought to Spain, but it was doubted whether the profit would compensate the expense of raising it. The sugar-cane had been transplanted into Hispaniola, and thrived luxuriantly in its genial soil. But it required time to grow it to any considerable amount as an article of commerce; and this was still further delayed by the distractions, as well as avarice of the colony, which grasped at nothing less substantial than gold itself. The only vegetable product extensively used in trade was the brazil-wood, whose beautiful dye and application to various ornamental purposes made it, from the first, one of the most important monopolies of the crown.

The accounts are too vague to afford any probable estimate of the precious metals obtained from the new territories previous to Ovando's mission. Before the discovery of the mines of Hayna it was certainly very inconsiderable. The size of some of the specimens of ore found there would suggest magnificent ideas of their opulence. One piece of gold is reported by the contemporary historians to have weighed three thousand two hundred castellanos, and to have been so large, that the Spaniards served up a roasted pig on it, boasting that no potentate in Europe could dine off so costly a dish.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, Hist. del Almirante, cap. 84. — lib. 5, cap. 1. — Fernando Colon, *Oviedo, Relacion Sumaria de la*

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The admiral's own statement, that the miners obtained from six gold castellanos to one hundred or even two hundred and fifty in a day, allows a latitude too great to lead to any definite conclusion.<sup>23</sup> More tangible evidence of the riches of the island is afforded by the fact, that two hundred thousand castellanos of gold went down in the ships with Bobadilla. But this, it must be remembered, was the fruit of gigantic efforts, continued, under a system of unexampled oppression, for more than two years. To this testimony might be added that of the well-informed historian of Seville, who infers from several royal ordinances, that the influx of the precious metals had been such, before the close of the fifteenth century, as to affect the value of the currency, and the regular prices of commodities.<sup>24</sup> These large estimates, however, are scarcely reconcilable with the popular discontent at the meagreness of the returns obtained from the New World, or with the assertion of Bernaldez, of the same date with Zuñiga's reference, that "so little gold had been brought home as to raise a general belief, that there was scarcely any in the island."<sup>25</sup> This is

Historia Natural de las Indias, cap. 84, apud Barcia, Historiadores Primitivos, tom. i.

<sup>23</sup> Tercer Viage de Colon, apud Navarrete, Coleccion de Viages, tom. i. p. 274.

<sup>24</sup> Zuñiga, Annales de Sevilla, p. 415.

The alteration was in the gold currency; which continued to rise in value till 1497, when it gradually sunk, in consequence of the importation from the mines of Hispaniola. Clemencin has given its

relative value as compared with silver, for several different years; and the year he assigns for the commencement of its depreciation, is precisely the same with that indicated by Zuñiga. (Mem. de la Acad. de Hist., tom. vi. Ilust. 20.) The value of silver was not materially affected till the discovery of the great mines of Potosí and Zacatecas.

<sup>25</sup> Bernaldez, Reyes Católicos, MS., cap. 131.



still further confirmed by the frequent representations of contemporary writers, that the expenses of the colonies considerably exceeded the profits; and may account for the very limited scale on which the Spanish government, at no time blind to its own interests, pursued its schemes of discovery, as compared with its Portuguese neighbours, who followed up theirs with a magnificent apparatus of fleets and armies, that could have been supported only by the teeming treasures of the Indies.<sup>25</sup>

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While the colonial commerce failed to produce immediately the splendid returns which were expected, it was generally believed to have introduced a physical evil into Europe, which, in the language of an eminent writer, "more than counterbalanced all the benefits that resulted from the discovery of the New World." I allude to the loathsome disease, which Heaven has sent as the severest scourge of licentious intercourse between the sexes; and

Origin of the  
venereal dis-  
ease.

<sup>25</sup> The estimates in the text, it will be noticed, apply only to the period antecedent to Ovando's administration, in 1502. The operations under him were conducted on a far more extensive and efficient plan. The system of *repartimientos* being revived, the whole physical force of the island, aided by the best mechanical apparatus, was employed in extorting from the soil all its hidden stores of wealth. The success was such that in 1506, within two years after Isabella's death, the four founderies established in the island yielded an annual amount, according to Herrera, of 450,000 ounces of gold. It must be remarked, however, that one fifth only of the gross sum obtained

from the mines was at that time paid to the crown. It is a proof how far these returns exceeded the expectations at the time of Ovando's appointment, that the person then sent out, as marker of the gold, was to receive, as a reasonable compensation, one per cent. of all the gold assayed. The perquisite, however, was found to be so excessive, that the functionary was recalled, and a new arrangement made with his successor. (See Herrera, *Indias Occidentales*, dec. 1, lib. 6, cap. 18.) When Navagiero visited Seville, in 1520, the royal fifth of the gold, which passed through the mints, amounted to about 100,000 ducats annually. Viaggio, fol. 15.

