

WASHINGTON IRVING

THE LIFE AND VOYAGES
OF CHRISTOPHER
COLUMBUS (VOLUME II)

Вашингтон Ирвинг

**The Life and Voyages of
Christopher Columbus (Volume II)**

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The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus (Volume II)

Book XI

Chapter I

Administration of the Adelantado. – Expedition to the Province of Xaragua

[1498.]

Columbus had anticipated repose from his toils on arriving at Hispaniola, but a new scene of trouble and anxiety opened upon him, destined to impede the prosecution of his enterprises, and to affect all his future fortunes. To explain this, it is necessary to relate the occurrences of the island during his long detention in Spain.

When he sailed for Europe in March, 1496, his brother, Don Bartholomew, who remained as Adelantado, took the earliest measures to execute his directions with respect to the mines recently discovered by Miguel Diaz on the south side of the island. Leaving Don Diego Columbus in command at Isabella, he repaired with a large force to the neighborhood of the mines, and, choosing a favorable situation in a place most abounding in ore, built a fortress, to which he gave the name of San Christoval. The workmen, however, finding grains of gold among the earth and stone employed in its construction, gave it the name of the Golden Tower.¹

The Adelantado remained here three months, superintending the building of the fortress, and making the necessary preparations for working the mines and purifying the ore. The progress of the work, however, was greatly impeded by scarcity of provisions, having frequently to detach a part of the men about the country in quest of supplies. The former hospitality of the island was at an end. The Indians no longer gave their provisions freely; they had learnt from the white men to profit by the necessities of the stranger, and to exact a price for bread. Their scanty stores, also, were soon exhausted, for their frugal habits, and their natural indolence and improvidence, seldom permitted them to have more provisions on hand than was requisite for present support.² The Adelantado found it difficult, therefore, to maintain so large a force in the neighborhood, until they should have time to cultivate the earth, and raise live-stock, or should receive supplies from Spain. Leaving ten men to guard the fortress, with a dog to assist them in catching utias, he marched with the rest of his men, about four hundred in number, to Fort Conception, in the abundant country of the Vega. He passed the whole month of June collecting the quarterly tribute, being supplied with food by Guarionex and his subordinate caciques. In the following month (July, 1496) the three caravels commanded by Niño arrived from Spain, bringing a reinforcement of men, and, what was still more needed, a supply of provisions. The latter was quickly distributed among the hungry colonists, but unfortunately a great

¹ Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. iv.

² Ibid., lib. v.

part had been injured during the voyage. This was a serious misfortune in a community where the least scarcity produced murmur and sedition.

By these ships the Adelantado received letters from his brother, directing him to found a town and sea-port at the mouth of the Ozema, near to the new mines. He requested him, also, to send prisoners to Spain such of the caciques and their subjects as had been concerned in the death of any of the colonists; that being considered as sufficient ground, by many of the ablest jurists and theologians of Spain, for selling them as slaves. On the return of the caravels, the Adelantado dispatched three hundred Indian prisoners, and three caciques. These formed the ill-starred cargoes about which Niño had made such absurd vaunting, as though the ships were laden with treasure; and which had caused such mortification, disappointment, and delay to Columbus.

Having obtained by this arrival a supply of provisions, the Adelantado returned to the fortress of San Christoval, and thence proceeded to the Ozema, to choose a site for the proposed seaport. After a careful examination, he chose the eastern bank of a natural haven at the mouth of the river. It was easy of access, of sufficient depth, and good anchorage. The river ran through a beautiful and fertile country; its waters were pure and salubrious, and well stocked with fish; its banks were covered with trees bearing the fine fruits of the island, so that in sailing along, the fruits and flowers might be plucked with the hand from the branches which overhung the stream. ³ This delightful vicinity was the dwelling-place of the female cacique who had conceived an affection for the young Spaniard Miguel Diaz, and had induced him to entice his countrymen to that part of the island. The promise she had given of a friendly reception on the part of her tribe was faithfully performed.

On a commanding bank of the harbor, Don Bartholomew erected a fortress, which at first was called Isabella, but afterwards San Domingo, and was the origin of the city which still bears that name. The Adelantado was of an active and indefatigable spirit. No sooner was the fortress completed, than he left in it a garrison of twenty men, and with the rest of his forces set out to visit the dominions of Behechio, one of the principal chieftains of the island. This cacique, as has already been mentioned, reigned over Xaragua, a province comprising almost the whole coast at the west end of the island, including Cape Tiburon, and extending along the south side as far as Point Aguida, or the small island of Beata. It was one of the most populous and fertile districts, with a delightful climate; and its inhabitants were softer and more graceful in their manners than the rest of the islanders. Being so remote from all the fortresses, the cacique, although he had taken a part in the combination of the chieftains, had hitherto remained free from the incursions and exactions of the white men.

With this cacique resided Anacaona, widow of the late formidable Caonabo. She was sister to Behechio, and had taken refuge with her brother after the capture of her husband. She was one of the most beautiful females of the island; her name in the Indian language signified "The Golden Flower." She possessed a genius superior to the generality of her race, and was said to excel in composing those little legendary ballads, or areytos, which the natives chanted as they performed their national dances. All the Spanish writers agree in describing her as possessing a natural dignity and grace hardly to be credited in her ignorant and savage condition. Notwithstanding the ruin with which her husband had been overwhelmed by the hostility of the white men, she appears to have entertained no vindictive feeling towards them, knowing that he had provoked their vengeance by his own voluntary warfare. She regarded the Spaniards with admiration as almost superhuman beings, and her intelligent mind perceived the futility and impolicy of any attempt to resist their superiority in arts and arms. Having great influence over her brother Behechio, she counseled him to take warning by the fate of her husband, and to conciliate the friendship of the Spaniards; and it is supposed that a knowledge of the friendly sentiments and powerful influence of this princess in a great measure prompted the Adelantado to his present expedition. ⁴

³ Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. v.

⁴ Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, lib. ii. p. 147. Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, lib. vi. § 6.

In passing through those parts of the island which had hitherto been unvisited by Europeans, the Adelantado adopted the same imposing measures which the admiral had used on a former occasion; he put his cavalry in the advance, and entered all the Indian towns in martial array, with standards displayed, and the sound of drum and trumpet.

After proceeding about thirty leagues, he came to the river Neyva, which, issuing from the mountains of Cibao, divides the southern side of the island. Crossing this stream, he dispatched two parties of ten men each along the sea-coast in search of brazil-wood. They found great quantities, and felled many trees, which they stored in the Indian cabins, until they could be taken away by sea.

Inclining with his main force to the right, the Adelantado met, not far from the river, the cacique Behechio, with a great army of his subjects, armed with bows and arrows and lances. If he had come forth with the intention of opposing the inroad into his forest domains, he was probably daunted by the formidable appearance of the Spaniards. Laying aside his weapons, he advanced and accosted the Adelantado very amicably, professing that he was thus in arms for the purpose of subjecting certain villages along the river, and inquiring, at the same time, the object of this incursion of the Spaniards. The Adelantado assured him that he came on a peaceful visit to pass a little time in friendly intercourse at Xaragua. He succeeded so well in allaying the apprehensions of the cacique, that the latter dismissed his army, and sent swift messengers to order preparations for the suitable reception of so distinguished a guest. As the Spaniards advanced into the territories of the chieftain, and passed through the districts of his inferior caciques, the latter brought forth cassava bread, hemp, cotton, and various other productions of the land. At length they drew near to the residence of Behechio, which was a large town situated in a beautiful part of the country near the coast, at the bottom of that deep bay called at present the Bight of Leogan.

The Spaniards had heard many accounts of the soft and delightful region of Xaragua, in one part of which Indian traditions placed their Elysian fields. They had heard much, also, of the beauty and urbanity of the inhabitants: the mode of their reception was calculated to confirm their favorable prepossessions. As they approached the place, thirty females of the cacique's household came forth to meet them, singing their areytos, or traditionary ballads, and dancing and waving palm branches. The married females wore aprons of embroidered cotton, reaching half way to the knee; the young women were entirely naked, with merely a fillet round the forehead, their hair falling upon their shoulders. They were beautifully proportioned; their skin smooth and delicate, and their complexion of a clear agreeable brown. According to old Peter Martyr, the Spaniards, when they beheld them issuing forth from their green woods, almost imagined they beheld the fabled dryads, or native nymphs and fairies of the fountains, sung by the ancient poets.⁵ When they came before Don Bartholomew, they knelt and gracefully presented him the green branches. After these came the female cacique Anacaona, reclining on a kind of light litter borne by six Indians. Like the other females, she had no other covering than an apron of various-colored cotton. She wore round her head a fragrant garland of red and white flowers, and wreaths of the same round her neck and arms. She received the Adelantado and his followers with that natural grace and courtesy for which she was celebrated; manifesting no hostility towards them for the fate her husband had experienced at their hands.

The Adelantado and his officers were conducted to the house of Behechio, where a banquet was served up of utias, a great variety of sea and river fish, with roots and fruits of excellent quality. Here first the Spaniards conquered their repugnance to the guana, the favorite delicacy of the Indians, but which the former had regarded with disgust, as a species of serpent. The Adelantado, willing to accustom himself to the usages of the country, was the first to taste this animal, being kindly pressed thereto by Anacaona. His followers imitated his example; they found it to be highly palatable and delicate; and from that time forward, the guana was held in repute among Spanish epicures.⁶

⁵ Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. v.

⁶ "These serpentes are lyke unto crocodiles, saving in bygness; they call them guanans. Unto that day none of owre men durste

The banquet being over, Don Bartholomew with six of his principal cavaliers were lodged in the dwelling of Behechio; the rest were distributed in the houses of the inferior caciques, where they slept in hammocks of matted cotton, the usual beds of the natives.

For two days they remained with the hospitable Behechio, entertained with various Indian games and festivities, among which the most remarkable was the representation of a battle. Two squadrons of naked Indians, armed with bows and arrows, sallied suddenly into the public square and began to skirmish in a manner similar to the Moorish play of canes, or tilting reeds. By degrees they became excited, and fought with such earnestness, that four were slain, and many wounded, which seemed to increase the interest and pleasure of the spectators. The contest would have continued longer, and might have been still more bloody, had not the Adelantado and the other cavaliers interfered and begged that the game might cease.⁷

When the festivities were over, and familiar intercourse had promoted mutual confidence, the Adelantado addressed the cacique and Anacaona on the real object of his visit. He informed him that his brother, the admiral, had been sent to this island by the sovereigns of Castile, who were great and mighty potentates, with many kingdoms under their sway. That the admiral had returned to apprise his sovereigns how many tributary caciques there were in the island, leaving him in command, and that he had come to receive Behechio under the protection of these mighty sovereigns, and to arrange a tribute to be paid by him, in such manner as should be most convenient and satisfactory to himself.⁸

The cacique was greatly embarrassed by this demand, knowing the sufferings inflicted on the other parts of the island by the avidity of the Spaniards for gold. He replied that he had been apprised that gold was the great object for which the white men had come to their island, and that a tribute was paid in it by some of his fellow-caciques; but that in no part of his territories was gold to be found; and his subjects hardly knew what it was. To this the Adelantado replied with great adroitness, that nothing was farther from the intention or wish of his sovereigns than to require a tribute in things not produced in his dominions, but that it might be paid in cotton, hemp, and cassava bread, with which the surrounding country appeared to abound. The countenance of the cacique brightened at this intimation; he promised cheerful compliance, and instantly sent orders to all his subordinate caciques to sow abundance of cotton for the first payment of the stipulated tribute. Having made all the requisite arrangements, the Adelantado took a most friendly leave of Behechio and his sister, and set out for Isabella.

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

adventure to taste of them, by reason of theyre horrible deformitie and lothsomnes. Yet the Adelantado being entysed by the pleasantnes of the king's sister, Anacaona, determined to taste the serpentes. But when he felte the flesh thereof to be so delycate to his tongue, he fel to amayne without al feare. The which thyng his companions perceiving, were not behynde hym in greedynesse: insomuche that they had now none other talke than of the sweetnesse of these serpentes, which, they affirm to be of more pleasant taste, than eyther our phesantes or partriches." Peter Martyr, decad. i. book v. Eden's Eng. Trans.

⁷ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., tom. i. cap. 113.

⁸ Ibid, lib. i. cap. 114.

Chapter II

Establishment of a Chain of Military Posts. – Insurrection of Guarionex, the Cacique of the Vega

[1496.]

On arriving at Isabella, Don Bartholomew found it, as usual, a scene of misery and repining. Many had died during his absence; most were ill. Those who were healthy complained of the scarcity of food, and those who were ill, of the want of medicines. The provisions distributed among them, from the supply brought out a few months before by Pedro Alonzo Niño, had been consumed. Partly from sickness, and partly from a repugnance to labor, they had neglected to cultivate the surrounding country, and the Indians, on whom they chiefly depended, outraged by their oppressions, had abandoned the vicinity, and fled to the mountains; choosing rather to subsist on roots and herbs, in their rugged retreats, than remain in the luxuriant plains, subject to the wrongs and cruelties of the white men. The history of this island presents continual pictures of the miseries, the actual want and poverty, produced by the grasping avidity of gold. It had rendered the Spaniards heedless of all the less obvious, but more certain and salubrious, sources of wealth. All labor seemed lost that was to produce profit by a circuitous process. Instead of cultivating the luxuriant soil around them, and deriving real treasures from its surface, they wasted their time in seeking for mines and golden streams, and were starving in the midst of fertility.

No sooner were the provisions exhausted which had been brought out by Niño, than the colonists began to break forth in their accustomed murmurs. They represented themselves as neglected by Columbus, who, amidst the blandishments and delights of a court, thought little of their sufferings. They considered themselves equally forgotten by government; while, having no vessel in the harbor, they were destitute of all means of sending home intelligence of their disastrous situation, and imploring relief.

