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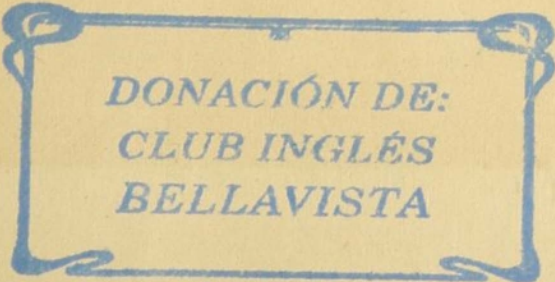
Isabella of Castile

From an original Picture at Madrid.

THE WORKS
OF
WASHINGTON IRVING.

VOL. VII.

COLUMBUS AND HIS COMPANIONS.



*DONACIÓN DE:
CLUB INGLÉS
BELLAVISTA*

LONDON:

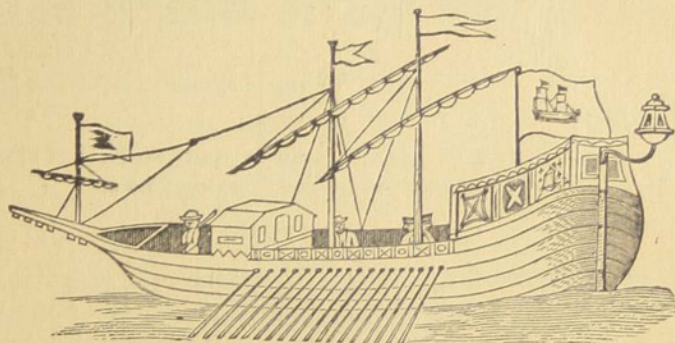
GEORGE BELL & SONS, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.



THE LIFE AND VOYAGES
OF
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS;

TOGETHER WITH
THE VOYAGES OF HIS COMPANIONS.

BY
WASHINGTON IRVING.



Venient annis
Sæcula seris, quibus, Oceanus
Vincula, rerum laxet, et ingens
Pateat tellus, Typhisque novos
Detegat Orbes, nec sit terris
Ultima Thule.

SENECA: *Medea*.

AUTHOR'S REVISED EDITION, COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES.
WITH AN APPENDIX OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS, AND A GENERAL INDEX

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THE
LIFE AND VOYAGES OF COLUMBUS;
TOGETHER WITH
THE VOYAGES OF HIS COMPANIONS.

BOOK XV.

CHAPTER I.—[1502.]

AGE was rapidly making its advances upon Columbus when he undertook his fourth and last voyage of discovery. He had already numbered sixty-six years, and they were years filled with care and trouble, in which age outstrips the march of time. His constitution, originally vigorous in the extreme, had been impaired by hardships and exposures in every clime, and silently preyed upon by the sufferings of the mind. His frame, once powerful and commanding, and retaining a semblance of strength and majesty even in its decay, was yet crazed by infirmities and subject to paroxysms of excruciating pain. His intellectual forces alone retained their wonted health and energy, prompting him, at a period of life when most men seek repose, to sally forth with youthful ardour, on the most toilsome and adventurous of expeditions.

His squadron for the present voyage consisted of four caravels, the smallest of fifty tons burden, the largest not exceeding seventy, and the crews amounting in all to one hundred and fifty men. With this little armament and these

slender barks did the venerable discoverer undertake the search after a strait, which, if found, must conduct him into the most remote seas, and lead to a complete circumnavigation of the globe.

In this arduous voyage, however, he had a faithful counsellor, and an intrepid and vigorous coadjutor, in his brother Don Bartholomew, while his younger son Fernando cheered him with his affectionate sympathy. He had learnt to appreciate such comforts, from being too often an isolated stranger, surrounded by false friends and perfidious enemies.

The squadron sailed from Cadiz on the 9th of May, and passed over to Ercilla, on the coast of Morocco, where it anchored on the 13th. Understanding that the Portuguese garrison was closely besieged in the fortress by the Moors, and exposed to great peril, Columbus was ordered to touch there, and render all the assistance in his power. Before his arrival the siege had been raised, but the governor lay ill, having been wounded in an assault. Columbus sent his brother, the Adelantado, his son Fernando, and the captains of the caravels on shore, to wait upon the governor, with expressions of friendship and civility, and offers of the services of his squadron. Their visit and message gave high satisfaction, and several cavaliers were sent to wait upon the admiral in return, some of whom were relatives of his deceased wife, Doña Felippa Muñoz. After this exchange of civilities, the admiral made sail on the same day, and continued his voyage.* On the 25th of May, he arrived at the Grand Canary, and remained at that and the adjacent islands for a few days, taking in wood and water. On the evening of the 25th, he took his departure for the New World. The trade winds were so favourable, that the little squadron swept gently on its course, without shifting a sail, and arrived on the 15th of June at one of the Caribbee Islands, called by the natives Mantinino.† After stopping here for three days, to take in wood and water, and allow the seamen time to wash their clothes, the squadron passed to the west of the island, and sailed to Dominica, about ten leagues distant.‡ Co-

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 88.

† Señor Narvarrete supposes this island to be the same at present called Santa Lucia. From the distance between it and Dominica, as stated by Fernando Columbus, it was more probably the present Martinico.

‡ Hist. del Almirante, c. 88.

Columbus continued hence along the inside of the Antilles, to Santa Cruz, then along the south side of Porto Rico, and steered for San Domingo. This was contrary to the original plan of the admiral, who had intended to steer to Jamaica,* and thence to take a departure for the continent, and explore its coasts in search of the supposed strait. It was contrary to the orders of the sovereigns also, prohibiting him on his outward voyage to touch at Hispaniola. His excuse was, that his principal vessel sailed extremely ill, could not carry any canvas, and continually embarrassed and delayed the rest of the squadron.† He wished, therefore, to exchange it for one of the fleet which had recently conveyed Ovando to his government, or to purchase some other vessel at San Domingo; and he was persuaded that he would not be blamed for departing from his orders, in a case of such importance to the safety and success of his expedition.

It is necessary to state the situation of the island at this moment. Ovando had reached San Domingo on the 15th of April. He had been received with the accustomed ceremony on the shore, by Bobadilla, accompanied by the principal inhabitants of the town. He was escorted to the fortress, where his commission was read in form, in presence of all the authorities. The usual oaths were taken, and ceremonials observed; and the new governor was hailed with great demonstrations of obedience and satisfaction. Ovando entered upon the duties of his office with coolness and prudence; and treated Bobadilla with a courtesy totally opposite to the rudeness with which the latter had superseded Columbus. The emptiness of mere official rank, when unsustained by merit, was shown in the case of Bobadilla. The moment his authority was at an end, all his importance vanished. He found himself a solitary and neglected man, deserted by those whom he had most favoured, and he experienced the worthlessness of the popularity gained by courting the prejudices and passions of the multitude. Still there is no record of any suit having been instituted against him; and Las Casas, who was on the spot, declares that he never heard any harsh thing spoken of him by the colonists.‡

The conduct of Roldan and his accomplices, however,

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Journal of Porras, Navarrete, i.

† Hist. del Almirante, c. 88. Las Casas, lib. ii. c. 5

‡ Las Casas, lib. ii. c. 3.

underwent a strict investigation, and many were arrested to be sent to Spain for trial. They appeared undismayed, trusting to the influence of their friends in Spain to protect them, and many relying on the well-known disposition of the Bishop of Fonseca to favour all who had been opposed to Columbus.

The fleet which had brought out Ovando, was now ready for sea; and was to take out a number of the principal delinquents, and many of the idlers and profligates of the island. Bobadilla was to embark in the principal ship, on board of which he put an immense amount of gold, the revenue collected for the crown during his government, and which he confidently expected would atone for all his faults. There was one solid mass of virgin gold on board of this ship, which is famous in the old Spanish chronicles. It had been found by a female Indian in a brook, on the estate of Francisco de Garay and Miguel Diaz, and had been taken by Bobadilla to send to the king, making the owners a suitable compensation. It was said to weigh three thousand six hundred castellanos.*

Large quantities of gold were likewise shipped in the fleet, by the followers of Roldan, and other adventurers; the wealth gained by the sufferings of the unhappy natives. Among the various persons who were to sail in the principal ship, was the unfortunate Guarionex, the once powerful cacique of the Vega. He had been confined in Fort Conception ever since his capture after the war of Higüey, and was now to be sent a captive in chains to Spain. In one of the ships, Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, the agent of Columbus, had put four thousand pieces of gold, to be remitted to him; being part of his property, either recently collected, or recovered from the hands of Bobadilla.†

The preparations were all made, and the fleet was ready to put to sea, when, on the 29th of June, the squadron of Columbus arrived at the mouth of the river. He immediately sent Pedro de Terreros, captain of one of the caravels, on shore, to wait on Ovando, and explain to him that the purpose of his coming was to procure a vessel in exchange for one of his caravels, which was extremely defective. He requested permission also to shelter his squadron in the harbour; as he apprehended, from various indications, au

* Las Casas, c. 5.

† Idem.

approaching storm. This request was refused by Ovando. Las Casas thinks it probable that he had instructions from the sovereigns not to admit Columbus, and that he was further swayed by prudent considerations, as San Domingo was at that moment crowded with the most virulent enemies of the admiral, many of them in a high state of exasperation from recent proceedings which had taken place against them.*

When the ungracious refusal of Ovando was brought to Columbus, and he found all shelter denied him, he sought at least to avert the danger of the fleet which was about to sail. He sent back the officer therefore to the governor, entreating him not to permit the fleet to put to sea for several days; assuring him that there were indubitable signs of an impending tempest. This second request was equally fruitless with the first. The weather, to an inexperienced eye, was fair and tranquil; the pilots and seamen were impatient to depart. They scoffed at the prediction of the admiral, ridiculing him as a false prophet, and they persuaded Ovando not to detain the fleet on so unsubstantial a pretext.

It was hard treatment of Columbus, thus to be denied the relief which the state of his ships required, and to be excluded in time of distress from the very harbour he had discovered. He retired from the river full of grief and indignation. His crew murmured loudly at being shut out from a port of their own nation, where even strangers, under similar circumstances, would be admitted. They repined at having embarked with a commander liable to such treatment; and anticipated nothing but evil from a voyage, in which they were exposed to the dangers of the sea, and repulsed from the protection of the land.

Being confident, from his observations of those natural phenomena in which he was deeply skilled, that the anticipated storm could not be distant, and expecting it from the land side, Columbus kept his feeble squadron close to the shore, and sought for secure anchorage in some wild bay or river of the island.

In the meantime, the fleet of Bobadilla set sail from San Domingo, and stood out confidently to sea. Within two days, the predictions of Columbus were verified. One of those tremendous hurricanes, which sometimes sweep those lati-

* Las Casas. *ubi sup.*

tudes, had gradually gathered up. The baleful appearance of the heavens, the wild look of the ocean, the rising murmur of the winds, all gave notice of its approach. The fleet had scarcely reached the eastern point of Hispaniola, when the tempest burst over it with awful fury, involving every thing in wreck and ruin. The ship on board of which were Bobadilla, Roldan, and a number of the most inveterate enemies of Columbus, was swallowed up with all its crew, and with the celebrated mass of gold, and the principal part of the ill-gotten treasure, gained by the miseries of the Indians. Many of the ships were entirely lost, some returned to San Domingo, in shattered condition, and only one was enabled to continue her voyage to Spain. That one, according to Fernando Columbus, was the weakest of the fleet, and had on board the four thousand pieces of gold, the property of the admiral.

During the early part of this storm, the little squadron of Columbus remained tolerably well sheltered by the land. On the second day the tempest increased in violence, and the night coming on with unusual darkness, the ships lost sight of each other and were separated. The admiral still kept close to the shore, and sustained no damage. The others, fearful of the land in such a dark and boisterous night, ran out for sea-room, and encountered the whole fury of the elements. For several days they were driven about at the mercy of wind and wave, fearful each moment of shipwreck, and giving up each other as lost. The Adelantado, who commanded the ship already mentioned as being scarcely sea-worthy, ran the most imminent hazard, and nothing but his consummate seamanship enabled him to keep her afloat. At length, after various vicissitudes, they all arrived safe at Port Hermoso, to the west of San Domingo. The Adelantado had lost his long boat; and all the vessels, with the exception of that of the admiral, had sustained more or less injury.

When Columbus learnt the signal destruction that had overwhelmed his enemies, almost before his eyes, he was deeply impressed with awe, and considered his own preservation as little less than miraculous. Both his son Fernando, and the venerable historian Las Casas, looked upon the event as one of those awful judgments, which seem at times to deal forth temporal retribution. They notice the circumstance, that while the enemies of the admiral were swallowed up by the raging sea, the only ship of the fleet which was enabled

to pursue her voyage, and reach her port of destination, was the frail bark freighted with the property of Columbus. The evil, however, in this, as in most circumstances, overwhelmed the innocent as well as the guilty. In the ship with Bobadilla and Roldan, perished the captive Guarionex, the unfortunate cacique of the Vega.*

CHAPTER II.—[1502.]

FOR several days Columbus remained in Port Hermoso to repair his vessels, and permit his crews to repose and refresh themselves after the late tempest. He had scarcely left this harbour, when he was obliged to take shelter from another storm in Jacquemel, or as it was called by the Spaniards, Port Brazil. Hence he sailed on the 14th of July, steering for Terra Firma. The weather falling perfectly calm, he was borne away by the current until he found himself in the vicinity of some little islands near Jamaica, † destitute of springs but where the seamen obtained a supply of water by digging holes in the sand on the beach.

The calm continuing, he was swept away to the group of small islands, or keys, on the southern coast of Cuba, to which, in 1494, he had given the name of The Gardens. He had scarcely touched there, however, when the wind sprang up from a favourable quarter, and he was enabled to make sail on his destined course. He now stood to the south-west, and after a few days discovered, on the 30th of July, a small but elevated island, agreeable to the eye from the variety of trees with which it was covered. Among these was a great number of lofty pines, from which circumstance Columbus named it *Isla de Pinos*. It has always, however, retained its Indian name of *Guanaja*, ‡ which has been extended to a number of smaller islands surrounding it. This group is within a few leagues of the coast of Honduras, to the east of the great bay or gulf of that name.

The *Adelantado*, with two launches full of people, landed on the principal island, which was extremely verdant and fertile. The inhabitants resembled those of other islands, excepting that their foreheads were narrower. While the *Adelantado* was on shore, he beheld a great canoe arriving, as

* *Las Casas*, lib. ii. c. 5. *Hist. del Almirante*, c. 88.

† Supposed to be the Morant Keys.

‡ Called in some of the English maps *Bonacca*.

from a distant and important voyage. He was struck with its magnitude and contents. It was eight feet wide, and as long as a galley, though formed of the trunk of a single tree. In the centre was a kind of awning or cabin of palm-leaves, after the manner of those in the gondolas of Venice, and sufficiently close to exclude both sun and rain. Under this sat a cacique with his wives and children. Twenty-five Indians rowed the canoe, and it was filled with all kinds of articles of the manufacture and natural production of the adjacent countries. It is supposed that this bark had come from the province of Yucatan, which is about forty leagues distant from this island.

The Indians in the canoe appeared to have no fear of the Spaniards, and readily went alongside of the admiral's caravel. Columbus was overjoyed at thus having brought to him at once, without trouble or danger, a collection of specimens of all the important articles of this part of the New World. He examined, with great curiosity and interest, the contents of the canoe. Among various utensils and weapons similar to those already found among the natives, he perceived others of a much superior kind. There were hatchets for cutting wood, formed not of stone but copper; wooden swords, with channels on each side of the blade, in which sharp flints were firmly fixed by cords made of the intestines of fishes; being the same kind of weapon afterwards found among the Mexicans. There were copper bells, and other articles of the same metal, together with a rude kind of crucible in which to melt it; various vessels and utensils neatly formed of clay, of marble, and of hard wood; sheets and mantles of cotton, worked and dyed with various colours; great quantities of cacao, a fruit as yet unknown to the Spaniards, but which, as they soon found, the natives held in great estimation, using it both as food and money. There was a beverage also extracted from maize or Indian corn, resembling beer. Their provisions consisted of bread, made of maize, and roots of various kinds, similar to those of Hispaniola. From among these articles, Columbus collected such as were important to send as specimens to Spain, giving the natives European trinkets in exchange, with which they were highly satisfied. They appeared to manifest neither astonishment nor alarm when on board of the vessels, and surrounded by people who must have been so strange and wonderful to them. The women

wore mantles, with which they wrapped themselves, like the female Moors of Granada, and the men had cloths of cotton round their loins. Both sexes appeared more particular about these coverings, and to have a quicker sense of personal modesty, than any Indians Columbus had yet discovered.

These circumstances, together with the superiority of their implements and manufactures, were held by the admiral as indications that he was approaching more civilized nations. He endeavoured to gain particular information from these Indians about the surrounding countries; but as they spoke a different language from that of his interpreters, he could understand them but imperfectly. They informed him that they had just arrived from a country, rich, cultivated, and industrious, situated to the west. They endeavoured to impress him with an idea of the wealth and magnificence of the regions, and the people in that quarter, and urged him to steer in that direction. Well would it have been for Columbus had he followed their advice. Within a day or two he would have arrived at Yucatan; the discovery of Mexico and the other opulent countries of New Spain would have necessarily followed; the Southern Ocean would have been disclosed to him, and a succession of splendid discoveries would have shed fresh glory on his declining age, instead of its sinking amidst gloom, neglect, and disappointment.

The admiral's whole mind, however, was at present intent upon discovering the strait. As the countries described by the Indians lay to the west, he supposed that he could easily visit them at some future time, by running with the trade winds along the coast of Cuba, which he imagined must continue on, so as to join them. At present he was determined to seek the main-land, the mountains of which were visible to the south, and apparently not many leagues distant: * by keeping along it steadfastly to the east, he must at length arrive to where he supposed it to be severed from the coast of Paria by an intervening strait; and passing through this, he should soon make his way to the Spice Islands and the richest parts of India. †

He was encouraged the more to persist in his eastern course by information from the Indians, that there were many places in that direction which abounded with gold. Much of the

* Journal of Porras, Navarrete, t. i.

† Las Casas, lib. ii. c. 20. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

information which he gathered among these people, was derived from an old man more intelligent than the rest, who appeared to be an ancient navigator of these seas. Columbus retained him to serve as a guide along the coast, and dismissed his companions with many presents.

Leaving the island of Guanaja, he stood southwardly for the main-land, and, after sailing a few leagues, discovered a cape, to which he gave the name of Caxinas, from its being covered with fruit-trees, so called by the natives. It is at present known as Cape Honduras. Here, on Sunday, the 14th of August, the Adelantado landed with the captains of the caravels and many of the seamen, to attend mass, which was performed under the trees on the sea-shore, according to the pious custom of the admiral, whenever circumstances would permit. On the 17th, the Adelantado again landed at a river about fifteen miles from the point, on the bank of which he displayed the banners of Castile, taking possession of the country in the name of their Catholic Majesties; from which circumstance he named this the River of Possession.*

At this place they found upwards of a hundred Indians assembled, laden with bread and maize, fish and fowl, vegetables and fruits of various kinds. These they laid down as presents before the Adelantado and his party, and drew back to a distance without speaking a word. The Adelantado distributed among them various trinkets, with which they were well pleased, and appeared the next day in the same place, in greater numbers, with still more abundant supplies of provisions.

The natives of this neighbourhood, and for a considerable distance eastward, had higher foreheads than those of the islands. They were of different languages, and varied from each other in their decorations. Some were entirely naked; and their bodies were marked by means of fire with the figures of various animals. Some wore coverings about the loins; others short cotton jerkins without sleeves: some wore tresses of hair in front. The chieftains had caps of white or coloured cotton. When arrayed for any festival, they painted their faces black, or with stripes of various colours, or with circles round the eyes. The old Indian guide assured the admiral that many of them were cannibals. In one part of the coast the natives had their ears bored, and hideously dis-

* Journal of Porras, Navarrete, Collec., t. i.

tended; which caused the Spaniards to call that region *la Costa de la Oreja*, or "the Coast of the Ear."*

From the River of Possession, Columbus proceeded along what is at present called the coast of Honduras, beating against contrary winds, and struggling with currents, which swept from the east like the constant stream of a river. He often lost in one tack what he had laboriously gained in two, frequently making but two leagues in a day, and never more than five. At night he anchored under the land, through fear of proceeding along an unknown coast in the dark, but was often forced out to sea by the violence of the currents.† In all this time he experienced the same kind of weather that had prevailed on the coast of Hispaniola, and had attended him more or less for upwards of sixty days. There was, he says, almost an incessant tempest of the heavens, with heavy rains, and such thunder and lightning, that it seemed as if the end of the world was at hand. Those who know anything of the drenching rains and rending thunder of the tropics, will not think his description of the storms exaggerated. His vessels were strained so that their seams opened; the sails and rigging were rent, and the provisions were damaged by the rain and by the leakage. The sailors were exhausted with labour, and harassed with terror. They many times confessed their sins to each other, and prepared for death. "I have seen many tempests," says Columbus, "but none so violent or of such long duration." He alludes to the whole series of storms for upwards of two months, since he had been refused shelter at San Domingo. During a great part of this time, he had suffered extremely from the gout, aggravated by his watchfulness and anxiety. His illness did not prevent his attending to his duties; he had a small cabin or chamber constructed on the stern, whence, even when confined to his bed, he could keep a look-out and regulate the sailing of the ships. Many times he was so ill that he thought his end approaching. His anxious mind was distressed about his brother the Adelantado, whom he had persuaded against his will to come on this expedition, and who was in the worst vessel of the squadron. He lamented also having brought with him his son Fernando, exposing him at so tender an age to such perils and hardships, although the youth bore them

* Las Casas, lib. ii. c. 21. Hist. del Almirante, c. 90.

† Hist. del Almirante, c. 80.

with the courage and fortitude of a veteran. Often, too, his thoughts reverted to his son Diego, and the cares and perplexities into which his death might plunge him.* At length, after struggling for upwards of forty days since leaving the Cape of Honduras, to make a distance of about seventy leagues, they arrived on the 14th of September at a cape where the coast making an angle, turned directly south, so as to give them an easy wind and free navigation. Doubling the point, they swept off with flowing sails and hearts filled with joy; and the admiral, to commemorate this sudden relief from toil and peril, gave to the Cape the name of *Gracias a Dios*, or Thanks to God.†

CHAPTER III.—[1503.]

AFTER doubling Cape Gracias a Dios, Columbus sailed directly south, along what is at present called the Mosquito shore. The land was of varied character, sometimes rugged, with craggy promontories and points stretching into the sea, at other places verdant and fertile, and watered by abundant streams. In the rivers grew immense reeds, sometimes of the thickness of a man's thigh: they abounded with fish and tortoises, and alligators basked on the banks. At one place Columbus passed a cluster of twelve small islands, on which grew a fruit resembling the lemon, on which account he called them the Limonares.‡

After sailing about sixty-two leagues along this coast, being greatly in want of wood and water, the squadron anchored on the 16th of September, near a copious river, up which the boats were sent to procure the requisite supplies. As they were returning to their ships, a sudden swelling of the sea, rushing in and encountering the rapid current of the river, caused a violent commotion, in which one of the boats was swallowed up, and all on board perished. This melancholy event had a gloomy effect upon the crews, already dispirited and care-worn from the hardships they had endured, and Columbus, sharing their dejection, gave the stream the sinister name of *El rio del Desastre*, or the River of Disaster.§

* Letter from Jamaica. Navarrete, Collec., t. i.

† Las Casas, lib. ii. c. 21. Hist. del Almirante, c. 91.

‡ P. Martyr, decad. iii. lib. iv. These may have been the lime, a small and extremely acid species of the lemon.

§ Las Casas, lib. ii. c. 21. Hist. del Almirante, c. 91. Journal or Paorrs.

Leaving this unlucky neighbourhood, they continued for several days along the coast, until finding both his ships and his people nearly disabled by the buffetings of the tempests, Columbus, on the 25th of September, cast anchor between a small island and the main-land, in what appeared a commodious and delightful situation. The island was covered with groves of palm-trees, cocoanut-trees, bananas, and a delicate and fragrant fruit, which the admiral continually mistook for the mirabolane of the East Indies. The fruits and flowers, and odoriferous shrubs of the island sent forth grateful perfumes, so that Columbus gave it the name of *La Huerta*, or *The Garden*. It was called by the natives, *Quiribiri*. Immediately opposite, at a short league's distance, was an Indian village, named *Cariari*, situated on the bank of a beautiful river. The country around was fresh and verdant, finely diversified by noble hills and forests, with trees of such height, that *Las Casas* says they appeared to reach the skies.

When the inhabitants beheld the ships, they gathered together on the coast, armed with bows and arrows, war-clubs, and lances, and prepared to defend their shores. The Spaniards, however, made no attempt to land during that or the succeeding day, but remained quietly on board repairing the ships, airing and drying the damaged provisions, or reposing from the fatigues of the voyage. When the savages perceived that these wonderful beings, who had arrived in this strange manner on their coast, were perfectly pacific, and made no movement to molest them, their hostility ceased, and curiosity predominated. They made various pacific signals, waving their mantles like banners, and inviting the Spaniards to land. Growing still more bold, they swam to the ships, bringing off mantles and tunics of cotton, and ornaments of the inferior sort of gold called *guanin*, which they wore about their necks. These they offered to the Spaniards. The admiral, however, forbade all traffic, making them presents, but taking nothing in exchange, wishing to impress them with a favourable idea of the liberality and disinterestedness of the white men. The pride of the savages was touched at the refusal of their proffered gifts, and this supposed contempt for their manufactures and productions. They endeavoured to retaliate, by pretending like indifference. On returning to shore, they tied together all the European articles which had been given them, without retaining the

least trifle, and left them lying on the strand, where the Spaniards found them on a subsequent day.

Finding the strangers still declined to come on shore, the natives tried in every way to gain their confidence and dispel the distrust which their hostile demonstrations might have caused. A boat approaching the shore cautiously one day, in quest of some safe place to procure water, an ancient Indian, of venerable demeanour, issued from among the trees, bearing a white banner on the end of a staff, and leading two girls, one about fourteen years of age, the other about eight, having jewels of guanin about their necks. These he brought to the boat and delivered to the Spaniards, making signs that they were to be detained as hostages while the strangers should be on shore. Upon this the Spaniards sallied forth with confidence and filled their water-casks, the Indians remaining at a distance, and observing the strictest care neither by word nor movement to cause any new distrust. When the boats were about to return to the ships, the old Indian made signs that the young girls should be taken on board, nor would he admit of any denial. On entering the ships, the girls showed no signs of grief nor alarm, though surrounded by what to them must have been uncouth and formidable beings. Columbus was careful that the confidence thus placed in him should not be abused. After feasting the young females, and ordering them to be clothed and adorned with various ornaments, he sent them on shore. The night, however, had fallen, and the coast was deserted. They had to return to the ship, where they remained all night under the careful protection of the admiral. The next morning he restored them to their friends. The old Indian received them with joy, and manifested a grateful sense of the kind treatment they had experienced. In the evening, however, when the boats went on shore, the young girls appeared, accompanied by a multitude of their friends, and returned all the presents they had received, nor could they be prevailed upon to retain any of them, although they must have been precious in their eyes; so greatly was the pride of these savages piqued at having their gifts refused.

On the following day, as the *Adelantado* approached the shore, two of the principal inhabitants, entering the water, took him out of the boat in their arms, and carrying him to land, seated him with great ceremony on a grassy bank. Don

Bartholomew endeavoured to collect information from them respecting the country, and ordered the notary of the squadron to write down their replies. The latter immediately prepared pen, ink, and paper, and proceeded to write; but no sooner did the Indians behold this strange and mysterious process than mistaking it for some necromantic spell intended to be wrought upon them, they fled with terror. After some time they returned, cautiously scattering a fragrant powder in the air, and burning some of it in such a direction that the smoke should be borne towards the Spaniards by the wind. This was apparently intended to counteract any baleful spell, for they regarded the strangers as beings of a mysterious and supernatural order.

The sailors looked upon these counter-charms of the Indians with equal distrust, and apprehended something of magic; nay, Fernando Columbus, who was present, and records the scene, appears to doubt whether these Indians were not versed in sorcery, and thus led to suspect it in others.*

Indeed, not to conceal a foible which was more characteristic of the superstition of the age than of the man, Columbus himself entertained an idea of the kind, and assures the sovereigns, in his letter from Jamaica, that the people of Cariari and its vicinity are great enchanters, and he intimates, that the two Indian girls who had visited his ship had magic powder concealed about their persons. He adds, that the sailors attributed all the delays and hardships experienced on that coast, to their being under the influence of some evil spell, worked by the witchcraft of the natives, and that they still remained in that belief.†

For several days the squadron remained at this place, during which time the ships were examined and repaired, and the crews enjoyed repose and the recreation of the land. The

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 91.

† Letter from Jamaica.

NOTE.—We find instances of the same kind of superstition in the work of Marco Polo, and as Columbus considered himself in the vicinity of the countries described by that traveller, he may have been influenced in this respect by his narrations. Speaking of the island of Socotera (Socotra), Marco Polo observes: "The inhabitants deal more in sorcery and witchcraft than any other people, although forbidden by their archbishop, who excommunicates and anathematizes them for the sin. Of this, however, they make little account, and if any vessel belonging to a pirate should injure one of theirs, they do not fail to lay him under a spell, so that he cannot proceed on his cruise until he has

Adelantado, with a band of armed men, made excursions on shore to collect information. There was no pure gold to be met with here, all their ornaments were of guanin; but the natives assured the Adelantado, that, in proceeding along the coast, the ships would soon arrive at a country where gold was in great abundance.