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which broke out with all the virulence of an epidemic in almost every quarter of Europe, in a very short time after the discovery of America. The coincidence of these two events led to the popular belief of their connexion with each other, though it derived little support from any other circumstance. The expedition of Charles the Eighth, against Naples, which brought the Spaniards, soon after, in immediate contact with the various nations of Christendom, suggested a plausible medium for the rapid communication of the disorder; and this theory of its origin and transmission, gaining credit with time, which made it more difficult to be refuted, has passed with little examination from the mouth of one historian to another to the present day.

The extremely brief interval which elapsed, between the return of Columbus and the simultaneous appearance of the disorder at the most distant points of Europe, long since suggested a reasonable distrust of the correctness of the hypothesis; and an American, naturally desirous of relieving his own country from so melancholy a reproach, may feel satisfaction that the more searching and judicious criticism of our own day has at length established beyond a doubt that the disease, far from originating in the New World, was never known there till introduced by Europeans.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> The curious reader is particularly referred to a late work, entitled *Lettere sulla Storia de' Mali*

*Veneret, di Domenico Thiene, Venezia, 1823; for the knowledge and loan of which I am indebted to my*

Whatever be the amount of physical good or evil, immediately resulting to Spain from her new discoveries, their moral consequences were inestimable. The ancient limits of human thought and action were overleaped; the veil which had covered the secrets of the deep for so many centuries was removed; another hemisphere was thrown open; and a boundless expansion promised to science, from the infinite varieties in which nature was exhibited in these unexplored regions. The success

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Moral consequences of the discoveries.

friend, Dr. Walter Channing. In this work, the author has assembled all the early notices of the disease of any authority, and discussed their import with great integrity and judgment. The following positions may be considered as established by his researches. 1. That neither Columbus nor his son, in their copious narratives and correspondence, allude in any way to the existence of such a disease in the New World. I must add, that an examination of the original documents published by Navarrete since the date of Dr. Thiene's work, fully confirms this statement. 2. That among the frequent notices of the disease, during the twenty-five years immediately following the discovery of America, there is not a single intimation of its having been brought from that country; but, on the contrary, a uniform derivation of it from some other source, generally France. 3. That the disorder was known and circumstantially described previous to the expedition of Charles VIII., and of course could not have been introduced by the Spaniards in that way, as vulgarly supposed. 4. That various contemporary authors trace its existence in a variety of countries, as far back as 1493, and the

beginning of 1494, showing a rapidity and extent of diffusion perfectly irreconcilable with its importation by Columbus in 1493. 5. Lastly, that it was not till after the close of Ferdinand and Isabella's reigns, that the first work appeared affecting to trace the origin of the disease to America; and this, published 1517, was the production not of a Spaniard, but a foreigner.

A letter of Peter Martyr to the learned Portuguese Arias Barbosa, professor of Greek at Salamanca, noticing the symptoms of the disease in the most unequivocal manner, will settle at once this much vexed question, if we can rely on the genuineness of the date, the 5th of April, 1488, about five years before the return of Columbus. Dr. Thiene, however, rejects the date as apocryphal, on the ground, 1. That the name of "morbus Gallicus," given to the disease by Martyr, was not in use till after the French invasion, in 1494. 2. That the superscription of Greek professor at Salamanca was premature, as no such professorship existed there till 1508.

As to the first of these objections, it may be remarked, that there is but one author prior to the French invasion, who notices the disease at

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of the Spaniards kindled a generous emulation in their Portuguese rivals, who soon after accomplished their long-sought passage into the Indian seas, and thus completed the great circle of maritime discovery.<sup>28</sup> It would seem as if Providence had postponed this grand event, until the possession of America, with its stores of precious metals, might supply such materials for a commerce with the east, as should bind together the most distant quarters of the globe. The impression made on

all. He derives it from Gaul, though not giving it the technical appellation of *morbus Gallicus*; and Martyr, it may be observed, far from confining himself to this, alludes to one or two other names, showing that its title was then quite undetermined. In regard to the second objection, Dr. Thiene does not cite his authority for limiting the introduction of Greek at Salamanca to 1508. He may have found a plausible one in the account of that university compiled by one of its officers, Pedro Chacon, in 1569, inserted in the eighteenth volume of the *Semanario Erudito*, (Madrid, 1789.) The accuracy of the writer's chronology, however, may well be doubted from a gross anachronism on the same page with the date referred to, where he speaks of Queen Joanna, as inheriting the crown in 1512. (*Hist. de la Universidad de Salamanca*, p. 55.) Waving this, however, the fact of Barbosa being Greek professor at Salamanca in 1488 is directly intimated by his pupil the celebrated Andrew Resendi. "Arius Lusitanus," says he, "quadraginta, et eo plus annos Salmanticae tum Latinas litteras, tum Græcas, magnâ cum laude professus est." (*Responsio ad Quevedum*, apud Bar-