To remove this last cause of discontent, and furnish some object for their hopes and thoughts to rally round, the Adelantado ordered that two caravels should be built at Isabella, for the use of the island. To relieve the settlement, also, from all useless and repining individuals, during this time of scarcity, he distributed such as were too ill to labor, or to bear arms, into the interior, where they would have the benefit of a better climate, and more abundant supply of Indian provisions. He at the same time completed and garrisoned the chain of military posts established by his brother in the preceding year, consisting of five fortified houses, each surrounded by its dependent hamlet. The first of these was about nine leagues from Isabella, and was called la Esperanza. Six leagues beyond was Santa Catalina. Four leagues and a half further was Magdalena, where the first town of Santiago was afterwards founded; and five leagues further Fort Conception – which was fortified with great care, being in the vast and populous Vega, and within half a league from the residence of its cacique, Guarionex.⁹ Having thus relieved Isabella of all its useless population, and left none but such as were too ill to be removed, or were required for the service and protection of the place, and the construction of the caravels, the Adelantado returned, with a large body of the most effective men, to the fortress of San Domingo.

⁹ P. Martyr, decad. i. lib. v. Of the residence of Guarionex, which must have been a considerable town, not the least vestige can be discovered at present. Vol. II. – 2.

The military posts, thus established, succeeded for a time in overawing the natives; but fresh hostilities were soon manifested, excited by a different cause from the preceding. Among the missionaries who had accompanied Friar Boyle to the island, were two of far greater zeal than their superior. When he returned to Spain, they remained, earnestly bent upon the fulfillment of their mission. One was called Roman Pane, a poor hermit, as he styled himself, of the order of St. Geronimo; the other was Juan Borgoñon, a Franciscan. They resided for some time among the Indians of the Vega, strenuously endeavoring to make converts, and had succeeded with one family, of sixteen persons, the chief of which, on being baptized, took the name of Juan Mateo. The conversion of the cacique Guarionex, however, was their main object. The extent of his possessions made his conversion of great importance to the interests of the colony, and was considered by the zealous fathers a means of bringing his numerous subjects under the dominion of the church. For some time he lent a willing ear; he learnt the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, and the Creed, and made his whole family repeat them daily. The other caciques of the Vega and of the provinces of Cibao, however, scoffed at him for meanly conforming to the laws and customs of strangers, usurpers of his domains, and oppressors of his nation. The friars complained that, in consequence of these evil communications, their convert suddenly relapsed into infidelity; but another and more grievous cause is assigned for his recantation. His favorite wife was seduced or treated with outrage by a Spaniard of authority; and the cacique renounced all faith in a religion which, as he supposed, admitted of such atrocities. Losing all hope of effecting his conversion, the missionaries removed to the territories of another cacique, taking with them Juan Mateo, their Indian convert. Before their departure, they erected a small chapel, and furnished it with an altar, crucifix, and images, for the use of the family of Mateo.

Scarcely had they departed, when several Indians entered the chapel, broke the images in pieces, trampled them under foot, and buried them in a neighboring field. This, it was said, was done by order of Guarionex, in contempt of the religion from which he had apostatized. A complaint of this enormity was carried to the Adelantado, who ordered a suit to be immediately instituted, and those who were found culpable, to be punished according to law. It was a period of great rigor in ecclesiastical law, especially among the Spaniards. In Spain, all heresies in religion, all recantations from the faith, and all acts of sacrilege, either by Moor or Jew, were punished with fire and fagot. Such was the fate of the poor ignorant Indians, convicted of this outrage on the church. It is questionable whether Guarionex had any hand in this offence, and it is probable that the whole affair was exaggerated. A proof of the credit due to the evidence brought forward may be judged by one of the facts recorded by Roman Pane, "the poor hermit." The field in which the holy images were buried, was planted, he says, with certain roots shaped like a turnip, or radish, several of which coming up in the neighborhood of the images, were found to have grown most miraculously in the form of a cross.¹⁰

The cruel punishment inflicted on these Indians, instead of daunting their countrymen, filled them with horror and indignation. Unaccustomed to such stern rule and vindictive justice, and having no clear ideas nor powerful sentiments with respect to religion of any kind, they could not comprehend the nature nor extent of the crime committed. Even Guarionex, a man naturally moderate and pacific, was highly incensed with the assumption of power within his territories, and the inhuman death inflicted on his subjects. The other caciques perceived his irritation, and endeavored to induce him to unite in a sudden insurrection, that by one vigorous and general effort they might break the yoke of their oppressors. Guarionex wavered for some time. He knew the martial skill and prowess of the Spaniards; he stood in awe of their cavalry, and he had before him the disastrous fate of Caonabo; but he was rendered bold by despair, and he beheld in the domination of these strangers the assured ruin of his race. The early writers speak of a tradition current among the inhabitants of the island, respecting this Guarionex. He was of an ancient line of hereditary caciques. His father, in times long

¹⁰ Escritura de Fr. Roman, Hist. del Almirante.

preceding the discovery, having fasted for five days, according to their superstitious observances, applied to his zemi, or household deity, for information of things to come. He received for answer, that within a few years there should come to the island a nation covered with clothing, which should destroy all their customs and ceremonies, and slay their children or reduce them to painful servitude.

¹¹ The tradition was probably invented by the Butios, or priests, after the Spaniards had begun to exercise their severities. Whether their prediction had an effect in disposing the mind of Guarionex to hostilities is uncertain. Some have asserted that he was compelled to take up arms by his subjects, who threatened, in case of his refusal, to choose some other chieftain; others have alleged the outrage committed upon his favorite wife, as the principal cause of his irritation. ¹² It was probably these things combined, which at length induced him to enter into the conspiracy. A secret consultation was held among the caciques, wherein it was concerted, that on the day of payment of their quarterly tribute, when a great number could assemble without causing suspicion, they should suddenly rise upon the Spaniards and massacre them. ¹³

By some means the garrison at Fort Conception received intimation of this conspiracy. Being but a handful of men, and surrounded by hostile tribes, they wrote a letter to the Adelantado, at San Domingo, imploring immediate aid. As this letter might be taken from their Indian messenger, the natives having discovered that these letters had a wonderful power of communicating intelligence, and fancying they could talk, it was inclosed in a reed, to be used as a staff. The messenger was, in fact, intercepted; but, affecting to be dumb and lame, and intimating by signs that he was returning home, was permitted to limp forward on his journey. When out of sight he resumed his speed, and bore the letter safely and expeditiously to San Domingo. ¹⁴

The Adelantado, with his characteristic promptness and activity, set out immediately with a body of troops for the fortress; and though his men were much enfeebled by scanty fare, hard service, and long marches, hurried them rapidly forward. Never did aid arrive more opportunely. The Indians were assembled on the plain, to the amount of many thousands, armed after their manner, and waiting for the appointed time to strike the blow. After consulting with the commander of the fortress and his officers, the Adelantado concerted a mode of proceeding. Ascertaining the places in which the various caciques had distributed their forces, he appointed an officer with a body of men to each cacique, with orders, at an appointed hour of the night, to rush into the villages, surprise them asleep and unarmed, bind the caciques, and bring them off prisoners. As Guarionex was the most important personage, and his capture would probably be attended with most difficulty and danger, the Adelantado took the charge of it upon himself, at the head of one hundred men.

This stratagem, founded upon a knowledge of the attachment of the Indians to their chieftains, and calculated to spare a great effusion of blood, was completely successful. The villages, having no walls nor other defences, were quietly entered at midnight; and the Spaniards, rushing suddenly into the houses where the caciques were quartered, seized and bound them, to the number of fourteen, and hurried them off to the fortress, before any effort could be made for their defence or rescue. The Indians, struck with terror, made no resistance, nor any show of hostility; surrounding the fortress in great multitudes, but without weapons, they filled the air with doleful howlings and lamentations, imploring the release of their chieftains. The Adelantado completed his enterprise with the spirit, sagacity, and moderation with which he had hitherto conducted it. He obtained information of the causes of this conspiracy, and the individuals most culpable. Two caciques, the principal movers of the insurrection, and who had most wrought upon the easy nature of Guarionex, were put to death. As to that unfortunate cacique, the Adelantado, considering the deep wrongs he had suffered,

¹¹ Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. ix.

¹² Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 121.

¹³ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 65. Peter Martyr, decad. vi. lib. v.

¹⁴ Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 7.

and the slowness with which he had been provoked to revenge, magnanimously pardoned him; nay, according to Las Casas, he proceeded with stern justice against the Spaniard whose outrage on his wife had sunk so deeply in his heart. He extended his lenity also to the remaining chieftains of the conspiracy; promising great favors and rewards, if they should continue firm in their loyalty; but terrible punishments should they again be found in rebellion. The heart of Guarionex was subdued by this unexpected clemency. He made a speech to his people, setting forth the irresistible might and valor of the Spaniards; their great lenity to offenders, and their generosity to such as were faithful; and he earnestly exhorted them henceforth to cultivate their friendship. The Indians listened to him with attention; his praises of the white men were confirmed by their treatment of himself; when he had concluded, they took him up on their shoulders, bore him to his habitation with songs and shouts of joy, and for some time the tranquillity of the Vega was restored.¹⁵

¹⁵ Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. v. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 6.

Chapter III

The Adelantado Repairs to Xaragua to Receive Tribute

[1497.]

With all his energy and discretion, the Adelantado found it difficult to manage the proud and turbulent spirit of the colonists. They could ill brook the sway of a foreigner, who, when they were restive, curbed them with an iron hand. Don Bartholomew had not the same legitimate authority in their eyes as his brother. The admiral was the discoverer of the country, and the authorized representative of the sovereigns; yet even him they with difficulty brought themselves to obey. The Adelantado, on the contrary, was regarded by many as a mere intruder, assuming high command without authority from the crown, and shouldering himself into power on the merits and services of his brother. They spoke with impatience and indignation, also, of the long absence of the admiral, and his fancied inattention to their wants; little aware of the incessant anxieties he was suffering on their account, during his detention in Spain. The sagacious measure of the Adelantado in building the caravels for some time diverted their attention. They watched their progress with solicitude, looking upon them as a means either of obtaining relief, or of abandoning the island. Aware that repining and discontented men should never be left in idleness, Don Bartholomew kept them continually in movement; and indeed a state of constant activity was congenial to his own vigorous spirit. About this time messengers arrived from Behechio, cacique of Xaragua, informing him that he had large quantities of cotton, and other articles, in which his tribute was to be paid, ready for delivery. The Adelantado immediately set forth with a numerous train, to revisit this fruitful and happy region. He was again received with songs and dances, and all the national demonstrations of respect and amity by Behechio and his sister Anacaona. The latter appeared to be highly popular among the natives, and to have almost as much sway in Xaragua as her brother. Her natural ease, and the graceful dignity of her manners, more and more won the admiration of the Spaniards.

The Adelantado found thirty-two inferior caciques assembled in the house of Behechio, awaiting his arrival with their respective tributes. The cotton they had brought was enough to fill one of their houses. Having delivered this, they gratuitously offered the Adelantado as much cassava bread as he desired. The offer was most acceptable in the present necessitous state of the colony; and Don Bartholomew sent to Isabella for one of the caravels, which was nearly finished, to be dispatched as soon as possible to Xaragua, to be freighted with bread and cotton.

In the meantime, the natives brought from all quarters large supplies of provisions, and entertained their guests with continual festivity and banqueting. The early Spanish writers, whose imaginations, heated by the accounts of the voyagers, could not form an idea of the simplicity of savage life, especially in these newly-discovered countries, which were supposed to border upon Asia, often speak in terms of oriental magnificence of the entertainments of the natives, the palaces of the caciques, and the lords and ladies of their courts, as if they were describing the abodes of Asiatic potentates. The accounts given of Xaragua, however, have a different character; and give a picture of savage life, in its perfection of idle and ignorant enjoyment. The troubles which distracted the other parts of devoted Hayti had not reached the inhabitants of this pleasant region. Living among beautiful and fruitful groves, on the borders of a sea apparently for ever tranquil and untroubled by storms; having few wants, and those readily supplied, they appeared emancipated from the common lot of labor, and to pass their lives in one uninterrupted holiday. When the Spaniards regarded the

fertility and sweetness of this country, the gentleness of its people, and the beauty of its women, they pronounced it a perfect paradise.

At length the caravel arrived which was to be freighted with the articles of tribute. It anchored about six miles from the residence of Behechio, and Anacaona proposed to her brother that they should go together to behold what she called the great canoe of the white men. On their way to the coast, the Adelantado was lodged one night in a village, in a house where Anacaona treasured up those articles which she esteemed most rare and precious. They consisted of various manufactures of cotton, ingeniously wrought; of vessels of clay, moulded into different forms; of chairs, tables, and like articles of furniture, formed of ebony and other kinds of wood, and carved with various devices, – all evincing great skill and ingenuity, in a people who had no iron tools to work with. Such were the simple treasures of this Indian princess, of which she made numerous presents to her guest.

Nothing could exceed the wonder and delight of this intelligent woman, when she first beheld the ship. Her brother, who treated her with a fraternal fondness and respectful attention worthy of civilized life, had prepared two canoes, gayly painted and decorated; one to convey her and her attendants, and the other for himself and his chieftains. Anacaona, however, preferred to embark, with her attendants, in the ship's boat with the Adelantado. As they approached the caravel, a salute was fired. At the report of the cannon, and the sight of the smoke, Anacaona, overcome with dismay, fell into the arms of the Adelantado, and her attendants would have leaped overboard, but the laughter and the cheerful words of Don Bartholomew speedily reassured them. As they drew nearer to the vessel, several instruments of martial music struck up, with which they were greatly delighted. Their admiration increased on entering on board. Accustomed only to their simple and slight canoes, every thing here appeared wonderfully vast and complicated. But when the anchor was weighed, the sails were spread, and, aided by a gentle breeze, they beheld this vast mass, moving apparently by its own volition, veering from side to side, and playing like a huge monster in the deep, the brother and sister remained gazing at each other in mute astonishment. ¹⁶ Nothing seems to have filled the mind of the most stoical savage with more wonder than that sublime and beautiful triumph of genius, a ship under sail.