In examining one of the villages, the Adelantado found, in a large house, several sepulchres. One contained a human body enbalmed: in another, there were two bodies wrapped in cotton, and so preserved as to be free from any disagreeable odour. They were adorned with the ornaments most precious to them when living; and the sepulchres were decorated with rude carvings and paintings representing various animals, and, sometimes, what appeared to be intended for portraits of the deceased.* Throughout most of the savage tribes, there appears to have been great veneration for the dead, and an anxiety to preserve their remains undisturbed.

When about to sail, Columbus seized seven of the people, two of whom, apparently the most intelligent, he selected to serve as guides; the rest he suffered to depart. His late guide he had dismissed with presents at Cape Gracias a Dios. The inhabitants of Cariari manifested unusual sensibility at this seizure of their countrymen. They thronged the shore, and sent off four of their principal men with presents to the ships, imploring the release of the prisoners.

The admiral assured them that he only took their companions as guides for a short distance along the coast, and would restore them soon in safety to their homes. He ordered various presents to be given to the ambassadors; but neither his promises nor gifts could soothe the grief and apprehension of the natives at beholding their friends carried away by beings of whom they had such mysterious apprehensions.†

made satisfaction for the damage; and even although he should have a fair and leading wind, they have the power of causing it to change, and thereby obliging him, in spite of himself, to return to the island. They can in like manner, cause the sea to become calm, and at their will can raise tempests, occasion shipwrecks, and produce many other extraordinary effects that need not be particularized."—Marco Polo, Book iii. cap. 35, Eng. translation by W. Marsden.

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 21. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 91.

† Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 21. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 91. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

CHAPTER IV.—[1502.]

ON the 5th of October, the squadron departed from Cariari, and sailed along what is at present called Costa Rica (or the Rich Coast), from the gold and silver mines found in after years among its mountains. After sailing about twenty-two leagues, the ships anchored in a great bay, about six leagues in length and three in breadth, full of islands, with channels opening between them, so as to present three or four entrances. It was called by the natives Caribaro,* and had been pointed out by the natives of Cariari as plentiful in gold.

The islands were beautifully verdant, covered with groves, and sent forth the fragrance of fruits and flowers. The channels between them were so deep and free from rocks that the ships sailed along them, as if in canals in the streets of a city, the spars and rigging brushing the overhanging branches of the trees. After anchoring, the boats landed on one of the islands, where they found twenty canoes. The people were on shore among the trees. Being encouraged by the Indians of Cariari, who accompanied the Spaniards, they soon advanced with confidence. Here, for the first time on this coast, the Spaniards met with specimens of pure gold; the natives wearing large plates of it suspended round their necks by cotton cords; they had ornaments likewise of guanin, rudely shaped like eagles. One of them exchanged a plate of gold, equal in value to ten ducats, for three hawks'-bells.†

On the following day, the boats proceeded to the main-land at the bottom of the bay. The country around was high and rough, and the villages were generally perched on the heights. They met with ten canoes of Indians, their heads decorated with garlands of flowers, and coronets formed of the claws of beasts and the quills of birds;‡ most of them had plates of gold about their necks, but refused to part with them. The Spaniards brought two of them to the admiral to serve as guides. One had a plate of pure gold worth fourteen ducats, another an eagle worth twenty-two ducats. Seeing the great value which the strangers set upon this metal, they assured them it was to be had in abundance within the distance of

* In some English maps this bay is called Almirante, or Carnabaco Bay. The channel by which Columbus entered is still called Boca del Almirante, or the Mouth of the Admiral.

† Journal of Porras, Navarrete, t. i. ‡ P. Martyr, decad. iii. lib. v

two days' journey; and mentioned various places along the coast, whence it was procured, particularly Veragua, which was about twenty-five leagues distant.*

The cupidity of the Spaniards was greatly excited, and they would gladly have remained to barter, but the admiral discouraged all disposition of the kind. He barely sought to collect specimens and information of the riches of the country, and then pressed forward in quest of the great object of his enterprise, the imaginary strait.

Sailing on the 17th of October, from this bay, or rather gulf, he began to coast this region of reputed wealth, since called the coast of Veragua; and after sailing about twelve leagues, arrived at a large river, which his son Fernando calls the Guaig. Here, on the boats being sent to land, about two hundred Indians appeared on the shore, armed with clubs, lances, and swords of palm-wood. The forests echoed with the sound of wooden drums, and the blasts of conch shells, their usual war signals. They rushed into the sea up to their waists, brandishing their weapons, and splashing the water at the Spaniards in token of defiance; but were soon pacified by gentle signs, and the intervention of the interpreters; and willingly bartered away their ornaments, giving seventeen plates of gold, worth one hundred and fifty ducats, for a few toys and trifles.

When the Spaniards returned the next day to renew their traffic, they found the Indians relapsed into hostility, sounding their drums and shells, and rushing forward to attack the boats. An arrow from a cross-bow, which wounded one of them in the arm, checked their fury, and on the discharge of a cannon, they fled with terror. Four of the Spaniards sprang on shore, pursuing and calling after them. They threw down their weapons, and came, awe-struck, and gentle as lambs, bringing three plates of gold, and meekly and thankfully receiving whatever was given in exchange.

Continuing along the coast, the admiral anchored in the mouth of another river, called the Catiba. Here likewise the sound of drums and conchs from among the forests, gave notice that the warriors were assembling. A canoe soon came off with two Indians, who, after exchanging a few words with the interpreters, entered the admiral's ship with fearless confidence; and being satisfied of the friendly inten-

* Columbus's Letter from Jamaica.

tions of the strangers, returned to their cacique with a favourable report. The boats landed, and the Spaniards were kindly received by the cacique. He was naked like his subjects, nor distinguished in any way from them, except by the great deference with which he was treated, and by a trifling attention paid to his personal comfort, being protected from a shower of rain by an immense leaf of a tree. He had a large plate of gold, which he readily gave in exchange, and permitted his people to do the same. Nineteen plates of pure gold were procured at this place. Here, for the first time in the New World, the Spaniards met with signs of solid architecture; finding a great mass of stucco, formed of stone and lime, a piece of which was retained by the admiral as a specimen,* considering it an indication of his approach to countries where the arts were in a higher state of cultivation.

He had intended to visit other rivers along this coast, but the wind coming on to blow freshly, he ran before it, passing in sight of five towns, where his interpreters assured him he might procure great quantities of gold. One they pointed out as Veragua, which has since given its name to the whole province. Here, they said, were the richest mines, and here most of the plates of gold were fabricated. On the following day, they arrived opposite a village called Cubiga, and here Columbus was informed that the country of gold terminated.† He resolved not to return to explore it, considering it as discovered, and its mines secured to the crown, and being anxious to arrive at the supposed strait, which he flattered himself could be at no great distance.

In fact, during his whole voyage along the coast, he had been under the influence of one of his frequent delusions. From the Indians met with at the island of Guanaja, just arrived from Yucatan, he had received accounts of some great, and, as far as he could understand, civilized nation in the interior. This intimation had been corroborated, as he imagined, by the various tribes with which he had since communicated. In a subsequent letter to the sovereigns, he informs them that all the Indians of this coast concurred in extolling the magnificence of the country of Ciguare, situated at ten days' journey, by land, to the west. The people of that region wore crowns, and bracelets, and anklets of gold, and garments embroidered with it. They used it for all their

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 92.

† Idem.

domestic purposes, even to the ornamenting and embossing of their seats and tables. On being shown coral, the Indians declared that the women of Ciguare wore bands of it about their heads and necks. Pepper and other spices being shown them, were equally said to abound there. They described it as a country of commerce, with great fairs and seaports, in which ships arrived armed with cannon. The people were warlike also, armed like the Spaniards with swords, bucklers, cuirasses, and cross-bows, and they were mounted on horses. Above all, Columbus understood from them that the sea continued round to Ciguare, and that ten days beyond it was the Ganges.

These may have been vague and wandering rumours concerning the distant kingdoms of Mexico and Peru, and many of the details may have been filled up by the imagination of Columbus. They made, however, a strong impression on his mind. He supposed that Ciguare must be some province belonging to the Grand Khan, or some other eastern potentate, and as the sea reached it, he concluded it was on the opposite side of a peninsula: bearing the same position with respect to Veragua that Fontarabia does with Tortosa in Spain, or Pisa with Venice in Italy. By proceeding farther eastward, therefore, he must soon arrive at a strait, like that of Gibraltar, through which he could pass into another sea, and visit this country of Ciguare, and, of course, arrive at the banks of the Ganges. He accounted for the circumstance of his having arrived so near to that river, by the idea which he had long entertained, that geographers were mistaken as to the circumference of the globe; that it was smaller than was generally imagined, and that a degree of the equinoctial line was but fifty-six miles and two-thirds.*

With these ideas Columbus determined to press forward, leaving the rich country of Veragua unexplored. Nothing could evince more clearly his generous ambition, than hurrying in this brief manner along a coast where wealth was to be gathered at every step, for the purpose of seeking a strait which, however it might produce vast benefit to mankind, could yield little else to himself than the glory of the discovery

CHAPTER V.—[1502.]

On the 2nd of November, the squadron anchored in a spa-

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Navarrete Collec., tom. i.

cious and commodious harbour, where the vessels could approach close to the shore without danger. It was surrounded by an elevated country; open and cultivated, with houses within bow-shot of each other, surrounded by fruit-trees, groves of palms, and fields producing maize, vegetables, and the delicious pine-apple, so that the whole neighbourhood had the mingled appearance of orchard and garden. Columbus was so pleased with the excellence of the harbour, and the sweetness of the surrounding country, that he gave it the name of Puerto Bello.* It is one of the few places along this coast which retain the appellation given by the illustrious discoverer. It is to be regretted that they have so generally been discontinued, as they were so often records of his feelings, and of circumstances attending the discovery.

For seven days they were detained in this port by heavy rain and stormy weather. The natives repaired from all quarters in canoes, bringing fruits and vegetables and balls of cotton, but there was no longer gold offered in traffic. The cacique, and seven of his principal chieftains, had small plates of gold hanging in their noses, but the rest of the natives appear to have been destitute of all ornaments of the kind. They were generally naked and painted red; the cacique alone was painted black.†

Sailing hence on the 9th of November, they proceeded eight leagues to the eastward, to the point since known as Nombre de Dios; but being driven back for some distance, they anchored in a harbour in the vicinity of three small islands. These, with the adjacent country of the main-land, were cultivated with fields of Indian corn, and various fruits and vegetables, whence Columbus called the harbour Puerto de Bastimentos, or Port of Provisions. Here they remained until the 23rd, endeavouring to repair their vessels, which leaked excessively. They were pierced in all parts by the teredo or worm which abounds in the tropical seas. It is of the size of a man's finger, and bores through the stoutest planks and timbers, so as soon to destroy any vessel that is not well coppered. After leaving this port, they touched at another called Guiga, where above three hundred of the natives appeared on the shore, some with provisions, and some with golden ornaments, which they offered in barter.

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 23. Hist. del Almirante.

† Peter Martyr, decad. iii. lib. iv.

Without making any stay, however, the admiral urged his way forward ; but rough and adverse winds again obliged him to take shelter in a small port, with a narrow entrance, not above twenty paces wide, beset on each side with reefs of rocks, the sharp points of which rose above the surface. Within, there was not room for more than five or six ships ; yet the port was so deep, that they had no good anchorage, unless they approached near enough to the land for a man to leap on shore.

From the smallness of the harbour, Columbus gave it the name of *El Retrete*, or The Cabinet. He had been betrayed into this inconvenient and dangerous port by the misrepresentations of the seamen sent to examine it, who were always eager to come to anchor, and have communication with the shore.*

The adjacent country was level and verdant, covered with herbage, but with few trees. The port was infested with alligators, which basked in the sunshine on the beach, filling the air with a powerful and musky odour. They were timorous, and fled on being attacked, but the Indians affirmed that if they found a man sleeping on the shore they would seize and drag him into the water. These alligators Columbus pronounced to be the same as the crocodiles of the Nile. For nine days the squadron was detained in this port, by tempestuous weather. The natives of this place were tall, well proportioned, and graceful ; of gentle and friendly manners, and brought whatever they possessed to exchange for European trinkets.

As long as the admiral had control over the actions of his people, the Indians were treated with justice and kindness, and everything went on amicably. The vicinity of the ships to land, however, enabled the seamen to get on shore in the night without license. The natives received them in their dwellings with their accustomed hospitality ; but the rough adventurers, instigated by avarice and lust, soon committed excesses that roused their generous hosts to revenge. Every night there were brawls and fights on shore, and blood was shed on both sides. The number of the Indians daily augmented by arrivals from the interior. They became more powerful and daring as they became more exasperated ; and seeing that the vessels lay close to the shore, approached in a great multitude to attack them.

* Las Casas, lib ii. cap. 23. Ist. del Almirante, cap. 92.

The admiral thought at first to disperse them by discharging cannon without ball, but they were not intimidated by the sound, regarding it as a kind of harmless thunder. They replied to it by yells and howlings, beating their lances and clubs against the trees and bushes in furious menace. The situation of the ships so close to the shore exposed them to assaults, and made the hostility of the natives unusually formidable. Columbus ordered a shot or two, therefore, to be discharged among them. When they saw the havoc made, they fled in terror, and offered no further hostility.*

The continuance of stormy winds from the east and the north-east, in addition to the constant opposition of the currents, disheartened the companions of Columbus, and they began to murmur against any further prosecution of the voyage. The seamen thought that some hostile spell was operating, and the commanders remonstrated against attempting to force their way in spite of the elements, with ships crazed and worm-eaten, and continually in need of repair. Few of his companions could sympathize with Columbus in his zeal for mere discovery. They were actuated by more gainful motives, and looked back with regret on the rich coast they had left behind, to go in search of an imaginary strait. It is probable that Columbus himself began to doubt the object of his enterprise. If he knew the details of the recent voyage of Bastides, he must have been aware that he had arrived from an opposite quarter to about the place where that navigator's exploring voyage from the east had terminated; consequently that there was but little probability of the existence of the strait he had imagined.*

At all events, he determined to relinquish the further pro-

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 23. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 92.

† It appears doubtful whether Columbus was acquainted with the exact particulars of that voyage, as they could scarcely have reached Spain previously to his sailing. Bastides had been seized in Hispaniola by Bobadilla, and was on board of that very fleet which was wrecked at the time that Columbus arrived off San Domingo. He escaped the fate that attended most of his companions, and returned to Spain, where he was rewarded by the sovereigns for his enterprise. Though some of his seamen had reached Spain previous to the sailing of Columbus, and had given a general idea of the voyage, it is doubtful whether he had transmitted his papers and charts. Porras, in his journal of the voyage of Columbus, states that they arrived at the place where the discoveries of Bastides terminated; but this information he may have obtained subsequently at San Domingo.

secution of his voyage eastward for the present, and to return to the coast of Veragua, to search for those mines of which he had heard so much, and seen so many indications. Should they prove equal to his hopes, he would have wherewithal to return to Spain in triumph and silence the reproaches of his enemies, even though he should fail in the leading object of his expedition.

Here, then, ended the lofty anticipations which had elevated Columbus above all mercenary interests; which had made him regardless of hardships and perils, and given an heroic character to the early part of this voyage. It is true, he had been in pursuit of a mere chimera, but it was the chimera of a splendid imagination and a penetrating judgment. If he was disappointed in his expectation of finding a strait through the Isthmus of Darien, it was because Nature herself had been disappointed, for she appears to have attempted to make one, but to have attempted it in vain.

CHAPTER VI.—[1502.]

ON the 5th of December, Columbus sailed from El Retrete, and relinquishing his course to the east, returned westward in search of the gold mines of Veragua. On the same evening he anchored in Puerto Bello, about ten leagues distant, whence departing on the succeeding day, the wind suddenly veered to the west, and began to blow directly adverse to the new course he had adopted. For three months he had been longing in vain for such a wind, and now it came merely to contradict him. Here was a temptation to resume his route to the east, but he did not dare trust to the continuance of the wind, which in these parts appeared but seldom to blow from that quarter. He resolved, therefore, to keep on in the present direction, trusting that the breeze would soon change again to the eastward.

In a little while the wind began to blow with dreadful violence, and to shift about in such a manner as to baffle all seamanship. Unable to reach Veragua, the ships were obliged to put back to Puerto Bello, and when they would have entered that harbour a sudden veering of the gale drove them from the land. For nine days they were blown and tossed about at the mercy of a furious tempest, in an unknown sea, and often exposed to the awful perils of a lee shore. It is wonderful that such open vessels, so crazed and decayed, could

outlive such a commotion of the elements. Nowhere is a storm so awful as between the tropics. The sea, according to the description of Columbus, boiled at times like a cauldron; at other times it ran in mountain waves, covered with foam. At night the raging billows resembled great surges of flame, owing to those luminous particles which cover the surface of the water in these seas, and throughout the whole course of the Gulf Stream. For a day and night the heavens glowed as a furnace with the incessant flashes of lightning, while the loud claps of thunder were often mistaken by the affrighted mariners for signal-guns of distress from their foundering companions. During the whole time, says Columbus, it poured down from the skies, not rain, but as it were a second deluge. The seamen were almost drowned in their open vessels. Haggard with toil and affright, some gave themselves over for lost; they confessed their sins to each other according to the rites of the Catholic religion, and prepared themselves for death; many, in their desperation, called upon death as a welcome relief from such overwhelming horrors. In the midst of this wild tumult of the elements, they beheld a new object of alarm; the ocean in one place became strangely agitated; the water was whirled up into a kind of pyramid or cone, while a livid cloud, tapering to a point, bent down to meet it. Joining together, they formed a vast column, which rapidly approached the ships, spinning along the surface of the deep, and drawing up the waters with a rushing sound. The affrighted mariners, when they beheld this water-spout advancing towards them, despaired of all human means to avert it, and began to repeat passages from St. John the Evangelist. The water-spout passed close by the ships without injuring them, and the trembling mariners attributed their escape to the miraculous efficacy of their quotations from the Scriptures.*

In this same night they lost sight of one of the caravels, and for three dark and stormy days gave it up for lost. At length, to their great relief, it rejoined the squadron, having lost its boat, and been obliged to cut its cable, in an attempt to anchor on a boisterous coast, and having since been driven to and fro by the storm. For one or two days there was an interval of calm, and the tempest-tossed mariners had time to breathe. They looked upon this tranquillity, however, as

* Las Casas, lib. ii cap. 24. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 90.

deceitful, and in their gloomy mood beheld every thing with a doubtful and foreboding eye. Great numbers of sharks, so abundant and ravenous in these latitudes, were seen about the ships. This was construed into an evil omen; for among the superstitions of the seas, it is believed that these voracious fish can smell dead bodies at a distance; that they have a kind of presentiment of their prey, and keep about vessels which have sick persons on board, or which are in danger of being wrecked. Several of these fish they caught, using large hooks fastened to chains, and sometimes baited merely with a piece of coloured cloth. From the maw of one they took out a living tortoise; from that of another the head of a shark, recently thrown from one of the ships; such is the indiscriminate voracity of these terrors of the ocean. Notwithstanding their superstitious fancies, the seamen were glad to use a part of these sharks for food, being very short of provisions. The length of the voyage had consumed the greater part of their sea stores; the heat and humidity of the climate, and the leakage of the ships, had damaged the remainder, and their biscuit was so filled with worms, that notwithstanding their hunger they were obliged to eat it in the dark, lest their stomachs should revolt at its appearance.*

At length, on the 17th, they were enabled to enter a port resembling a great canal, where they enjoyed three days of repose. The natives of this vicinity built their cabins in trees, on stakes or poles laid from one branch to another. The Spaniards supposed this to be through the fear of wild beasts, or of surprisals from neighbouring tribes; the different nations of these coasts being extremely hostile to one another. It may have been a precaution against inundations caused by floods from the mountains. After leaving this port, they were driven backwards and forwards by the changeable and tempestuous winds until the day after Christmas, when they sheltered themselves in another port, where they remained until the 3rd of January, 1503, repairing one of the caravels, and procuring wood, water, and a supply of maize or Indian corn. These measures being completed, they again put to sea, and on the day of Epiphany, to their great joy, anchored at the mouth of a river called by the natives Yebra, within a league or two of the river Veragua, and in the country said to be so rich in mines. To this river, from arriving at it on the

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 94

day of Epiphany, Columbus gave the name of Belen or Bethlehem.

For nearly a month he had endeavoured to accomplish the voyage from Puerto Bello to Veragua, a distance of about thirty leagues, and had encountered so many troubles and adversities, from changeable winds and currents, and boisterous tempests, that he gave this intermediate line of sea board the name of *La Costa de los Contrastes*, or The Coast of Contradictions.*

Columbus immediately ordered the mouths of the Belen, and of its neighbouring river of Veragua, to be sounded. The latter proved too shallow to admit his vessels, but the Belen was somewhat deeper, and it was thought they might enter it with safety. Seeing a village on the banks of the Belen, the admiral sent the boats on shore to procure information. On their approach, the inhabitants issued forth with weapons in hand to oppose their landing, but were readily pacified. They seemed unwilling to give any intelligence about the gold mines, but on being importuned, declared that they lay in the vicinity of the river of Veragua. To that river the boats were dispatched on the following day; they met with the reception so frequent along this coast, where many of the tribes were fierce and warlike, and are supposed to have been of Carib origin. As the boats entered the river, the natives sallied forth in their canoes, and others assembled in menacing style on the shores. The Spaniards, however, had brought with them an Indian of that coast, who put an end to this show of hostility by assuring his countrymen that the strangers came only to traffic with them.

The various accounts of the riches of these parts appeared to be confirmed by what the Spaniards saw and heard among these people. They procured in exchange for the veriest trifles, twenty plates of gold, with several pipes of the same metal and crude masses of ore. The Indians informed them that the mines lay among distant mountains, and that when they went in quest of it they were obliged to practice rigorous fasting and continence.†

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 94.

† A superstitious notion with respect to gold appears to have been very prevalent among the natives. The Indians of Hispaniola observed the same privations when they sought for it, abstaining from food and from sexual intercourse. Columbus, who seemed to look upon gold as

The favourable report brought by the boats determined the admiral to remain in the neighbourhood. The river Belen having the greatest depth, two of the caravels entered it on the 9th of January, and the two others on the following day at high tide, which on that coast does not rise above half a fathom.* The natives came to them in the most friendly manner, bringing great quantities of fish, with which that river abounded; they brought also golden ornaments to traffic, but continued to affirm that Veragua was the place whence the ore was procured.

The Adelantado, with his usual activity and enterprise, set off on the third day, with the boats well armed, to ascend the Veragua about a league and a half, to the residence of Quibian, the principal cacique. The chieftain, hearing of his intention, met him near the entrance of the river, attended by his subjects, in several canoes. He was tall, of powerful frame, and warlike demeanor: the interview was extremely amicable. The cacique presented the Adelantado with the golden ornaments which he wore, and received as magnificent presents a few European trinkets. They parted mutually well pleased. On the following day Quibian visited the ships, where he was hospitably entertained by the admiral. They could only communicate by signs, and as the chieftain was of a taciturn and cautious character, the interview was not of long duration. Columbus made him several presents; the followers of the cacique exchanged many jewels of gold for the usual trifles, and Quibian returned without much ceremony to his home.

On the 24th of January, there was a sudden swelling of the river. The waters came rushing from the interior like a vast torrent; the ships were forced from their anchors, tossed from side to side, and driven against each other; the foremast of the admiral's vessel was carried away, and the whole squadron was in imminent danger of shipwreck. While exposed to this peril in the river, they were prevented from running out to sea by a violent storm, and by the breakers

one of the sacred and mystic treasures of the earth, wished to encourage similar observances among the Spaniards; exhorting them to purify themselves for the research of the mines by fasting, prayer, and chastity. It is scarcely necessary to add, that his advice was but little attended to by his rapacious and sensual followers.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 95.

which beat upon the bar. This sudden rising of the river, Columbus attributed to some heavy fall of rain among a range of distant mountains, to which he had given the name of the mountains of San Christoval. The highest of these rose to a peak far above the clouds.*

The weather continued extremely boisterous for several days. At length, on the 6th of February, the sea being tolerably calm, the Adelantado, attended by sixty-eight men well armed, proceeded in the boats to explore the Veragua, and seek its reputed mines. When he ascended the river and drew near to the village of Quibian, situated on the side of a hill, the cacique came down to the bank to meet him, with a great train of his subjects, unarmed, and making signs of peace. Quibian was naked, and painted after the fashion of the country. One of his attendants drew a great stone out of the river, and washed and rubbed it carefully, upon which the chieftain seated himself as upon a throne.† He received the Adelantado with great courtesy; for the lofty, vigorous, and iron form of the latter, and his look of resolution and command, were calculated to inspire awe and respect in an Indian warrior. The cacique, however, was wary and politic. His jealousy was awakened by the intrusion of these strangers into his territories; but he saw the futility of any open attempt to resist them. He acceded to the wishes of the Adelantado, therefore, to visit the interior of his dominions, and furnished him with three guides to conduct him to the mines.

Leaving a number of his men to guard the boats, the Adelantado departed on foot with the remainder. After penetrating into the interior about four leagues and a half, they slept for the first night on the banks of a river, which seemed to water the whole country with its windings, as they had crossed it upwards of forty times. On the second day, they proceeded a league and a half farther, and arrived among thick forests, where their guides informed them the mines were situated. In fact, the whole soil appeared to be impregnated with gold. They gathered it from among the roots of the trees, which were of an immense height, and magnificent foliage. In the space of two hours each man had collected a little quantity of gold, gathered from the surface of the earth. Hence the guides took the Adelantado to the

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 25. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 95.

† Peter Martyr, decad. iii. lib. iv.

summit of a high hill, and showing him an extent of country as far as the eye could reach, assured him that the whole of it, to the distance of twenty days' journey westward, abounded in gold, naming to him several of the principal places.* The Adelantado gazed with enraptured eye over a vast wilderness of continued forest, where only here and there a bright column of smoke from amidst the trees, gave sign of some savage hamlet, or solitary wigwam, and the wild unappropriated aspect of this golden country delighted him more than if he had beheld it covered with towns and cities, and adorned with all the graces of cultivation. He returned with his party, in high spirits to the ships, and rejoiced the admiral with the favourable report of his expedition. It was soon discovered, however, that the politic Quibian had deceived them. His guides, by his instructions, had taken the Spaniards to the mines of a neighbouring cacique with whom he was at war, hoping to divert them into the territories of his enemy. The real mines of Veragua, it was said, were nearer, and much more wealthy.

The indefatigable Adelantado set forth again on the 16th of February, with an armed band of fifty-nine men, marching along the coast westward, a boat with fourteen men keeping pace with him. In this excursion he explored an extensive tract of country, and visited the dominions of various caciques, by whom he was hospitably entertained. He met continually with proofs of abundance of gold; the natives generally wearing great plates of it suspended round their necks by cotton cords. There were tracts of land, also, cultivated with Indian corn,—one of which continued for the extent of six leagues; and the country abounded with excellent fruits. He again heard of a nation in the interior, advanced in arts and arms, wearing clothing, and being armed like the Spaniards. Either these were vague and exaggerated rumours concerning the great empire of Peru, or the Adelantado had misunderstood the signs of his informants. He returned, after an absence of several days, with a great quantity of gold, and with animating accounts of the country. He had found no port, however, equal to the river of Belen, and was convinced that gold was nowhere to be met with in such abundance as in the district of Veragua.†

* Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.

† Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 25. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 95.

CHAPTER VII.—[1503.]

THE reports brought to Columbus, from every side, of the wealth of the neighbourhood; the golden tract of twenty days' journey in extent, shown to his brother from the mountain; the rumours of a rich and civilized country at no great distance, all convinced him that he had reached one of the most favoured parts of the Asiatic continent. Again his ardent mind kindled up with glowing anticipations. He fancied himself arrived at a fountain-head of riches, at one of the sources of the unbounded wealth of King Solomon. Josephus, in his work on the antiquities of the Jews, had expressed an opinion, that the gold for the building of the temple of Jerusalem had been procured from the mines of the Aurea Chersonesus. Columbus supposed the mines of Veragua to be the same. They lay, as he observed, "within the same distance from the pole and from the line;" and if the information which he fancied he had received from the Indians was to be depended on, they were situated about the same distance from the Ganges.*

Here, then, it appeared to him, was a place at which to found a colony, and establish a mart that should become the emporium of a vast tract of mines. Within the two first days after his arrival in the country, as he wrote to the sovereigns, he had seen more signs of gold than in Hispaniola during four years. That island, so long the object of his pride and hopes, had been taken from him, and was a scene of confusion; the pearl coast of Paria was ravaged by mere adventurers; all his plans concerning both had been defeated; but here was a far more wealthy region than either, and one calculated to console him for all his wrongs and deprivations.