bosa, *Bibliotheca Lusitana*, tom. i. p. 77.) Now as Barbosa, by general consent, passed several years in his native country, Portugal, before his death in 1530, this assertion of Resendi necessarily places him at Salamanca in the situation of Greek instructor some time before the date of Martyr's letter. It may be added, indeed, that Nic. Antonio, than whom a more competent critic could not be found, so far from suspecting the date of the letter, cites it as settling the period when Barbosa filled the Greek chair at Salamanca. (See *Bibliotheca, Nova*, tom. i. p. 170.)

Martyr's epistle, if we admit the genuineness of the date, must dispose at once of the whole question of the American origin of the venereal disease. But as this question is determined quite as conclusively, though not so summarily, by the accumulated evidence from other sources, the reader will probably think the matter not worth so much discussion.

<sup>28</sup> This event occurred in 1497, Vasco de Gama doubling the Cape of Good Hope, November 20th, in that year, and reaching Calicut in the following May, 1498. *La Clède*, *Hist. de Portugal*, tom. iii. pp. 104 - 109.

the enlightened minds of that day is evinced by the tone of gratitude and exultation, in which they indulge, at being permitted to witness the consummation of these glorious events, which their fathers had so long, but in vain, desired to see.<sup>29</sup>

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The discoveries of Columbus occurred most opportunely for the Spanish nation, at the moment when it was released from the tumultuous struggle in which it had been engaged for so many years with the Moslems. The severe schooling of these wars had prepared it for entering on a bolder theatre of action, whose stirring and romantic perils raised still higher the chivalrous spirit of the people. The operation of this spirit was shown, in the alacrity with which private adventurers embarked in expeditions to the New World, under cover of the general license, during the last two years of this century. Their efforts, combined with those of Columbus, extended the range of discovery from its original limits, twenty-four degrees of north latitude, to probably more than fifteen south, comprehending some of the most important territories in the western hemisphere. Before the end of 1500, the principal groups of the West India islands had been visited, and the whole extent of the southern continent coasted, from the Bay of Honduras to Cape St. Augustine. One adventurous mariner, indeed, named Lepe, penetrated several degrees south of this, to a point not reached

Their geographical extent.

<sup>29</sup> See, among others, Peter Martyr, *Opus Epist.*, epist. 181.

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by any other voyager for ten or twelve years after. A great part of the kingdom of Brazil was embraced in this extent, and two successive Castilian navigators landed and took formal possession of it for the crown of Castile, previous to its reputed discovery by the Portuguese Cabral;<sup>30</sup> although the claims to it were subsequently relinquished by the Spanish Government, conformably to the famous line of demarkation established by the treaty of Tordesillas.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages*, tom. iii. pp. 18-26. — Cabral's pretensions to the discovery of Brazil appear not to have been doubted until recently. They are sanctioned both by Robertson and Raynal.

<sup>31</sup> The Portuguese court formed, probably, no very accurate idea of the geographical position of Brazil. King Emanuel, in a letter to the Spanish sovereigns acquainting them with Cabral's voyage, speaks of the newly discovered region as not only convenient, but *necessary*, for the navigation to India. (See the letter, apud Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages*, tom. iii. no. 13.) The oldest maps of this country, whether from ignorance or design, bring it twenty-two degrees east of its proper longitude, so that the whole of the vast tract now comprehended under the name of Brazil, would fall on the Portuguese side of the partition line agreed on by the two governments, which, it will be remembered, was removed to 370 leagues west of the Cape de Verd Islands. The Spanish court

made some show at first of resisting the pretensions of the Portuguese, by preparations for establishing a colony on the northern extremity of the Brazilian territory. (Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages*, tom. iii. p. 39.) It is not easy to understand how it came finally to admit these pretensions. Any correct admeasurement with the Castilian league would only have included the fringe, as it were, of the northeastern promontory of Brazil. The Portuguese league, allowing seventeen to a degree, may have been adopted, which would embrace nearly the whole territory which passed under the name of Brazil, in the best ancient maps, extending from Para on the north, to the great river of San Pedro on the south. (See Malte Brun, *Universal Geography*, (Boston, 1824-9,) book 91. Mariana seems willing to help the Portuguese, by running the partition line one hundred leagues farther west than they claimed themselves. *Hist. de España*, tom. ii. p. 607.