Having freighted and dispatched the caravel, the Adelantado made many presents to Behechio, his sister, and their attendants, and took leave of them, to return by land with his troops to Isabella. Anacaona showed great affliction at their parting, entreating him to remain some time longer with them, and appearing fearful that they had failed in their humble attempt to please him. She even offered to follow him to the settlement, nor would she be consoled until he had promised to return again to Xaragua. ¹⁷

We cannot but remark the ability shown by the Adelantado in the course of his transient government of the island. Wonderfully alert and active, he made repeated marches of great extent, from one remote province to another, and was always at the post of danger at the critical moment. By skillful management, with a handful of men, he defeated a formidable insurrection without any effusion of blood. He conciliated the most inveterate enemies among the natives by great moderation, while he deterred all wanton hostilities by the infliction of signal punishments. He had made firm friends of the most important chieftains, brought their dominions under cheerful tribute, opened new sources of supplies for the colony, and procured relief from its immediate wants. Had his judicious measures been seconded by those under his command, the whole country would have been a scene of tranquil prosperity, and would have produced great revenues to the crown, without cruelty to the natives; but, like his brother the admiral, his good intentions and judicious arrangements were constantly thwarted by the vile passions and perverse conduct of others. While he was absent from

¹⁶ Peter Martyr, *decad. i. lib. v.* Herrera, *decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 6.*

¹⁷ Ramusio, *vol. iii. p. 9.*

Isabella, new mischiefs had been fomented there, which were soon to throw the whole island into confusion.

Chapter IV

Conspiracy of Roldan

[1497.]

The prime mover of the present mischief was one Francisco Roldan, a man under the deepest obligations to the admiral. Raised by him from poverty and obscurity, he had been employed at first in menial capacities; but, showing strong natural talents, and great assiduity, he had been made ordinary alcalde, equivalent to justice of the peace. The able manner in which he acquitted himself in this situation, and the persuasion of his great fidelity and gratitude, induced Columbus, on departing for Spain, to appoint him alcalde mayor, or chief judge of the island. It is true he was an uneducated man, but, as there were as yet no intricacies of law in the colony, the office required little else than shrewd good sense and upright principles for its discharge.¹⁸

Roldan was one of those base spirits which grow venomous in the sunshine of prosperity. His benefactor had returned to Spain apparently under a cloud of disgrace; a long interval had elapsed without tidings from him; he considered him a fallen man, and began to devise how he might profit by his downfall. He was intrusted with an office inferior only to that of the Adelantado; the brothers of Columbus were highly unpopular; he imagined it possible to ruin them, both with the colonists and with the government at home, and by dextrous cunning and bustling activity to work his way into the command of the colony. The vigorous and somewhat austere character of the Adelantado for some time kept him in awe; but when he was absent from the settlement, Roldan was able to carry on his machinations with confidence. Don Diego, who then commanded at Isabella, was an upright and worthy man, but deficient in energy. Roldan felt himself his superior in talent and spirit, and his self-conceit was wounded at being inferior to him in authority. He soon made a party among the daring and dissolute of the community, and secretly loosened the ties of order and good government, by listening to and encouraging the discontents of the common people, and directing them against the character and conduct of Columbus and his brothers. He had heretofore been employed as superintendent of various public works; this brought him into familiar communication with workmen, sailors, and others of the lower order. His originally vulgar character enabled him to adapt himself to their intellects and manners, while his present station gave him consequence in their eyes. Finding them full of murmurs about hard treatment, severe toil, and the long absence of the admiral, he affected to be moved by their distresses. He threw out suggestions that the admiral might never return, being disgraced and ruined in consequence of the representations of Aguado. He sympathized with the hard treatment they experienced from the Adelantado and his brother Don Diego, who, being foreigners, could take no interest in their welfare, nor feel a proper respect for the pride of a Spaniard; but who used them merely as slaves, to build houses and fortresses for them, or to swell their state and secure their power, as they marched about the island enriching themselves with the spoils of the caciques. By these suggestions he exasperated their feelings to such a height, that they had at one time formed a conspiracy to take away the life of the Adelantado, as the only means of delivering themselves from an odious tyrant. The time and place for the perpetration of the act were concerted. The Adelantado had condemned to death a Spaniard of the name of Berahona, a friend of Roldan, and of several of the conspirators. What was his offence is not positively stated, but from a passage

¹⁸ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 1.

in Las Casas ¹⁹ there is reason to believe that he was the very Spaniard who had violated the favorite wife of Guarionex, the cacique of the Vega. The Adelantado would be present at the execution. It was arranged, therefore, that when the populace had assembled, a tumult should be made as if by accident, and in the confusion of the moment, Don Bartholomew should be dispatched with a poniard. Fortunately for the Adelantado, he pardoned the criminal, the assemblage did not take place, and the plan of the conspirators was disconcerted. ²⁰

When Don Bartholomew was absent collecting the tribute in Xaragua, Roldan thought it was a favorable time to bring affairs to a crisis. He had sounded the feelings of the colonists, and ascertained that there was a large party disposed for open sedition. His plan was to create a popular tumult, to interpose in his official character of *alcalde mayor*, to throw the blame upon the oppression and injustice of Don Diego and his brother, and, while he usurped the reins of authority, to appear as if actuated only by zeal for the peace and prosperity of the island, and the interests of the sovereigns.

A pretext soon presented itself for the proposed tumult. When the caravel returned from Xaragua laden with the Indian tributes, and the cargo was discharged, Don Diego had the vessel drawn up on the land, to protect it from accidents, or from any sinister designs of the disaffected colonists. Roldan immediately pointed this circumstance out to his partisans. He secretly inveighed against the hardship of having this vessel drawn on shore, instead of being left afloat for the benefit of the colony, or sent to Spain to make known their distresses. He hinted that the true reason was the fear of the Adelantado and his brother, lest accounts should be carried to Spain of their misconduct, and he affirmed that they wished to remain undisturbed masters of the island, and keep the Spaniards there as subjects, or rather as slaves. The people took fire at these suggestions. They had long looked forward to the completion of the caravels as their only chance for relief; they now insisted that the vessel should be launched and sent to Spain for supplies. Don Diego endeavored to convince them of the folly of their demand, the vessel not being rigged and equipped for such a voyage; but the more he attempted to pacify them, the more unreasonable and turbulent they became. Roldan, also, became more bold and explicit in his instigations. He advised them to launch and take possession of the caravel, as the only mode of regaining their independence. They might then throw off the tyranny of these upstart strangers, enemies in their hearts to Spaniards, and might lead a life of ease and pleasure; sharing equally all that they might gain by barter in the island, employing the Indians as slaves to work for them, and enjoying unrestrained indulgence with respect to the Indian women. ²¹

Don Diego received information of what was fermenting among the people, yet feared to come to an open rupture with Roldan in the present mutinous state of the colony. He suddenly detached him, therefore, with forty men, to the Vega, under pretext of overawing certain of the natives who had refused to pay their tribute, and had shown a disposition to revolt. Roldan made use of this opportunity to strengthen his faction. He made friends and partisans among the discontented caciques, secretly justifying them in their resistance to the imposition of tribute, and promising them redress. He secured the devotion of his own soldiers by great acts of indulgence, disarming and dismissing such as refused full participation in his plans, and returned with his little band to Isabella, where he felt secure of a strong party among the common people.

The Adelantado had by this time returned from Xaragua; but Roldan, feeling himself at the head of a strong faction, and arrogating to himself great authority from his official station, now openly demanded that the caravel should be launched, or permission given to himself and his followers to launch it. The Adelantado peremptorily refused, observing that neither he nor his companions were mariners, nor was the caravel furnished and equipped for sea, and that neither the safety of the vessel, nor of the people, should be endangered by their attempt to navigate her.

¹⁹ Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i. cap. 118.

²⁰ *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 73.

²¹ *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 73.

Roldan perceived that his motives were suspected, and felt that the Adelantado was too formidable an adversary to contend with in any open sedition at Isabella. He determined, therefore, to carry his plans into operation in some more favorable part of the island, always trusting to excuse any open rebellion against the authority of Don Bartholomew, by representing it as a patriotic opposition to his tyranny over Spaniards. He had seventy well-armed and determined men under his command, and he trusted, on erecting his standard, to be joined by all the disaffected throughout the island. He set off suddenly, therefore, for the Vega, intending to surprise the fortress of Conception, and by getting command of that post and the rich country adjacent, to set the Adelantado at defiance.

He stopped, on his way, at various Indian villages in which the Spaniards were distributed, endeavoring to enlist the latter in his party, by holding out promises of great gain and free living. He attempted also to seduce the natives from their allegiance, by promising them freedom from all tribute. Those caciques with whom he had maintained a previous understanding, received him with open arms; particularly one who had taken the name of Diego Marque, whose village he made his headquarters, being about two leagues from Fort Conception. He was disappointed in his hopes of surprising the fortress. Its commander, Miguel Ballester, was an old and staunch soldier, both resolute and wary. He drew himself into his stronghold on the approach of Roldan, and closed his gates. His garrison was small, but the fortification, situated on the side of a hill, with a river running at its foot, was proof against any assault. Roldan had still some hopes that Ballester might be disaffected to government, and might be gradually brought into his plans, or that the garrison would be disposed to desert, tempted by the licentious life which he permitted among his followers. In the neighborhood was the town inhabited by Guarionex. Here were quartered thirty soldiers, under the command of Captain Garcia de Barrantes. Roldan repaired thither with his armed force, hoping to enlist Barrantes and his party; but the captain shut himself up with his men in a fortified house, refusing to permit them to hold any communication with Roldan. The latter threatened to set fire to the house; but after a little consideration, contented himself with seizing their store of provisions, and then marched towards Fort Conception, which was not quite half a league distant.²²

²² Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 7. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 74. *Extract of a letter from T. S. Heneken, Esq., 1847.* – Fort Conception is situated at the foot of a hill now called Santo Cerro. It is constructed of bricks, and is almost as entire at the present day as when just finished. It stands in the gloom of an exuberant forest which has invaded the scene of former bustle and activity; a spot once considered of great importance and surrounded by swarms of intelligent beings. What has become of the countless multitudes this fortress was intended to awe? Not a trace of them remains excepting in the records of history. The silence of the tomb prevails where their habitations responded to their songs and dances. A few indigent Spaniards, living in miserable hovels, scattered widely apart in the bosom of the forest, are now the sole occupants of this once fruitful and beautiful region. A Spanish town gradually grew up round the fortress; the ruins of which extend to a considerable distance. It was destroyed by an earthquake, at nine o'clock of the morning of Saturday, 20th April, 1564, during the celebration of mass. Part of the massive walls of a handsome church still remain, as well as those of a very large convent or hospital, supposed to have been constructed in pursuance of the testamentary dispositions of Columbus. The inhabitants who survived the catastrophe retired to a small chapel, on the banks of a river, about a league distant, where the new town of La Vega was afterwards built.

Chapter V

The Adelantado Repairs to the Vega in Relief of Fort Conception. – His Interview with Roldan

[1497.]

The Adelantado had received intelligence of the flagitious proceedings of Roldan, yet hesitated for a time to set out in pursuit of him. He had lost all confidence in the loyalty of the people around him, and knew not how far the conspiracy extended, nor on whom he could rely. Diego de Escobar, alcaide of the fortress of La Madalena, together with Adrian de Moxica and Pedro de Valdivieso, all principal men, were in league with Roldan. He feared that the commander of Fort Conception might likewise be in the plot, and the whole island in arms against him. He was reassured, however, by tidings from Miguel Ballester. That loyal veteran wrote to him pressing letters for succor; representing the weakness of his garrison, and the increasing forces of the rebels.