On consulting with his brother, therefore, he resolved immediately to commence an establishment here, for the purpose of securing the possession of the country, and exploring and working the mines. The Adelantado agreed to remain with the greater part of the people, while the admiral should return to Spain for reinforcements and supplies. The greatest dispatch was employed in carrying this plan into immediate operation. Eighty men were selected to remain. They were separated into parties of about ten each, and commenced

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

building houses on a small eminence, situated on the bank of a creek, about a bow-shot within the mouth of the river Belen. The houses were of wood, thatched with the leaves of palmettes. One larger than the rest was to serve as a magazine, to receive their ammunition, artillery, and a part of their provisions. The principal part was stored, for greater security, on board one of the caravels, which was to be left for the use of the colony. It was true they had but a scanty supply of European stores remaining, consisting chiefly of biscuit, cheese, pulse, wine, oil, and vinegar; but the country produced bananas, plantains, pine-apples, cocoa-nuts, and other fruit. There was also maize in abundance, together with various roots, such as were found in Hispaniola. The rivers and sea-coast abounded with fish. The natives, too, made beverages of various kinds. One from the juice of the pine-apple, having a vinous flavour; another from maize, resembling beer; and another from the fruit of a species of palm-tree.* There appeared to be no danger, therefore, of suffering from famine. Columbus took pains to conciliate the goodwill of the Indians, that they might supply the wants of the colony during his absence, and he made many presents to Quibian, by way of reconciling him to this intrusion into his territories.†

The necessary arrangements being made for the colony, and a number of the houses being roofed, and sufficiently finished for occupation, the admiral prepared for his departure, when an unlooked-for obstacle presented itself. The heavy rains which had so long distressed him during this expedition had recently ceased. The torrents from the mountains were over; and the river which had once put him to such peril by its sudden swelling, had now become so shallow, that there was not above half a fathom water on the bar. Though his vessels were small, it was impossible to draw them over the sands, which choked the mouth of the river, for there was a swell rolling and tumbling upon them, enough to dash his worm-eaten barks to pieces. He was obliged, therefore, to wait with patience, and pray for the return of those rains which he had lately deplored.

In the meantime, Quibian beheld, with secret jealousy and indignation, these strangers erecting habitations, and manifesting an intention of establishing themselves in his territory.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 96.

† Letter from Jamaica.

ries. He was of a bold and warlike spirit, and had a great force of warriors at his command; and being ignorant of the vast superiority of the Europeans in the art of war, thought it easy, by a well-concerted artifice, to overwhelm and destroy them. He sent messengers round, and ordered all his fighting men to assemble at his residence on the river Veragua, under pretext of making war upon a neighbouring province. Numbers of the warriors, in repairing to his head-quarters, passed by the harbour. No suspicions of their real design were entertained by Columbus or his officers; but their movements attracted the attention of the chief notary, Diego Mendez, a man of a shrewd and prying character, and zealously devoted to the admiral. Doubting some treachery, he communicated his surmises to Columbus, and offered to coast along in an armed boat to the river Veragua, and reconnoitre the Indian camp. His offer was accepted, and he sallied from the river accordingly, but had scarcely advanced a league, when he descried a large force of Indians on the shore. Landing alone, and ordering that the boat should be kept afloat, he entered among them. There were about a thousand, armed and supplied with provisions, as if for an expedition. He offered to accompany them with his armed boat; his offer was declined with evident signs of impatience. Returning to his boat, he kept watch upon them all night, until, seeing they were vigilantly observed, they returned to Veragua.

Mendez hastened back to the admiral, and gave it as his opinion that the Indians had been on their way to surprise the Spaniards. The admiral was loth to believe in such treachery, and was desirous of obtaining clearer information, before he took any step that might interrupt the apparently good understanding that existed with the natives. Mendez now undertook, with a single companion, to penetrate by land to the head-quarters of Quibian, and endeavour to ascertain his intentions. Accompanied by one Rodrigo de Escobar, he proceeded on foot along the sea-board, to avoid the tangled forests, and arriving at the mouth of the Veragua, found two canoes with Indians, whom he prevailed on, by presents, to convey him and his companion to the village of the cacique. It was on the bank of the river; the houses were detached and interspersed among trees. There was a bustle of warlike preparation in the place, and the arrival of the two Spaniards evidently excited surprise and uneasiness. The residence of

the cacique was larger than the others, and situated on a hill which rose from the water's edge. Quibian was confined to the house by indisposition, having been wounded in the leg by an arrow. Mendez gave himself out as a surgeon come to cure the wound; with great difficulty and by force of presents he obtained permission to proceed. On the crest of the hill and in front of the cacique's dwelling, was a broad, level, open place, round which, on posts, were the heads of three hundred enemies slain in battle. Undismayed by this dismal array, Mendez and his companion crossed the place toward the den of this grim warrior. A number of women and children about the door fled into the house with piercing cries. A young and powerful Indian, son to the cacique, sallied forth in a violent rage, and struck Mendez a blow which made him recoil several paces. The latter pacified him by presents and assurances that he came to cure his father's wound, in proof of which he produced a box of ointment. It was impossible, however, to gain access to the cacique, and Mendez returned with all haste to the harbour to report to the admiral what he had seen and learnt. It was evident there was a dangerous plot impending over the Spaniards, and as far as Mendez could learn from the Indians who had taken him up the river in their canoe, the body of a thousand warriors which he had seen on his previous reconnoitering expedition, had actually been on a hostile enterprise against the harbour, but had given it up on finding themselves observed.

This information was confirmed by an Indian of the neighbourhood, who had become attached to the Spaniards and acted as interpreter. He revealed to the admiral the designs of his countrymen, which he had overheard. Quibian intended to surprise the harbour at night with a great force, burn the ships and houses, and make a general massacre. Thus forewarned, Columbus immediately set a double watch upon the harbour. The military spirit of the Adelantado suggested a bolder expedient. The hostile plan of Quibian was doubtless delayed by his wound, and in the meantime he would maintain the semblance of friendship. The Adelantado determined to march at once to his residence, capture him, his family, and principal warriors, send them prisoners to Spain, and take possession of his village.

With the Adelantado, to conceive a plan was to carry it into immediate execution, and, in fact, the impending danger

admitted of no delay. Taking with him seventy-four men, well armed, among whom was Diego Mendez, and being accompanied by the Indian interpreter who had revealed the plot, he set off on the 30th of March, in boats, to the mouth of the Veragua, ascended it rapidly, and before the Indians could have notice of his movements, landed at the foot of the hill on which the house of Quibian was situated.

Lest the cacique should take alarm and fly at the sight of a large force, he ascended the hill, accompanied by only five men, among whom was Diego Mendez; ordering the rest to come on, with great caution and secresy, two at a time, and at a distance from each other. On the discharge of an arquebuse, they were to surround the dwelling and suffer no one to escape.

As the Adelantado drew near to the house, Quibian came forth, and seating himself in the portal, desired the Adelantado to approach singly. Don Bartholomew now ordered Diego Mendez and his four companions to remain at a little distance, and when they should see him take the cacique by the arm, to rush immediately to his assistance. He then advanced with his Indian interpreter, through whom a short conversation took place, relative to the surrounding country. The Adelantado then adverted to the wound of the cacique, and pretending to examine it, took him by the arm. At the concerted signal, four of the Spaniards rushed forward, the fifth discharged the arquebuse. The cacique attempted to get loose, but was firmly held in the iron grasp of the Adelantado. Being both men of great muscular power, a violent struggle ensued. Don Bartholomew, however, maintained the mastery, and Diego Mendez and his companions coming to his assistance, Quibian was bound hand and foot. At the report of the arquebuse, the main body of the Spaniards surrounded the house, and seized most of those who were within, consisting of fifty persons, old and young. Among these were the wives and children of Quibian, and several of his principal subjects. No one was wounded, for there was no resistance, and the Adelantado never permitted wanton bloodshed. When the poor savages saw their prince a captive, they filled the air with lamentations; imploring his release, and offering for his ransom a great treasure, which they said lay concealed in a neighbouring forest.

The Adelantado was deaf to their supplications and their

offers. Quibian was too dangerous a foe to be set at liberty; as a prisoner, he would be a hostage for the security of the settlement. Anxious to secure his prize, he determined to send the cacique and the other prisoners on board of the boats, while he remained on shore with a part of his men to pursue the Indians who had escaped. Juan Sanchez, the principal pilot of the squadron, a powerful and spirited man, volunteered to take charge of the captives. On committing the chieftain to his care, the Adelantado warned him to be on his guard against any attempt at rescue or escape. The sturdy pilot replied that if the cacique got out of his hands, he would give them leave to pluck out his beard, hair by hair; with this vaunt he departed, bearing off Quibian bound hand and foot. On arriving at the boat, he secured him by a strong cord to one of the benches. It was a dark night. As the boat proceeded down the river, the cacique complained piteously of the painfulness of his bonds. The rough heart of the pilot was touched with compassion, and he loosened the cord by which Quibian was tied to the bench, keeping the end of it in his hand. The wily Indian watched his opportunity, and when Sanchez was looking another way, plunged into the water and disappeared. So sudden and violent was his plunge, that the pilot had to let go the cord, lest he should be drawn in after him. The darkness of the night, and the bustle which took place, in preventing the escape of the other prisoners, rendered it impossible to pursue the cacique, or even to ascertain his fate. Juan Sanchez hastened to the ships with the residue of the captives, deeply mortified at being thus outwitted by a savage.

The Adelantado remained all night on shore. The following morning, when he beheld the wild, broken, and mountainous nature of the country, and the scattered situation of the habitations, perched on different heights, he gave up the search after the Indians, and returned to the ships with the spoils of the cacique's mansion. These consisted of bracelets, anklets, and massive plates of gold, such as were worn round the neck, together with two golden coronets. The whole amounted to the value of three hundred ducats.* One fifth of the booty was set apart for the crown. The residue was shared among those concerned in the enterprise. To the

* Equivalent to one thousand two hundred and eighty-one dollars at the present day.

Adelantado one of the coronets was assigned as a trophy of his exploit.*

CHAPTER VIII.—[1503.]

It was hoped by Columbus that the vigorous measure of the Adelantado would strike terror into the Indians of the neighbourhood, and prevent any further designs upon the settlement. Quibian had probably perished. If he survived, he must be disheartened by the captivity of his family, and several of his principal subjects, and fearful of their being made responsible for any act of violence on his part. The heavy rains, therefore, which fall so frequently among the mountains of this isthmus, having again swelled the river, Columbus made his final arrangements for the management of the colony, and having given much wholesome counsel to the Spaniards who were to remain, and taken an affectionate leave of his brother, got under weigh with three of the caravels, leaving the fourth for the use of the settlement. As the water was still shallow at the bar, the ships were lightened of a great part of their cargoes, and towed out by the boats in calm weather, grounding repeatedly. When fairly released from the river, and their cargoes re-shipped, they anchored within a league of the shore, to await a favourable wind. It was the intention of the admiral to touch at Hispaniola, on his way to Spain, and send thence supplies and reinforcements. The wind continuing adverse, he sent a boat on shore on the 6th of April, under the command of Diego Tristan, captain of one of the caravels, to procure wood and water, and make some communications to the Adelantado. The expedition of this boat proved fatal to its crew, but was providential to the settlement.

The cacique Quibian had not perished as some had supposed. Though both hands and feet were bound, yet in the water he was as in his natural element. Plunging to the bottom, he swam below the surface until sufficiently distant

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 98. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 27. Many of the particulars of this chapter are from a short narrative given by Diego Mendez, and inserted in his last will and testament. It is written in a strain of simple egotism, as he represents himself as the principal and almost the sole actor in every affair. The facts, however, have all the air of veracity, and being given on such a solemn occasion, the document is entitled to high credit. He will be found to distinguish himself on another hazardous and important occasion in the course of this history.—Vide Navarrete, Collec., tom. i.

to be out of view in the darkness of the night, and then emerging made his way to shore. The desolation of his home, and the capture of his wives and children, filled him with anguish; but when he saw the vessels in which they were confined leaving the river, and bearing them off, he was transported with fury and despair. Determined on a signal vengeance, he assembled a great number of his warriors, and came secretly upon the settlement. The thick woods by which it was surrounded, enabled the Indians to approach unseen within ten paces. The Spaniards, thinking the enemy completely discomfited and dispersed, were perfectly off their guard. Some had strayed to the sea-shore, to take a farewell look at the ships; some were on board of the caravel in the river; others were scattered about the houses: on a sudden, the Indians rushed from their concealment with yells and howlings, launched their javelins through the roofs of palm-leaves, hurled them in at the windows, or thrust them through the crevices of the logs which composed the walls. As the houses were small, several of the inhabitants were wounded. On the first alarm, the Adelantado seized a lance, and sallied forth with seven or eight of his men. He was joined by Diego Mendez and several of his companions, and they drove the enemy into the forest, killing and wounding several of them. The Indians kept up a brisk fire of darts and arrows from among the trees, and made furious sallies with their war-clubs; but there was no withstanding the keen edge of the Spanish weapons, and a fierce blood-hound being let loose upon them, completed their terror. They fled howling through the forest, leaving a number dead on the field, having killed one Spaniard, and wounded eight. Among the latter was the Adelantado, who received a slight thrust of a javelin in the breast.

Diego Tristan arrived in his boat during the contest, but feared to approach the land, lest the Spaniards should rush on board in such numbers as to sink him. When the Indians had been put to flight, he proceeded up the river in quest of fresh water, disregarding the warnings of those on shore, that he might be cut off by the enemy in their canoes.

The river was deep and narrow, shut in by high banks, and overhanging trees. The forests on each side were thick and impenetrable; so that there was no landing-place, excepting here and there where a footpath wound down to

some fishing-ground, or some place where the natives kept their canoes.

The boat had ascended about a league above the village, to a part of the river where it was completely overshadowed by lofty banks and spreading trees. Suddenly, yells and war-whoops, and blasts of conch-shells rose on every side. Light canoes darted forth in every direction from dark hollows, and overhanging thickets, each dexterously managed by a single savage, while others stood up brandishing and hurling their lances. Missiles were launched also from the banks of the river, and the branches of the trees. There were eight sailors in the boat, and three soldiers. Galled and wounded by darts and arrows, confounded by the yells and blasts of conchs, and the assaults which thickened from every side, they lost all presence of mind, neglected to use either oars or fire-arms, and only sought to shelter themselves with their bucklers. Diego Tristan had received several wounds; but still displayed great intrepidity, and was endeavouring to animate his men, when a javelin pierced his right eye, and struck him dead. The canoes now closed upon the boat, and a general massacre ensued. But one Spaniard escaped, Juan de Noya, a cooper of Seville. Having fallen overboard in the midst of the action, he dived to the bottom, swam under water, gained the bank of the river unperceived, and made his way down to the settlement, bringing tidings of the massacre of his captain and comrades.

The Spaniards were completely dismayed, were few in number, several of them were wounded, and they were in the midst of tribes of exasperated savages, far more fierce and warlike than those to whom they had been accustomed. The admiral being ignorant of their misfortunes, would sail away without yielding them assistance, and they would be left to sink beneath the overwhelming force of barbarous foes, or to perish with hunger on this inhospitable coast. In their despair they determined to take the caravel which had been left with them, and abandon the place altogether. The Adelantado remonstrated with them in vain; nothing would content them but to put to sea immediately. Here a new alarm awaited them. The torrents having subsided, the river was again shallow, and it was impossible for the caravel to pass over the bar. They now took the boat of the caravel, to bear tidings of their danger to the admiral, and implore

him not to abandon them; but the wind was boisterous, a high sea was rolling, and a heavy surf, tumbling and breaking at the mouth of the river, prevented the boat from getting out. Horrors increased upon them. The mangled bodies of Diego Tristan and his men came floating down the stream, and drifting about the harbour, with flights of crows, and other carrion birds, feeding on them, and hovering, and screaming, and fighting about their prey. The forlorn Spaniards contemplated this scene with shuddering; it appeared ominous of their own fate.

In the meantime the Indians, elated by their triumph over the crew of the boat, renewed their hostilities. Whoops and yells answered each other from various parts of the neighbourhood. The dismal sound of conchs and war-drums in the deep bosom of the woods, showed that the number of the enemy was continually augmenting. They would rush forth occasionally upon straggling parties of Spaniards, and make partial attacks upon the houses. It was considered no longer safe to remain in the settlement, the close forest which surrounded it being a covert for the approaches of the enemy. The Adelantado chose, therefore, an open place on the shore at some distance from the wood. Here he caused a kind of bulwark to be made of the boat of the caravel, and of chests, casks, and similar articles. Two places were left open as embrasures, in which were placed a couple of falconets, or small pieces of artillery, in such a manner as to command the neighbourhood. In this little fortress the Spaniards shut themselves up; its walls were sufficient to screen them from the darts and arrows of the Indians, but mostly they depended upon their fire-arms, the sound of which struck dismay into the savages, especially when they saw the effect of the balls, splintering and rending the trees around them, and carrying havoc to such a distance. The Indians were thus kept in check for the present, and deterred from venturing from the forest; but the Spaniards, exhausted by constant watching and incessant alarms, anticipated all kinds of evil when their ammunition should be exhausted, or they should be driven forth by hunger to seek for food.*

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 98. Las Casas, lib. ii. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Relation of Diego Mendez, and Journal of Porras, Navarrete tom. i.

CHAPTER IX.—[1503.]

WHILE the Adelantado and his men were exposed to such imminent peril on shore, great anxiety prevailed on board of the ships. Day after day elapsed without the return of Diego Tristan and his party, and it was feared some disaster had befallen them. Columbus would have sent on shore to make inquiries; but there was only one boat remaining for the service of the squadron, and he dared not risk it in the rough sea and heavy surf. A dismal circumstance occurred to increase the gloom and uneasiness of the crews. On board of one of the caravels were confined the family and household of the cacique Quibian. It was the intention of Columbus to carry them to Spain, trusting that as long as they remained in the power of the Spaniards, their tribe would be deterred from further hostilities. They were shut up at night in the forecastle of the caravel, the hatchway of which was secured by a strong chain and padlock. As several of the crew slept upon the hatch, and it was so high as to be considered out of reach of the prisoners, they neglected to fasten the chain. The Indians discovered their negligence. Collecting a quantity of stones from the ballast of the vessel, they made a great heap directly under the hatchway. Several of the most powerful warriors mounted upon the top, and bending their backs, by a sudden and simultaneous effort, forced up the hatch, flinging the seamen who slept upon it to the opposite side of the ship. In an instant the greater part of the Indians sprang forth, plunged into the sea, and swam for shore. Several, however, were prevented from sallying forth; others were seized on the deck, and forced back into the forecastle; the hatchway was carefully chained down, and a guard was set for the rest of the night. In the morning, when the Spaniards went to examine the captives, they were all found dead. Some had hanged themselves with the ends of ropes, their knees touching the floor; others had strangled themselves by straining the cords tight with their feet. Such was the fierce, unconquerable spirit of these people, and their horror of the white men.*

The escape of the prisoners occasioned great anxiety to the admiral, fearing they would stimulate their countrymen to some violent act of vengeance; and he trembled for the safety

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 99.

of his brother. Still this painful mystery reigned over the land. The boat of Diego Tristan did not return, and the raging surf prevented all communication. At length, one Pedro Ledesma, a pilot of Seville, a man of about forty-five years of age, and of great strength of body and mind, offered if the boat would take him to the edge of the surf, to swim to shore, and bring off news. He had been piqued by the achievement of the Indian captives, in swimming to land at a league's distance, in defiance of sea and surf. "Surely," he said, "if they dare venture so much to procure their individual liberties, I ought to brave at least a part of the danger, to save the lives of so many companions." His offer was gladly accepted by the admiral, and was boldly accomplished. The boat approached with him as near to the surf as safety would permit, where it was to await his return. Here, stripping himself, he plunged into the sea, and after buffeting for some time with the breakers, sometimes rising upon their surges, sometimes buried beneath them and dashed upon the sand, he succeeded in reaching the shore.

He found his countrymen shut up in their forlorn fortress, beleaguered by savage foes, and learnt the tragical fate of Diego Tristan and his companions. Many of the Spaniards, in their horror and despair, had thrown off all subordination, refused to assist in any measure that had in view a continuance in this place, and thought of nothing but escape. When they beheld Ledesma, a messenger from the ships, they surrounded him with frantic eagerness, urging him to implore the admiral to take them on board, and not abandon them on a coast where their destruction was inevitable. They were preparing canoes to take them to the ships, when the weather should moderate, the boat of the caravel being too small, and swore that, if the admiral refused to take them on board, they would embark in the caravel, as soon as it could be extricated from the river, and abandon themselves to the mercy of the seas, rather than remain upon that fatal coast.

Having heard all that his forlorn countrymen had to say, and communicated with the Adelantado and his officers, Ledesma set out on his perilous return. He again braved the surf and the breakers, reached the boat which was waiting for him, and was conveyed back to the ships. The disastrous tidings from the land filled the heart of the admiral with grief and alarm. To leave his brother on shore, would be to

expose him to the mutiny of his own men, and the ferocity of the savages. He could spare no reinforcement from his ships, the crews being so much weakened by the loss of Tristan and his companions. Rather than the settlement should be broken up, he would gladly have joined the Adelantado with all his people; but in such ease how could intelligence be conveyed to the sovereigns of this important discovery, and how could supplies be obtained from Spain? There appeared no alternative, therefore, but to embark all the people, abandon the settlement for the present, and return at some future day, with a force competent to take secure possession of the country.* The state of the weather rendered the practicability even of this plan doubtful. The wind continued high, the sea rough, and no boat could pass between the squadron and the land. The situation of the ships was itself a matter of extreme solicitude. Feebly manned, crazed by storms, and ready to fall to pieces from the ravages of the teredo, they were anchored on a lee shore, with a boisterous wind and sea, in a climate subject to tempests, and where the least augmentation of the weather might drive them among the breakers. Every hour increased the anxiety of Columbus for his brother, his people, and his ships, and each hour appeared to render the impending dangers more imminent. Days of constant perturbation, and nights of sleepless anxiety, preyed upon a constitution broken by age, by maladies and hardships, and produced a fever of the mind, in which he was visited by one of those mental hallucinations deemed by him mysterious and supernatural. In a letter to the sovereigns he gives a solemn account of a kind of vision by which he was comforted in a dismal night, when full of despondency and tossing on a couch of pain:—

“Wearied and sighing,” says he, “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 deli-

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

vered 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 a shepherd, he made a king in Judea? 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 an hundred years when he begat Isaac; and was Sarah youthful? Thou urged despondingly for succour. Answer! who hath afflicted thee so much, and so many times?—God, or the world? The privileges and promises which God hath made thee he hath never broken; neither hath he said, after having received thy services, that his meaning was different, and to be understood in a different sense. He performs to the very letter. 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 all 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 spake to me, finished by saying, 'Fear not! Confide! All these tribulations are written in marble, and not without cause.'"

Such is the singular statement which Columbus gave to the sovereigns of his supposed vision. It has been suggested that this was a mere ingenious fiction, adroitly devised by him to convey a lesson to his prince; but such an idea is inconsistent with his character. He was too deeply imbued with awe of the Deity, and with reverence for his sovereign, to make use of such an artifice. The words here spoken to him by the supposed voice, are truths which dwelt upon his mind, and grieved his spirit during his waking hours. It is natural that they should recur vividly and coherently in his feverish dreams; and in recalling and relating a dream one is unconsciously apt to give it a little coherency. Besides, Columbus had a solemn belief that he was a peculiar instrument in the hands of Providence, which, together with a deep tinge of superstition, common to the age, made him prone to mistake every striking dream for a revelation. He is not to

be measured by the same standard with ordinary men in ordinary circumstances. It is difficult for the mind to realize his situation, and to conceive the exaltations of spirit to which he must have been subjected. The artless manner in which, in his letter to the sovereigns, he mingles up the rhapsodies and dreams of his imagination, with simple facts, and sound practical observations, pouring them forth with a kind of scriptural solemnity and poetry of language, is one of the most striking illustrations of a character richly compounded of extraordinary and apparently contradictory elements.

Immediately after this supposed vision, and after a duration of nine days, the boisterous weather subsided, the sea became calm, and the communication with the land was restored. It was found impossible to extricate the remaining caravel from the river; but every exertion was made to bring off the people and the property, before there should be a return of bad weather. In this, the exertions of the zealous Diego Mendez were eminently efficient. He had been for some days preparing for such an emergency. Cutting up the sails of the caravel, he made great sacks to receive the biscuit. He lashed two Indian canoes together with spars, so that they could not be overturned by the waves, and made a platform on them capable of sustaining a great burden. This kind of raft was laden repeatedly with the stores, arms, and ammunition, which had been left on shore, and with the furniture of the caravel, which was entirely dismantled. When well freighted, it was towed by the boat to the ships. In this way, by constant and sleepless exertions, in the space of two days, almost everything of value was transported on board the squadron, and little else left than the hull of the caravel, stranded, decayed, and rotting in the river. Diego Mendez superintended the whole embarkation with unwearied watchfulness and activity. He, and five companions, were the last to leave the shore, remaining all night at their perilous post, and embarking in the morning with the last cargo of effects.

Nothing could equal the transports of the Spaniards, when they found themselves once more on board of the ships, and saw a space of ocean between them and those forests which had lately seemed destined to be their graves. The joy of their comrades seemed little inferior to their own; and the perils and hardships which yet surrounded them, were for-

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gotten for a time in mutual congratulations. The admiral was so much impressed with a sense of the high services rendered by Diego Mendez, throughout the late time of danger and disaster, that he gave him the command of the caravel, vacant by the death of the unfortunate Diego Tristan.*

CHAPTER X.—[1503.]

THE wind at length becoming favourable, Columbus set sail, towards the end of April, from the disastrous coast of Veragua. The wretched condition of the ships, the enfeebled state of the crews, and the scarcity of provisions, determined him to make the best of his way to Hispaniola, where he might refit his vessels and procure the necessary supplies for the voyage to Europe. To the surprise of his pilot and crews, however, on making sail, he stood again along the coast to the eastward, instead of steering north, which they considered the direct route to Hispaniola. They fancied that he intended to proceed immediately for Spain, and murmured loudly at the madness of attempting so long a voyage, with ships destitute of stores and consumed by the worms. Columbus and his brother, however, had studied the navigation of those seas with a more observant and experienced eye. They considered it advisable to gain a considerable distance to the east, before standing across for Hispaniola, to avoid being swept away, far below their destined port, by the strong currents setting constantly to the west.† The admiral, however, did not impart his reasons to the pilots, being anxious to keep the knowledge of his routes as much to himself as possible, seeing that there were so many adventurers crowding into the field, and ready to follow on his track. He even took from the mariners their charts,‡ and boasts, in a letter to the sovereigns, that none of his pilots would be able to retrace the route to and from Veragua, nor to describe where it was situated.

Disregarding the murmurs of his men, therefore, he continued along the coast eastward as far as Puerto Bello. Here he was obliged to leave one of the caravels, being so pierced

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 99, 100. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 29. Relacion por Diego Mendez. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Journal of Porras, Navarrete, Collec., tom. i.

† Hist. del Almirante. Letter from Jamaica.

‡ Journal of Porras, Navarrete, Collec., t. i.

by worms, that it was impossible to keep her afloat. All the crews were now crowded into two caravels, and these were little better than mere wrecks. The utmost exertions were necessary to keep them free from water; while the incessant labour of the pumps bore hard on men enfeebled by scanty diet, and dejected by various hardships. Continuing onward, they passed Port Retrete, and a number of islands to which the admiral gave the name of Las Barbas, now termed the Mulatas, a little beyond Point Blas. Here he supposed that he had arrived at the province of Mangi in the territories of the Grand Khan, described by Marco Polo as adjoining to Cathay.* He continued on about ten leagues farther, until he approached the entrance of what is at present called the Gulf of Darien. Here he had a consultation with his captains and pilots, who remonstrated at his persisting in this struggle against contrary winds and currents, representing the lamentable plight of the ships, and the infirm state of the crews.† Bidding farewell, therefore, to the main-land, he stood northward on the 1st of May, in quest of Hispaniola. As the wind was easterly, with a strong current setting to the west, he kept as near the wind as possible. So little did his pilots know of their situation, that they supposed themselves to the east of the Caribbee Islands, whereas the admiral feared that, with all his exertions, he should fall to the westward of Hispaniola.‡ His apprehensions proved to be well founded; for, on the 10th of the month, he came in sight of two small low islands to the northwest of Hispaniola, to which, from the great quantities of tortoises seen about them, he gave the name of the Tortugas; they are now known as the Caymans. Passing wide of these, and continuing directly north, he found himself, on the 30th of May, among the cluster of islands on the south side of Cuba, to which he had formerly given the name of the Queen's Gardens; having been carried between eight and nine degrees west of his destined port. Here he cast anchor near one of the Keys, about ten leagues from the main island. His crews were suffering excessively through scanty provisions and great fatigue; nothing was left of the sea-stores but a little biscuit, oil, and vinegar; and they were obliged to labour incessantly at the pumps, to keep the vessels afloat. They had scarcely

* Letter from Jamaica.