While the colonial empire of Spain was thus every day enlarging, the man to whom it was all due was never permitted to know the extent, or the value of it. He died in the conviction in which he lived, that the land he had reached was the long-sought Indies. But it was a country far richer than the Indies ; and, had he on quitting Cuba struck

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conception of its importance. Public attention was promptly and eagerly directed to this momentous event, so that few facts worthy of note, during the whole progress of discovery from its earliest epoch, escaped contemporary record. Many of these notices have, indeed, perished through neglect, in the various repositories in which they were scattered. The researches of Navarrete have rescued many, and will, it is to be hoped, many more from their progress to oblivion. The first two volumes of his compilation, containing the journals and letters of Columbus, the correspondence of the sovereigns with him, and a vast quantity of public and private documents, form, as I have elsewhere remarked, the most authentic basis for a history of that great man. Next to these in importance is the "History of the Admiral," by his son Ferdinand, whose own experience and opportunities, combined with uncommon literary attainments, eminently qualified him for recording his father's extraordinary life. It must be allowed, that he has done this with a candor and good faith seldom warped by any overweening, though natural, partiality for his subject. His work met with a whimsical fate. The original was early lost, but happily not before it had been translated into the Italian, from which a Spanish version was afterwards made: and from this latter,

thus reproduced in the same tongue in which it originally appeared, are derived the various translations of it into the other languages of Europe. The Spanish version, which is incorporated into Barcia's collection, is executed in a slovenly manner, and is replete with chronological inaccuracies; a circumstance not very wonderful, considering the curious transmigration it has undergone.

Another contemporary author of great value is Peter Martyr, who took so deep an interest in the nautical enterprise of his day, as to make it, independently of the abundant notices scattered through his correspondence, the subject of a separate work. His history, "De Rebus Oceanicis et Novo Orbe," has all the value which extensive learning, a reflecting, philosophical mind, and intimate familiarity with the principal actors in the scenes he describes, can give. Indeed, that no source of information might be wanting to him, the sovereigns authorized him to be present at the council of the Indies, whenever any communication was made to that body, respecting the progress of discovery. The principal defects of his work arise from the precipitate manner in which the greater part of it was put together, and the consequently imperfect and occasionally contradictory statements which appear in it. But the honest intentions of the author, who

Peter Mar-  
tyr.

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into a westerly, instead of southerly direction, it would have carried him into the very depths of the golden regions, whose existence he had so long and vainly predicted. As it was, he "only opened the gates," to use his own language, for others more fortunate than himself; and, before he quitted Hispaniola for the last time, the young adventurer

seems to have been fully sensible of his own imperfections, and his liberal spirit, are so apparent, as to disarm criticism in respect to comparatively venial errors.

Herrera and  
Muñoz.

But the writer who has furnished the greatest supply of materials for the modern historian is Antonio de Herrera. He did not flourish, indeed, until near a century after the discovery of America; but the post which he occupied of historiographer of the Indies gave him free access to the most authentic and reserved sources of information. He has availed himself of these with great freedom; transferring whole chapters from the unpublished narratives of his predecessors, especially of the good bishop Las Casas, whose great work, "*Crónica de las Indias Occidentales*," contained too much that was offensive to national feeling to be allowed the honors of the press. The Apostle of the Indians, however, lives in the pages of Herrera, who, while he has omitted the tumid and overheated declamation of the original, is allowed by the Castilian critics to have retained whatever is of most value, and exhibited it in a dress far superior to that of his predecessor. It must not be omitted, however, that he is also accused of occasional inadvertence in stating as fact, what Las Casas only adduced as tradition or conjecture. His "*Historia General de las Indias Occidentales*," bringing down the

narrative to 1554, was published in four volumes, at Madrid, in 1601. Herrera left several other histories of the different states of Europe, and closed his learned labors in 1625, at the age of sixty.

No Spanish historian had since arisen to contest the palm with Herrera on his own ground, until at the close of the last century, Don Juan Bautista Muñoz was commissioned by the government to prepare a history of the New World. The talents and liberal acquisitions of this scholar, the free admission opened to him in every place of public and private deposit, and the immense mass of materials collected by his indefatigable researches, authorized the most favorable auguries of his success. These were justified by the character of the first volume, which brought the narrative of early discovery to the period of Bobadilla's mission, written in a perspicuous and agreeable style, with such a discriminating selection of incident and skilful arrangement, as convey the most distinct impression to the mind of the reader. Unfortunately, the untimely death of the author crushed his labors in the bud. Their fruits were not wholly lost, however. Señor Navarrete availing himself of them, in connexion with those derived from his own extensive investigations, is pursuing in part the plan of Muñoz, by the publication of original documents; and Mr.



Generalif



arrived there, who was destined by the conquest of Mexico to realize all the magnificent visions, which had been derided only as visions, in the lifetime of Columbus.

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IX.

Irving has completed this design in regard to the early history of Spanish discovery, by the use which he has made of these materials in constructing out of them the noblest monument to the memory of Columbus.



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