Don Bartholomew hastened to his assistance with his accustomed promptness, and threw himself with a reinforcement into the fortress. Being ignorant of the force of the rebels, and doubtful of the loyalty of his own followers, he determined to adopt mild measures. Understanding that Roldan was quartered at a village but half a league distant, he sent a message to him, remonstrating on the flagrant irregularity of his conduct, the injury it was calculated to produce in the island, and the certain ruin it must bring upon himself, and summoning him to appear at the fortress, pledging his word for his personal safety. Roldan repaired accordingly to Fort Conception, where the Adelantado held a parley with him from a window, demanding the reason of his appearing in arms, in opposition to royal authority. Roldan replied boldly, that he was in the service of his sovereigns, defending their subjects from the oppression of men who sought their destruction. The Adelantado ordered him to surrender his staff of office, as alcalde mayor, and to submit peaceably to superior authority. Roldan refused to resign his office, or to put himself in the power of Don Bartholomew, whom he charged with seeking his life. He refused also to submit to any trial, unless commanded by the king. Pretending, however, to make no resistance to the peaceable exercise of authority, he offered to go with his followers, and reside at any place the Adelantado might appoint. The latter immediately designated the village of the cacique Diego Colon, the same native of the Lucayos Islands who had been baptized in Spain, and had since married a daughter of Guarionex. Roldan objected, pretending there were not sufficient provisions to be had there for the subsistence of his men, and departed, declaring that he would seek a more eligible residence elsewhere.²³

He now proposed to his followers to take possession of the remote province of Xaragua. The Spaniards who had returned thence gave enticing accounts of the life they had led there; of the fertility of the soil, the sweetness of the climate, the hospitality and gentleness of the people, their feasts, dances, and various amusements, and, above all, the beauty of the women; for they had been captivated by the naked charms of the dancing nymphs of Xaragua. In this delightful region, emancipated from the iron rule of the Adelantado, and relieved from the necessity of irksome labor, they might lead a life of perfect freedom and indulgence, and have a world of beauty at their command. In short, Roldan drew a picture of loose sensual enjoyment, such as he knew to be irresistible with men of idle and dissolute habits. His followers acceded with joy to his proposition. Some preparations,

²³ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 7. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 74.

however, were necessary to carry it into effect. Taking advantage of the absence of the Adelantado, he suddenly marched with his band to Isabella, and entering it in a manner by surprise, endeavored to launch the caravel, with which they might sail to Xaragua. Don Diego Columbus, hearing the tumult, issued forth with several cavaliers; but such was the force of the mutineers, and their menacing conduct, that he was obliged to withdraw, with his adherents, into the fortress. Roldan held several parleys with him, and offered to submit to his command, provided he would set himself up in opposition to his brother the Adelantado. His proposition was treated with scorn. The fortress was too strong to be assailed with success; he found it impossible to launch the caravel, and feared the Adelantado might return, and he be inclosed between two forces. He proceeded, therefore, in all haste to make provisions for the proposed expedition to Xaragua. Still pretending to act in his official capacity, and to do every thing from loyal motives, for the protection and support of the oppressed subjects of the crown, he broke open the royal warehouse, with shouts of "Long live the king!" supplied his followers with arms, ammunition, clothing, and whatever they desired from the public stores; proceeded to the inclosure where the cattle and other European animals were kept to breed, took such as he thought necessary for his intended establishment, and permitted his followers to kill such of the remainder as they might want for present supply. Having committed this wasteful ravage, he marched in triumph out of Isabella. ²⁴ Reflecting, however, on the prompt and vigorous character of the Adelantado, he felt that his situation would be but little secure with such an active enemy behind him; who, on extricating himself from present perplexities, would not fail to pursue him to his proposed paradise of Xaragua. He determined, therefore, to march again to the Vega, and endeavor either to get possession of the person of the Adelantado, or to strike some blow, in his present crippled state, that should disable him from offering further molestation. Returning, therefore, to the vicinity of Fort Conception, he endeavored in every way, by the means of subtle emissaries, to seduce the garrison to desertion, or to excite it to revolt.

The Adelantado dared not take the field with his forces, having no confidence in their fidelity. He knew that they listened wistfully to the emissaries of Roldan, and contrasted the meagre fare and stern discipline of the garrison with the abundant cheer and easy misrule that prevailed among the rebels. To counteract these seductions, he relaxed from his usual strictness, treating his men with great indulgence, and promising them large rewards. By these means he was enabled to maintain some degree of loyalty amongst his forces, his service having the advantage over that of Roldan, of being on the side of government and law.

Finding his attempts to corrupt the garrison unsuccessful, and fearing some sudden sally from the vigorous Adelantado, Roldan drew off to a distance, and sought by insidious means to strengthen his own power, and weaken that of the government. He asserted equal right to manage the affairs of the island with the Adelantado, and pretended to have separated from him on account of his being passionate and vindictive in the exercise of his authority. He represented him as the tyrant of the Spaniards, the oppressor of the Indians. For himself, he assumed the character of a redresser of grievances and champion of the injured. He pretended to feel a patriotic indignation at the affronts heaped upon Spaniards by a family of obscure and arrogant foreigners; and professed to free the natives from tributes wrung from them by these rapacious men for their own enrichment, and contrary to the beneficent intentions of the Spanish monarchs. He connected himself closely with the Carib cacique Manicaotex, brother of the late Caonabo, whose son and nephew were in his possession as hostages for payment of tributes. This warlike chieftain he conciliated by presents and caresses, bestowing on him the appellation of brother. ²⁵ The unhappy natives, deceived by his professions, and overjoyed at the idea of having a protector in arms for their defence, submitted cheerfully to a thousand impositions, supplying his followers with provisions in abundance, and bringing to Roldan

²⁴ Hist. del Almirante, cap. 74. Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 7.

²⁵ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 118.

all the gold they could collect; voluntarily yielding him heavier tributes than those from which he pretended to free them.

The affairs of the island were now in a lamentable situation. The Indians, perceiving the dissensions among the white men, and encouraged by the protection of Roldan, began to throw off all allegiance to the government. The caciques at a distance ceased to send in their tributes, and those who were in the vicinity were excused by the Adelantado, that by indulgence he might retain their friendship in this time of danger. Roldan's faction daily gained strength; they ranged insolently and at large in the open country, and were supported by the misguided natives; while the Spaniards who remained loyal, fearing conspiracies among the natives, had to keep under shelter of the fort, or in the strong houses which they had erected in the villages. The commanders were obliged to palliate all kinds of slights and indignities, both from their soldiers and from the Indians, fearful of driving them to sedition by any severity. The clothing and munitions of all kinds, either for maintenance or defence, were rapidly wasting away, and the want of all supplies or tidings from Spain was sinking the spirits of the well-affected into despondency. The Adelantado was shut up in Fort Conception, in daily expectation of being openly besieged by Roldan, and was secretly informed that means were taken to destroy him, should he issue from the walls of the fortress.²⁶

Such was the desperate state to which the colony was reduced, in consequence of the long detention of Columbus in Spain, and the impediments thrown in the way of all his measures for the benefit of the island by the delays of cabinets and the chicanery of Fonseca and his satellites. At this critical juncture, when faction reigned triumphant, and the colony was on the brink of ruin, tidings were brought to the Vega that Pedro Fernandez Coronal had arrived at the port of San Domingo, with two ships, bringing supplies of all kinds, and a strong reinforcement of troops.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., cap. 119.

²⁷ Las Casas. Herrera. Hist. del Almirante.

Chapter VI

Second Insurrection of Guarionex, and His Flight to the Mountains of Ciguay

[1498.]

The arrival of Coronal, which took place on the third of February, was the salvation of the colony. The reinforcements of troops, and of supplies of all kinds, strengthened the hands of Don Bartholomew. The royal confirmation of his title and authority as Adelantado at once dispelled all doubts as to the legitimacy of his power; and the tidings that the admiral was in high favor at court, and would soon arrive with a powerful squadron, struck consternation into those who had entered into the rebellion on the presumption of his having fallen into disgrace.

The Adelantado no longer remained mewed up in his fortress, but set out immediately for San Domingo with a part of his troops, although a much superior rebel force was at the village of the cacique Guarionex, at a very short distance. Roldan followed slowly and gloomily with his party, anxious to ascertain the truth of these tidings, to make partisans, if possible, among those who had newly arrived, and to take advantage of every circumstance that might befriend his rash and hazardous projects. The Adelantado left strong guards on the passes of the roads to prevent his near approach to San Domingo, but Roldan paused within a few leagues of the place.

When the Adelantado found himself secure in San Domingo with this augmentation of force, and the prospect of a still greater reinforcement at hand, his magnanimity prevailed over his indignation, and he sought by gentle means to allay the popular seditions, that the island might be restored to tranquillity before his brother's arrival. He considered that the colonists had suffered greatly from the want of supplies; that their discontents had been heightened by the severities he had been compelled to inflict; and that many had been led to rebellion by doubts of the legitimacy of his authority. While, therefore, he proclaimed the royal act sanctioning his title and powers, he promised amnesty for all past offences, on condition of immediate return to allegiance. Hearing that Roldan was within five leagues of San Domingo with his band, he sent Pedro Fernandez Coronal, who had been appointed by the sovereigns alguazil mayor of the island, to exhort him to obedience, promising him oblivion of the past. He trusted that the representations of a discreet and honorable man like Coronal, who had been witness of the favor in which his brother stood in Spain, would convince the rebels of the hopelessness of their course.

Roldan, however, conscious of his guilt, and doubtful of the clemency of Don Bartholomew, feared to venture within his power; he determined, also, to prevent his followers from communicating with Coronal, lest they should be seduced from him by the promise of pardon. When that emissary, therefore, approached the encampment of the rebels, he was opposed in a narrow pass by a body of archers, with their cross-bows levelled. "Halt there! traitor!" cried Roldan, "had you arrived eight days later, we should all have been united as one man."²⁸

In vain Coronal endeavored by fair reasoning and earnest entreaty to win this perverse and turbulent man from his career. Roldan answered with hardihood and defiance, professing to oppose only the tyranny and misrule of the Adelantado, but to be ready to submit to the admiral on his arrival. He, and several of his principal confederates, wrote letters to the same effect to their friends in San

²⁸ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 8.

Domingo, urging them to plead their cause with the admiral when he should arrive, and to assure him of their disposition to acknowledge his authority.

When Coronal returned with accounts of Roldan's contumacy, the Adelantado proclaimed him and his followers traitors. That shrewd rebel, however, did not suffer his men to remain within either the seduction of promise or the terror of menace; he immediately set out on his march for his promised land of Xaragua, trusting to impair every honest principle and virtuous tie of his misguided followers by a life of indolence and libertinage.

In the meantime the mischievous effects of his intrigues among the caciques became more and more apparent. No sooner had the Adelantado left Fort Conception, than a conspiracy was formed among the natives to surprise it. Guarionex was at the head of this conspiracy, moved by the instigations of Roldan, who had promised him protection and assistance, and led on by the forlorn hope, in this distracted state of the Spanish forces, of relieving his paternal domains from the intolerable domination of usurping strangers. Holding secret communications with his tributary caciques, it was concerted that they should all rise simultaneously and massacre the soldiery, quartered in small parties in their villages; while he, with a chosen force, should surprise the fortress of Conception. The night of the full moon was fixed upon for the insurrection.

One of the principal caciques, however, not being a correct observer of the heavenly bodies, took up arms before the appointed night, and was repulsed by the soldiers quartered in his village. The alarm was given, and the Spaniards were all put on the alert. The cacique fled to Guarionex for protection, but the chieftain, enraged at his fatal blunder, put him to death upon the spot.

No sooner did the Adelantado hear of this fresh conspiracy, than he put himself on the march for the Vega with a strong body of men. Guarionex did not await his coming. He saw that every attempt was fruitless to shake off these strangers, who had settled like a curse upon his territories. He had found their very friendship withering and destructive, and he now dreaded their vengeance. Abandoning, therefore, his rightful domain, the once happy Vega, he fled with his family and a small band of faithful followers to the mountains of Ciguay. This is a lofty chain, extending along the north side of the island, between the Vega and the sea. The inhabitants were the most robust and hardy tribe of the island, and far more formidable than the mild inhabitants of the plains. It was a part of this tribe which displayed hostility to the Spaniards in the course of the first voyage of Columbus, and in a skirmish with them in the Gulf of Semana the first drop of native blood had been shed in the New World. The reader may remember the frank and confiding conduct of these people the day after the skirmish, and the intrepid faith with which their cacique trusted himself on board of the caravel of the admiral, and in the power of the Spaniards. It was to this same cacique, named Mayobanex, that the fugitive chieftain of the Vega now applied for refuge. He came to his residence at an Indian town near Cape Cabron, about forty leagues east of Isabella, and implored shelter for his wife and children, and his handful of loyal followers. The noble-minded cacique of the mountains received him with open arms. He not only gave an asylum to his family, but engaged to stand by him in his distress, to defend his cause, and share his desperate fortunes. ²⁹Men in civilized life learn magnanimity from precept, but their most generous actions are often rivaled by the deeds of untutored savages, who act only from natural impulse.

²⁹ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., cap. 121, MS. Peter Martyr, decad. i. cap. 5.

Chapter VII

Campaign of the Adelantado in the Mountains of Ciguay

[1498.]

Aided by his mountain ally, and by bands of hardy Ciguayans, Guarionex made several descents into the plain, cutting off straggling parties of the Spaniards, laying waste the villages of the natives which continued in allegiance to them, and destroying the fruits of the earth. The Adelantado put a speedy stop to these molestations; but he determined to root out so formidable an adversary from the neighborhood. Shrinking from no danger nor fatigue, and leaving nothing to be done by others which he could do himself, he set forth in the spring with a band of ninety men, a few cavalry, and a body of Indians, to penetrate the Ciguay mountains.

After passing a steep defile, rendered almost impracticable for troops by rugged rocks and exuberant vegetation, he descended into a beautiful valley or plain, extending along the coast, and embraced by arms of the mountains which approached the sea. His advance into the country was watched by the keen eyes of Indian scouts who lurked among rocks and thickets. As the Spaniards were seeking the ford of a river at the entrance of the plain, two of these spies darted from among the bushes on its bank. One flung himself headlong into the water, and swimming across the mouth of the river escaped; the other being taken, gave information that six thousand Indians lay in ambush on the opposite shore, waiting to attack them as they crossed.

The Adelantado advanced with caution, and finding a shallow place, entered the river with his troops. They were scarcely midway in the stream when the savages, hideously painted, and looking more like fiends than men, burst from their concealment. The forest rang with their yells and howlings. They discharged a shower of arrows and lances, by which, notwithstanding the protection of their targets, many of the Spaniards were wounded. The Adelantado, however, forced his way across the river, and the Indians took to flight. Some were killed, but their swiftness of foot, their knowledge of the forest, and their dexterity in winding through the most tangled thickets, enabled the greater number to elude the pursuit of the Spaniards, who were encumbered with armor, targets, crossbows, and lances.