† Testimony of Petra de Ledesma. *Pleito de los Colonos.*

‡ Letter from Jamaica.

anchored at these islands, when there came on, at midnight, a sudden tempest, of such violence, that according to the strong expression of Columbus, it seemed as if the world would dissolve.* They lost three of their anchors almost immediately, and the caravel *Bermuda* was driven with such violence upon the ship of the admiral, that the bow of the one, and the stern of the other, were greatly shattered. The sea running high, and the wind being boisterous, the vessels chafed and injured each other dreadfully, and it was with great difficulty that they were separated. One anchor only remained to the admiral's ship, and this saved him from being driven upon the rocks; but at daylight the cable was found nearly worn asunder. Had the darkness continued an hour longer, he could scarcely have escaped shipwreck.†

At the end of six days, the weather having moderated, he resumed his course, standing eastward for Hispaniola: "his people," as he says, "dismayed and down-hearted; almost all his anchors lost, and his vessels bored as full of holes as a honey-comb." After struggling against contrary winds and the usual currents from the east, he reached Cape Cruz, and anchored at a village in the province of Macaca,‡ where he had touched in 1494, in his voyage along the southern coast of Cuba. Here he was detained by head winds for several days, during which he was supplied with cassava bread by the natives. Making sail again, he endeavoured to beat up to Hispaniola; but every effort was in vain. The winds and currents continued adverse; the leaks continually gained upon his vessels, though the pumps were kept incessantly going, and the seamen even baled the water out with buckets and kettles. The admiral now stood, in despair, for the island of Jamaica, to seek some secure port; for there was imminent danger of foundering at sea. On the eve of St. John, the 23rd of June, they put into Puerto Bueno, now called Dry Harbour, but met with none of the natives from whom they could obtain provisions, nor was there any fresh water to be had in the neighbourhood. Suffering from hunger and thirst, they sailed eastward, on the following day, to another harbour, to which the admiral on his first visit to the island had given the name of Port Santa Gloria.

Here, at last, Columbus had to give up his long and ardu-

* Letter from Jamaica.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 100. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

‡ Hist. del Almirante. Journal of Porras.

ous struggle against the unremitting persecution of the elements. His ships, reduced to mere wrecks, could no longer keep the sea, and were ready to sink even in port. He ordered them, therefore, to be run aground, within a bow-shot of the shore, and fastened together, side by side. They soon filled with water to the deck. Thatched cabins were then erected at the prow and stern for the accommodation of the crews, and the wreck was placed in the best possible state of defence. Thus castled in the sea, he trusted to be able to repel any sudden attack of the natives, and at the same time to keep his men from roving about the neighbourhood and indulging in their usual excesses. No one was allowed to go on shore without especial license, and the utmost precaution was taken to prevent any offence being given to the Indians. Any exasperation of them might be fatal to the Spaniards in their present forlorn situation. A firebrand thrown into their wooden fortress might wrap it in flames, and leave them defenceless amidst hostile thousands.

BOOK XVI.

CHAPTER I.—[1503.]

THE island of Jamaica was extremely populous and fertile; and the harbour soon swarmed with Indians, who brought provisions to barter with the Spaniards. To prevent any disputes in purchasing or sharing these supplies, two persons were appointed to superintend all bargains, and the provisions thus obtained were divided every evening among the people. This arrangement had a happy effect in promoting a peaceful intercourse. The stores thus furnished, however, coming from a limited neighbourhood of improvident beings, were not sufficient for the necessities of the Spaniards, and were so irregular as often to leave them in pinching want. They feared, too, that the neighbourhood might soon be exhausted, in which case they should be reduced to famine. In this emergency, Diego Mendez stepped forward with his accustomed zeal, and volunteered to set off, with three men, on a foraging expedition about the island. His offer being gladly accepted by the admiral, he departed with his comrades well armed. He was everywhere treated with the utmost kindness by the natives. They took him to their houses, set meat and drink before him and his companions, and performed

all the rites of savage hospitality. Mendez made an arrangement with the cacique of a numerous tribe, that his subjects should hunt and fish, and make cassava bread, and bring a quantity of provisions every day to the harbour. They were to receive, in exchange, knives, combs, beads, fish-hooks, hawks'-bells, and other articles, from a Spaniard, who was to reside among them for that purpose. The agreement being made, Mendez dispatched one of his comrades to apprise the admiral. He then pursued his journey three leagues further, when he made a similar arrangement, and dispatched another of his companions to the admiral. Proceeding onward, about thirteen leagues from the ships, he arrived at the residence of another cacique, called Huarco, where he was generously entertained. The cacique ordered his subjects to bring a large quantity of provisions, for which Mendez paid him on the spot, and made arrangements for a like supply at stated intervals. He dispatched his third companion with this supply to the admiral, requesting, as usual, that an agent might be sent to receive and pay for the regular deliveries of provisions.

Mendez was now left alone, but he was fond of any enterprise that gave individual distinction. He requested of the cacique two Indians to accompany him to the end of the island; one to carry his provisions, and the other to bear the hammae, or cotton net in which he slept. These being granted, he pushed resolutely forward along the coast, until he reached the eastern extremity of Jamaica. Here he found a powerful cacique of the name of Ameyro. Mendez had buoyant spirits, great address, and an ingratiating manner with the savages. He and the cacique became great friends, exchanged names, which is a kind of token of brotherhood, and Mendez engaged him to furnish provisions to the ships. He then bought an excellent canoe of the cacique, for which he gave a splendid brass basin, a short frock or cassock, and one of the two shirts which formed his stock of linen. The cacique furnished him with six Indians to navigate his bark, and they parted mutually well pleased. Diego Mendez coasted his way back, touching at the various places where he had made his arrangements. He found the Spanish agents already arrived at them, loaded his canoe with provisions, and returned in triumph to the harbour, where he was received with acclamations by his comrades, and with

open arms by the admiral. The provisions he brought were a most seasonable supply, for the Spaniards were absolutely fasting; and thenceforward Indians arrived daily, well laden, from the marts which he had established.*

The immediate wants of his people being thus provided for, Columbus revolved, in his anxious mind, the means of getting from this island. His ships were beyond the possibility of repair, and there was no hope of any chance sail arriving to his relief, on the shores of a savage island, in an unfrequented sea. The most likely measure appeared to be, to send notice of his situation to Ovando, the governor at San Domingo, entreating him to dispatch a vessel to his relief. But how was this message to be conveyed? The distance between Jamaica and Hispaniola was forty leagues, across a gulf swept by contrary currents; there were no means of transporting a messenger, except in the light canoes of the savages; and who would undertake so hazardous a voyage in a frail bark of the kind? Suddenly the idea of Diego Mendez, and the canoe he had recently purchased, presented itself to the mind of Columbus. He knew the ardour and intrepidity of Mendez, and his love of distinction by any hazardous exploit. Taking him aside, therefore, he addressed him in a manner calculated both to stimulate his zeal, and flatter his self-love. Mendez himself gives an artless account of this interesting conversation, which is full of character.

“Diego Mendez, my son,” said the venerable admiral, “none of those whom I have here understand the great peril in which we are placed, excepting you and myself. We are few in number, and these savage Indians are many, and of fickle and irritable natures. On the least provocation they may throw firebrands from the shore, and consume us in our straw-thatched cabins. The arrangement which you have made with them for provisions, and which at present they fulfil so cheerfully, to-morrow they may break in their caprice, and may refuse to bring us anything; nor have we the means to compel them by force, but are entirely at their pleasure. I have thought of a remedy, if it meets with your views. In this canoe, which you have purchased, some one may pass over to Hispaniola, and procure a ship, by which we may all be delivered from this great peril into which we have fallen. Tell me your opinion on the matter.”

* *Relacion por Diego Mendez. Navarrete, tom. i.*

"To this," says Diego Mendez, "I replied: 'Señor, the danger in which we are placed, I well know, is far greater than is easily conceived. As to passing from this island to Hispaniola, in so small a vessel as a canoe, I hold it not merely difficult, but impossible; since it is necessary to traverse a gulf of forty leagues, and between islands where the sea is extremely impetuous, and seldom in repose. I know not who there is would adventure upon so extreme a peril.'"

Columbus made no reply, but from his looks and the nature of his silence, Mendez plainly perceived himself to be the person whom the admiral had in view; "Whereupon," continues he, "I added, 'Señor, I have many times put my life in peril of death to save you and all those who are here, and God has hitherto preserved me in a miraculous manner. There are, nevertheless, murmurers, who say that your Excellency intrusts to me all affairs wherein honour is to be gained, while there are others in your company who would execute them as well as I do. Therefore I beg that you would summon all the people, and propose this enterprise to them, to see if among them there is any one who will undertake it, which I doubt. If all decline it, I will then come forward and risk my life in your service, as I many times have done.'"

The admiral gladly humoured the wishes of the worthy Mendez, for never was simple egotism accompanied by more generous and devoted loyalty. On the following morning, the crew was assembled, and the proposition publicly made. Every one drew back at the thoughts of it, pronouncing it the height of rashness. Upon this, Diego Mendez stepped forward. "Señor," said he, "I have but one life to lose, yet I am willing to venture it for your service and for the good of all here present, and I trust in the protection of God, which I have experienced on so many other occasions."

Columbus embraced this zealous follower, who immediately set about preparing for his expedition. Drawing his canoe on shore, he put on a false keel, nailed weather-boards along the bow and stern, to prevent the sea from breaking over it; payed it with a coat of tar; furnished it with a mast and sail; and put in provisions for himself, a Spanish comrade, and six Indians.

In the meantime, Columbus wrote letters to Ovando, re-

* Relacion por Diego Mendez. Navarrete, Colec., tom. i.

questing that a ship might be immediately sent to bring him and his men to Hispaniola. He wrote a letter likewise to the sovereigns; for, after fulfilling his mission at San Domingo, Diego Mendez was to proceed to Spain on the admiral's affairs. In the letter to the sovereigns, Columbus depicted his deplorable situation, and entreated that a vessel might be dispatched to Hispaniola, to convey himself and his crew to Spain. He gave a comprehensive account of his voyage, most particulars of which have already been incorporated in his history, and he insisted greatly on the importance of the discovery of Veragua. He gave it as his opinion, that here were the mines of the Aurea Chersonesus, whence Solomon had derived such wealth for the building of the Temple. He entreated that this golden coast might not, like the other places which he had discovered, be abandoned to adventurers, or placed under the government of men who felt no interest in the cause. "This is not a child," he adds, "to be abandoned to a step-mother. I never think of Hispaniola and Paria without weeping. Their case is desperate and past cure; I hope their example may cause this region to be treated in a different manner." His imagination becomes heated. He magnifies the supposed importance of Veragua, as transcending all his former discoveries: and he alludes to his favourite project for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre: "Jerusalem," he says, "and Mount Sion, are to be rebuilt by the hand of a Christian. Who is he to be? God, by the mouth of the Prophet, in the fourteenth Psalm, declares it. The abbot Joachim* says that he is to come out of Spain." His thoughts then revert to the ancient story of the Grand Khan, who had requested that sages might be sent to instruct him in the Christian faith. Columbus, thinking that he had been in the

* Joachim, native of the burgh of Celico, near Cozenza, travelled in the Holy Land. Returning to Calabria, he took the habit of the Cistercians in the monastery of Corazzo, of which he became prior and abbot, and afterwards rose to higher monastic importance. He died in 1202, having attained 72 years of age, leaving a great number of works; among the most known are commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Apocalypse. There are also prophecies by him, "which," (says the *Dictionnaire Historique*,) "during his life, made him to be admired by fools, and despised by men of sense; at present the latter sentiment prevails. He was either very weak or very presumptuous, to flatter himself that he had the keys of things of which God reserves the knowledge to himself"—*Diet. Hist.* tom. v, Caen, 1785.

very vicinity of Cathay, exclaims with sudden zeal, "Who will offer himself for this task? If our Lord permit me to return to Spain, I engage to take him there, God helping, in safety."

Nothing is more characteristic of Columbus than his earnest, artless, at times eloquent, and at times almost incoherent letters. What an instance of soaring enthusiasm and irrepressible enterprise is here exhibited! At the time that he was indulging in these visions, and proposing new and romantic enterprises, he was broken down by age and infirmities, racked by pain, confined to his bed, and shut up in a wreck on the coast of a remote and savage island. No stronger picture can be given of his situation, than that which shortly follows this transient glow of excitement; when, with one of his sudden transitions of thought, he awakens, as it were, to his actual condition.

"Hitherto," says he, "I have wept for others; but now, have pity upon me, heaven, and weep for me, O earth! In my temporal concerns, without a farthing to offer for a mass; cast away here in the Indies; surrounded by cruel and hostile savages; isolated, infirm, expecting each day will be my last: in spiritual concerns, separated from the holy sacraments of the church, so that my soul, if parted here from my body, must be for ever lost! Weep for me, whoever has charity, truth and justice! I came not on this voyage to gain honour or estate, that is most certain, for all hope of the kind was already dead within me. I came to serve your majesties with a sound intention and an honest zeal, and I speak no falsehood. 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."

The dispatches being ready, and the preparations of the canoe completed, Diego Mendez embarked, with his Spanish comrade and his six Indians, and departed along the coast to the eastward. The voyage was toilsome and perilous. They had to make their way against strong currents. Once they were taken by roving canoes of Indians, but made their escape, and at length arrived at the end of the island; a distance of thirty-four leagues from the harbour. Here they remained, waiting for calm weather to venture upon the broad gulf, when they were suddenly surrounded and taken prisoner by a number of hostile Indians, who carried them off a distance of

three leagues, where they determined to kill them. Some dispute arose about the division of the spoils taken from the Spaniards, whereupon the savages agreed to settle it by a game of chance. While they were thus engaged, Diego Mendez escaped, found his way to his canoe, embarked in it, and returned alone to the harbour after fifteen days' absence. What became of his companions he does not mention, being seldom apt to speak of any person but himself. This account is taken from the narrative inserted in his last will and testament.

Columbus, though grieved at the failure of his message, was rejoiced at the escape of the faithful Mendez. The latter, nothing daunted by the perils and hardships he had undergone, offered to depart immediately on a second attempt, provided he could have persons to accompany him to the end of the island, and protect him from the natives. This the Adelantado offered to undertake, with a large party well armed. Bartholomew Fiesco, a Genoese, who had been captain of one of the caravels, was associated with Mendez in this second expedition. He was a man of great worth, strongly attached to the admiral, and much esteemed by him. Each had a large canoe under his command, in which were six Spaniards and ten Indians—the latter were to serve as oarsmen. The canoes were to keep in company. On reaching Hispaniola, Fiesco was to return immediately to Jamaica, to relieve the anxiety of the admiral and his crew, by tidings of the safe arrival of their messenger. In the meantime, Diego Mendez was to proceed to San Domingo, deliver his letter to Ovando, procure and dispatch a ship, and then depart for Spain with a letter to the sovereigns.

All arrangements being made, the Indians placed in the canoes their frugal provisions of cassava bread, and each his calabash of water. The Spaniards, beside their bread, had a supply of the flesh of utias, and each his sword and target. In this way they launched forth upon their long and perilous voyage, followed by the prayers of their countrymen.

The Adelantado, with his armed band, kept pace with them along the coast. There was no attempt of the natives to molest them, and they arrived in safety at the end of the island. Here they remained three days before the sea was sufficiently calm for them to venture forth in their feeble barks. At length, the weather being quite serene, they bade

farewell to their comrades, and committed themselves to the broad sea. The Adelantado remained watching them, until they became mere specks on the ocean, and the evening hid them from his view. The next day he set out on his return to the harbour, stopping at various villages on the way, and endeavouring to confirm the good-will of the natives.*

CHAPTER II.—[1503.]

It might have been thought that the adverse fortune which had so long persecuted Columbus was now exhausted. The envy which had once sickened at his glory and prosperity could scarcely have devised for him a more forlorn heritage in the world he had discovered. The tenant of a wreck on savage coast, in an untraversed ocean, at the mercy of barbarous hordes, who, in a moment, from precarious friends might be transformed into ferocious enemies; afflicted, too, by excruciating maladies which confined him to his bed, and by the pains and infirmities which hardship and anxiety had heaped upon his advancing age. But he had not yet exhausted his cup of bitterness. He had yet to experience an evil worse than storm, or shipwreck, or bodily anguish, or the violence of savage hordes,—the perfidy of those in whom he confided.

Mendez and Fiesco had not long departed when the Spaniards in the wreck began to grow sickly, partly from the toils and exposures of the recent voyage, partly from being crowded in narrow quarters in a moist and sultry climate, and partly from want of their accustomed food, for they could not habituate themselves to the vegetable diet of the Indians. Their maladies were rendered more insupportable by mental suffering, by that suspense which frets the spirit, and that hope deferred which corrodes the heart. Accustomed to a life of bustle and variety, they had now nothing to do but loiter about the dreary hulk, look out upon the sea, watch for the canoe of Fiesco, wonder at its protracted absence, and doubt its return. A long time elapsed, much more than sufficient for the voyage, but nothing was seen or heard of the canoe. Fears were entertained that their messenger had perished. If so, how long were they to remain here, vainly looking for relief which was never to arrive? Some sank into deep despondency, others became peevish and impatient. Murmurs broke forth, and, as usual with men in distress,

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 101.

murmurs of the most unreasonable kind. Instead of sympathizing with their aged and infirm commander, who was involved in the same calamity, who in suffering transcended them all, and yet who was incessantly studious of their welfare, they began to rail against him as the cause of all their misfortunes.

The factious feeling of an unreasonable multitude would be of little importance if left to itself, and might end in idle clamour; it is the industry of one or two evil spirits which generally directs it to an object, and makes it mischievous. Among the officers of Columbus were two brothers, Francisco and Diego de Porras. They were related to the royal treasurer Morales, who had married their sister, and had made interest with the admiral to give them some employment in the expedition.* To gratify the treasurer, he had appointed Francisco de Porras captain of one of the caravels, and had obtained for his brother Diego the situation of notary and accountant-general of the squadron. He had treated them, as he declares, with the kindness of relatives, though both proved incompetent to their situations. They were vain and insolent men, and, like many others whom Columbus had benefited, requited his kindness with black ingratitude.†

These men, finding the common people in a highly impatient and discontented state, wrought upon them with seditious insinuations, assuring them that all hope of relief through the agency of Mendez was idle; it being a mere delusion of the admiral to keep them quiet, and render them subservient to his purposes. He had no desire nor intention to return to Spain; and in fact was banished thence. Hispaniola was equally closed to him, as had been proved by the exclusion of his ships from its harbour in a time of peril. To him, at present, all places were alike, and he was content to remain in Jamaica until his friends could make interest at court, and procure his recal from banishment. As to Mendez and Fiesco, they had been sent to Spain by Columbus on his own private affairs, not to procure a ship for the relief of his followers. If this were not the case, why did not the ships arrive, or why did not Fiesco return, as had been promised? Or if the canoes had really been sent for succour, the long time that had elapsed without tidings of them, gave reason

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102.

† Letter of Columbus to his son Diego. Navarrete, Colec.

to believe they had perished by the way. In such case, their only alternative would be, to take the canoes of the Indians, and endeavour to reach Hispaniola. There was no hope, however, of persuading the admiral to such an undertaking; he was too old, and too helpless from the gout, to expose himself to the hardships of such a voyage. What then? were they to be sacrificed to his interests or his infirmities?—to give up their only chance for escape, and linger and perish with him in this desolate wreck? If they succeeded in reaching Hispaniola, they would be the better received for having left the admiral behind. Ovando was secretly hostile to him, fearing that he would regain the government of the island; on their arrival in Spain, the Bishop Fonseca, from his enmity to Columbus, would be sure to take their part; the brothers Porras had powerful friends and relatives at court, to counteract any representations that might be made by the admiral; and they cited the case of Roldan's rebellion, to show that the prejudices of the public, and of men in power, would always be against him. Nay, they insinuated that the sovereigns, who, on that occasion, had deprived him of part of his dignities and privileges, would rejoice at a pretext for stripping him of the remainder.*

Columbus was aware that the minds of his people were embittered against him. He had repeatedly been treated with insolent impatience, and reproached with being the cause of their disasters. Accustomed, however, to the unreasonableness of men in adversity, and exercised, by many trials, in the mastery of his passions, he bore with their petulance, soothed their irritation, and endeavoured to cheer their spirits by the hopes of speedy succour. A little while longer, and he trusted that Fiesco would arrive with good tidings, when the certainty of relief would put an end to all these clamours. The mischief, however, was deeper than he apprehended: a complete mutiny had been organized.

On the 2nd of January, 1504, he was in his small cabin on the stern of his vessel, being confined to his bed by the gout, which had now rendered him a complete cripple. While ruminating on his disastrous situation, Francisco de Porras suddenly entered. His abrupt and agitated manner betrayed the evil nature of his visit. He had the flurried impudence of a man about to commit an open crime. Breaking forth

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102.

into bitter complaints, at their being kept, week after week, and month after month, to perish piecemeal in that desolate place, he accused the admiral of having no intention to return to Spain. Columbus suspected something sinister from his unusual arrogance; he maintained, however, his calmness, and, raising himself from his bed, endeavoured to reason with Porras. He pointed out the impossibility of departing until those who had gone to Hispaniola should send them vessels. He represented how much more urgent must be his desire to depart, since he had not only his own safety to provide for, but was accountable to God and his sovereigns for the welfare of all who had been committed to his charge. He reminded Porras that he had always consulted with them all, as to the measures to be taken for the common safety, and that what he had done, had been with the general approbation; still, if any other measure appeared advisable, he recommended that they should assemble together, and consult upon it, and adopt whatever course appeared most judicious.

The measures of Porras and his comrades, however, were already concerted, and when men are determined on mutiny, they are deaf to reason. He bluntly replied, that there was no time for further consultations. "Embark immediately, or remain in God's name, were the only alternatives." "For my part," said he, turning his back upon the admiral, and elevating his voice so that it resounded all over the vessel, "I am for Castile! those who choose may follow me!" shouts arose immediately from all sides, "I will follow you! and I! and I!" Numbers of the crew sprang upon the most conspicuous parts of the ship, brandishing weapons, and uttering mingled threats and cries of rebellion. Some called upon Porras for orders what to do; others shouted "To Castile! to Castile!" while, amidst the general uproar, the voices of some desperadoes were heard menacing the life of the admiral.

Columbus, hearing the tumult, leaped from his bed, ill and infirm as he was, and tottered out of the cabin, stumbling and falling in the exertion, hoping by his presence to pacify the mutineers. Three or four of his faithful adherents, however, fearing some violence might be offered him, threw themselves between him and the throng, and taking him in their arms, compelled him to return to his cabin.

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mood. He planted himself, with lance in hand, in a situation to take the whole brunt of the assault. It was with the greatest difficulty that several of the loyal part of the crew could appease his fury, and prevail upon him to relinquish his weapon, and retire to the cabin of his brother. They now entreated Porras and his companions to depart peaceably, since no one sought to oppose them. No advantage could be gained by violence; but should they cause the death of the admiral, they would draw upon themselves the severest punishment from the sovereigns.*

These representations moderated the turbulence of the mutineers, and they now proceeded to carry their plans into execution. Taking ten canoes which the admiral had purchased of the Indians, they embarked in them with as much exultation as if certain of immediately landing on the shores of Spain. Others, who had not been concerned in the mutiny, seeing so large a force departing, and fearing to remain behind, when so reduced in number, hastily collected their effects, and entered likewise into the canoes. In this way forty-eight abandoned the admiral. Many of those who remained were only detained by sickness, for, had they been well, most of them would have accompanied the deserters.† The few who remained faithful to the admiral, and the sick, who crawled forth from the cabins, saw the departure of the mutineers with tears and lamentations, giving themselves up for lost. Notwithstanding his malady, Columbus left his bed, mingling among those who were loyal, and visiting those who were ill, endeavouring in every way to cheer and comfort them. He entreated them to put their trust in God, who would yet relieve them; and he promised, on his return to Spain, to throw himself at the feet of the queen, represent their loyalty and constancy, and obtain for them rewards that should compensate for all their sufferings.‡

In the meantime, Francisco de Porras and his followers, in their squadron of canoes, coasted the island to the eastward, following the route taken by Mendez and Fiesco. Wherever they landed, they committed outrages upon the Indians, robbing them of their provisions, and whatever they coveted of their effects. They endeavoured to make their own crimes redound to the prejudice of Columbus, pretending to act under

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 32. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102.

‡ Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 32.

his authority, and affirming that he would pay for everything they took. If he refused, they told the natives to kill him. They represented him as an implacable foe to the Indians, as one who had tyrannized over other islands, causing the misery and death of the natives, and who only sought to gain a sway here for the purpose of inflicting like calamities.

Having reached the eastern extremity of the island, they waited until the weather should be perfectly calm, before they ventured to cross the gulf. Being unskilled in the management of canoes, they procured several Indians to accompany them. The sea being at length quite smooth, they set forth upon their voyage. Scarcely had they proceeded four leagues from land when a contrary wind arose, and the waves began to swell. They turned immediately for shore. The canoes, from their light structure, and being nearly round and without keels, were easily overturned, and required to be carefully balanced. They were now deeply freighted by men unaccustomed to them, and as the sea rose, they frequently let in the water. The Spaniards were alarmed, and endeavoured to lighten them, by throwing overboard everything that could be spared; retaining only their arms, and a part of their provisions. The danger augmented with the wind. They now compelled the Indians to leap into the sea, excepting such as were absolutely necessary to navigate the canoes. If they hesitated, they drove them overboard with the edge of the sword. The Indians were skilful swimmers, but the distance to land was too great for their strength. They kept about the canoes, therefore, taking hold of them occasionally to rest themselves and recover breath. As their weight disturbed the balance of the canoes, and endangered their overturning, the Spaniards cut off their hands, and stabbed them with their swords. Some died by the weapons of these cruel men, others were exhausted and sank beneath the waves; thus eighteen perished miserably, and none survived, but such as had been retained to manage the canoes.

When the Spaniards got back to land, different opinions arose as to what course they should next pursue. Some were for crossing to Cuba, for which island the wind was favourable. It was thought they might easily cross thence to the end of Hispaniola. Others advised that they should return and make their peace with the admiral, or take from him

what remained of arms and stores, having thrown almost everything overboard during their late danger. Others counselled another attempt to cross over to Hispaniola, as soon as the sea should become tranquil.

This last advice was adopted. They remained for a month at an Indian village near the eastern point of the island, living on the substance of the natives, and treating them in the most arbitrary and capricious manner. When at length the weather became serene, they made a second attempt, but were again driven back by adverse winds. Losing all patience, therefore, and despairing of the enterprise, they abandoned their canoes, and returned westward; wandering from village to village, a dissolute and lawless gang, supporting themselves by fair means or foul, according as they met with kindness or hostility, and passing like a pestilence through the island.*

CHAPTER III.—[1504.]

WHILE Porras and his crew were raging about with that desperate and joyless licentiousness which attends the abandonment of principle, Columbus presented the opposite picture of a man true to others and to himself, and supported, amidst hardships and difficulties, by conscious rectitude. Deserted by the healthful and vigorous portion of his garrison, he exerted himself to soothe and encourage the infirm and desponding remnant which remained. Regardless of his own painful maladies, he was only attentive to relieve their sufferings. The few who were fit for service were required to mount guard on the wreck, or attend upon the sick; there were none to forage for provisions. The scrupulous good faith and amiable conduct maintained by Columbus towards the natives had now their effect. Considerable supplies of provisions were brought by them from time to time, which he purchased at a reasonable rate. The most palatable and nourishing of these, together with the small stock of European biscuit that remained, he ordered to be appropriated to the sustenance of the infirm. Knowing how much the body is affected by the operations of the mind, he endeavoured to rouse the spirits, and animate the hopes, of the drooping sufferers. Concealing his own anxiety, he maintained a serene and even cheerful countenance, encouraging his men by kind words, and holding forth confident anticipations of speedy

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102 Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 32.

relief. By his friendly and careful treatment, he soon recruited both the health and spirits of his people, and brought them into a condition to contribute to the common safety. Judicious regulations, calmly, but firmly enforced, maintained everything in order. The men became sensible of the advantages of wholesome discipline, and perceived that the restraints imposed upon them by their commander, were for their own good, and ultimately productive of their own comfort.

Columbus had thus succeeded in guarding against internal ills, when alarming evils began to menace from without. The Indians, unused to lay up any stock of provisions, and unwilling to subject themselves to extra labour, found it difficult to furnish the quantity of food daily required for so many hungry men. The European trinkets, once so precious, lost their value, in proportion as they became common. The importance of the admiral had been greatly diminished by the desertion of so many of his followers; and the malignant instigations of the rebels had awakened jealousy and enmity in several of the villages, which had been accustomed to furnish provisions.

By degrees, therefore, the supplies fell off. The arrangements for the daily delivery of certain quantities, made by Diego Mendez, were irregularly attended to, and at length ceased entirely. The Indians no longer thronged to the harbour with provisions, and often refused them when applied for. The Spaniards were obliged to forage about the neighbourhood for their daily food; but found more and more difficulty in procuring it; thus, in addition to their other causes for despondency, they began to entertain horrible apprehensions of famine.

The admiral heard their melancholy forebodings, and beheld the growing evil, but was at a loss for a remedy. To resort to force was an alternative full of danger, and of but temporary efficacy. It would require all those who were well enough to bear arms to sally forth, while he and the rest of the infirm would be left defenceless on board of the wreck, exposed to the vengeance of the natives.

In the meantime, the scarcity daily increased. The Indians perceived the wants of the white men, and had learnt from them the art of making bargains. They asked ten times the former quantity of European articles for any amount of provisions, and brought their supplies in scanty quantities, to enhance the eagerness of the hungry Spaniards. At length,

even this relief ceased, and there was an absolute distress for food. The jealousy of the natives had been universally roused by Porras and his followers, and they withheld all provisions, in hopes either of starving the admiral and his people, or of driving them from the island.