By the advice of one of his Indian guides, the Adelantado pressed forward along the valley to reach the residence of Mayobanex, at Cabron. In the way he had several skirmishes with the natives, who would suddenly rush forth with furious war-cries from ambuscades among the bushes, discharge their weapons, and take refuge again in the fastnesses of their rocks and forests, inaccessible to the Spaniards.

Having taken several prisoners, the Adelantado sent one accompanied by an Indian of a friendly tribe, as a messenger to Mayobanex, demanding the surrender of Guarionex; promising friendship and protection in case of compliance, but threatening, in case of refusal, to lay waste his territory with fire and sword. The cacique listened attentively to the messenger: "Tell the Spaniards," said he in reply, "that they are bad men, cruel and tyrannical; usurpers of the territories of others, and shedders of innocent blood. I desire not the friendship of such men; Guarionex is a good man, he is my friend, he is my guest, he has fled to me for refuge, I have promised to protect him, and I will keep my word."

This magnanimous reply, or rather defiance, convinced the Adelantado that nothing was to be gained by friendly overtures. When severity was required, he could be a stern soldier. He immediately ordered the village in which he had been quartered, and several others in the neighborhood, to be set

on fire. He then sent further messengers to Mayobanex, warning him that, unless he delivered up the fugitive cacique, his whole dominions should be laid waste in like manner; and he would see nothing in every direction but the smoke and flames of burning villages. Alarmed at this impending destruction, the Ciguayans surrounded their chieftain with clamorous lamentations, cursing the day that Guarionex had taken refuge among them, and urging that he should be given up for the salvation of the country. The generous cacique was inflexible. He reminded them of the many virtues of Guarionex, and the sacred claims he had on their hospitality, and declared he would abide all evils, rather than it should ever be said Mayobanex had betrayed his guest.

The people retired with sorrowful hearts, and the chieftain, summoning Guarionex into his presence, again pledged his word to protect him, though it should cost him his dominions. He sent no reply to the Adelantado, and lest further messages might tempt the fidelity of his subjects, he placed men in ambush, with orders to slay any messenger who might approach. They had not lain in wait long, before they beheld two men advancing through the forest, one of whom was a captive Ciguayan, and the other an Indian ally of the Spaniards. They were both instantly slain. The Adelantado was following at no great distance, with only ten foot-soldiers and four horsemen. When he found his messengers lying dead in the forest path, transfixed with arrows, he was greatly exasperated, and resolved to deal rigorously with this obstinate tribe. He advanced, therefore, with all his force to Cabron, where Mayobanex and his army were quartered. At his approach the inferior caciques and their adherents fled, overcome by terror of the Spaniards. Finding himself thus deserted, Mayobanex took refuge with his family in a secret part of the mountains. Several of the Ciguayans sought for Guarionex, to kill him or deliver him up as a propitiatory offering, but he fled to the heights, where he wandered about alone, in the most savage and desolate places.

The density of the forests and the ruggedness of the mountains rendered this expedition excessively painful and laborious, and protracted it far beyond the time that the Adelantado had contemplated. His men suffered, not merely from fatigue, but hunger. The natives had all fled to the mountains; their villages remained empty and desolate; all the provisions of the Spaniards consisted of cassava bread, and such roots and herbs as their Indian allies could gather for them, with now and then a few utias taken with the assistance of their dogs. They slept almost always on the ground, in the open air, under the trees, exposed to the heavy dew which falls in this climate. For three months they were thus ranging the mountains, until almost worn out with toil and hard fare. Many of them had farms in the neighborhood of Fort Conception, which required their attention; they, therefore, entreated permission, since the Indians were terrified and dispersed, to return to their abodes in the Vega.

The Adelantado granted many of them passports and an allowance out of the scanty stock of bread which remained. Retaining only thirty men, he resolved with these to search every den and cavern of the mountains until he should find the two caciques. It was difficult, however, to trace them in such a wilderness. There was no one to give a clue to their retreat, for the whole country was abandoned. There were the habitations of men, but not a human being to be seen; or if, by chance, they caught some wretched Indian stealing forth from the mountains in quest of food, he always professed utter ignorance of the hiding-place of the caciques.

It happened one day, however, that several Spaniards, while hunting utias, captured two of the followers of Mayobanex, who were on their way to a distant village in search of bread. They were taken to the Adelantado, who compelled them to betray the place of concealment of their chieftain, and to act as guides. Twelve Spaniards volunteered to go in quest of him. Stripping themselves naked, staining and painting their bodies so as to look like Indians, and covering their swords with palm-leaves, they were conducted by the guides to the retreat of the unfortunate Mayobanex. They came secretly upon him, and found him surrounded by his wife and children and a few of his household, totally unsuspecting of danger. Drawing their swords, the Spaniards rushed upon them, and made

them all prisoners. When they were brought to the Adelantado, he gave up all further search after Guarionex, and returned to Fort Conception.

Among the prisoners thus taken was the sister of Mayobanex. She was the wife of another cacique of the mountains, whose territories had never yet been visited by the Spaniards; and she was reputed to be one of the most beautiful women of the island. Tenderly attached to her brother, she had abandoned the security of her own dominions, and had followed him among rocks and precipices, participating in all his hardships, and comforting him with a woman's sympathy and kindness. When her husband heard of her captivity, he hastened to the Adelantado and offered to submit himself and all his possessions to his sway, if his wife might be restored to him. The Adelantado accepted his offer of allegiance, and released his wife and several of his subjects who had been captured. The cacique, faithful to his word, became a firm and valuable ally of the Spaniards, cultivating large tracts of land, and supplying them with great quantities of bread and other provisions.

Kindness appears never to have been lost upon the people of this island. When this act of clemency reached the Ciguayans, they came in multitudes to the fortress, bringing presents of various kinds, promising allegiance, and imploring the release of Mayobanex and his family. The Adelantado granted their prayers in part, releasing the wife and household of the cacique, but still detaining him prisoner to insure the fidelity of his subjects.

In the meantime the unfortunate Guarionex, who had been hiding in the wildest parts of the mountains, was driven by hunger to venture down occasionally into the plain in quest of food. The Ciguayans looking upon him as the cause of their misfortunes, and perhaps hoping by his sacrifice to procure the release of their chieftain, betrayed his haunts to the Adelantado. A party was dispatched to secure him. They lay in wait in the path by which he usually returned to the mountains. As the unhappy cacique, after one of his famished excursions, was returning to his den among the cliffs, he was surprised by the lurking Spaniards, and brought in chains to Fort Conception. After his repeated insurrections, and the extraordinary zeal and perseverance displayed in his pursuit, Guarionex expected nothing less than death from the vengeance of the Adelantado. Don Bartholomew, however, though stern in his policy, was neither vindictive nor cruel in his nature. He considered the tranquillity of the Vega sufficiently secured by the captivity of the cacique; and ordered him to be detained a prisoner and hostage in the fortress. The Indian hostilities in this important part of the island being thus brought to a conclusion, and precautions taken to prevent their recurrence, Don Bartholomew returned to the city of San Domingo, where, shortly after his arrival, he had the happiness of receiving his brother, the admiral, after nearly two years and six months' absence.³⁰

Such was the active, intrepid, and sagacious, but turbulent and disastrous administration of the Adelantado, in which we find evidences of the great capacity, the mental and bodily vigor of this self-formed and almost self-taught man. He united, in a singular degree, the sailor, the soldier, and the legislator. Like his brother, the admiral, his mind and manners rose immediately to the level of his situation, showing no arrogance nor ostentation, and exercising the sway of sudden and extraordinary power with the sobriety and moderation of one who had been born to rule. He has been accused of severity in his government, but no instance appears of a cruel or wanton abuse of authority. If he was stern towards the factious Spaniards, he was just; the disasters of his administration were not produced by his own rigor, but by the perverse passions of others, which called for its exercise; and the admiral, who had more suavity of manner and benevolence of heart, was not more fortunate in conciliating the good will, and insuring the obedience of the colonists. The merits of Don Bartholomew do not appear to have been sufficiently appreciated by the world. His portrait has been suffered to remain too much in the shade; it is worthy of being brought into the light, as a companion to that of his

³⁰ The particulars of this chapter are chiefly from P. Martyr, *decad. i. lib. vi.*; the manuscript history of Las Casas, *lib. i. cap. 121*; and Herrera, *Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 8, 9.*

illustrious brother. Less amiable and engaging, perhaps, in its lineaments, and less characterized by magnanimity, its traits are nevertheless bold, generous, and heroic, and stamped with iron firmness.

Book XII

Chapter I

Confusion in the Island. – Proceedings of the Rebels at Xaragua

[August 30, 1498.]

Columbus arrived at San Domingo, wearied by a long and arduous voyage, and worn down by infirmities; both mind and body craved repose, but from the time he first entered into public life, he had been doomed never again to taste the sweets of tranquillity. The island of Hispaniola, the favorite child as it were of his hopes, was destined to involve him in perpetual troubles, to fetter his fortunes, impede his enterprises, and imbitter the conclusion of his life. What a scene of poverty and suffering had this opulent and lovely island been rendered by the bad passions of a few despicable men! The wars with the natives and the seditions among the colonists had put a stop to the labors of the mines, and all hopes of wealth were at an end. The horrors of famine had succeeded to those of war. The cultivation of the earth had been generally neglected; several of the provinces had been desolated during the late troubles; a great part of the Indians had fled to the mountains, and those who remained had lost all heart to labor, seeing the produce of their toils liable to be wrested from them by ruthless strangers. It is true, the Vega was once more tranquil, but it was a desolate tranquillity. That beautiful region, which the Spaniards but four years before had found so populous and happy, seeming to inclose in its luxuriant bosom all the sweets of nature, and to exclude all the cares and sorrows of the world, was now a scene of wretchedness and repining. Many of those Indian towns, where the Spaniards had been detained by genial hospitality, and almost worshiped as beneficent deities, were now silent and deserted. Some of their late inhabitants were lurking among rocks and caverns; some were reduced to slavery; many had perished with hunger, and many had fallen by the sword. It seems almost incredible, that so small a number of men, restrained too by well-meaning governors, could in so short a space of time have produced such wide-spreading miseries. But the principles of evil have a fatal activity. With every exertion, the best of men can do but a moderate amount of good; but it seems in the power of the most contemptible individual to do incalculable mischief.

The evil passions of the white men, which had inflicted such calamities upon this innocent people, had insured likewise a merited return of suffering to themselves. In no part was this more truly exemplified than among the inhabitants of Isabella, the most idle, factious, and dissolute of the island. The public works were unfinished; the gardens and fields they had begun to cultivate lay neglected: they had driven the natives from their vicinity by extortion and cruelty, and had rendered the country around them a solitary wilderness. Too idle to labor, and destitute of any resources with which to occupy their indolence, they quarrelled among themselves, mutinied against their rulers, and wasted their time in alternate riot and despondency. Many of the soldiery quartered about the island had suffered from ill health during the late troubles, being shut up in Indian villages where they could take no exercise, and obliged to subsist on food to which they could not accustom themselves. Those actively employed had been worn down by hard service, long marches, and scanty food. Many of them were broken in constitution, and many had perished by disease. There was a universal desire to leave the island, and escape from miseries created by themselves. Yet this was the favored and fruitful land to which the eyes of philosophers and poets in Europe were fondly turned, as realizing

the pictures of the golden age. So true it is, that the fairest Elysium fancy ever devised would be turned into a purgatory by the passions of bad men!

One of the first measures of Columbus on his arrival was to issue a proclamation approving of all the measures of the Adelantado, and denouncing Roldan and his associates. That turbulent man had taken possession of Xaragua, and been kindly received by the natives. He had permitted his followers to lead an idle and licentious life among its beautiful scenes, making the surrounding country and its inhabitants subservient to their pleasures and their passions. An event happened previous to their knowledge of the arrival of Columbus, which threw supplies into their hands, and strengthened their power. As they were one day loitering on the sea-shore, they beheld three caravels at a distance, the sight of which, in this unfrequented part of the ocean, filled them with wonder and alarm. The ships approached the land, and came to anchor. The rebels apprehended at first they were vessels dispatched in pursuit of them. Roldan, however, who was sagacious as he was bold, surmised them to be ships which had wandered from their course, and been borne to the westward by the currents, and that they must be ignorant of the recent occurrences of the island. Enjoining secrecy on his men, he went on board, pretending to be stationed in that neighborhood for the purpose of keeping the natives in obedience, and collecting tribute. His conjectures as to the vessels were correct. They were, in fact, the three caravels detached by Columbus from his squadron at the Canary Islands, to bring supplies to the colonies. The captains, ignorant of the strength of the currents, which set through the Caribbean Sea, had been carried west far beyond their reckoning, until they had wandered to the coast of Xaragua.

Roldan kept his secret closely for three days. Being considered a man in important trust and authority, the captains did not hesitate to grant all his requests for supplies. He procured swords, lances, cross-bows, and various military stores; while his men, dispersed through the three vessels, were busy among the crews, secretly making partisans, representing the hard life of the colonists at San Domingo, and the ease and revelry in which they passed their time at Xaragua. Many of the crews had been shipped in compliance with the admiral's ill-judged proposition, to commute criminal punishments into transportation to the colony. They were vagabonds, the refuse of Spanish towns, and culprits from Spanish dungeons; the very men, therefore, to be wrought upon by such representations, and they promised to desert on the first opportunity and join the rebels.

It was not until the third day, that Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, the most intelligent of the three captains, discovered the real character of the guests he had admitted so freely on board of his vessels. It was then too late; the mischief was effected. He and his fellow captains had many earnest conversations with Roldan, endeavoring to persuade him from his dangerous opposition to the regular authority. The certainty that Columbus was actually on his way to the island, with additional forces, and augmented authority, had operated strongly on his mind. He had, as has already been intimated, prepared his friends at San Domingo to plead his cause with the admiral, assuring him that he had only acted in opposition to the injustice and oppression of the Adelantado, but was ready to submit to Columbus on his arrival. Carvajal perceived that the resolution of Roldan and of several of his principal confederates was shaken, and flattered himself, that, if he were to remain some little time among the rebels, he might succeed in drawing them back to their duty. Contrary winds rendered it impossible for the ships to work up against the currents to San Domingo. It was arranged among the captains, therefore, that a large number of the people on board, artificers and others most important to the service of the colony, should proceed to the settlement by land. They were to be conducted by Juan Antonio Colombo, captain of one of the caravels, a relative of the admiral, and zealously devoted to his interests. Arana was to proceed with the ships, when the wind would permit, and Carvajal volunteered to remain on shore, to endeavor to bring the rebels to their allegiance.

On the following morning, Juan Antonio Colombo landed with forty men well armed with cross-bows, swords, and lances, but was astonished to find himself suddenly deserted by all his party excepting eight. The deserters went off to the rebels, who received with exultation this important

reinforcement of kindred spirits. Juan Antonio endeavored in vain by remonstrances and threats to bring them back to their duty. They were most of them convicted culprits, accustomed to detest order, and to set law at defiance. It was equally in vain that he appealed to Roldan, and reminded him of his professions of loyalty to the government. The latter replied that he had no means of enforcing obedience; his was a mere "Monastery of Observation," where every one was at liberty to adopt the habit of the order. Such was the first of a long train of evils, which sprang from this most ill-judged expedient of peopling a colony with criminals, and thus mingling vice and villany with the fountain-head of its population.

Juan Antonio, grieved and disconcerted, returned on board with the few who remained faithful. Fearing further desertions, the two captains immediately put to sea, leaving Carvajal on shore, to prosecute his attempt at reforming the rebels. It was not without great difficulty and delay that the vessels reached San Domingo; the ship of Carvajal having struck on a sand-bank, and sustained great injury. By the time of their arrival, the greater part of the provisions with which they had been freighted was either exhausted or damaged. Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal arrived shortly afterwards by land, having been escorted to within six leagues of the place by several of the insurgents, to protect him from the Indians. He failed in his attempt to persuade the band to immediate submission; but Roldan had promised that the moment he heard of the arrival of Columbus, he would repair to the neighborhood of San Domingo, to be at hand to state his grievances, and the reasons of his past conduct, and to enter into a negotiation for the adjustment of all differences. Carvajal brought a letter from him to the admiral to the same purport; and expressed a confident opinion, from all that he observed of the rebels, that they might easily be brought back to their allegiance by an assurance of amnesty.³¹

³¹ Las Casas, lib. i. cap. 149,150. Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 12. Hist, del Almirante, cap. 77.

Chapter II

Negotiation of the Admiral with the Rebels. – Departure of Ships for Spain

[1498.]

Notwithstanding the favorable representations of Carvajal, Columbus was greatly troubled by the late event at Xaragua. He saw that the insolence of the rebels, and their confidence in their strength, must be greatly increased by the accession of such a large number of well-armed and desperate confederates. The proposition of Roldan to approach to the neighborhood of San Domingo, startled him. He doubted the sincerity of his professions, and apprehended great evils and dangers from so artful, daring, and turbulent a leader, with a rash and devoted crew at his command. The example of this lawless horde, roving at large about the island, and living in loose revel and open profligacy, could not but have a dangerous effect upon the colonists newly arrived; and when they were close at hand, to carry on secret intrigues, and to hold out a camp of refuge to all malcontents, the loyalty of the whole colony might be sapped and undermined.

Some measures were immediately necessary to fortify the fidelity of the people against such seductions. He was aware of a vehement desire among many to return to Spain; and of an assertion industriously propagated by the seditious, that he and his brothers wished to detain the colonists on the island through motives of self-interest. On the 12th of September, therefore, he issued a proclamation, offering free passage and provisions for the voyage to all who wished to return to Spain, in five vessels nearly ready to put to sea. He hoped by this means to relieve the colony from the idle and disaffected; to weaken the party of Roldan, and to retain none about him but such as were sound-hearted and well-disposed.

He wrote at the same time to Miguel Ballester, the staunch and well-tried veteran who commanded the fortress of Conception, advising him to be upon his guard, as the rebels were coining into his neighborhood. He empowered him also to have an interview with Roldan; to offer him pardon and oblivion of the past, on condition of his immediate return to duty; and to invite him to repair to San Domingo to have an interview with the admiral, under a solemn, and, if required, a written assurance from the latter, of personal safety. Columbus was sincere in his intentions. He was of a benevolent and placable disposition, and singularly free from all vindictive feelings towards the many worthless and wicked men who heaped sorrow on his head.

Ballester had scarcely received this letter, when the rebels began to arrive at the village of Bonao. This was situated in a beautiful valley, or Vega, bearing the same name, about ten leagues from Fort Conception, and about twenty from San Domingo, in a well-peopled and abundant country. Here Pedro Riquelme, one of the ringleaders of the sedition, had large possessions, and his residence became the headquarters of the rebels. Adrian de Moxica, a man of turbulent and mischievous character, brought his detachment of dissolute ruffians to this place of rendezvous. Roldan and others of the conspirators drew together there by different routes.

No sooner did the veteran Miguel Ballester hear of the arrival of Roldan, than he set forth to meet him. Ballester was a venerable man, gray-headed, and of a soldier-like demeanor. Loyal, frank, and virtuous, of a serious disposition, and great simplicity of heart, he was well chosen as a mediator with rash and profligate men; being calculated to calm their passions by his sobriety; to disarm their

petulance by his age; to win their confidence by his artless probity; and to awe their licentiousness by his spotless virtue.³²

Ballester found Roldan in company with Pedro Riquelme, Pedro de Gamez, and Adrian de Moxica, three of his principal confederates. Flushed with a confidence of his present strength, Roldan treated the proffered pardon with contempt, declaring that he did not come there to treat of peace, but to demand the release of certain Indians captured unjustifiably, and about to be shipped to Spain as slaves, notwithstanding that he, in his capacity of *alcalde mayor*, had pledged his word for their protection. He declared that, until these Indians were given up, he would listen to no terms of compact; throwing out an insolent intimation at the same time, that he held the admiral and his fortunes in his hand, to make and mar them as he pleased.

The Indians he alluded to were certain subjects of Guarionex, who had been incited by Roldan to resist the exaction of tribute, and who, under the sanction of his supposed authority, had engaged in the insurrections of the Vega. Roldan knew that the enslavement of the Indians was an unpopular feature in the government of the island, especially with the queen; and the artful character of this man is evinced in his giving his opposition to Columbus the appearance of a vindication of the rights of the suffering islanders. Other demands were made of a highly insolent nature, and the rebels declared that, in all further negotiations, they would treat with no other intermediate agent than Carvajal, having had proofs of his fairness and impartiality in the course of their late communications with him at Xaragua.

This arrogant reply to his proffer of pardon was totally different from what the admiral had been led to expect, and placed him in an embarrassing situation. He seemed surrounded by treachery and falsehood. He knew that Roldan had friends and secret partisans even among those who professed to remain faithful; and he knew not how far the ramifications of the conspiracy might extend. A circumstance soon occurred to show the justice of his apprehensions. He ordered the men of San Domingo to appear under arms, that he might ascertain the force with which he could take the field in case of necessity. A report was, immediately circulated that they were to be led to Bonao, against the rebels. Not above seventy men appeared under arms, and of these not forty were to be relied upon. One affected to be lame, another ill; some had relations, and others had friends among the followers of Roldan: almost all were disaffected to the service.³³

Columbus saw that a resort to arms would betray his own weakness and the power of the rebels, and completely prostrate the dignity and authority of government. It was necessary to temporize, therefore, however humiliating such conduct might be deemed. He had detained the five ships for eighteen days in port, hoping in some way to have put an end to this rebellion, so as to send home favorable accounts of the island to the sovereigns. The provisions of the ships, however, were wasting. The Indian prisoners on board were suffering and perishing; several of them threw themselves overboard, or were suffocated with heat in the holds of the vessels. He was anxious, also, that as many of the discontented colonists as possible should make sail for Spain before any commotion should take place.

On the 18th of October, therefore, the ships put to sea.³⁴ Columbus wrote to the sovereigns an account of the rebellion, and of his proffered pardon being refused. As Roldan pretended that it was a mere quarrel between him and the Adelantado, of which the admiral was not an impartial judge, the latter entreated that Roldan might be summoned to Spain, where the sovereigns might be his judges; or that an investigation might take place in presence of Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, who was friendly to Roldan, and of Miguel Ballester, as witness on the part of the Adelantado. He attributed, in a great measure, the troubles of this island to his own long detention in Spain, and the delays thrown in

³² Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i. cap. 153.

³³ *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 78.

³⁴ In one of these ships sailed the father of the venerable historian Las Casas, from whom he derived many of the facts of his history. Las Casas, *lib. i. cap. 153*.

his way by those appointed to assist him, who had retarded the departure of the ships with supplies, until the colony had been reduced to the greatest scarcity. Hence had arisen discontent, murmuring, and finally rebellion. He entreated the sovereigns, in the most pressing manner, that the affairs of the colony might not be neglected, and those at Seville, who had charge of its concerns, might be instructed at least not to devise impediments instead of assistance. He alluded to his chastisement of the contemptible Ximeno Breviesca, the insolent minion of Fonseca, and entreated that neither that nor any other circumstance might be allowed to prejudice him in the royal favor, through the misrepresentations of designing men. He assured them that the natural resources of the island required nothing but good management to supply all the wants of the colonists; but that the latter were indolent and profligate. He proposed to send home, by every ship, as in the present instance, a number of the discontented and worthless, to be replaced by sober and industrious men. He begged also that ecclesiastics might be sent out for the instruction and conversion of the Indians; and, what was equally necessary, for the reformation of the dissolute Spaniards. He required also a man learned in the law, to officiate as judge over the island, together with several officers of the royal revenue. Nothing could surpass the soundness and policy of these suggestions; but unfortunately one clause marred the moral beauty of this excellent letter. He requested that for two years longer the Spaniards might be permitted to employ the Indians as slaves; only making use of such, however, as were captured in wars and insurrections. Columbus had the usage of the age in excuse for this suggestion; but it is at variance with his usual benignity of feeling, and his paternal conduct towards these unfortunate people.

At the same time he wrote another letter, giving an account of his recent voyage, accompanied by a chart, and by specimens of the gold, and particularly of the pearls found in the Gulf of Paria. He called especial attention to the latter as being the first specimens of pearls found in the New World. It was in this letter that he described the newly-discovered continent in such enthusiastic terms, as the most favored part of the east, the source of inexhaustible treasures, the supposed seat of the terrestrial Paradise; and he promised to prosecute the discovery of its glorious realms with the three remaining ships, as soon as the affairs of the island should permit.

By this opportunity, Roldan and his friends likewise sent letters to Spain, endeavoring to justify their rebellion by charging Columbus and his brothers with oppression and injustice, and painting their whole conduct in the blackest colors. It would naturally be supposed that the representations of such men would have little weight in the balance against the tried merits and exalted services of Columbus: but they had numerous friends and relatives in Spain; they had the popular prejudice on their side, and there were designing persons in the confidence of the sovereigns ready to advocate their cause. Columbus, to use his own simple but affecting words was "absent, envied, and a stranger."³⁵

³⁵ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 157.

Chapter III

Negotiations and Arrangements with the Rebels

[1498.]

The ships being dispatched, Columbus resumed his negotiation with the rebels; determined at any sacrifice to put an end to a sedition which distracted the island and interrupted all his plans of discovery. His three remaining ships lay idle in the harbor, though a region of apparently boundless wealth was to be explored. He had intended to send his brother on the discovery, but the active and military spirit of the Adelantado rendered his presence indispensable, in case the rebels should come to violence. Such were the difficulties encountered at every step of his generous and magnanimous enterprises; impeded at one time by the insidious intrigues of crafty men in place, and checked at another by the insolent turbulence of a handful of ruffians.

In his consultations with the most important persons about him, Columbus found that much of the popular discontent was attributed to the strict rule of his brother, who was accused of dealing out justice with a rigorous hand. Las Casas, however, who saw the whole of the testimony collected from various sources with respect to the conduct of the Adelantado, acquits him of all charges of the kind, and affirms that, with respect to Roldan in particular, he had exerted great forbearance. Be this as it may, Columbus now, by the advice of his counselors, resolved to try the alternative of extreme lenity. He wrote a letter to Roldan, dated the 20th of October, couched in the most conciliating terms, calling to mind past kindnesses, and expressing deep concern for the feud existing between him and the Adelantado. He entreated him, for the common good, and for the sake of his own reputation, which stood well with the sovereigns, not to persist in his present insubordination, and repeated the assurance, that he and his companions might come to him, under the faith of his word for the inviolability of their persons.

There was a difficulty as to who should be the bearer of this letter. The rebels had declared that they would receive no one as mediator but Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal. Strong doubts, however, existed in the minds of those about Columbus as to the integrity of that officer. They observed that he had suffered Roldan to remain two days on board of his caravel at Xaragua; had furnished him with weapons and stores; had neglected to detain him on board, when he knew him to be a rebel; had not exerted himself to retake the deserters; had been escorted on his way to San Domingo by the rebels, and had sent refreshments to them at Bonao. It was alleged, moreover, that he had given himself out as a colleague of Columbus, appointed by government to have a watch and control over his conduct. It was suggested, that, in advising the rebels to approach San Domingo, he had intended, in case the admiral did not arrive, to unite his pretended authority as colleague, to that of Roldan, as chief judge, and to seize upon the reins of government. Finally, the desire of the rebels to have him sent to them as an agent, was cited as proof that he was to join them as a leader, and that the standard of rebellion was to be hoisted at Bonao.³⁶ These circumstances, for some time, perplexed Columbus: but he reflected that Carvajal, as far as he had observed his conduct, had behaved like a man of integrity; most of the circumstances alleged against him admitted of a construction in his favor; the rest were mere rumors, and he had unfortunately experienced, in his own case, how easily the fairest actions, and the

³⁶ Hist. del Almirante, cap. 78.

fairest characters, may be falsified by rumor. He discarded, therefore, all suspicion, and determined to confide implicitly in Carvajal; nor had he ever any reason to repent of his confidence.