In this extremity, a fortunate idea presented itself to Columbus. From his knowledge of astronomy, he ascertained that, within three days, there would be a total eclipse of the moon in the early part of the night. He sent, therefore, an Indian of Hispaniola, who served as his interpreter, to summon the principal caciques to a grand conference, appointing for it the day of the eclipse. When all were assembled, he told them by his interpreter, that he and his followers were worshippers of a Deity who dwelt in the skies; who favoured such as did well, but punished all transgressors. That, as they must all have noticed, he had protected Diego Mendez and his companions in their voyage, because they went in obedience to the orders of their commander; but had visited Porras and his companions with all kinds of afflictions, in consequence of their rebellion. This great Deity, he added, was incensed against the Indians who refused to furnish his faithful worshippers with provisions, and intended to chastise them with famine and pestilence. Lest they should disbelieve this warning, a signal would be given that night. They would behold the moon change its colour, and gradually lose its light; a token of the fearful punishment which awaited them.

Many of the Indians were alarmed at the prediction, others treated it with derision,—all, however, awaited with solicitude the coming of the night. When they beheld a dark shadow stealing over the moon, they began to tremble; with the progress of the eclipse their fears increased, and when they saw a mysterious darkness covering the whole face of nature, there were no bounds to their terror. Seizing upon whatever provisions were at hand, they hurried to the ships, threw themselves at the feet of Columbus, and implored him to intercede with his God to withhold the threatened calamities, assuring him they would thenceforth bring him whatever he required. Columbus shut himself up in his cabin, as if to commune with the Deity, and remained there during the increase of the eclipse, the forests and shores all the while resounding with the howlings and supplications of the savages. When the eclipse was about to diminish, he came forth and informed

the natives that his God had deigned to pardon them, on condition of their fulfilling their promises : in sign of which he would withdraw the darkness from the moon.

When the Indians saw that planet restored to its brightness, and rolling in all its beauty through the firmament, they overwhelmed the admiral with thanks for his intercession, and repaired to their homes, joyful at having escaped such great disasters. Regarding Columbus with awe and reverence, as a man in the peculiar favour and confidence of the Deity, since he knew upon earth what was passing in the heavens, they hastened to propitiate him with gifts; supplies again arrived daily at the harbour, and from that time forward, there was no want of provisions.*

CHAPTER IV.—[1504.]

EIGHT months had now elapsed since the departure of Mendez and Fiesco, without any tidings of their fate. For a long time the Spaniards had kept a wistful look-out upon the ocean, flattering themselves that every Indian canoe, gliding at a distance, might be the harbinger of deliverance. The hopes of the most sanguine were now fast sinking into despondency. What thousand perils awaited such frail barks, and so weak a party, on an expedition of the kind ! Either the canoes had been swallowed up by boisterous waves and adverse currents, or their crews had perished among the rugged mountains and savage tribes of Hispaniola. To increase their despondency, they were informed that a vessel had been seen, bottom upwards, drifting with the currents along the coasts of Jamaica. This might be the vessel sent to their relief; and if so, all their hopes were shipwrecked with it. This rumour, it is affirmed, was invented and circulated in the island by the rebels, that it might reach the ears of those who remained faithful to the admiral, and reduce them to despair.† It no doubt had its effect. Losing all hope of aid from a distance, and considering themselves abandoned and forgotten by the world, many grew wild and desperate in their plans. Another conspiracy was formed by one Bernardo, an apothecary of Valencia, with two confederates, Alonzo de Zamora and Pedro de Villatoro. They designed to seize upon the remaining canoes, and seek their way to Hispaniola.‡

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 103. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 33.

† Hist. del Almirante, c. 104.

‡ Las Casas, ubi sup.

The mutiny was on the very point of breaking out, when one evening, towards dusk, a sail was seen standing towards the harbour. The transports of the poor Spaniards may be more easily conceived than described. The vessel was of small size; it kept out to sea, but sent its boat to visit the ships. Every eye was eagerly bent to hail the countenances of Christians and deliverers. As the boat approached, they descried in it Diego de Escobar, a man who had been one of the most active confederates of Roldan in his rebellion, who had been condemned to death under the administration of Columbus, and pardoned by his successor Bobadilla. There was bad omen in such a messenger.

Coming alongside of the ships, Escobar put a letter on board from Ovando, governor of Hispaniola, together with a barrel of wine and a side of bacon, sent as presents to the admiral. He then drew off, and talked with Columbus from a distance. He told him that he was sent by the governor to express his great concern at his misfortunes, and his regret at not having in port a vessel of sufficient size to bring off himself and his people, but that he would send one as soon as possible. Escobar gave the admiral assurances likewise, that his concerns in Hispaniola had been faithfully attended to. He requested him, if he had any letter to write to the governor in reply, to give it to him as soon as possible, as he wished to return immediately.

There was something extremely singular in this mission, but there was no time for comments, Escobar was urgent to depart. Columbus hastened, therefore, to write a reply to Ovando, depicting the dangers and distresses of his situation, increased as they were by the rebellion of Porras, but expressing his reliance on his promise to send him relief, confiding in which he should remain patiently on board of his wreck. He recommended Diego Mendez and Bartholomew Piesco to his favour, assuring him that they were not sent to San Domingo with any artful design, but simply to represent his perilous situation, and to apply for succour.* When Escobar received this letter, he returned immediately on board of his vessel, which made all sail, and soon disappeared in the gathering gloom of the night.

If the Spaniards had hailed the arrival of this vessel with transport, its sudden departure and the mysterious conduct of

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 34.

Escobar inspired no less wonder and consternation. He had kept aloof from all communication with them, as if he felt no interest in their welfare, or sympathy in their misfortunes. Columbus saw the gloom that had gathered in their countenances, and feared the consequences. He eagerly sought, therefore, to dispel their suspicions, professing himself satisfied with the communications received from Ovando, and assuring them that vessels would soon arrive to take them all away. In confidence of this, he said, he had declined to depart with Escobar, because his vessel was too small to take the whole, preferring to remain with them and share their lot, and had dispatched the caravel in such haste that no time might be lost in expediting the necessary ships. These assurances, and the certainty that their situation was known in San Domingo, cheered the hearts of the people. Their hopes again revived, and the conspiracy, which had been on the point of breaking forth, was completely disconcerted.

In secret, however, Columbus was exceedingly indignant at the conduct of Ovando. He had left him for many months in a state of the utmost danger and most distressing uncertainty, exposed to the hostilities of the natives, the seditions of his men, and the suggestions of his own despair. He had, at length, sent a mere tantalizing message, by a man known to be one of his bitterest enemies, with a present of food, which, from its scantiness, seemed intended to mock their necessities.

Columbus believed that Ovando had purposely neglected him, hoping that he might perish on the island, being apprehensive that, should he return in safety, he would be reinstated in the government of Hispaniola; and he considered Escobar merely as a spy sent to ascertain the state of himself and his crew, and whether they were yet in existence. Las Casas, who was then at San Domingo, expresses similar suspicions. He says that Escobar was chosen because Ovando was certain that, from ancient enmity he would have no sympathy for the admiral. That he was ordered not to go on board of the vessels, nor to land, neither was he to hold conversation with any of the crew, nor to receive any letters, except those of the admiral. In a word, that he was a mere scout to collect information. *

Others have ascribed the long neglect of Ovando to extreme

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 33. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 103.

caution. There was a rumour prevalent that Columbus, irritated at the suspension of his dignities by the court of Spain, intended to transfer his newly-discovered countries into the hands of his native republic Genoa, or of some other power. Such rumours had long been current, and to their recent circulation Columbus himself alludes in his letter sent to the sovereigns by Diego Mendez. The most plausible apology given, is, that Ovando was absent for several months in the interior, occupied in wars with the natives, and that there were no ships at San Domingo of sufficient burden to take Columbus and his crew to Spain. He may have feared that should they come to reside for any length of time on the island, either the admiral would interfere in public affairs, or, endeavour to make a party in his favour, or that, in consequence of the number of his old enemies still resident there, former scenes of faction and turbulence might be revived.* In the meantime the situation of Columbus in Jamaica, while it disposed of him quietly until vessels should arrive from Spain, could not, he may have thought, be hazardous. He had sufficient force and arms for defence, and he had made amicable arrangements with the natives for the supply of provisions, as Diego Mendez, who had made those arrangements, had no doubt informed him. Such may have been the reasoning by which Ovando, under the real influence of his interest, may have reconciled his conscience to a measure which excited the strong reprobation of his contemporaries, and has continued to draw upon him the suspicions of mankind.

CHAPTER V.—[1504.]

It is proper to give here some account of the mission of Diego Mendez and Bartholomew Fiesco, and of the circumstances which prevented the latter from returning to Jamaica. Having taken leave of the Adelantado at the east end of the island, they continued all day in a direct course, animating the Indians who navigated their canoes, and who frequently paused at their labour. There was no wind, the sky was without a cloud, and the sea perfectly calm; the heat was intolerable, and the rays of the sun reflected from the surface of the ocean, seemed to scorch their very eyes. The Indians, exhausted by heat and toil, would often leap into the water to cool and refresh themselves, and, after remaining there a

* Las Casas, ubi sup. Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.

short time, would return with new vigour to their labours. At the going down of the sun they lost sight of land. During the night the Indians took turns, one half to row while the others slept. The Spaniards, in like manner, divided their forces: while one half took repose, the others kept guard with their weapons in hand, ready to defend themselves in case of any perfidy on the part of their savage companions.

Watching and toiling in this way through the night, they were exceedingly fatigued at the return of day. Nothing was to be seen but sea and sky. Their frail canoes, heaving up and down with the swelling and sinking of the ocean, seemed scarcely capable of sustaining the broad undulations of a calm; how would they be able to live amid waves and surges, should the wind arise? The commanders did all they could to keep up the flagging spirits of the men. Sometimes they permitted them a respite; at other times they took the paddles and shared their toils. But labour and fatigue were soon forgotten in a new source of suffering. During the preceding sultry day and night, the Indians, parched and fatigued, had drunk up all the water. They now began to experience the torments of thirst. In proportion as the day advanced, their thirst increased; the calm, which favoured the navigation of the canoes, rendered this misery the more intense. There was not a breeze to fan the air, nor counteract the ardent rays of a tropical sun. Their sufferings were irritated by the prospect around them—nothing but water, while they were perishing with thirst. At mid-day their strength failed them, and they could work no longer. Fortunately, at this time the commanders of the canoes found, or pretended to find, two small kegs of water, which they had perhaps secretly reserved for such an extremity. Administering the precious contents from time to time, in sparing mouthfuls to their companions, and particularly to the labouring Indians, they enabled them to resume their toils. They cheered them with the hopes of soon arriving at a small island called Navasa, which lay directly in their way, and was only eight leagues from Hispaniola. Here they would be able to procure water, and might take repose.

For the rest of the day they continued faintly and wearily labouring forward, and keeping an anxious look-out for the island. The day passed away, the sun went down, yet there was no sign of land, not even a cloud on the horizon that

might deceive them into a lope. According to their calculations, they had certainly come the distance from Jamaica at which Navasa lay. They began to fear that they had deviated from their course. If so, they should miss the island entirely, and perish with thirst before they could reach Hispaniola.

The night closed upon them without any sight of the island. They now despaired of touching at it, for it was so small and low, that, even if they were to pass near, they would scarcely be able to perceive it in the dark. One of the Indians sank and died, under the accumulated sufferings of labour, heat, and raging thirst. His body was thrown into the sea. Others lay panting and gasping at the bottom of the canoes. Their companions, troubled in spirit, and exhausted in strength, feebly continued their toils. Sometimes they endeavoured to cool their parched palates by taking sea-water in their mouths, but its briny acrimony rather increased their thirst. Now and then, but very sparingly, they were allowed a drop of water from the kegs; but this was only in cases of the utmost extremity, and principally to those who were employed in rowing. The night had far advanced, but those whose turn it was to take repose were unable to sleep, from the intensity of their thirst; or if they slept, it was but to be tantalized with dreams of cool fountains and running brooks, and to awaken in redoubled torment. The last drop of water had been dealt out to the Indian rowers, but it only served to irritate their sufferings. They scarce could move their paddles; one after another gave up, and it seemed impossible they should live to reach Hispaniola.

The commanders, by admirable management, had hitherto kept up this weary struggle with suffering and despair; they now, too, began to despond. Diego Mendez sat watching the horizon, which was gradually lighting up with those faint rays which precede the rising of the moon. As that planet rose, he perceived it to emerge from behind some dark mass elevated above the level of the ocean. He immediately gave the animating cry of "land!" His almost expiring companions were roused by it to new life. It proved to be the island of Navasa, but so small, and low, and distant, that had it not been thus revealed by the rising of the moon, they would never have discovered it. The error in their reckoning with respect to the island had arisen from miscalculating the rate

of sailing of the canoes, and from not making sufficient allowance for the fatigue of the rowers and the opposition of the current.

New vigour was now diffused throughout the crews. They exerted themselves with feverish impatience; by the dawn of day they reached the land, and, springing on shore, returned thanks to God for such signal deliverance. The island was a mere mass of rocks half a league in circuit. There was neither tree, nor shrub, nor herbage, nor stream, nor fountain. Hurrying about, however, with anxious search, they found to their joy abundance of rain-water in the hollows of the rocks. Eagerly scooping it up, with their calabashes, they quenched their burning thirst by immoderate draughts. In vain the more prudent warned the others of their danger. The Spaniards were in some degree restrained; but the poor Indians, whose toils had increased the fever of their thirst, gave way to a kind of frantic indulgence. Several died upon the spot, and others fell dangerously ill.*

Having allayed their thirst, they now looked about in search of food. A few shell-fish were found along the shore, and Diego Mendez striking a light, and gathering drift-wood, they were enabled to boil them, and to make a delicious banquet. All day they remained reposing in the shade of the rocks, refreshing themselves after their intolerable sufferings, and gazing upon Hispaniola, whose mountains rose above the horizon, at eight leagues distance.

In the cool of the evening they once more embarked, invigorated by repose, and arrived safely at Cape Tiburon on the following day, the fourth since their departure from Jamaica. Here they landed on the banks of a beautiful river, where they were kindly received and treated by the natives. Such are the particulars, collected from different sources, of this adventurous and interesting voyage, on the precarious success of which depended the deliverance of Columbus and his crews.† The voyagers remained for two days among the hospitable natives on the banks of the river to refresh them-

* Not far from the island of Navasa there gushes up in the sea a pure fountain of fresh water that sweetens the surface for some distance; this circumstance was of course unknown to the Spaniards at the time. (Oviedo, *Cronica*, lib. vi. cap. 12.)

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 105. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 31. Testament of Diego Mendez. Navarrete, tom. i.

selves. Fiesco would have returned to Jamaica, according to promise, to give assurance to the admiral and his companions of the safe arrival of their messenger; but both Spaniards and Indians had suffered so much during the voyage, that nothing could induce them to encounter the perils of a return in the canoes.

Parting with his companions, Diego Mendez took six Indians of the island, and set off resolutely to coast in his canoe one hundred and thirty leagues to San Domingo. After proceeding for eighty leagues, with infinite toil, always against the currents, and subject to perils from the native tribes, he was informed that the governor had departed for Xaragua, fifty leagues distant. Still undaunted by fatigues and difficulties, he abandoned his canoe, and proceeded alone and on foot through forests and over mountains, until he arrived at Xaragua, achieving one of the most perilous expeditions ever undertaken by a devoted follower for the safety of his commander.

Ovando received him with great kindness, expressing the utmost concern at the unfortunate situation of Columbus. He made many promises of sending immediate relief, but suffered day after day, week after week, and even month after month to elapse, without carrying his promises into effect. He was at that time completely engrossed by wars with the natives, and had a ready plea that there were no ships of sufficient burden at San Domingo. Had he felt a proper zeal, however, for the safety of a man like Columbus, it would have been easy, within eight months, to have devised some means, if not of delivering him from his situation, at least of conveying to him ample reinforcements and supplies.

The faithful Mendez remained for seven months in Xaragua, detained there under various pretexts by Ovando, who was unwilling that he should proceed to San Domingo; partly, as is intimated, from his having some jealousy of his being employed in secret agency for the admiral, and partly from a desire to throw impediments in the way of his obtaining the required relief. At length, by daily importunity, he obtained permission to go to San Domingo, and await the arrival of certain ships which were expected, of which he proposed to purchase one on the account of the admiral. He immediately set out on foot a distance of seventy leagues, part of his toilsome journey lying through forests and among

mountains infested by hostile and exasperated Indians. It was after his departure that Ovando dispatched the caravel commanded by the pardoned rebel Escobar, on that singular and equivocal visit, which, in the eyes of Columbus, had the air of a mere scouting expedition to spy into the camp of an enemy.

CHAPTER VI.—[1503.]

WHEN Columbus had soothed the disappointment of his men at the brief and unsatisfactory visit and sudden departure of Escobar, he endeavoured to turn the event to some advantage with the rebels. He knew them to be disheartened by the inevitable miseries attending a lawless and dissolute life; that many longed to return to the safe and quiet path of duty; and that the most malignant, seeing how he had foiled all their intrigues among the natives to produce a famine, began to fear his ultimate triumph and consequent vengeance. A favourable opportunity, he thought, now presented to take advantage of these feelings, and by gentle means to bring them back to their allegiance. He sent two of his people, therefore, who were most intimate with the rebels, to inform them of the recent arrival of Escobar with letters from the Governor of Hispaniola, promising him a speedy deliverance from the island. He now offered a free pardon, kind treatment, and a passage with him in the expected ships, on condition of their immediate return to obedience. To convince them of the arrival of the vessel, he sent them a part of the bacon which had been brought by Escobar.

On the approach of these ambassadors, Francisco de Porras came forth to meet them, accompanied solely by a few of the ringleaders of his party. He imagined that there might be some propositions from the admiral, and he was fearful of their being heard by the mass of his people, who, in their dissatisfied and repentant mood, would be likely to desert him on the least prospect of pardon. Having listened to the tidings and overtures brought by the messengers, he and his confidential confederates consulted for some time together. Perfidious in their own nature, they suspected the sincerity of the admiral; and, conscious of the extent of their offences, doubted his having the magnanimity to pardon them. Determined, therefore, not to confide in his proffered amnesty, they replied to the messengers, that they had no wish to return to the ships, but preferred living at large about the island.

They offered to engage, however, to conduct themselves peaceably and amicably, on receiving a solemn promise from the admiral, that should two vessels arrive, they should have one to depart in: should but one arrive, that half of it should be granted to them; and that, moreover, the admiral should share with them the stores and articles of Indian traffic remaining in the ships, having lost all that they had, in the sea. These demands were pronounced extravagant and inadmissible, upon which they replied insolently that, if they were not peaceably conceded, they would take them by force: and with this menace they dismissed the ambassadors.*

This conference was not conducted so privately, but that the rest of the rebels learned the purport of the mission; and the offer of pardon and deliverance occasioned great tumult and agitation. Porras, fearful of their desertion, assured them that these offers of the admiral were all deceitful; that he was naturally cruel and vindictive, and only sought to get them into his power to wreak on them his vengeance. He exhorted them to persist in their opposition to his tyranny; reminding them, that those who had formerly done so in Hispaniola, had eventually triumphed, and sent him home in irons; he assured them that they might do the same; and again made vaunting promises of protection in Spain, through the influence of his relatives. But the boldest of his assertions was with respect to the caravel of Escobar. It shows the ignorance of the age, and the superstitious awe which the common people entertained with respect to Columbus and his astronomical knowledge. Porras assured them that no real caravel had arrived, but a mere phantasm conjured up by the admiral, who was deeply versed in necromancy. In proof of this, he adverted to its arriving in the dusk of the evening; its holding communication with no one but the admiral, and its sudden disappearance in the night. Had it been a real caravel, the crew would have sought to talk with their countrymen; the admiral, his son and brother, would have eagerly embarked on board, and it would at any rate have remained a little while in port, and not have vanished so suddenly and mysteriously.†

By these, and similar delusions, Porras succeeded in working upon the feelings and credulity of his followers. Fearful,

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 35. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 106.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 106. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 35.

however, that they might yield to after reflection, and to further offers from the admiral, he determined to involve them in some act of violence which would commit them beyond all hopes of forgiveness. He marched them, therefore, to an Indian village called Maima,* about a quarter of a league from the ships, intending to plunder the stores remaining on board the wreck, and to take the admiral prisoner.†

Columbus had notice of the designs of the rebels, and of their approach. Being confined by his infirmities, he sent his brother to endeavour with mild words to persuade them from their purpose, and win them to obedience; but with sufficient force to resist any violence. The Adelantado, who was a man rather of deeds than of words, took with him fifty followers, men of tried resolution, and ready to fight in any cause. They were well armed and full of courage, though many were pale and debilitated from recent sickness, and from long confinement to the ships. Arriving on the side of a hill, within a bow-shot of the village, the Adelantado discovered the rebels, and dispatched the same two messengers to treat with them, who had already carried them the offer of pardon. Porras and his fellow-leaders, however, would not permit them to approach. They confided in the superiority of their numbers, and in their men being, for the most part, hardy sailors, rendered robust and vigorous by the roving life they had been leading in the forest and the open air. They knew that many of those who were with the Adelantado were men brought up in a softer mode of life. They pointed to their pale countenances, and persuaded their followers that they were mere household men, fair-weather troops, who could never stand before them. They did not reflect that, with such men, pride and lofty spirit often more than supply the place of bodily force, and they forgot that their adversaries had the incalculable advantage of justice and law upon their side. Deluded by their words, their followers were excited to a transient glow of courage, and brandishing their weapons, refused to listen to the messengers.

Six of the stoutest rebels made a league to stand by one another and attack the Adelantado: for, he being killed, the rest would be easily defeated. The main body formed themselves into a squadron, drawing their swords and shaking their lances. They did not wait to be assailed, but, uttering

* At present Mambee Bay.

† Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup

shouts and menaces, rushed upon the enemy. They were so well received, however, that at the first shock four or five were killed, most of them the confederates who had leagued to attack the Adelantado. The latter, with his own hand, killed Juan Sanchez, the same powerful mariner who had carried off the cacique Quibian; and Juan Barber also, who had first drawn a sword against the admiral in this rebellion. The Adelantado with his usual vigour and courage was dealing his blows about him in the thickest of the affray, where several lay killed and wounded, when he was assailed by Francisco de Porras. The rebel with a blow of his sword cleft the buckler of Don Bartholomew, and wounded the hand which grasped it. The sword remained wedged in the shield, and before Porras could withdraw it, the Adelantado closed upon him, grappled him, and being assisted by others, after a severe struggle, took him prisoner.*

When the rebels beheld their leader a captive, their transient courage was at an end, and they fled in confusion. The Adelantado would have pursued them, but was persuaded to let them escape with the punishment they had received, especially as it was necessary to guard against the possibility of an attack from the Indians.

The latter had taken arms and drawn up in battle array, gazing with astonishment at this fight between white men, but without taking part on either side. When the battle was over, they approached the field, gazing upon the dead bodies of the beings they had once fancied immortal. They were curious in examining the wounds made by the Christian weapons. Among the wounded insurgents was Pedro Ledesma, the same pilot who so bravely swam ashore at Veragua, to procure tidings of the colony. He was a man of prodigious muscular force and a hoarse, deep voice. As the Indians, who thought him dead, were inspecting the wounds with which he was literally covered, he suddenly uttered an ejaculation in his tremendous voice, at the sound of which the savages fled in dismay. This man having fallen into a cleft or ravine, was not discovered by the white men, until the dawning of the following day, having remained all that time without a drop of water. The number and severity of the wounds he is said to have received would seem incredible, but they are mentioned by Fernando Co-

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 107. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 35.

lumbus, who was an eye-witness, and by Las Casas, who had the account from Ledesma himself. For want of proper remedies, his wounds were treated in the roughest manner, yet, through the aid of a vigorous constitution, he completely recovered. Las Casas conversed with him several years afterwards at Seville, when he obtained from him various particulars concerning this voyage of Columbus. Some few days after this conversation, however, he heard that Ledesma had fallen under the knife of the assassin.*

The Adelantado returned in triumph to the ships, where he was received by the admiral in the most affectionate manner: thanking him as his deliverer. He brought Porras and several of his followers prisoners. Of his own party only two had been wounded; himself in the hand, and the admiral's steward, who had received an apparently slight wound with a lance, equal to one of the most insignificant of those with which Ledesma was covered; yet, in spite of careful treatment, he died.

On the next day, the 20th of May, the fugitives sent a petition to the admiral, signed with all their names, in which, says Las Casas, they confessed all their misdeeds, and cruelties, and evil intentions, supplicating the admiral to have pity on them and pardon them for their rebellion, for which God had already punished them. They offered to return to their obedience and to serve him faithfully in future, making an oath to that effect upon a cross and a missal, accompanied by an imprecation worthy of being recorded: "They hoped, should they break their oath, that no priest nor other Christian might ever confess them; that repentance might be of no avail; that they might be deprived of the holy sacraments of the church; that at their death they might receive no benefit from bulls nor indulgences; that their bodies might be cast out into the fields like those of heretics and renegados, instead of being buried in holy ground; and that they might not receive absolution from the pope, nor from cardinals, nor archbishops, nor bishops, nor any other Christian priests."† Such were the awful imprecations by which these men endeavoured to add validity to an oath. The worthlessness of a man's word may always be known by the extravagant means he uses to enforce it.

The admiral saw, by the abject nature of this petition, how

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii. cap. 35.

† Idem, cap. 32.

completely the spirit of these misguided men was broken; with his wonted magnanimity, he readily granted their prayer, and pardoned their offences; but on one condition, that their ringleader, Francisco Porras, should remain a prisoner.

As it was difficult to maintain so many persons on board of the ships, and as quarrels might take place between persons who had so recently been at blows, Columbus put the late followers of Porras under the command of a discreet and faithful man; and giving in his charge a quantity of European articles for the purpose of purchasing food of the natives, directed him to forage about the island until the expected vessels should arrive.

At length, after a long year of alternate hope and despondency, the doubts of the Spaniards were joyfully dispelled by the sight of two vessels standing into the harbour. One proved to be a ship hired and well victualled, at the expense of the admiral, by the faithful and indefatigable Diego Mendez; the other had been subsequently fitted out by Ovando, and put under the command of Diego de Salcedo, the admiral's agent employed to collect his rents in San Domingo.

The long neglect of Ovando to attend to the relief of Columbus, had, it seems, roused the public indignation, insomuch that animadversions had been made upon his conduct even in the pulpits. This is affirmed by Las Casas, who was at San Domingo at the time. If the governor had really entertained hopes that, during the delay of relief, Columbus might perish in the island, the report brought back by Escobar must have completely disappointed him. No time was to be lost if he wished to claim any merit in his deliverance, or to avoid the disgrace of having totally neglected him. He exerted himself, therefore, at the eleventh hour, and dispatched a caravel at the same time with the ship sent by Diego Mendez. The latter, having faithfully discharged this part of his mission and seen the ships depart, proceeded to Spain on the further concerns of the admiral.*

* Some brief notice of the further fortunes of Diego Mendez may be interesting to the reader. When King Ferdinand heard of his faithful services, says Oviedo, he bestowed rewards upon Mendez, and permitted him to bear a canoe in his coat of arms, as a memento of his loyalty. He continued devotedly attached to the admiral, serving him zealously after his return to Spain, and during his last illness. Columbus retained the most grateful and affectionate sense of his fidelity

BOOK XVII.

CHAPTER I.—[1503.]

BEFORE relating the return of Columbus to Hispaniola, it is proper to notice some of the principal occurrences which

On his death-bed he promised Mendez that, in reward for his services, he should be appointed principal Alguazil of the island of Hispaniola; an engagement which the admiral's son, Don Diego, who was present, cheerfully undertook to perform. A few years afterwards, when the latter succeeded to the office of his father, Mendez reminded him of the promise, but Don Diego informed him that he had given the office to his uncle Don Bartholomew; he assured him, however, that he should receive something equivalent. Mendez shrewdly replied, that the equivalent had better been given to Don Bartholomew, and the office to himself, according to agreement. The promise, however, remained unperformed, and Diego Mendez unrewarded. He was afterwards engaged on voyages of discovery in vessels of his own, but met with many vicissitudes, and appears to have died in impoverished circumstances. His last will, from which these particulars are principally gathered, was dated in Valladolid, the 19th June, 1536, by which it is evident he must have been in the prime of life at the time of his voyage with the admiral. In this will he requested that the reward which had been promised to him should be paid to his children, by making his eldest son principal Alguazil for life of the city of San Domingo, and his other son lieutenant to the admiral for the same city. It does not appear whether this request was complied with under the successors of Don Diego.

In another clause of his will, he desired that a large stone should be placed upon his sepulchre, on which should be engraved, "Here lies the honourable Cavalier Diego Mendez, who served greatly the royal crown of Spain, in the conquest of the Indies, with the admiral Don Christopher Columbus, of glorious memory, who made the discovery; and afterwards by himself, with ships at his own cost. He died, &c., &c. Bestow in charity a Paternoster, and an Ave Maria."

He ordered that in the midst of this stone there should be carved an Indian Canoe, as given him by the king for armorial bearings in memorial of his voyage from Jamaica to Hispaniola, and above it should be engraved in large letters, the word "CANOA." He enjoined upon his heirs to be loyal to the admiral (Don Diego Columbus), and his lady, and gave them much ghostly counsel, mingled with pious benedictions. As an heir loom in his family, he bequeathed his library, consisting of a few volumes, which accompanied him in his wanderings; viz. "The Art of Holy Dying, by Erasmus; A Sermon of the same author, in Spanish; The Lingua and the Colloquies of the same; The History of Josephus; The Moral Philosophy of Aristotle; The Book of the Holy Land; A Book called the Contemplation of the Passion of Our Saviour; A Tract on the Vengeance of the Death of Agamemnon, and several other short treatises." This curious and characteristic testament is in the archives of the Duke of Veragua in Madrid.

took place in that island under the government of Ovando. A great crowd of adventurers of various ranks had thronged his fleet—eager speculators, credulous dreamers, and broken-down gentlemen of desperate fortunes; all expecting to enrich themselves suddenly in an island where gold was to be picked up from the surface of the soil, or gathered from the mountain-brooks. They had scarcely landed, says Las Casas, who accompanied the expedition, when they all hurried off to the mines, about eight leagues distance. The roads swarmed like ant-hills, with adventurers of all classes. Every one had his knapsack stored with biscuit or flour, and his mining implements on his shoulders. Those hidalgos, or gentlemen, who had no servants to carry their burdens, bore them on their own backs, and lucky was he who had a horse for the journey; he would be able to bring back the greater load of treasure. They all set out in high spirits, eager who should first reach the golden land; thinking they had but to arrive at the mines, and collect riches; “for they fancied,” says Las Casas, “that gold was to be gathered as easily and readily as fruit from the trees.” When they arrived, however, they discovered, to their dismay, that it was necessary to dig painfully into the bowels of the earth—a labour to which most of them had never been accustomed; that it required experience and sagacity to detect the veins of ore; that, in fact, the whole process of mining was exceedingly toilsome, demanded vast patience and much experience, and, after all, was full of uncertainty. They digged eagerly for a time, but found no ore. They grew hungry, threw by their implements, sat down to eat, and then returned to work. It was all in vain. “Their labour,” says Las Casas, “gave them a keen appetite and quick digestion, but no gold.” They soon consumed their provisions, exhausted their patience, cursed their infatuation, and in eight days set off drearily on their return along the roads they had lately trod so exultingly. They arrived at San Domingo without an ounce of gold, half-famished, downcast, and despairing.* Such is too often the case of those who ignorantly engage in mining—of all speculations the most brilliant, promising, and fallacious.

Poverty soon fell upon these misguided men. They exhausted the little property brought from Spain. Many suffered extremely from hunger, and were obliged to exchange even

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii. cap. 6.

their apparel for bread. Some formed connections with the old settlers of the island; but the greater part were like men lost and bewildered, and just awakened from a dream. The miseries of the mind, as usual, heightened the sufferings of the body. Some wasted away and died broken-hearted; others were hurried off by raging fevers, so that there soon perished upwards of a thousand men.

Ovando was reputed a man of great prudence and sagacity, and he certainly took several judicious measures for the regulation of the island, and the relief of the colonists. He made arrangements for distributing the married persons and the families which had come out in his fleet, in four towns in the interior, granting them important privileges. He revived the drooping zeal for mining, by reducing the royal share of the product from one-half to a third, and shortly after to a fifth; but he empowered the Spaniards to avail themselves, in the most oppressive manner, of the labour of the unhappy natives in working the mines. The charge of treating the natives with severity had been one of those chiefly urged against Columbus. It is proper, therefore, to notice, in this respect, the conduct of his successor, a man chosen for his prudence, and his supposed capacity to govern.

It will be recollected, that when Columbus was in a manner compelled to assign lands to the rebellious followers of Francisco Roldan in 1499, he had made an arrangement, that the caciques in their vicinity should, in lieu of tribute, furnish a number of their subjects to assist them in cultivating their estates. This, as has been observed, was the commencement of the disastrous system of repartimientos, or distributions of Indians. When Bobadilla administered the government, he constrained the caciques to furnish a certain number of Indians to each Spaniard, for the purpose of working the mines; where they were employed like beasts of burden. He made an enumeration of the natives, to prevent evasion; reduced them into classes, and distributed them among the Spanish inhabitants. The enormous oppressions which ensued have been noticed. They roused the indignation of Isabella; and when Ovando was sent out to supersede Bobadilla, in 1502, the natives were pronounced free; they immediately refused to labour in the mines.

Ovando represented to the Spanish sovereigns, in 1503, that ruinous consequences resulted to the colony from this entire

liberty granted to the Indians. He stated that the tribute could not be collected, for the Indians were lazy and improvident; that they could only be kept from vices and irregularities by occupation; that they now kept aloof from the Spaniards, and from all instruction in the Christian faith.

The last representation had an influence with Isabella, and drew a letter from the sovereigns to Ovando in 1503, in which he was ordered to spare no pains to attach the natives to the Spanish nation and the Catholic religion. To make them labour moderately, if absolutely essential to their own good; but to temper authority with persuasion and kindness. To pay them regularly and fairly for their labour, and to have them instructed in religion on certain days.

Ovando availed himself of the powers given him by this letter, to their fullest extent. He assigned to each Castilian a certain number of Indians, according to the quality of the applicant, the nature of the application, or his own pleasure. It was arranged in the form of an order on a cacique for a certain number of Indians, who were to be paid by their employer, and instructed in the Catholic faith. The pay was so small as to be little better than nominal; the instruction was little more than the mere ceremony of baptism; and the term of labour was at first six months, and then eight months in the year. Under cover of this hired labour, intended for the good both of their bodies and their souls, more intolerable toil was exacted from them, and more horrible cruelties were inflicted, than in the worst days of Bobadilla. They were separated often the distance of several days' journey from their wives and children, and doomed to intolerable labour of all kinds, extorted by the cruel infliction of the lash. For food they had the cassava bread, an unsubstantial support for men obliged to labour; sometimes a scanty portion of pork was distributed among a great number of them, scarce a mouthful to each. When the Spaniards who superintended the mines were at their repast, says Las Casas, the famished Indians scrambled under the table, like dogs, for any bone thrown to them. After they had gnawed and sucked it, they pounded it between stones and mixed it with their cassava bread, that nothing of so precious a morsel might be lost. As to those who laboured in the fields, they never tasted either flesh or fish; a little cassava bread and a few roots were their support. While the Spaniards thus withheld the

nourishment necessary to sustain their health and strength, they exacted a degree of labour sufficient to break down the most vigorous man. If the Indians fled from this incessant toil and barbarous coercion, and took refuge in the mountains, they were hunted out like wild beasts, scourged in the most inhuman manner, and laden with chains to prevent a second escape. Many perished long before their term of labour had expired. Those who survived their term of six or eight months, were permitted to return to their homes, until the next term commenced. But their homes were often forty, sixty, and eighty leagues distant. They had nothing to sustain them through the journey but a few roots or agi peppers, or a little cassava bread. Worn down by long toil and cruel hardships, which their feeble constitutions were incapable of sustaining, many had not strength to perform the journey, but sank down and died by the way; some by the side of a brook, others under the shade of a tree, where they had crawled for shelter from the sun. "I have found many dead in the road," says Las Casas, "others gasping under the trees, and others in the pangs of death, faintly crying Hunger! hunger!"* Those who reached their homes, most commonly found them desolate. During the eight months they had been absent, their wives and children had either perished or wandered away; the fields on which they depended for food were overrun with weeds, and nothing was left them but to lie down, exhausted and despairing, and die at the threshold of their habitations. †

It is impossible to pursue any further the picture drawn by the venerable Las Casas, not of what he had heard, but of what he had seen; nature and humanity revolt at the details. Suffice it to say that, so intolerable were the toils and sufferings inflicted upon this weak and unoffending race, that they sank under them, dissolving as it were from the face of the earth. Many killed themselves in despair, and even mothers overcame the powerful instinct of nature, and destroyed the infants at their breasts, to spare them a life of wretchedness. Twelve years had not elapsed since the discovery of the island, and several hundred thousand of its native inhabitants had perished, miserable victims to the grasping avarice of the white men.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 14, MS.

† Idem, ubi sup.

CHAPTER II.—[1503.]

THE sufferings of the natives under the civil policy of Ovando have been briefly shown; it remains to give a concise view of the military operations of this commander, so lauded by certain of the early historians for his prudence. By this notice a portion of the eventful history of this island will be recounted which is connected with the fortunes of Columbus, and which comprises the thorough subjugation, and, it may almost be said, extermination of the native inhabitants. And first, we must treat of the disasters of the beautiful province of Xaragua, the seat of hospitality, the refuge of the suffering Spaniards; and of the fate of the female cacique, Anacaona, once the pride of the island, and the generous friend of white men.

Behechio, the ancient cacique of this province, being dead, Anacaona, his sister, had succeeded to the government. The marked partiality which she once manifested for the Spaniards had been greatly weakened by the general misery they had produced in her country; and by the brutal profligacy exhibited in her immediate dominions by the followers of Roldan. The unhappy story of the loves of her beautiful daughter, Higuenamota, with the young Spaniard, Hernando de Guevara, had also caused her great affliction; and, finally, the various and enduring hardships inflicted on her once happy subjects, by the grinding systems of labour enforced by Bobadilla and Ovando, had at length, it is said, converted her friendship into absolute detestation.

This disgust was kept alive and aggravated by the Spaniards who lived in her immediate neighbourhood, and had obtained grants of land there; a remnant of the rebel faction of Roldan, who retained the gross licentiousness and open profligacy in which they had been indulged under the loose misrule of that commander, and who made themselves odious to the inferior caciques, by exacting services tyrannically and capriciously, under the baneful system of repartimientos.

The Indians of this province were uniformly represented as a more intelligent, polite, and generous-spirited race than any others of the islands. They were the more prone to feel and resent the overbearing treatment to which they were subjected. Quarrels sometimes took place between the caciques and their oppressors. These were immediately reported to the governor as dangerous mutinies; and a resistance to any capricious and extortionate exaction, was magnified into a

rebellious resistance to the authority of government. Complaints of this kind were continually pouring in upon Ovando, until he was persuaded by some alarmist, or some designing mischief-maker, that there was a deep-laid conspiracy among the Indians of this province to rise upon the Spaniards.

Ovando immediately set out for Xaragua at the head of three hundred foot-soldiers, armed with swords, arquebuses, and cross-bows, and seventy horsemen, with cuirasses, bucklers, and lances. He pretended that he was going on a mere visit of friendship to Anacaona, and to make arrangements about the payment of tribute.

When Anacaona heard of the intended visit, she summoned all her tributary caciques, and principal subjects, to assemble at her chief town, that they might receive the commander of the Spaniards with becoming homage and distinction. As Ovando, at the head of his little army, approached, she went forth to meet him, according to the custom of her nation, attended by a great train of her most distinguished subjects, male and female; who, as has been before observed, were noted for superior grace and beauty. They received the Spaniards with their popular areytos, their national songs; the young women waving palm branches and dancing before them, in the way that had so much charmed the followers of the Adelantado, on his first visit to the province.

Anacaona treated the governor with that natural graciousness and dignity for which she was celebrated. She gave him the largest house in the place for his residence, and his people were quartered in the houses adjoining. For several days the Spaniards were entertained with all the natural luxuries that the province afforded. National songs and dances and games were performed for their amusement, and there was every outward demonstration of the same hospitality, the same amity, that Anacaona had uniformly shown to white men.

Notwithstanding all this kindness, and notwithstanding her uniform integrity of conduct, and open generosity of character, Ovando was persuaded that Anacaona was secretly meditating a massacre of himself and his followers. Historians tell us nothing of the grounds for such a belief. It was too probably produced by the misrepresentations of the unprincipled adventurers who infested the province. Ovando should have paused and reflected before he acted upon it. He

should have considered the improbability of such an attempt by naked Indians against so large a force of steel-clad troops, armed with European weapons; and he should have reflected upon the general character and conduct of Anacaona. At any rate, the example set repeatedly by Columbus and his brother the Adelantado, should have convinced him that it was a sufficient safeguard against the machinations of the natives, to seize upon their caciques and detain them as hostages. The policy of Ovando, however, was of a more rash and sanguinary nature; he acted upon suspicion as upon conviction. He determined to anticipate the alleged plot by a counter-artifice, and to overwhelm this defenceless people in an indiscriminate and bloody vengeance.

As the Indians had entertained their guests with various national games, Ovando invited them in return to witness certain games of his country. Among these was a tilting match or joust with reeds; a chivalrous game which the Spaniards had learnt from the Moors of Granada. The Spanish cavalry, in those days, were as remarkable for the skilful management, as for the ostentatious caparison of their horses. Among the troops brought out from Spain by Ovando, one horseman had disciplined his horse to prance and curvet in time to the music of a viol.* The joust was appointed to take place of a Sunday after dinner, in the public square, before the house where Ovando was quartered. The cavalry and foot soldiers had their secret instructions. The former were to parade, not merely with reeds or blunted tilting lances, but with weapons of a more deadly character. The foot soldiers were to come apparently as mere spectators, but likewise armed and ready for action at a concerted signal.

At the appointed time the square was crowded with the Indians, waiting to see this military spectacle. The caciques were assembled in the house of Ovando, which looked upon the square. None were armed; an unreserved confidence prevailed among them, totally incompatible with the dark treachery of which they were accused. To prevent all suspicion, and take off all appearance of sinister design, Ovando, after dinner, was playing at quoits with some of his principal officers, when the cavalry having arrived in the square, the caciques begged the governor to order the joust to commence.† Anacaona, and her beautiful daughter Higuenamota,

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 9.

† Oviedo lib. iii. cap. 12

with several of her female attendants, were present and joined in the request.

Ovando left his game and came forward to a conspicuous place. When he saw that everything was disposed according to his orders, he gave the fatal signal. Some say it was by taking hold of a piece of gold which was suspended about his neck;* others, by laying his hand on the cross of Alcantara, which was embroidered on his habit.† A trumpet was immediately sounded. The house in which Anacaona and all the principal caciques were assembled was surrounded by soldiery, commanded by Diego Velasquez and Rodrigo Mexiatrillo, and no one was permitted to escape. They entered, and seizing upon the caciques, bound them to the posts which supported the roof. Anacaona was led forth a prisoner. The unhappy caciques were then put to horrible tortures, until some of them, in the extremity of anguish, were made to accuse their queen and themselves of the plot with which they were charged. When this cruel mockery of judicial form had been executed, instead of preserving them for after-examination, fire was set to the house, and all the caciques perished miserably in the flames.

While these barbarities were practised upon the chieftains, a horrible massacre took place among the populace. At the signal of Ovando, the horsemen rushed into the midst of the naked and defenceless throng, trampling them under the hoofs of their steeds, cutting them down with their swords, and transfixing them with their spears. No mercy was shown to age or sex; it was a savage and indiscriminate butchery. Now and then a Spanish horseman, either through an emotion of pity, or an impulse of avarice, caught up a child, to bear it off in safety; but it was barbarously pierced by the lances of his companions. Humanity turns with horror from such atrocities, and would fain discredit them; but they are circumstantially and still more minutely recorded by the venerable bishop Las Casas, who was resident in the island at the time, and conversant with the principal actors in this tragedy. He may have coloured the picture strongly, in his usual indignation when the wrongs of the Indians are in question; yet, from all concurring accounts, and from many precise facts which speak for themselves, the scene must have been most sanguinary and atrocious. Oviedo, who is loud in

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 9.

† Charlevoix, lib. xxiv. p. 235.

extolling the justice, and devotion, and charity, and meekness of Ovando, and his kind treatment of the Indians, and who visited the province of Xaragua a few years afterwards, records several of the preceding circumstances; especially the cold-blooded game of quoits played by the governor on the verge of such a horrible scene, and the burning of the caciques, to the number, he says, of more than forty. Diego Mendez, who was at Xaragua at the time, and doubtless present on such an important occasion, says incidentally in his last will and testament, that there were eighty-four caciques either burnt or hanged.* Las Casas says, that there were eighty who entered the house with Anacaona. The slaughter of the multitude must have been great; and this was inflicted on an unarmed and unresisting throng. Several who escaped from the massacre fled in their canoes to an island about eight leagues distant, called Guanabo. They were pursued and taken, and condemned to slavery.

As to the princess Anacaona, she was carried in chains to San Domingo. The mockery of a trial was given her, in which she was found guilty on the confessions wrung by tortures from her subjects, and on the testimony of their butchers; and she was ignominiously hanged in the presence of the people whom she had so long and so signally befriended.† Oviedo has sought to throw a stigma on the character of this unfortunate princess, accusing her of great licentiousness; but he was prone to criminate the character of the native princes, who fell victims to the ingratitude and injustice of his countrymen. Contemporary writers of greater authority have concurred in representing Anacaona as remarkable for her native propriety and dignity. She was adored by her subjects, so as to hold a kind of dominion over them even during the lifetime of her brother: she is said to have been skilled in composing the areytos, or legendary ballads of her nation, and may have conduced much towards producing that superior degree of refinement remarked among her people. Her grace and beauty had made her renowned throughout the island, and had excited the admiration both of the savage and the Spaniard. Her magnanimous spirit was evinced in her amicable treatment of the white men, although her husband, the brave Caonabo, had perished a prisoner in their

* Diego Mendez. Navarrete, Col., tom. i. p. 314.

† Oviedo, lib. iii. cap. 12. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 9.

hands, and defenceless parties of them had been repeatedly in her power, and lived at large in her dominions. After having for several years neglected all safe opportunities of vengeance, she fell a victim to the absurd charge of having conspired against an armed body of nearly four hundred men, seventy of them horsemen; a force sufficient to have subjugated large armies of naked Indians.

After the massacre of Xaragua, the destruction of its inhabitants still continued. The favourite nephew of Anacaona, the cacique Guaora, who had fled to the mountains, was hunted like a wild beast, until he was taken, and likewise hanged. For six months the Spaniards continued ravaging the country with horse and foot, under pretext of quelling insurrections for, wherever the affrighted natives took refuge in their despair, herding in dismal caverns and in the fastnesses of the mountains, they were represented as assembling in arms to make a head of rebellion. Having at length hunted them out of their retreats, destroyed many, and reduced the survivors to the most deplorable misery and abject submission, the whole of that part of the island was considered as restored to good order; and in commemoration of this great triumph, Ovando founded a town near to the lake, which he called Santa Maria de la Verdadera Paz (St. Mary of the True Peace).*

Such is the tragical history of the delightful region of Xaragua, and of its amiable and hospitable people. A place which the Europeans, by their own account, found a perfect paradise, but which, by their vile passions they filled with horror and desolation.

CHAPTER III.—[1504.]

THE subjugation of four of the Indian sovereignties of Hispaniola, and the disastrous fate of their caciques, have been already related. Under the administration of Ovando, was also accomplished the downfall of Higüey, the last of those independent districts; a fertile province which comprised the eastern extremity of the island.

The people of Higüey were of a more warlike spirit than those of the other provinces, having learned the effectual use of their weapons, from frequent contests with their Carib invaders. They were governed by a cacique named Cotabama. Las Casas describes this chieftain from actual observation, and draws the picture of a native hero. He was, he

* Oviedo, *Cronica de las Indias*, lib. ii. cap. 12.

says, the strongest of his tribe, and more perfectly formed than one man in a thousand of any nation whatever. He was taller in stature than the tallest of his countrymen, a yard in breadth from shoulder to shoulder, and the rest of his body in admirable proportion. His aspect was not handsome, but grave and courageous. His bow was not easily bent by a common man; his arrows were three pronged, tipped with the bones of fishes, and his weapons appeared to be intended for a giant. In a word, he was so nobly proportioned, as to be the admiration even of the Spaniards.

While Columbus was engaged in his fourth voyage, and shortly after the accession of Ovando to office, there was an insurrection of this cacique and his people. A shallop, with eight Spaniards, was surprised at the small island of Saona, adjacent to Higüey, and all the crew slaughtered. This was in revenge for the death of a cacique, torn to pieces by a dog wantonly set upon him by a Spaniard, and for which the natives had in vain sued for redress.

Ovando immediately dispatched Juan de Esquivel, a courageous officer, at the head of four hundred men, to quell the insurrection, and punish the massacre. Cotabanama assembled his warriors, and prepared for vigorous resistance. Distrustful of the mercy of the Spaniards, the chieftain rejected all overtures of peace, and the war was prosecuted with some advantage to the natives. The Indians had now overcome their superstitious awe of the white men as supernatural beings, and though they could ill withstand the superiority of European arms, they manifested a courage and dexterity that rendered them enemies not to be despised. Las Casas and other historians relate a bold and romantic encounter between a single Indian and two mounted cavaliers, named Valtebro and Portovedra, in which the Indian, though pierced through the body by the lances and swords of both his assailants, retained his fierceness, and continued the combat, until he fell dead in the possession of all their weapons.* This gallant action, says Las Casas, was public and notorious.

The Indians were soon defeated and driven to their mountain retreats. The Spaniards pursued them into their recesses, discovered their wives and children, wreaked on them the most indiscriminate slaughter, and committed their chieftains to the flames. An aged female cacique of great distinction, named Higuanama, being taken prisoner, was hanged.

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 8.

A detachment was sent in a caravel to the island of Saona, to take particuar vengeance for the destruction of the shallop and its crew. The natives made a desperate defence and fled. The island was mountainous, and full of caverns. in which the Indians vainly sought for refuge. Six or seven hundred were imprisoned in a dwelling, and all put to the sword or poniarded. Those of the inhabitants who were spared were carried off as slaves; and the island was left desolate and deserted.

The natives of Higüey were driven to despair; seeing that there was no escape for them even in the bowels of the earth,* they sued for peace, which was granted them, and protection promised, on condition of their cultivating a large tract of land, and paying a great quantity of bread in tribute. The peace being concluded, Cotabanama visited the Spanish camp, where his gigantic proportions and martial demeanour made him an object of curiosity and admiration. He was received with great distinction by Esquibel, and they exchanged names; an Indian league of fraternity and perpetual friendship. The natives thenceforward called the cacique Juan de Esquibel, and the Spanish commander Cotabanama. Esquibel then built a wooden fortress in an Indian village near the sea, and left in it nine men, with a captain, named Martin de Villaman. After this, the troops dispersed, every man returning home, with his proportion of slaves gained in this expedition.

The pacification was not of long continuance. About the time that succours were sent to Columbus, to rescue him from the wrecks of his vessels at Jamaica, a new revolt broke out in Higüey, in consequence of the oppressions of the Spaniards, and a violation of the treaty made by Esquibel. Martin de Villaman demanded that the natives should not only raise the grain stipulated for by the treaty, but convey it to San Domingo, and he treated them with the greatest severity on their refusal. He connived also at the licentious conduct of his men towards the Indian women, the Spaniards often taking from the natives their daughters and sisters, and even their wives.* The Indians, roused at last to fury, rose on their tyrants, slaughtered them, and burnt their wooden fortress to the ground. Only one of the Spaniards escaped, and bore the tidings of this catastrophe to the city of San Domingo.

Ovando gave immediate orders to carry fire and sword into

* Las Casas, ubi sup.

† Idem.

the province of Higüey. The Spanish troops mustered from various quarters on the confines of that province, when Juan de Esquivel took the command, and had a great number of Indians with him as allies. The towns of Higüey were generally built among the mountains. Those mountains rose in terraces, from ten to fifteen leagues in length and breadth; rough and rocky, interspersed with glens of red soil, remarkably fertile, where they raised their cassava-bread. The ascent from terrace to terrace was about fifty feet; steep and precipitous, formed of the living rock, and resembling a wall wrought with tools into rough diamond points. Each village had four wide streets, a stone's throw in length, forming a cross, the trees being cleared away from them, and from a public square in the centre.

When the Spanish troops arrived on the frontiers, alarm-fires along the mountains and columns of smoke spread the intelligence by night and day. The old men, the women, and children, were sent off to the forests and caverns, and the warriors prepared for battle. The Castilians paused in one of the plains clear of forests, where their horses could be of use. They made prisoners of several of the natives, and tried to learn from them the plans and forces of the enemy. They applied tortures for the purpose, but in vain, so devoted was the loyalty of these people to their caciques. The Spaniards penetrated into the interior. They found the warriors of several towns assembled in one, and drawn up in the streets with their bows and arrows, but perfectly naked, and without defensive armour. They uttered tremendous yells, and discharged a shower of arrows; but from such a distance, that they fell short of their foe. The Spaniards replied with their cross-bows, and with two or three arquebuses, for at this time they had but few fire-arms. When the Indians saw several of their comrades fall dead, they took to flight, rarely waiting for the attack with swords: some of the wounded, in whose bodies the arrows from the cross-bows had penetrated to the very feather, drew them out with their hands, broke them with their teeth, and hurling them at the Spaniards with impotent fury, fell dead upon the spot.

The whole force of the Indians was routed and dispersed, each family, or band of neighbours, fled in its own direction, and concealed itself in the fastness of the mountains. The Spaniards pursued them, but found the chase difficult amidst

the close forests, and the broken and stony heights. They took several prisoners as guides, and inflicted incredible torments on them, to compel them to betray their countrymen. They drove them before them, secured by cords fastened round their necks; and some of them, as they passed along the brinks of precipices, suddenly threw themselves headlong down, in hopes of dragging after them the Spaniards. When at length the pursuers came upon the unhappy Indians in their concealments, they spared neither age nor sex; even pregnant women, and mothers with infants in their arms, fell beneath their merciless swords. The cold-blooded acts of cruelty which followed this first slaughter, would be shocking to relate.

Hence Esquibel marched to attack the town where Cota-banama resided, and where that cacique had collected a great force to resist him. He proceeded direct for the place along the sea-coast, and came to where two roads led up the mountain to the town. One of the roads was open and inviting; the branches of the trees being lopped, and all the underwood cleared away. Here the Indians had stationed an ambuscade to take the Spaniards in the rear. The other road was almost closed up by trees and bushes cut down and thrown across each other. Esquibel was wary and distrustful; he suspected the stratagem, and chose the encumbered road. The town was about a league and a half from the sea. The Spaniards made their way with great difficulty for the first half league. The rest of the road was free from all embarrassment, which confirmed their suspicion of a stratagem. They now advanced with great rapidity, and, having arrived near the village, suddenly turned into the other road, took the party in ambush by surprise, and made great havoc among them with their cross-bows.

The warriors now sallied from their concealment, others rushed out of the houses into the streets, and discharged flights of arrows, but from such a distance as generally to fall harmless. They then approached nearer, and hurled stones with their hands, being unacquainted with the use of slings. Instead of being dismayed at seeing their companions fall, it rather increased their fury. An irregular battle, probably little else than wild skirmishing and bush-fighting, was kept up from two o'clock in the afternoon until night. Las Casas was present on the occasion, and, from his account, the

Indians must have shown instances of great personal bravery, though the inferiority of their weapons, and the want of all defensive armour, rendered their valour totally ineffectual. As the evening shut in, their hostilities gradually ceased, and they disappeared in the profound gloom and close thickets of the surrounding forest. A deep silence succeeded to their yells and war-whoops, and throughout the night the Spaniards remained in undisturbed possession of the village.

CHAPTER IV.—[1504.]

ON the morning after the battle, not an Indian was to be seen. Finding that even their great chief, Cotabanama, was incapable of vying with the prowess of the white men, they had given up the contest in despair, and fled to the mountains. The Spaniards, separating into small parties, hunted them with the utmost diligence; their object was to seize the caciques, and, above all, Cotabanama. They explored all the glens and concealed paths leading into the wild recesses where the fugitives had taken refuge. The Indians were cautious and stealthy in their mode of retreating, treading in each other's foot-prints, so that twenty would make no more track than one, and stepping so lightly as scarce to disturb the herbage; yet there were Spaniards so skilled in hunting Indians, that they could trace them even by the turn of a withered leaf, and among the confused tracks of a thousand animals.

They could scent afar off, also, the smoke of the fires which the Indians made whenever they halted, and thus they would come upon them in their most secret haunts. Sometimes they would hunt down a straggling Indian, and compel him, by torments, to betray the hiding-place of his companions, binding him and driving him before them as a guide. Wherever they discovered one of these places of refuge, filled with the aged and infirm, with feeble women and helpless children, they massacred them without mercy. They wished to inspire terror throughout the land, and to frighten the whole tribe into submission. They cut off the hands of those whom they took roving at large, and sent them, as they said, to deliver them as letters to their friends, demanding their surrender. Numberless were those, says Las Casas, whose hands were amputated in this manner, and many of them sank down and died by the way, through anguish and loss of blood.

The conquerors delighted in exercising strange and ingenious cruelties. They mingled horrible levity with their blood-thirstiness. They erected gibbets long and low, so that the feet of the sufferers might reach the ground, and their death be lingering. They hanged thirteen together, in reverence, says the indignant Las Casas, of our blessed Saviour and the twelve apostles. While their victims were suspended, and still living, they hacked them with their swords, to prove the strength of their arms and the edge of their weapons. They wrapped them in dry straw, and setting fire to it, terminated their existence by the fiercest agony.

These are horrible details, yet a veil is drawn over others still more detestable. They are related circumstantially by Las Casas, who was an eye-witness. He was young at the time, but records them in his advanced years. "All these things," says the venerable Bishop, "and others revolting to human nature, did my own eyes behold; and now I almost fear to repeat them, scarce believing myself, or whether I have not dreamt them."*

These details would have been withheld from the present work as disgraceful to human nature, and from an unwillingness to advance any thing which might convey a stigma upon a brave and generous nation. But it would be a departure from historical veracity, having the documents before my eyes, to pass silently over transactions so atrocious, and vouched for by witnesses beyond all suspicion of falsehood. Such occurrences show the extremity to which human cruelty may extend, when stimulated by avidity of gain; by a thirst of vengeance; or even by a perverted zeal in the holy cause of religion. Every nation has in turn furnished proofs of this disgraceful truth. As in the present instance, they are commonly the crimes of individuals rather than of the nation. Yet it behoves governments to keep a vigilant eye upon those to whom they delegate power in remote and helpless colonies. It is the imperious duty of the historian to place these matters upon record, that they may serve as warning beacons to future generations.