The admiral had scarcely dispatched this letter, when he received one from the leaders of the rebels, written several days previously. In this they not merely vindicated themselves from the charge of rebellion, but claimed great merit, as having dissuaded their followers from a resolution to kill the Adelantado, in revenge of his oppressions, prevailing upon them to await patiently for redress from the admiral. A month had elapsed since his arrival, during which they had waited anxiously for his orders, but he had manifested nothing but irritation against them. Considerations of honor and safety, therefore, obliged them to withdraw from his service, and they accordingly demanded their discharge. This letter was dated from Bonao, the 17th of October, and signed by Francisco Roldan, Adrian de Moxica, Pedro de Gamez, and Diego de Escobar.³⁷

In the meantime, Carvajal arrived at Bonao, accompanied by Miguel Ballester. They found the rebels full of arrogance and presumption. The conciliating letter of the admiral, however, enforced by the earnest persuasions of Carvajal, and the admonitions of the veteran Ballester, had a favorable effect on several of the leaders, who had more intellect than their brutal followers. Roldan, Gamez, Escobar, and two or three others, actually mounted their horses to repair to the admiral, but were detained by the clamorous opposition of their men; too infatuated with their idle, licentious mode of life, to relish the idea of a return to labor and discipline. These insisted that it was a matter which concerned them all; whatever arrangement was to be made, therefore, should be made in public, in writing, and subject to their approbation or dissent. A day or two elapsed before this clamor could be appeased. Roldan then wrote to the admiral, that his followers objected to his coming, unless a written assurance, or passport, were sent, protecting the persons of himself and such as should accompany him. Miguel Ballester wrote, at the same time, to the admiral, urging him to agree to whatever terms the rebels might demand. He represented their forces as continually augmenting, the soldiers of his garrison daily deserting to them; unless, therefore, some compromise were speedily effected, and the rebels shipped off to Spain, he feared that not merely the authority, but even the person of the admiral would be in danger; for though the Hidalgos and the officers and servants immediately about him would, doubtless, die in his service, the common people were but little to be depended upon.³⁸

Columbus felt the increasing urgency of the case, and sent the required passport. Roldan came to San Domingo; but, from his conduct, it appeared as if his object was to make partisans, and gain deserters, rather than to effect a reconciliation. He had several conversations with the admiral, and several letters passed between them. He made many complaints, and numerous demands; Columbus made large concessions, but some of the pretensions were too arrogant to be admitted.³⁹ Nothing definite was arranged. Roldan departed under the pretext of conferring with his people, promising to send his terms in writing. The admiral sent his Mayordomo, Diego de Salamanca, to treat in his behalf.⁴⁰

On the 6th of November, Roldan wrote a letter from Bonao, containing his terms, and requesting that a reply might be sent to him to Concepcion, as scarcity of provisions obliged him to leave Bonao. He added that he should wait for a reply until the following Monday (the 11th). There was an insolent menace implied in this note, accompanied as it was by insolent demands. The admiral found it impossible to comply with the latter; but to manifest his lenient disposition, and to take from the rebels all plea of rigor, he had a proclamation affixed for thirty days at the gate of the fortress, promising full indulgence and complete oblivion of the past to Roldan and his followers, on condition of their presenting themselves before him and returning to their allegiance to the crown within a

³⁷ Ibid., cap. 79. Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 13.

³⁸ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 153.

³⁹ Ibid., cap. 158.

⁴⁰ Hist. del Almirante, cap. 79.

month; together with free conveyance for all such as wished to return to Spain; but threatening to execute rigorous justice upon those who should not appear within the limited time. A copy of this paper he sent to Roldan by Carvajal, with a letter, stating the impossibility of compliance with his terms, but offering to agree to any compact drawn up with the approbation of Carvajal and Salamanca.

When Carvajal arrived, he found the veteran Ballester actually besieged in his fortress of Conception by Roldan, under pretext of claiming, in his official character of alcalde mayor, a culprit who had taken refuge there from justice. He had cut off the supply of water from the fort, by way of distressing it into a surrender. When Carvajal posted up the proclamation of the admiral on the gate of the fortress, the rebels scoffed at the proffered amnesty, saying that, in a little while, they would oblige the admiral to ask the same at their hands. The earnest intercessions of Carvajal, however, brought the leaders at length to reflection, and through his mediation articles of capitulation were drawn up. By these it was agreed that Roldan and his followers should embark for Spain from the port of Xaragua in two ships, to be fitted out and victualed within fifty days. That they should each receive from the admiral a certificate of good conduct, and an order for the amount of their pay, up to the actual date. That slaves should be given to them, as had been given to others, in consideration of services performed; and as several of their company had wives, natives of the island, who were pregnant, or had lately been delivered, they might take them with them, if willing to go, in place of the slaves. That satisfaction should be made for property of some of the company which had been sequestered, and for live-stock which had belonged to Francisco Roldan. There were other conditions, providing for the security of their persons: and it was stipulated that, if no reply were received to these terms within eight days, the whole should be void.⁴¹

This agreement was signed by Roldan and his companions at Fort Conception on the 16th of November, and by the admiral at San Domingo on the 21st. At the same time, he proclaimed a further act of grace, permitting such as chose to remain in the island either to come to San Domingo, and enter into the royal service, or to hold lands in any part of the island. They preferred, however, to follow the fortunes of Roldan, who departed with his band for Xaragua, to await the arrival of the ships, accompanied by Miguel Ballester, sent by the admiral to superintend the preparations for their embarkation.

Columbus was deeply grieved to have his projected enterprise to Terra Firma impeded by such contemptible obstacles, and the ships which should have borne his brother to explore that newly-found continent devoted to the use of this turbulent and worthless rabble. He consoled himself, however, with the reflection, that all the mischief which had so long been lurking in the island, would thus be at once shipped off, and thenceforth every thing restored to order and tranquillity. He ordered every exertion to be made, therefore, to get the ships in readiness to be sent round to Xaragua; but the scarcity of sea-stores, and the difficulty of completing the arrangements for such a voyage in the disordered state of the colony, delayed their departure far beyond the stipulated time. Feeling that he had been compelled to a kind of deception towards the sovereigns, in the certificate of good conduct given to Roldan and his followers, he wrote a letter to them, stating the circumstances under which that certificate had been in a manner wrung from him to save the island from utter confusion and ruin. He represented the real character and conduct of those men; how they had rebelled against his authority; prevented the Indians from paying tribute; pillaged the island; possessed themselves of large quantities of gold, and carried off the daughters of several of the caciques. He advised, therefore, that they should be seized, and their slaves and treasure taken from them, until their conduct could be properly investigated. This letter he intrusted to a confidential person, who was to go in one of the ships.⁴²

⁴¹ Hist. del Almirante, cap. 80.

⁴² Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

The rebels having left the neighborhood, and the affairs of San Domingo being in a state of security, Columbus put his brother Don Diego in temporary command, and departed with the Adelantado on a tour of several months to visit the various stations, and restore the island to order.

The two caravels destined for the use of the rebels sailed from San Domingo for Xaragua about the end of February; but, encountering a violent storm, were obliged to put into one of the harbors of the island, where they were detained until the end of March. One was so disabled as to be compelled to return to San Domingo. Another vessel was dispatched to supply its place, in which the indefatigable Carvajal set sail, to expedite the embarkation of the rebels. He was eleven days in making the voyage, and found the other caravel at Xaragua.

The followers of Roldan had in the meantime changed their minds, and now refused to embark; as usual, they threw all the blame on Columbus, affirming that he had purposely delayed the ships far beyond the stipulated time; that he had sent them in a state not sea-worthy, and short of provisions, with many other charges, artfully founded on circumstances over which they knew he could have no control. Carvajal made a formal protest before a notary who had accompanied him, and finding that the ships were suffering great injury from the teredo or worm, and their provisions failing, he sent them back to San Domingo, and set out on his return by land. Roldan accompanied him a little distance on horseback, evidently disturbed in mind. He feared to return to Spain, yet was shrewd enough to know the insecurity of his present situation at the head of a band of dissolute men, acting in defiance of authority. What tie had he upon their fidelity stronger than the sacred obligations which they had violated? After riding thoughtfully for some distance, he paused, and requested some private conversation with Carvajal before they parted. They alighted under the shade of a tree. Here Roldan made further professions of the loyalty of his intentions, and finally declared, that if the admiral would once more send him a written security for his person, with the guarantee also of the principal persons about him, he would come to treat with him, and trusted that the whole matter would be arranged on terms satisfactory to both parties. This offer, however, he added, must be kept secret from his followers.

Carvajal, overjoyed at this prospect of a final arrangement, lost no time in conveying the proposition of Roldan to the admiral. The latter immediately forwarded the required passport or security, sealed with the royal seal, accompanied by a letter written in amicable terms, exhorting his quiet obedience to the authority of the sovereigns. Several of the principal persons also, who were with the admiral, wrote, at his request, a letter of security to Roldan, pledging themselves for the safety of himself and his followers during the negotiation; provided they did nothing hostile to the royal authority or its representative.

While Columbus was thus, with unwearied assiduity and loyal zeal, endeavoring to bring the island back to its obedience, he received a reply from Spain, to the earnest representations made by him, in the preceding autumn, of the distracted state of the colony and the outrages of these lawless men, and his prayers for royal countenance and support. The letter was written by his invidious enemy, the Bishop Fonseca, superintendent of Indian affairs. It acknowledged the receipt of his statement of the alleged insurrection of Roldan, but observed that this matter must be suffered to remain in suspense, as the sovereigns would investigate and remedy it presently.⁴³

This cold reply had a disheartening effect upon Columbus. He saw that his complaints had little weight with the government; he feared that his enemies were prejudicing him with the sovereigns; and he anticipated redoubled insolence on the part of the rebels, when they should discover how little influence he possessed in Spain. Full of zeal, however, for the success of his undertaking, and of fidelity to the interests of the sovereigns, he resolved to spare no personal sacrifice of comfort or dignity in appeasing the troubles of the island. Eager to expedite the negotiation with Roldan, therefore, he sailed in the latter part of August with two caravels to the port of Azua, west of San

⁴³ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

Domingo, and much nearer to Xaragua. He was accompanied by several of the most important personages of the colony. Roldan repaired thither likewise, with the turbulent Adrian de Moxica, and a number of his band. The concessions already obtained had increased his presumption; and he had, doubtless, received intelligence of the cold manner in which the complaints of the admiral had been received in Spain. He conducted himself more like a conqueror, exacting triumphant terms, than a delinquent seeking to procure pardon by atonement. He came on board of the caravel, and with his usual effrontery, propounded the preliminaries upon which he and his companions were disposed to negotiate.

First, that he should be permitted to send several of his company, to the number of fifteen, to Spain, in the vessels which were at San Domingo. Secondly, that those who remained should have lands granted them, in place of royal pay. Thirdly, that it should be proclaimed, that every thing charged against him and his party had been grounded upon false testimony, and the machinations of person disaffected to the royal service. Fourthly, that he should be reinstated in his office of *alcalde mayor*, or chief judge.⁴⁴

These were hard and insolent conditions to commence with, but they were granted. Roldan then went on shore, and communicated them to his companions. At the end of the two days the insurgents sent their capitulations, drawn up in form, and couched in arrogant language, including all the stipulations granted at Fort Conception, with those recently demanded by Roldan, and concluding with one, more insolent than all the rest, namely, that if the admiral should fail in the fulfillment of any of these articles, they should have a right to assemble together, and compel his performance of them by force, or by any other means they might think proper.⁴⁵ The conspirators thus sought not merely exculpation of the past, but a pretext for future rebellion.

The mind grows wearied and impatient with recording, and the heart of the generous reader must burn with indignation at perusing, this protracted and ineffectual struggle of a man of the exalted merits and matchless services of Columbus, in the toils of such miscreants. Surrounded by doubt and danger; a foreigner among a jealous people; an unpopular commander in a mutinous island; distrusted and slighted by the government he was seeking to serve; and creating suspicion by his very services; he knew not where to look for faithful advice, efficient aid, or candid judgment. The very ground on which he stood seemed giving way under him, for he was told of seditious symptoms among his own people. Seeing the impunity with which the rebels rioted in the possession of one of the finest parts of the island, they began to talk among themselves of following their example, of abandoning the standard of the admiral, and seizing upon the province of Higüey, at the eastern extremity of the island, which was said to contain valuable mines of gold.

Thus critically situated, disregarding every consideration of personal pride and dignity, and determined, at any individual sacrifice, to secure the interests of an ungrateful sovereign, Columbus forced himself to sign this most humiliating capitulation. He trusted that afterwards, when he could gain quiet access to the royal ear, he should be able to convince the king and queen that it had been compulsory, and forced from him by the extraordinary difficulties in which he had been placed, and the imminent perils of the colony. Before signing it, however, he inserted a stipulation, that the commands of the sovereigns, of himself, and of the justices appointed by him, should be punctually obeyed.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Herrera, *decad. I. lib. iii. cap. 16.*

⁴⁵ *Idem. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 38.*

⁴⁶ Herrera, *Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.*

Chapter IV

Grants Made to Roldan and His Followers. – Departure of Several of the Rebels for Spain

[1499.]