Juan de Esquibel found that, with all his severities, it would be impossible to subjugate the tribe of Higüey, as long as the cacique Cotabanama was at large. That chieftain had retired to the little island of Saona, about two leagues from

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 17, MS.

the coast of Higüey, in the centre of which, amidst a labyrinth of rocks and forests, he had taken shelter with his wife and children in a vast cavern.

A caravel, recently arrived from the city of San Domingo with supplies for the camp, was employed by Esquibel to entrap the cacique. He knew that the latter kept a vigilant look-out, stationing scouts upon the lofty rocks of his island to watch the movements of the caravel. Esquibel departed by night, therefore, in the vessel, with fifty followers, and keeping under the deep shadows cast by the land, arrived at Saona unperceived, at the dawn of morning. Here he anchored close in with the shore, hid by its cliffs and forests, and landed forty men, before the spies of Cotabanama had taken their station. Two of these were surprised and brought to Esquibel, who, having learnt from them that the cacique was at hand, poniarded one of the spies, and bound the other, making him serve as guide.

A number of Spaniards ran in advance, each anxious to signalize himself by the capture of the cacique. They came to two roads, and the whole party pursued that to the right, excepting one Juan Lopez, a powerful man, skilful in Indian warfare. He proceeded in a footpath to the left, winding among little hills, so thickly wooded, that it was impossible to see any one at the distance of half a bow-shot. Suddenly, in a narrow pass, overshadowed by rocks and trees, he encountered twelve Indian warriors, armed with bows and arrows, and following each other in single file, according to their custom. The Indians were confounded at the sight of Lopez, imagining that there must be a party of soldiers behind him. They might readily have transfixed him with their arrows, but they had lost all presence of mind. He demanded their chieftain. They replied that he was behind, and, opening to let him pass, Lopez beheld the cacique in the rear. At sight of the Spaniard, Cotabanama bent his gigantic bow, and was on the point of launching one of his three-pronged arrows, but Lopez rushed upon him and wounded him with his sword. The other Indians, struck with panic, had already fled. Cotabanama, dismayed at the keenness of the sword, cried out that he was Juan de Esquibel, claiming respect as having exchanged names with the Spanish commander. Lopez seized him with one hand by the hair, and with the other aimed a thrust at his body; but the cacique struck

down the sword with his hand, and grappling with his antagonist, threw him with his back upon the rocks. As they were both men of great power, the struggle was long and violent. The sword was beneath them, but Cotabanama, seizing the Spaniard by the throat with his mighty hand, attempted to strangle him. The sound of the contest brought the other Spaniards to the spot. They found their companion writhing and gasping, and almost dead, in the gripe of the gigantic Indian. They seized the cacique, bound him, and carried him captive to a deserted Indian village in the vicinity. They found the way to his secret cave, but his wife and children having received notice of his capture by the fugitive Indians, had taken refuge in another part of the island. In the cavern was found the chain with which a number of Indian captives had been bound, who had risen upon and slain three Spaniards who had them in charge, and had made their escape to this island. There were also the swords of the same Spaniards, which they had brought off as trophies to their cacique. The chain was now employed to manacle Cotabanama.

The Spaniards prepared to execute the chieftain on the spot, in the centre of the deserted village. For this purpose a pyre was built of logs of wood laid crossways, in the form of a gridiron, on which he was to be slowly broiled to death. On further consultation, however, they were induced to forego the pleasure of this horrible sacrifice. Perhaps they thought the cacique too important a personage to be executed thus obscurely. Granting him, therefore, a transient reprieve, they conveyed him to the caravel, and sent him, bound with heavy chains, to San Domingo. Ovando saw him in his power, and incapable of doing further harm; but he had not the magnanimity to forgive a fallen enemy, whose only crime was the defence of his native soil and lawful territory. He ordered him to be publicly hanged like a common culprit.* In this ignominious manner was the cacique Cotabanama executed, the last of the five sovereign princes of Hayti. His death was followed by the complete subjugation of his people, and sealed the last struggle of the natives against their oppressors. The island was almost unpeopled of its original inhabitants, and meek and mournful submission and mute despair settled upon the scanty remnant that survived.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 18.

Such was the ruthless system which had been pursued, during the absence of the admiral, by the commander Ovando; this man of boasted prudence and moderation, who was sent to reform the abuses of the island, and above all, to redress the wrongs of the natives. The system of Columbus may have borne hard upon the Indians, born and brought up in untasked freedom, but it was never cruel nor sanguinary. He inflicted no wanton massacres nor vindictive punishments; his desire was to cherish and civilize the Indians, and to render them useful subjects; not to oppress, and persecute, and destroy them. When he beheld the desolation that had swept them from the land during his suspension from authority, he could not restrain the strong expression of his feelings. In a letter written to the king after his return to Spain, he thus expresses himself on the subject. "The Indians of Hispaniola were and are the riches of the island: for it is they who cultivate and make the bread and the provisions for the Christians; who dig the gold from the mines, and perform all the offices and labours both of men and beasts. I am informed that, since I left this island, six parts out of seven of the natives are dead; all through ill treatment and inhumanity; some by the sword, others by blows and cruel usage, others through hunger. The greater part have perished in the mountains and glens, whither they had fled, from not being able to support the labour imposed upon them." For his own part, he added, although he had sent many Indians to Spain to be sold, it was always with a view to their being instructed in the Christian faith, and in civilized arts and usages, and afterwards sent back to their island to assist in civilizing their countrymen.*

The brief view that has been given of the policy of Ovando on certain points on which Columbus was censured, may enable the reader to judge more correctly of the conduct of the latter. It is not to be measured by the standard of right and wrong established in the present more enlightened age. We must consider him in connection with the era in which he lived. By comparing his measures with those men of his own times praised for their virtues and abilities, placed in precisely his own situation, and placed there expressly to correct his faults, we shall be the better able to judge how virtuously and wisely, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, he may be considered to have governed.

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii. cap. 36.

BOOK XVIII.

CHAPTER I.

THE arrival at Jamaica of the two vessels under the command of Salcedo, had caused a joyful reverse in the situation of Columbus. He hastened to leave the wreck in which he had been so long immured, and hoisting his flag on board of one of the ships, felt as if the career of enterprise and glory were once more open to him. The late partisans of Porras, when they heard of the arrival of the ships, came wistful and abject to the harbour, doubting how far they might trust to the magnanimity of a man whom they had so greatly injured, and who had now an opportunity of vengeance. The generous mind, however, never harbours revenge in the hour of returning prosperity; but feels noble satisfaction in sharing its happiness even with its enemies. Columbus forgot, in his present felicity, all that he had suffered from these men; he ceased to consider them enemies, now that they had lost the power to injure; and he not only fulfilled all that he had promised them, by taking them on board the ships, but relieved their necessities from his own purse, until their return to Spain; and afterwards took unwearied pains to recommend them to the bounty of the sovereigns. Francisco Porras alone continued a prisoner, to be tried by the tribunals of his country.

Oviedo assures us that the Indians wept when they beheld the departure of the Spaniards; still considering them as beings from the skies. From the admiral, it is true, they had experienced nothing but just and gentle treatment, and continual benefits; and the idea of his immediate influence with the Deity, manifested on the memorable occasion of the eclipse, may have made them consider him as more than human, and his presence as propitious to their island; but it is not easy to believe that a lawless gang like that of Porras, could have been ranging for months among their villages, without giving cause for the greatest joy at their departure.

On the 28th of June the vessels set sail for San Domingo. The adverse winds and currents which had opposed Columbus throughout this ill-starred expedition, still continued to harass him. After a weary struggle of several weeks, he reached, on the 3rd of August, the little island of Beata, on the coast of Hispaniola. Between this place and San Domingo the cur-

rents are so violent, that vessels are often detained months, waiting for sufficient wind to enable them to stem the stream. Hence Columbus dispatched a letter by land to Ovando, to inform of his approach, and to remove certain absurd suspicions of his views, which he had learnt from Salcedo were still entertained by the governor, who feared his arrival in the island might produce factions and disturbances. In this letter he expresses, with his usual warmth and simplicity, the joy he felt at his deliverance, which was so great, he says, that since the arrival of Diego de Salcedo with succour, he had scarcely been able to sleep. The letter had barely time to precede the writer, for, a favourable wind springing up, the vessels again made sail, and, on the 13th of August, anchored in the harbour of San Domingo.

If it is the lot of prosperity to awaken envy and excite detraction, it is certainly the lot of misfortune to atone for a multitude of faults. San Domingo had been the very hot-bed of sedition against Columbus in the day of his power; he had been hurried from it in ignominious chains, amidst the shouts and taunts of the triumphant rabble; he had been excluded from its harbour, when, as commander of a squadron, he craved shelter from an impending tempest; but now that he arrived in its waters, a broken-down and shipwrecked man, all past hostility was overpowered by the popular sense of his late disasters. There was a momentary burst of enthusiasm in his favour; what had been denied to his merits, was granted to his misfortunes; and even the envious, appeased by his present reverses, seemed to forgive him for having once been so triumphant.

The governor and principal inhabitants came forth to meet him, and received him with signal distinction. He was lodged as a guest in the house of Ovando, who treated him with the utmost courtesy and attention. The governor was a shrewd and discreet man, and much of a courtier; but there were causes of jealousy and distrust between him and Columbus too deep to permit of cordial intercourse. The admiral and his son Fernando always pronounced the civility of Ovando overstrained and hypocritical; intended to obliterate the remembrance of past neglect, and to conceal lurking enmity. While he professed the utmost friendship and sympathy for the admiral, he set at liberty the traitor Porras, who was still a prisoner, to be taken to Spain for trial. He also talked of punishing those of the admiral's

people who had taken arms in his defence, and in the affray at Jamaica had killed several of the mutineers. These circumstances were loudly complained of by Columbus; but, in fact, they rose out of a question of jurisdiction between him and the governor. Their powers were so undefined as to clash with each other, and they were both disposed to be extremely punctilious. Ovando assumed a right to take cognizance of all transactions at Jamaica; as happening within the limits of his government, which included all the islands and Terra Firma. Columbus, on the other hand, asserted the absolute command, and the jurisdiction both civil and criminal, given to him by the sovereigns, over all persons who sailed in his expedition, from the time of departure until their return to Spain. To prove this, he produced his letter of instructions. The governor heard him with great courtesy and a smiling countenance; but observed, that the letter of instructions gave him no authority within the bounds of his government.* He relinquished the idea, however, of investigating the conduct of the followers of Columbus, and sent Porras to Spain, to be examined by the board which had charge of the affairs of the Indies.

The sojourn of Columbus at San Domingo was but little calculated to yield him satisfaction. He was grieved at the desolation of the island by the oppressive treatment of the natives, and the horrible massacre which had been perpetrated by Ovando and his agents. He had fondly hoped, at one time, to render the natives civilized, industrious, and tributary subjects to the crown, and to derive from their well-regulated labour a great and steady revenue. How different had been the event! The five great tribes which peopled the mountains and the valleys at the time of the discovery, and rendered, by their mingled towns, and villages, and tracts of cultivation, the rich levels of the Vegas so many "painted gardens," had almost all passed away, and the native princes had perished chiefly by violent or ignominious deaths. Columbus regarded the affairs of the island with a different eye from Ovando. He had a paternal feeling for its prosperity, and his fortunes were implicated in its judicious management. He complained, in subsequent letters to the sovereigns, that all the public affairs were ill conducted; that the ore collected lay unguarded in large quantities, in houses slightly

* Letter of Columbus to his son Diego, Seville, Nov. 21, 1504.

built and thatched, inviting depredation; that Ovando was unpopular, the people were dissolute, and the property of the crown and the security of the island in continual risk from mutiny and sedition.* While he saw all this, he had no power to interfere, and any observation or remonstrance on his part was ill received by the governor.

He found his own immediate concerns in great confusion. His rents and dues were either uncollected, or he could not obtain a clear account and a full liquidation of them. Whatever he could collect was appropriated to the fitting out of the vessels which were to convey himself and his crews to Spain. He accuses Ovando, in his subsequent letters, of having neglected, if not sacrificed, his interests during his long absence, and of having impeded those who were appointed to attend to his concerns. That he had some grounds for these complaints would appear from two letters still extant,† written by Queen Isabella to Ovando, on the 27th of November, 1503, in which she informs him of the complaint of Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, that he was impeded in collecting the rents of the admiral; and expressly commands Ovando to observe the capitulations granted to Columbus; to respect his agents, and to facilitate, instead of obstructing his concerns. These letters, while they imply ungenerous conduct on the part of the governor towards his illustrious predecessor, evince likewise the personal interest taken by Isabella on the affairs of Columbus, during his absence. She had, in fact, signified her displeasure at his being excluded from the port of San Domingo, when he applied there for succour for his squadron, and for shelter from a storm; and had censured Ovando for not taking his advice and detaining the fleet of Bobadilla, by which it would have escaped its disastrous fate.‡ And here it may be observed, that the sanguinary acts of Ovando towards the natives, in particular the massacre at Xaragua, and the execution of the unfortunate Anacaona, awakened equal horror and indignation in Isabella; she was languishing on her death-bed when she received the intelligence, and with her dying breath she exacted a promise from King Ferdinand, that Ovando should immediately be recalled from his government. The promise was tardily and reluct-

* Letter of Columbus to his son Diego, Seville, 3rd Dec. 1504.

† Navarrete, Collec., tom. ii., decad. 151, 152.

‡ Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. v. cap. 12.

antly fulfilled, after an interval of about four years, and not until induced by other circumstances; for Ovando contrived to propitiate the monarch, by forcing a revenue from the island.

The continual misunderstandings between the admiral and the governor, though always qualified on the part of the latter with great complaisance, induced Columbus to hasten as much as possible his departure from the island. The ship in which he had returned from Jamaica was repaired and fitted out, and put under the command of the Adelantado; another vessel was freighted, in which Columbus embarked with his son and his domestics. The greater part of his late crews remained at San Domingo; as they were in great poverty, he relieved their necessities from his own purse, and advanced the funds necessary for the voyage home of those who chose to return. Many thus relieved by his generosity had been among the most violent of the rebels.

On the 12th of September he set sail, but had scarcely left the harbour when, in a sudden squall, the mast of his ship was carried away. He immediately went with his family on board of the vessel commanded by the Adelantado, and, sending back the damaged ship to port, continued on his course. Throughout the voyage he experienced the most tempestuous weather. In one storm the mainmast was sprung in four places. He was confined to his bed at the time by the gout; by his advice, however, and the activity of the Adelantado, the damage was skilfully repaired; the mast was shortened; the weak parts were fortified by wood taken from the castles or cabins, which the vessels in those days carried on the prow and stern; and the whole was well secured by cords. They were still more damaged in a succeeding tempest in which the ship sprung her foremast. In this crippled state, they had to traverse seven hundred leagues of a stormy ocean. Fortune continued to persecute Columbus to the end of this, his last and most disastrous expedition. For several weeks he was tempest-tost—suffering at the same time the most excruciating pains from his malady—until, on the seventh day of November, his crazy and shattered bark anchored in the harbour of San Lucar. Hence he had himself conveyed to Seville, where he hoped to enjoy repose of mind and body, and to recruit his health after such a long series of fatigues, anxieties, and hardships.*

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 108. Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 36

CHAPTER II.—[1504.]

BROKEN by age and infirmities, and worn down by the toils and hardships of his recent expedition, Columbus had looked forward to Seville as to a haven of rest, where he might repose awhile from his troubles. Care and sorrow, however, followed him by sea and land. In varying the scene, he but varied the nature of his distress. "Wearisome days and nights" were appointed to him for the remainder of his life; and the very margin of his grave was destined to be strewn with thorns.

On arriving at Seville, he found all his affairs in confusion. Ever since he had been sent home in chains from San Domingo, when his house and effects had been taken possession of by Bobadilla, his rents and dues had never been properly collected; and such as had been gathered had been retained in the hands of the governor Ovando. "I have much vexation from the governor," says he, in a letter to his son Diego.* "All tell me that I have there eleven or twelve thousand castellanos; and I have not received a quarto. * * * * I know well, that since my departure, he must have received upwards of five thousand castellanos." He entreated that a letter might be written by the king, commanding the payment of these arrears without delay; for his agents would not venture even to speak to Ovando on the subject, unless empowered by a letter from the sovereign.

Columbus was not of a mercenary spirit; but his rank and situation required large expenditure. The world thought him in the possession of sources of inexhaustible wealth; but, as yet, those sources had furnished him but precarious and scanty streams. His last voyage had exhausted his finances, and involved him in perplexities. All that he had been able to collect of the money due to him in Hispaniola, to the amount of twelve hundred castellanos, had been expended in bringing home many of his late crew, who were in distress; and for the greater part of the sum the crown remained his debtor. While struggling to obtain his mere pecuniary dues, he was absolutely suffering a degree of penury. He repeatedly urges the necessity of economy to his son Diego, until he can obtain a restitution of his property, and the payment of his arrears. "I receive nothing of the revenue due to me," says he, in one letter; "I live by borrowing." "Little

* Let. Seville, 13 Dec., 1504. Navarrete, v. i. p. 343.

have I profited," he adds, in another, "by twenty years of service, with such toils and perils; since, at present, I do not own a roof in Spain. If I desire to eat or sleep, I have no resort but an inn; and, for the most times, have not wherewithal to pay my bill."

Yet in the midst of these personal distresses, he was more solicitous for the payment of his seamen than of himself. He wrote strongly and repeatedly to the sovereigns, entreating the discharge of their arrears, and urged his son Diego, who was at court, to exert himself in their behalf. "They are poor," said he, "and it is now nearly three years since they left their homes. They have endured infinite toils and perils, and they bring invaluable tidings, for which their majesties ought to give thanks to God and rejoice." Notwithstanding his generous solicitude for these men, he knew several of them to have been his enemies; nay, that some of them were at this very time disposed to do him harm rather than good; such was the magnanimity of his spirit and his forgiving disposition.

The same zeal, also, for the interests of his sovereigns, which had ever actuated his loyal mind, mingled with his other causes of solicitude. He represented in his letter to the king the mismanagement of the royal rents in Hisipaniola, under the administration of Ovando. Immense quantities of ore lay unprotected in slightly-built houses, and liable to depredations. It required a person of vigour, and one who had an individual interest in the property of the island, to restore its affairs to order, and draw from it the immense revenues which it was capable of yielding; and Columbus plainly intimated that he was the proper person.

In fact, as to himself, it was not so much pecuniary indemnification that he sought, as the restoration of his offices and dignities. He regarded them as the trophies of his illustrious achievements; he had received the royal promise that he should be reinstated in them; and he felt that as long as they were withheld, a tacit censure rested upon his name. Had he not been proudly impatient on this subject, he would have belied the loftiest part of his character; for he who can be indifferent to the wreath of triumph, is deficient in the noble ambition which incites to glorious deeds.

The unsatisfactory replies received to his letters disquieted his mind. He knew that he had a few active enemies at court ready to turn all things to his disadvantage, and felt the

importance of being there in person to defeat their machinations: but his infirmities detained him at Seville. He made an attempt to set forth on the journey, but the severity of the winter and the virulence of his malady obliged him to relinquish it in despair. All that he could do was to reiterate his letters to the sovereigns, and to entreat the intervention of his few but faithful friends. He feared the disastrous occurrences of the last voyage might be represented to his prejudice. The great object of the expedition, the discovery of a strait opening from the Carribean to a southern sea, had failed. The secondary object, the acquisition of gold, had not been completed. He had discovered the gold mines of Veragua, it is true; but he had brought home no treasure; because, as he said, in one of his letters, "I would not rob nor outrage the country; since reason requires that it should be settled, and then the gold may be procured without violence."

He was especially apprehensive that the violent scenes in the island of Jamaica might, by the perversity of his enemies, and the effrontery of the delinquents, be wrested into matters of accusation against him, as had been the case with the rebellion of Roldan. Porras, the ringleader of the late faction, had been sent home by Ovando, to appear before the board of the Indies; but without any written process, setting forth the offences charged against him. While at Jamaica, Columbus had ordered an inquest of the affair to be taken; but the notary of the squadron who took it, and the papers which he drew up, were on board of the ship in which the admiral had sailed from Hispaniola, but which had put back dismasted. No cognizance of the case, therefore, was taken by the council of the Indies; and Porras went at large, armed with the power and the disposition to do mischief. Being related to Morales, the royal treasurer, he had access to people in place, and an opportunity of enlisting their opinions and prejudices on his side. Columbus wrote to Morales, inclosing a copy of the petition which the rebels had sent to him when in Jamaica, in which they acknowledged their culpability, and implored his forgiveness; and he entreated the treasurer not to be swayed by the representations of his relative, nor to pronounce an opinion unfavourable to him, until he had an opportunity of being heard.

The faithful and indefatigable Diego Mendez was at this time at the court, as well as Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, and

an active friend of Columbus named Geronimo. They could bear the most important testimony as to his conduct, and he wrote to his son Diego to call upon them for their good offices. "I trust," said he, "that the truth and diligence of Diego Mendez will be of as much avail as the lies of Porras." Nothing can surpass the affecting earnestness and simplicity of the general declaration of loyalty, contained in one of his letters. "I have served their majesties," says he, "with as much zeal and diligence as if it had been to gain Paradise; and if I have failed in anything, it has been because my knowledge and powers went no further."

While reading these touching appeals, we can scarcely realize the fact, that the dejected individual thus wearily and vainly applying for unquestionable rights, and pleading almost like a culprit, in cases wherein he had been flagrantly injured, was the same who but a few years previously had been received at this very court with almost regal honours, and idolized as a national benefactor; that this, in a word, was Columbus, the discoverer of the New World; broken in health, and impoverished in his old days by his very discoveries.

At length the caravel bringing the official proceedings relative to the brothers Porras arrived at the Algarves, in Portugal, and Columbus looked forward with hope that all matters would soon be placed in a proper light. His anxiety to get to court became every day more intense. A litter was provided to convey him thither, and was actually at the door, but the inclemency of the weather and his increasing infirmities obliged him again to abandon the journey. His resource of letter-writing began to fail him: he could only write at night, for in the daytime the severity of his malady deprived him of the use of his hands. The tidings from the court were every day more and more adverse to his hopes; the intrigues of his enemies were prevailing; the cold-hearted Ferdinand treated all his applications with indifference; the generous Isabella lay dangerously ill. On her justice and magnanimity he still relied for the full restoration of his rights, and the redress of all his grievances. "May it please the Holy Trinity," says he, "to restore our sovereign queen to health; for by her will every thing be adjusted which is now in confusion." Alas! while writing that letter, his noble benefactress was a corpse!

The health of Isabella had long been undermined by the shocks of repeated domestic calamities. The death of her only son, the prince Juan; of her beloved daughter and bosom friend, the princess Isabella; and of her grandson and prospective heir the prince Miguel, had been three cruel wounds to a heart full of the tenderest sensibility. To these was added the constant grief caused by the evident infirmity of intellect of her daughter Juana, and the domestic unhappiness of that princess with her husband, the Archduke Philip. The desolation which walks through palaces admits not the familiar sympathies and sweet consolations which alleviate the sorrows of common life. Isabella pined in state, amidst the obsequious homages of a court, surrounded by the trophies of a glorious and successful reign, and placed at the summit of earthly grandeur. A deep and incurable melancholy settled upon her, which undermined her constitution, and gave a fatal acuteness to her bodily maladies. After four months of illness, she died on the 26th of November, 1504, at Medina del Campo, in the fifty-fourth year of her age; but long before her eyes closed upon the world, her heart had closed on all its pomps and vanities. "Let my body," said she in her will, "be interred in the monastery of San Francisco, which is in the Alhambra of the city of Granada, in a low sepulchre, without any monument except a plain stone, with the inscription cut on it. But I desire and command, that if the king, my lord, should choose a sepulchre in any church or monastery in any other part or place of these my kingdoms, my body be transported thither, and buried beside the body of his highness; so that the union we have enjoyed while living, and which, through the mercy of God, we hope our souls will experience in heaven, may be represented by our bodies in the earth."*

Such was one of several passages in the will of this admirable woman, which bespoke the chastened humility of her heart; and in which, as has been well observed, the affections of conjugal love were delicately entwined with piety, and with the most tender melancholy.† She was one of the purest

* The dying command of Isabella has been obeyed. The author of this work has seen her tomb in the royal chapel of the Cathedral of Granada, in which her remains are interred with those of Ferdinand. Their effigies, sculptured in white marble, lie side by side on a magnificent sepulchre. The altar of the chapel is adorned with bas reliefs representing the conquest and surrender of Granada.

† *Elogio de la Reina Catolica por D. Diego Clemencin. Illustration 19.*

spirits that ever ruled over the destinies of a nation. Had she been spared, her benignant vigilance would have prevented many a scene of horror in the colonization of the New World, and might have softened the lot of its native inhabitants. As it is, her fair name will ever shine with celestial radiance in the dawning of its history.

The news of the death of Isabella reached Columbus when he was writing a letter to his son Diego. He notices it in a postscript or memorandum, written in the haste and brevity of the moment, but in beautifully touching and mournful terms. "A memorial," he writes, "for thee, my dear son Diego, of what is at present to be done. The principal thing is to commend affectionately, and with great devotion, the soul of the queen our sovereign to God. Her life was always catholic and holy, and prompt to all things in his holy service: for this reason we may rest assured that she is received into his glory, and beyond the cares of this rough and weary world. The next thing is to watch and labor in all matters for the service of our sovereign the king, and to endeavour to alleviate his grief. His Majesty is the head of Christendom. Remember the proverb which says, when the head suffers all the members suffer. Therefore all good Christians should pray for his health and long life; and we, who are in his employ, ought more than others to do this with all study and diligence."*

It is impossible to read this mournful letter without being moved by the simply eloquent yet artless language, in which Columbus expresses his tenderness for the memory of his benefactress, his weariness under the gathering cares and ills of life, and his persevering and enduring loyalty towards the sovereign who was so ungratefully neglecting him. It is in these unstudied and confidential letters that we read the heart of Columbus.

CHAPTER III.—[1505.]

THE death of Isabella was a fatal blow to the fortunes of Columbus. While she lived, he had every thing to anticipate from her high sense of justice, her regard for her royal word, her gratitude for his services, and her admiration of his character. With her illness, however, his interests had languished, and when she died, he was left to the justice and generosity of Ferdinand!

* Letter to his son Diego, Dec. 3. 1504.

During the remainder of the winter and a part of the spring, he continued at Seville, detained by painful illness, and endeavouring to obtain redress from the government by ineffectual letters. His brother the Adelantado, who supported him with his accustomed fondness and devotion through all his trials, proceeded to court to attend to his interests, taking with him the admiral's younger son Fernando, then aged about seventeen. The latter, the affectionate father repeatedly represents to his son Diego as a man in understanding and conduct, though but a stripling in years; and inculcates the strongest fraternal attachment, alluding to his own brethren with one of those simply eloquent and effecting expressions which stamp his heart upon his letters. "To thy brother, conduct thyself as the elder brother should unto the younger. Thou hast no other, and I praise God that this is such a one as thou dost need. Ten brothers would not be too many for thee. Never have I found a better friend to right or left, than my brothers."

Among the persons whom Columbus employed at this time in his missions to the court, was Amerigo Vespucci. He describes him as worthy but unfortunate man, who had not profited as much as he deserved by his undertakings, and who had always been disposed to render him service. His object in employing him appears to have been to prove the value of his last voyage, and that he had been in the most opulent parts of the New World; Vespucci having since touched upon the same coast, in a voyage with Alonzo de Ojeda.

One circumstance occurred at this time which shed a gleam of hope and consolation over his gloomy prospects. Diego de Deza, who had been for some time bishop of Palencia, was expected at court. This was the same worthy friar who had aided him to advocate his theory before the board of learned men at Salamanca, and had assisted him with his purse when making his proposals to the Spanish court. He had just been promoted and made archbishop of Seville, but had not yet been installed in office. Columbus directs his son Diego to intrust his interests to this worthy prelate. "Two things," says he, "require particular attention. Ascertain whether the queen, who is now with God, has said anything concerning me in her testament, and stimulate the bishop of Palencia, he who was the cause that their highnesses obtained possession of the Indies, who induced me to remain in Castile

when I was on the road to leave it.”* In another letter he says, “If the bishop of Palencia has arrived, or should arrive, tell him how much I have been gratified by his prosperity, and that if I come, I shall lodge with his grace, even though he should not invite me, for we must return to our ancient fraternal affection.”

The incessant applications of Columbus, both by letter and by the intervention of friends, appear to have been listened to with cool indifference. No compliance was yielded to his requests, and no deference was paid to his opinions, on various points, concerning which he interested himself. New instructions were sent out to Ovando, but not a word of their purport was mentioned to the admiral. It was proposed to send out three bishops, and he entreated in vain to be heard previous to their election. In short, he was not in any way consulted in the affairs of the New World. He felt deeply this neglect, and became every day more impatient of his absence from court. To enable himself to perform the journey with more ease, he applied for permission to use a mule, a royal ordinance having prohibited the employment of those animals under the saddle, in consequence of their universal use having occasioned a decline in the breed of horses. A royal permission was accordingly granted to Columbus, in consideration that his age and infirmities incapacitated him from riding on horseback; but it was a considerable time before the state of his health would permit him to avail himself of that privilege.

The foregoing particulars, gleaned from letters of Columbus recently discovered, show the real state of his affairs, and the mental and bodily affliction sustained by him during his winter's residence at Seville, on his return from his last disastrous voyage. He has generally been represented as reposing there from his toils and troubles. Never was honourable repose more merited, more desired, and less enjoyed.

It was not until the month of May that he was able, in company with his brother the Adelantado, to accomplish his journey to court, at that time held at Segovia. He, who but a few years before had entered the city of Barcelona in triumph, attended by the nobility and chivalry of Spain, and hailed with rapture by the multitude, now arrived within the gates of Segovia, a wayworn, melancholy, and neglected man;

* Letter of December 21, 1504, Navarrete, tom. i. p. 346.

oppressed more by sorrow than even by his years and infirmities. When he presented himself at court, he met with none of that distinguished attention, that cordial kindness, that cherishing sympathy, which his unparalleled services and his recent sufferings had merited.*

The selfish Ferdinand had lost sight of his past services, in what appeared to him the inconvenience of his present demands. He received him with many professions of kindness : but with those cold, ineffectual smiles, which pass like wintry sunshine over the countenance, and convey no warmth to the heart.

The admiral now gave a particular account of his late voyage ; describing the great tract of Terra Firma, which he had explored, and the riches of the province of Veragua. He related also the disasters sustained in the island of Jamaica ; the insurrection of the Porras and their band ; and all the other griefs and troubles of this unfortunate expedition. He had but a cold-hearted auditor in the king ; and the benignant Isabella was no more at hand to soothe him with a smile of kindness, or a tear of sympathy. " I know not," says the venerable Las Casas, " what could cause this dislike and this want of princely countenance in the king, towards one who had rendered him such pre-eminent benefits ; unless it was that his mind was swayed by the false testimonies which had been brought against the admiral ; of which I have been enabled to learn something from persons much in favour with the sovereigns."†

After a few days had elapsed, Columbus urged his suit in form ; reminding the king of all that he had done, and all that had been promised him under the royal word and seal, and supplicating that the restitutions and indemnifications which had been so frequently solicited, might be awarded to him ; offering in return to serve his majesty devotedly for the short time he had yet to live ; and trusting, from what he felt within him, and from what he thought he knew with certainty, to render services which should surpass all that he had yet performed a hundred-fold. The king, in reply, acknowledged the greatness of his merits, and the importance of his services, but observed, that, for the more satisfactory adjustment of his claims, it would be advisable to refer all

* Las Casas, lib. ii. cap. 37. Herrera, decad. i. lib. vi. cap. 13.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 37, MS.

joints in dispute to the decision of some discreet and able person. The admiral immediately proposed as arbiter his friend the archbishop of Seville, Don Diego de Deza, one of the most able and upright men about the court, devotedly loyal, high in the confidence of the king, and one who had always taken great interest in the affairs of the New World. The king consented to the arbitration, but artfully extended it to questions which he knew would never be put at issue by Columbus; among these was his claim to the restoration of his office of viceroy. To this Columbus objected with becoming spirit, as compromising a right which was too clearly defined and solemnly established, to be put for a moment in dispute. It was the question of rents and revenue alone, he observed, which he was willing to submit to the decision of a learned man, not that of the government of the Indies. As the monarch persisted, however, in embracing both questions in the arbitration, the proposed measure was never carried into effect.

It was, in fact, on the subject of his dignities alone that Columbus was tenacious; all other matters he considered of minor importance. In a conversation with the king, he absolutely disavowed all wish of entering into any suit or pleading as to his pecuniary dues; on the contrary he offered to put all his privileges and writings into the hands of his sovereign, and to receive out of the dues arising from them, whatever his majesty might think proper to award. All that he claimed without qualification or reserve, were his official dignities, assured to him under the royal seal with all the solemnity of a treaty. He entreated, at all events, that these matters might speedily be decided, so that he might be released from a state of miserable suspense, and enabled to retire to some quiet corner, in search of that tranquillity and repose necessary to his fatigues and his infirmities.

To this frank appeal to his justice and generosity, Ferdinand replied with many courteous expressions, and with those general evasive promises, which beguile the ear of the court applicant, but convey no comfort to his heart. "As far as actions went," observes Las Casas, "the king not merely showed him no signs of favour, but, on the contrary, discountenanced him as much as possible; yet he was never wanting in complimentary expressions."

Many months were passed by Columbus in unavailing soli-

citation, during which he continued to receive outward demonstrations of respect from the king, and due attention from Cardinal Ximenes, archbishop of Toledo, and other principal personages; but he had learned to appreciate and distrust the hollow civilities of a court. His claims were referred to a tribunal, called "The council of the discharges of the conscience of the deceased queen, and of the king." This is a kind of tribunal, commonly known by the name of the *Junta de Descargos*, composed of persons nominated by the sovereign, to superintend the accomplishment of the last will of his predecessor, and the discharge of his debts. Two consultations were held by this body, but nothing was determined. The wishes of the king were too well known to be thwarted. "It was believed," says Las Casas, "that if the king could have done so with a safe conscience, and without detriment to his fame, he would have respected few or none of the privileges which he and the queen had conceded to the admiral, and which had been so justly merited."*

Columbus still flattered himself that, his claims being of such importance, and touching a question of sovereignty, the adjustment of them might be only postponed by the king until he could consult with his daughter Juana, who had succeeded to her mother as queen of Castile, and who was daily expected from Flanders, with her husband, King Philip. He endeavoured, therefore, to bear his delay with patience; but he had no longer the physical strength and glorious anticipations which once sustained him through his long application at this court. Life itself was drawing to a close.

He was once more confined to his bed by a tormenting attack of the gout, aggravated by the sorrows and disappointments which preyed upon his heart. From this couch of anguish he addressed one more appeal to the justice of the king. He no longer petitioned for himself: it was for his son Diego. Nor did he dwell upon his pecuniary dues; it was the honourable trophies of his services, which he wished to secure and perpetuate in his family. He entreated that his son Diego might be appointed in his place, to the government of which he had been so wrongfully deprived. "This," he said, "is a matter which concerns my honour; as to all the rest, do as your majesty may think proper; give or withhold, as may be most for your interest, and I shall be content. I

* Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii. cap. 37.

believe the anxiety caused by the delay of this affair is the principal cause of my ill health." A petition to the same purpose was presented at the same time by his son Diego, offering to take with him such persons for counsellors as the king should appoint, and to be guided by their advice.

These petitions were treated by Ferdinand with his usual professions and evasions. "The more applications were made to him," observes Las Casas, "the more favourably did he reply; but still he delayed, hoping, by exhausting their patience, to induce them to waive their privileges, and accept in place thereof titles and estates in Castile." Columbus rejected all propositions of the kind with indignation, as calculated to compromise those titles which were the trophies of his achievements. He saw, however, that all further hope of redress from Ferdinand was vain. From the bed to which he was confined, he addressed a letter to his constant friend Diego de Deza, expressive of his despair. "It appears that his majesty does not think fit to fulfil that which he, with the queen, who is now in glory, promised me by word and seal. For me to contend for the contrary, would be to contend with the wind. I have done all that I could do. I leave the rest to God, whom I have ever found propitious to me in my necessities."*

The cold and calculating Ferdinand beheld this illustrious man sinking under infirmity of body, heightened by that deferred hope which "maketh the heart sick." A little more delay, a little more disappointment, and a little longer infliction of ingratitude, and this loyal and generous heart would cease to beat: he should then be delivered from the just claims of a well-tried servant, who, in ceasing to be useful, was considered by him to have become importunate.

CHAPTER IV.

IN the midst of illness and despondency, when both life and hope were expiring in the bosom of Columbus, a new gleam was awakened, and blazed up for the moment with characteristic fervour. He heard with joy of the landing of King Philip and Queen Juana, who had just arrived from Flanders to take possession of their throne of Castile. In the daughter of Isabella he trusted once more to find a patroness and a friend. King Ferdinand and all the court repaired to

* Navarrete, Collec., tom. i.

Laredo to receive the youthful sovereigns. Columbus would gladly have done the same, but he was confined to his bed by a severe return of his malady; neither in his painful and helpless situation could he dispense with the aid and ministry of his son Diego. His brother, the Adelantado, therefore, his main dependence in all emergencies, was sent to represent him, and to present his homage and congratulations. Columbus wrote by him to the new king and queen, expressing his grief at being prevented by illness from coming in person to manifest his devotion, but begging to be considered among the most faithful of their subjects. He expressed a hope that he should receive at their hands the restitution of his honours and estates, and assured them, that, though cruelly tortured at present by disease, he would yet be able to render them services, the like of which had never been witnessed.

Such was the last sally of his sanguine and unconquerable spirit; which, disregarding age and infirmities, and all past sorrows and disappointments, spoke from his dying bed with all the confidence of youthful hope; and talked of still greater enterprises, as if he had a long and vigorous life before him. The Adelantado took leave of his brother whom he was never to behold again, and set out on his mission to the new sovereigns. He experienced the most gracious reception. The claims of the admiral were treated with great attention by the young king and queen, and flattering hopes were given of a speedy and prosperous termination to his suit.

In the meantime, the cares and troubles of Columbus were drawing to a close. The momentary fire which had reanimated him was soon quenched by accumulating infirmities. Immediately after the departure of the Adelantado his illness increased in violence. His last voyage had shattered beyond repair a frame already worn and wasted by a life of hardship; and continual anxieties robbed him of that sweet repose so necessary to recruit the weariness and debility of age. The cold ingratitude of his sovereign chilled his heart. The continued suspension of his honours, and the enmity and defamation experienced at every turn, seemed to throw a shadow over that glory which had been the great object of his ambition. This shadow, it is true, could be but of transient duration; but it is difficult for the most illustrious man to

look beyond the present cloud which may obscure his fame, and anticipate its permanent lustre in the admiration of posterity.

Being admonished by failing strength and increasing sufferings that his end was approaching, he prepared to leave his affairs in order for the benefit of his successors.

It is said that on the 4th of May he wrote an informal testamentary codicil on the blank page of a little breviary, given him by Pope Alexander VI. In this he bequeathed that book to the republic of Genoa, which he also appointed successor to his privileges and dignities, on the extinction of his male line. He directed likewise the erection of an hospital in that city with the produce of his possessions in Italy. The authenticity of this document is questioned, and has become a point of warm contest among commentators. It is not, however, of much importance. The paper is such as might readily have been written by a person like Columbus in the paroxysm of disease, when he imagined his end suddenly approaching, and shows the affection with which his thoughts were bent on his native city. It is termed among commentators a military codicil, because testamentary dispositions of this kind are executed by the soldier at the point of death, without the usual formalities required by the civil law. About two weeks afterwards, on the eve of his death, he executed a final and regularly authenticated codicil, in which he bequeathed his dignities and estates with better judgment.

In these last and awful moments, when the soul has but a brief space in which to make up its accounts between heaven and earth, all dissimulation is at an end, and we read unequivocal evidences of character. The last codicil of Columbus, made at the very verge of the grave, is stamped with his ruling passion and his benignant virtues. He repeats and enforces several clauses of his original testament, constituting his son Diego his universal heir. The entailed inheritance, or *mayorazgo*, in case he died without male issue, was to go to his brother Don Fernando, and from him, in like case, to pass to his uncle Don Bartholomew, descending always to the nearest male heir; in failure of which it was to pass to the female nearest in lineage to the admiral. He enjoined upon whoever should inherit his estate never to alienate or diminish it, but to endeavour by all means to augment its prosperity and importance. He likewise enjoined upon his heirs to be

prompt and devoted at all times, with person and estate, to serve their sovereign and promote the Christian faith. He ordered that Don Diego should devote one-tenth of the revenues which might arise from his estate, when it came to be productive, to the relief of indigent relatives and of other persons in necessity; that, out of the remainder, he should yield certain yearly proportions to his brother Don Fernando, and his uncles Don Bartholomew and Don Diego; and that the part allotted to Don Fernando should be settled upon him and his male heirs in an entailed and unalienable inheritance. Having thus provided for the maintenance and perpetuity of his family and dignities, he ordered that Don Diego, when his estates should be sufficiently productive, should erect a chapel in the island of Hispaniola, which God had given to him so marvellously, at the town of Conception, in the Vega, where masses should be daily performed for the repose of the souls of himself, his father, his mother, his wife, and all who died in the faith. Another clause recommends to the care of Don Diego, Beatriz Enriquez, the mother of his natural son Fernando. His connection with her had never been sanctioned by matrimony, and either this circumstance, or some neglect of her, seems to have awakened deep compunction in his dying moments. He orders Don Diego to provide for her respectable maintenance; "and let this be done," he adds, "for the discharge of my conscience, for it weighs heavy on my soul."* Finally, he noted with his own hand several minute sums, to be paid to persons of different and distant places, without their being told whence they received them. These appear to have been trivial debts of conscience, or rewards for petty services received in times long past. Among them is one of half a mark of silver to a poor Jew, who lived at the gate of the Jewry, in the city of Lisbon. These minute provisions evince the scrupulous attention to justice in all his dealings, and that love of punctuality in the fulfilment of duties, for which he was remarked. In the same spirit, he gave much advice to his son Diego, as to the

* Diego, the son of the admiral, notes in his own testament this bequest of his father, and says, that he was charged by him to pay Beatriz Enriquez 10,000 maravedies a-year, which for some time he had faithfully performed; but as he believes that for three or four years previous to her death he had neglected to do so, he orders that the deficiency shall be ascertained, and paid to her heirs. Memorial ajustado sobre la propiedad del mayorazgo que fondo D. Christ. Colon. § 245.

conduct of his affairs, enjoining upon him to take every month an account with his own hand of the expenses of his household, and to sign it with his name; for a want of regularity in this, he observed, lost both property and servants, and turned the last into enemies.* His dying bequests were made in presence of a few faithful followers and servants, and among them we find the name of Bartholomeo Fiesco, who had accompanied Diego Mendez in the perilous voyage in a canoe from Jamaica to Hispaniola.

Having thus scrupulously attended to all the claims of affection, loyalty, and justice upon earth, Columbus turned his thoughts to heaven; and having received the holy sacrament, and performed all the pious offices of a devout Christian, he expired with great resignation, on the day of ascension, the 20th of May, 1506, being about seventy years of age.† His last words were, "*In manus tuas Domine, commendo spiritum meum:*" Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.‡

His body was deposited in the convent of St. Francisco, and his obsequies were celebrated with funereal pomp at Valladolid, in the parochial church of Santa Maria de la Antigua. His remains were transported afterwards, in 1513, to the Carthusian monastery of Las Cuevas of Seville, to the chapel of St. Ann or of Santo Christo, in which chapel were likewise deposited those of his son Don Diego, who died in the village of Montalban, on the 23rd of February, 1526. In the year 1536 the bodies of Columbus and his son Diego were removed to Hispaniola, and interred in the principal chapel of the cathedral of the city of San Domingo; but even here they did not rest in quiet, having since been again disinterred and conveyed to the Havanna, in the island of Cuba.

We are told that Ferdinand, after the death of Columbus, showed a sense of his merits by ordering a monument to be erected to his memory, on which was inscribed the motto already cited, which had formerly been granted to him by the sovereigns: A CASTILLA Y A LEON NUEVO MUNDO DIO COLON (*To Castile and Leon Columbus gave a new world*). However great an honour a monument may be for a subject to receive, it is certainly but a cheap reward for a sovereign to bestow. As to the motto inscribed upon it, it remains

* Memorial ajustado, § 248.

† Cura de los Palacios, c. 121.

‡ Las Casas, ii. c. 38. Hist. del Almirante, c. 108

engraved in the memory of mankind, more indelibly than in brass or marble; a record of the great debt of gratitude due to the discoverer, which the monarch had so faithlessly neglected to discharge.

Attempts have been made in recent days, by loyal Spanish writers, to vindicate the conduct of Ferdinand towards Columbus. They were doubtless well intended, but they have been futile, nor is their failure to be regretted. To screen such injustice in so eminent a character from the reprobation of mankind, is to deprive history of one of its most important uses. Let the ingratitude of Ferdinand stand recorded in its full extent, and endure throughout all time. The dark shadow which it casts upon his brilliant renown, will be a lesson to all rulers, teaching them what is important to their own fame in their treatment of illustrious men.

CHAPTER V.

IN narrating the story of Columbus, it has been the endeavour of the author to place him in a clear and familiar point of view; for this purpose he has rejected no circumstance, however trivial, which appeared to evolve some point of character; and he has sought all kinds of collateral facts which might throw light upon his views and motives. With this view also he has detailed many facts hitherto passed over in silence, or vaguely noticed by historians, probably because they might be deemed instances of error or misconduct on the part of Columbus; but he who paints a great man merely in great and heroic traits, though he may produce a fine picture, will never present a faithful portrait. Great men are compounds of great and little qualities. Indeed, much of their greatness arises from their mastery over the imperfections of their nature, and their noblest actions are sometimes struck forth by the collision of their merits and their defects.

In Columbus were singularly combined the practical and the poetical. His mind had grasped all kinds of knowledge, whether procured by study or observation, which bore upon his theories; impatient of the scanty aliment of the day, "his impetuous ardour," as has well been observed, "threw him into the study of the fathers of the church, the Arabian Jews, and the ancient geographers;" while his daring, but irregular genius, bursting from the limits of imperfect science,

bore him to conclusions far beyond the intellectual vision of his contemporaries. If some of his conclusions were erroneous, they were at least ingenious and splendid; and their error resulted from the clouds which still hung over his peculiar path of enterprise. His own discoveries enlightened the ignorance of the age; guided conjecture to certainty, and dispelled that very darkness with which he had been obliged to struggle.

In the progress of his discoveries he has been remarked for the extreme sagacity and the admirable justness with which he seized upon the phenomena of the exterior world. The variations, for instance, of terrestrial magnetism, the direction of currents, the groupings of marine plants, fixing one of the grand climacteric divisions of the ocean, the temperatures changing not solely with the distance to the equator, but also with the difference of meridians: these and similar phenomena, as they broke upon him, were discerned with wonderful quickness of perception, and made to contribute important principles to the stock of general knowledge. This lucidity of spirit, this quick convertibility of facts to principles, distinguish him from the dawn to the close of his sublime enterprise, insomuch that, with all the sallying ardour of his imagination, his ultimate success has been admirably characterized as a "conquest of reflection."*

It has been said that mercenary views mingled with the ambition of Columbus, and that his stipulations with the Spanish court were selfish and avaricious. The charge is inconsiderate and unjust. He aimed at dignity and wealth in the same lofty spirit in which he sought renown; they were to be part and parcel of his achievement, and palpable evidence of its success; they were to arise from the territories he should discover, and be commensurate in importance. No condition could be more just. He asked nothing of the sovereigns but a command of the countries he hoped to give them, and a share of the profits to support the dignity of his command. If there should be no country discovered his stipulated viceroyalty would be of no avail; and if no revenues should be produced, his labour and peril would produce no gain. If his command and revenues ultimately proved magnificent, it was from the magnificence of the regions he had attached to the Castilian crown. What monarch would not

* D. Humboldt, *Examen Critique*.

rejoice to gain empire on such conditions? But he did not risk merely a loss of labour, and a disappointment of ambition in the enterprise;—on his motives being questioned, he voluntarily undertook, and, with the assistance of his coadjutors, actually defrayed one-eighth of the whole charge of the first expedition.

It was, in fact, this rare union already noticed, of the practical man of business with the poetical projector, which enabled him to carry his grand enterprises into effect through so many difficulties; but the pecuniary calculations and cares, which gave feasibility to his schemes, were never suffered to chill the glowing aspirations of his soul. The gains that promised to arise from his discoveries, he intended to appropriate in the same princely and pious spirit in which they were demanded. He contemplated works and achievements of benevolence and religion; vast contributions for the relief of the poor of his native city; the foundation of churches, where masses should be said for the souls of the departed; and armies for the recovery of the holy sepulchre in Palestine. Thus his ambition was truly noble and lofty; instinct with high thought and prone to generous deed.

In the discharge of his office he maintained the state and ceremonial of a viceroy, and was tenacious of his rank and privileges; not from a mere vulgar love of titles, but because he prized them as testimonials and trophies of his achievements; these he jealously cherished as his great rewards. In his repeated applications to the king, he insisted merely on the restitution of his dignities. As to his pecuniary dues, and all questions relative to mere revenue, he offered to leave them to arbitration or even to the absolute disposition of the monarch; but not so his official dignities; “these things,” said he, nobly, “affect my honour.” In his testament, he enjoined on his son Diego, and whoever after him should inherit his estates, whatever dignities and titles might afterwards be granted by the king, always to sign himself simply “the Admiral,” by way of perpetuating in the family its real source of greatness.

His conduct was characterized by the grandeur of his views, and the magnanimity of his spirit. Instead of scouring the newly-found countries, like a grasping adventurer eager only for immediate gain, as was too generally the case with contemporary discoverers, he sought to ascertain their soil and

productions, their rivers and harbours; he was desirous of colonizing and cultivating them; of conciliating and civilizing the natives; of building cities; introducing the useful arts; subjecting every thing to the control of law, order, and religion; and thus of founding regular and prosperous empires. In this glorious plan he was constantly defeated by the dissolute rabble which it was his misfortune to command; with whom all law was tyranny, and all order restraint. They interrupted all useful works by their seditions; provoked the peaceful Indians to hostility; and after they had thus drawn down misery and warfare upon their own heads, and overwhelmed Columbus with the ruins of the edifice he was building, they charged him with being the cause of the confusion.

Well would it have been for Spain had those who followed in the track of Columbus possessed his sound policy and liberal views. The New World, in such cases, would have been settled by pacific colonists, and civilized by enlightened legislators; instead of being overrun by desperate adventurers, and desolated by avaricious conquerors.

Columbus was a man of quick sensibility, liable to great excitement, to sudden and strong impressions, and powerful impulses. He was naturally irritable and impetuous, and keenly sensible to injury and injustice; yet the quickness of his temper was counteracted by the benevolence and generosity of his heart. The magnanimity of his nature shone forth through all the troubles of his stormy career. Though continually outraged in his dignity, and braved in the exercise of his command; though foiled in his plans, and endangered in his person by the seditions of turbulent and worthless men, and that too at times when suffering under anxiety of mind and anguish of body sufficient to exasperate the most patient, yet he restrained his valiant and indignant spirit by the strong powers of his mind, and brought himself to forbear, and reason, and even to supplicate; nor should we fail to notice how free he was from all feeling of revenge, how ready to forgive and forget, on the least signs of repentance and atonement. He has been extolled for his skill in controlling others; but far greater praise is due to him for his firmness in governing himself.

His natural benignity made him accessible to all kinds of pleasurable sensations from external objects. In his letters and journals, instead of detailing circumstances with the

technical precision of a mere navigator, he notices the beauties of nature with the enthusiasm of a poet or a painter. As he coasts the shores of the New World, the reader participates in the enjoyment with which he describes, in his imperfect but picturesque Spanish, the varied objects around him; the blandness of the temperature, the purity of the atmosphere, the fragrance of the air, "full of dew and sweetness," the verdure of the forests, the magnificence of the trees, the grandeur of the mountains, and the limpidity and freshness of the running streams. New delight springs up for him in every scene. He extols each new discovery as more beautiful than the last, and each as the most beautiful in the world; until, with his simple earnestness, he tells the sovereigns, that, having spoken so highly of the preceding islands, he fears that they will not credit him, when he declares that the one he is actually describing surpasses them all in excellence.

In the same ardent and unstudied way he expresses his emotions on various occasions, readily affected by impulses of joy or grief, of pleasure or indignation. When surrounded and overwhelmed by the ingratitude and violence of worthless men, he often, in the retirement of his cabin, gave way to bursts of sorrow, and relieved his overladen heart by sighs and groans. When he returned in chains to Spain, and came into the presence of Isabella instead of continuing the lofty pride with which he had hitherto sustained his injuries, he was touched with grief and tenderness at her sympathy, and burst forth into sobs and tears.

He was devoutly pious; religion mingled with the whole course of his thoughts and actions, and shone forth in his most private and unstudied writings. Whenever he made any great discovery, he celebrated it by solemn thanks to God. The voice of prayer and melody of praise rose from his ships when they first beheld the New World, and his first action on landing was to prostrate himself upon the earth and return thanksgivings. Every evening the *Salve Regina*, and other vesper hymns, were chanted by his crew, and masses were performed in the beautiful groves bordering the wild shores of this heathen land. All his great enterprises were undertaken in the name of the Holy Trinity, and he partook of the communion previous to embarkation. He was a firm believer in the efficacy of vows, and penances, and pilgrimages,

and resorted to them in times of difficulty and danger. The religion thus deeply seated in his soul diffused a sober dignity and benign composure over his whole demeanour. His language was pure and guarded, and free from all imprecations, oaths, and other irreverent expressions.

It cannot be denied, however, that his piety was mingled with superstition, and darkened by the bigotry of the age. He evidently concurred in the opinion, that all nations which did not acknowledge the Christian faith were destitute of natural rights, that the sternest measures might be used for their conversion, and the severest punishments inflicted upon their obstinacy in unbelief. In this spirit of bigotry, he considered himself justified in making captives of the Indians, and transporting them to Spain to have them taught the doctrines of Christianity, and in selling them for slaves if they pretended to resist his invasions. In so doing he sinned against the natural goodness of his character, and against the feelings which he had originally entertained and expressed towards this gentle and hospitable people; but he was goaded on by the mercenary impatience of the crown, and by the sneers of his enemies at the unprofitable result of his enterprises. It is but justice to his character to observe, that the enslavement of the Indians thus taken in battle was at first openly countenanced by the crown, and that, when the question of right came to be discussed at the entreaty of the queen, several of the most distinguished jurists and theologians advocated the practice; so that the question was finally settled in favour of the Indians solely by the humanity of Isabella. As the venerable bishop Las Casas observes, where the most learned men have doubted, it is not surprising that an unlearned mariner should err.

These remarks, in palliation of the conduct of Columbus, are required by candour. It is proper to show him in connection with the age in which he lived, lest the errors of the times should be considered as his individual faults. It is not the intention of the author, however, to justify Columbus on a point where it is inexcusable to err. Let it remain a blot on his illustrious name, and let others derive a lesson from it.

We have already hinted at a peculiar trait in his rich and varied character; that ardent and enthusiastic imagination which threw a magnificence over his whole course of thought. Herrera intimates that he had a talent for poetry

and some slight traces of it are on record in the book of prophecies which he presented to the Catholic sovereigns. But his poetical temperament is discernible throughout all his writings and in all his actions. It spread a golden and glorious world around him, and tinged every thing with its own gorgeous colours. It betrayed him into visionary speculations, which subjected him to the sneers and cavillings of men of cooler and safer, but more grovelling, minds. Such were the conjectures formed on the coast of Paria about the form of the earth, and the situation of the terrestrial paradise; about the mines of Ophir in Hispaniola, and the Aurea Chersonesus in Veragua; and such was the heroic scheme of a crusade for the recovery of the holy sepulchre. It mingled with his religion, and filled his mind with solemn and visionary meditations on mystic passages of the Scriptures, and the shadowy portents of the prophecies. It exalted his office in his eyes, and made him conceive himself an agent sent forth upon a sublime and awful mission, subject to impulses and supernatural intimations from the Deity; such as the voice which he imagined spoke to him in comfort amidst the troubles of Hispaniola, and in the silence of the night on the disastrous coast of Veragua.

He was decidedly a visionary, but a visionary of an uncommon and successful kind. The manner in which his ardent, imaginative, and mercurial nature was controlled by a powerful judgment, and directed by an acute sagacity, is the most extraordinary feature in his character. Thus governed, his imagination, instead of exhausting itself in idle flights, lent aid to his judgment, and enabled him to form conclusions at which common minds could never have arrived, nay, which they could not perceive when pointed out.

To his intellectual vision it was given to read the signs of the times, and to trace, in the conjectures and reveries of past ages, the indications of an unknown world; as soothsayers were said to read predictions in the stars, and to foretell events from the visions of the night. "His soul," observes a Spanish writer, "was superior to the age in which he lived. For him was reserved the great enterprise of traversing that sea which had given rise to so many fables, and of deciphering the mystery of his time." *

With all the visionary fervour of his imagination, its

* Cladera, *Investigaciones historicas*, p. 43.

fondest dreams fell short of the reality. He died in ignorance of the real grandeur of his discovery. Until his last breath he entertained the idea that he had merely opened a new way to the old resorts of opulent commerce, and had discovered some of the wild regions of the east. He supposed Hispaniola to be the ancient Ophir which had been visited by the ships of Solomon, and that Cuba and Terra Firma were but remote parts of Asia. What visions of glory would have broken upon his mind could he have known that he had indeed discovered a new continent, equal to the whole of the old world in magnitude, and separated by two vast oceans from all the earth hitherto known by civilized men! And how would his magnanimous spirit have been consoled, amidst the afflictions of age and the cares of penury, the neglect of a fickle public, and the injustice of an ungrateful king, could he have anticipated the splendid empires which were to spread over the beautiful world he had discovered; and the nations, and tongues, and languages which were to fill its lands with his renown, and revere and bless his name to the latest posterity!