When Roldan resumed his office of *alcalde mayor*, or chief judge, he displayed all the arrogance to be expected from one who had intruded himself into power by profligate means. At the city of San Domingo, he was always surrounded by his faction; communed only with the dissolute and disaffected; and, having all the turbulent and desperate men of the community at his beck, was enabled to intimidate the quiet and loyal by his frowns. He bore an impudent front against the authority even of Columbus himself, discharging from office one Rodrigo Perez, a lieutenant of the admiral, declaring that none but such as he appointed should bear a staff of office in the island.⁴⁷ Columbus had a difficult and painful task in bearing with the insolence of this man, and of the shameless rabble which had returned, under his auspices, to the settlements. He tacitly permitted many abuses; endeavoring by mildness and indulgence to allay the jealousies and prejudices awakened against him, and by various concessions to lure the factious to the performance of their duty. To such of the colonists generally as preferred to remain in the island, he offered a choice of either royal pay or portions of lands, with a number of Indians, some free, others as slaves, to assist in the cultivation. The latter was generally preferred; and grants were made out, in which he endeavored, as much as possible, to combine the benefit of the individual with the interests of the colony.

Roldan presented a memorial signed by upwards of one hundred of his late followers, demanding grants of lands and licenses to settle, and choosing Xaragua for their place of abode. The admiral feared to trust such a numerous body of factious partisans in so remote a province; he contrived, therefore, to distribute them in various parts of the island; some at Bonao, where their settlement gave origin to the town of that name; others on the bank of the Rio Verde, or Green River, in the Vega; others about six leagues thence, at St. Jago. He assigned to them liberal portions of land, and numerous Indian slaves, taken in the wars. He made an arrangement, also, by which the caciques in their vicinity, instead of paying tribute, should furnish parties of their subjects, free Indians, to assist the colonists in the cultivation of their lands: a kind of feudal service, which was the origin of the *repartimientos*, or distributions of free Indians among the colonists, afterwards generally adopted, and shamefully abused, throughout the Spanish colonies: a source of intolerable hardships and oppressions to the unhappy natives, and which greatly contributed to exterminate them from the island of Hispaniola.⁴⁸ Columbus considered the island in the light of a conquered country, and arrogated to himself all the rights of a conqueror, in the name of the sovereigns for whom he fought. Of course all his companions in the enterprise were entitled to take part in the acquired territory, and to establish themselves there as feudal lords, reducing the natives to the condition of villains or vassals.⁴⁹ This was an arrangement widely different from his original intention of treating the natives with kindness, as peaceful subjects of the crown. But all his plans had been subverted, and his present measures forced upon him by the exigency of the times, and the violence of lawless men.

⁴⁷ Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

⁴⁸ Herrera, *decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.*

⁴⁹ Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, lib. vi. § 50.

He appointed a captain with an armed band, as a kind of police, with orders to range the provinces; oblige the Indians to pay their tributes; watch over the conduct of the colonists; and check the least appearance of mutiny or insurrection.⁵⁰

Having sought and obtained such ample provisions for his followers, Roldan was not more modest in making demands for himself. He claimed certain lands in the vicinity of Isabella, as having belonged to him before his rebellion; also a royal farm, called La Esperanza, situated on the Vega, and devoted to the rearing of poultry. These the admiral granted him, with permission to employ, in the cultivation of the farm, the subjects of the cacique whose ears had been cut off by Alonzo de Ojeda in his first military expedition into the Vega. Roldan received also grants of land in Xaragua, and a variety of live-stock from the cattle and other animals belonging to the crown. These grants were made to him provisionally, until the pleasure of the sovereigns should be known;⁵¹ for Columbus yet trusted, that when they should understand the manner in which these concessions had been extorted from him, the ringleaders of the rebels would not merely be stripped of their ill-gotten possessions, but receive well-merited punishment.

Roldan, having now enriched himself beyond his hopes, requested permission of Columbus to visit his lands. This was granted with great reluctance. He immediately departed for the Vega, and stopping at Bonao, his late headquarters, made Pedro Riquelme, one of his most active confederates, alcalde, or judge of the place, with the power of arresting all delinquents, and sending them prisoners to the fortress of Concepcion, where he reserved to himself the right of sentencing them. This was an assumption of powers not vested in his office, and gave great offence to Columbus. Other circumstances created apprehensions of further troubles from the late insurgents. Pedro Riquelme, under pretext of erecting farming buildings for his cattle, began to construct a strong edifice on a hill, capable of being converted into a formidable fortress. This, it was whispered, was done in concert with Roldan, by way of securing a stronghold in case of need. Being in the neighborhood of the Vega, where so many of their late partisans were settled, it would form a dangerous rallying place for any new sedition. The designs of Riquelme were suspected and his proceedings opposed by Pedro de Arana, a loyal and honorable man, who was on the spot. Representations were made by both parties to the admiral, who prohibited Riquelme from proceeding with the construction of his edifice.⁵²

Columbus had prepared to return, with his brother Don Bartholomew, to Spain, where he felt that his presence was of the utmost importance to place the late events of the island in a proper light; having found that his letters of explanation were liable to be counteracted by the misrepresentations of malevolent enemies. The island, however, was still in a feverish state. He was not well assured of the fidelity of the late rebels, though so dearly purchased; there was a rumor of a threatened descent into the Vega, by the mountain tribes of Ciguay, to attempt the rescue of their captive cacique Mayobanex, still detained a prisoner in the fortress of Concepcion. Tidings were brought about the same time from the western parts of the island, that four strange ships had arrived at the coast, under suspicious appearances. These circumstances obliged him to postpone his departure, and held him involved in the affairs of this favorite but fatal island.

The two caravels were dispatched for Spain in the beginning of October, taking such of the colonists as chose to return, and among them a number of Roldan's partisans. Some of these took with them slaves, others carried away the daughters of caciques whom they had beguiled from their families and homes. At these iniquities, no less than at many others which equally grieved his spirit, the admiral was obliged to connive. He was conscious, at the same time, that he was sending home a reinforcement of enemies and false witnesses, to defame his character and traduce his conduct, but he had no alternative. To counteract, as much as possible, their misrepresentations, he sent by

⁵⁰ Hist. del Almirante, cap. 84.

⁵¹ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

⁵² Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 83, 84.

the same caravel the loyal and upright veteran Miguel Ballester, together with Garcia de Barrantés, empowered to attend to his affairs at court, and furnished with the dispositions taken relative to the conduct of Roldan and his accomplices.

In his letters to the sovereigns, he entreated them to inquire into the truth of the late transactions. He stated his opinion that his capitulations with the rebels were null and void, for various reasons, viz. – they had been extorted from him by violence, and at sea, where he did not exercise the office of viceroy – there had been two trials relative to the insurrection, and the insurgents having been condemned as traitors, it was not in the power of the admiral to absolve them from their criminality – the capitulations treated of matters touching the royal revenue, over which he had no control, without the intervention of the proper officers; – lastly, Francisco Roldan and his companions, on leaving Spain, had taken an oath to be faithful to the sovereigns, and to the admiral in their name, which oath they had violated. For these and similar reasons, some just, others rather sophistical, he urged the sovereigns not to consider themselves bound to ratify the compulsory terms ceded to these profligate men, but to inquire into their offences, and treat them accordingly. ⁵³

He repeated the request made in a former letter, that a learned judge might be sent out to administer the laws in the island, since he himself had been charged with rigor, although conscious of having always observed a guarded clemency. He requested also that discreet persons should be sent out to form a council, and others for certain fiscal employments, entreating, however, that their powers should be so limited and defined, as not to interfere with his dignity and privileges. He bore strongly on this point; as his prerogatives on former occasions had been grievously invaded. It appeared to him, he said, that princes ought to show much confidence in their governors; for without the royal favor to give them strength and consequence, every thing went to ruin under their command; a sound maxim, forced from the admiral by his recent experience, in which much of his own perplexities, and the triumph of the rebels, had been caused by the distrust of the crown, and its inattention to his remonstrances.

Finding age and infirmity creeping upon him, and his health much impaired by his last voyage, he began to think of his son Diego, as an active coadjutor; who, being destined as his successor, might gain experience under his eye, for the future discharge of his high duties. Diego, though still serving as a page at the court, was grown to man's estate, and capable of entering into the important concerns of life. Columbus entreated, therefore, that he might be sent out to assist him, as he felt himself infirm in health and broken in constitution, and less capable of exertion than formerly. ⁵⁴

⁵³ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

⁵⁴ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iii. cap. 16.

Chapter V

Arrival of Ojeda with a Squadron at the Western Part of the Island. – Roldan Sent to Meet Him

[1499.]

Among the causes which induced Columbus to postpone his departure for Spain, has been mentioned the arrival of four ships at the western part of the island. These had anchored on the 5th of September in a harbor a little below Jacquemel, apparently with the design of cutting dye-woods, which abound in that neighborhood, and of carrying off the natives for slaves. Further reports informed him that they were commanded by Alonzo de Ojeda, the same hot-headed and bold-hearted cavalier who had distinguished himself on various occasions in the previous voyages of discovery, and particularly in the capture of the cacique Caonabo. Knowing the daring and adventurous spirit of this man, Columbus felt much disturbed at his visiting the island in this clandestine manner, on what appeared to be little better than a freebooting expedition. To call him to account, and oppose his aggressions, required an agent of spirit and address. No one seemed better fitted for the purpose than Roldan. He was as daring as Ojeda, and of a more crafty character. An expedition of the kind would occupy the attention of himself and his partisans, and divert them from any schemes of mischief. The large concessions recently made to them would, he trusted, secure their present fidelity, rendering it more profitable for them to be loyal than rebellious.

Roldan readily undertook the enterprise. He had nothing further to gain by sedition, and was anxious to secure his ill-gotten possessions and atone for past offences by public services. He was vain as well as active, and took a pride in acquitting himself well in an expedition which called for both courage and shrewdness. Departing from San Domingo with two caravels, he arrived on the 29th of September within two leagues of the harbor where the ships of Ojeda were anchored. Here he landed with five-and-twenty resolute followers, well armed, and accustomed to range the forests. He sent five scouts to reconnoitre. They brought word that Ojeda was several leagues distant from his ships, with only fifteen men, employed in making cassava bread in an Indian village. Roldan threw himself between them and the ships, thinking to take them by surprise. They were apprised, however, of his approach by the Indians, with whom the very name of Roldan inspired terror, from his late excesses in Xaragua. Ojeda saw his danger; he supposed Roldan had been sent in pursuit of him, and he found himself cut off from his ships. With his usual intrepidity he immediately presented himself before Roldan, attended merely by half a dozen followers. The latter craftily began by conversing on general topics. He then inquired into his motives for landing on the island, particularly on that remote and lonely part, without first reporting his arrival to the admiral. Ojeda replied, that he had been on a voyage of discovery, and had put in there in distress, to repair his ships and procure provisions. Roldan then demanded, in the name of the government, a sight of the license under which he sailed. Ojeda, who knew the resolute character of the man he had to deal with, restrained his natural impetuosity, and replied that his papers were on board of his ship. He declared his intention, on departing thence, to go to San Domingo, and pay his homage to the admiral, having many things to tell him which were for his private ear alone. He intimated to Roldan that the admiral was in complete disgrace at court; that there was a talk of taking from him his command, and that the queen, his patroness, was ill beyond all hopes of recovery. This intimation, it is presumed, was referred to by Roldan in his

dispatches to the admiral, wherein he mentioned that certain things had been communicated to him by Ojeda, which he did not think it safe to confide to a letter.

Roldan now repaired to the ships. He found several persons on board with whom he was acquainted, and who had already been in Hispaniola. They confirmed the truth of what Ojeda had said, and showed a license signed by the Bishop of Fonseca, as superintendent of the affairs of the Indias, authorizing him to sail on a voyage of discovery.⁵⁵

It appeared, from the report of Ojeda and his followers, that the glowing accounts sent home by Columbus of his late discoveries on the coast of Paria, his magnificent speculations with respect to the riches of the newly-found country, and the specimen of pearls transmitted to the sovereigns, had inflamed the cupidity of various adventurers. Ojeda happened to be at that time in Spain. He was a favorite of the Bishop of Fonseca, and obtained a sight of the letter written by the admiral to the sovereigns, and the charts and maps of his route by which it was accompanied. Ojeda knew Columbus to be embarrassed by the seditions of Hispaniola; he found, by his conversations with Fonseca and other of the admiral's enemies, that strong doubts and jealousies existed in the mind of the king with respect to his conduct, and that his approaching downfall was confidently predicted. The idea of taking advantage of these circumstances struck Ojeda, and, by a private enterprise, he hoped to be the first in gathering the wealth of these newly-discovered regions. He communicated his project to his patron, Fonseca. The latter was but too ready for any tiling that might defeat the plans and obscure the glory of Columbus; and it may be added that he always showed himself more disposed to patronize mercenary adventurers than upright and high-minded men. He granted Ojeda every facility; furnishing him with copies of the papers and charts of Columbus, by which to direct himself in his course, and a letter of license signed with his own name, though not with that of the sovereigns. In this, it was stipulated that he should not touch at any land belonging to the King of Portugal, nor any that had been discovered by Columbus prior to 1495. The last provision shows the perfidious artifice of Fonseca, as it left Paria and the Pearl Islands free to the visits of Ojeda, they having been discovered by Columbus subsequent to the designated year. The ships were to be fitted out at the charges of the adventurers, and a certain proportion of the products of the voyage were to be rendered to the crown.

Under this license Ojeda fitted out four ships at Seville, assisted by many eager and wealthy speculators. Among the number was the celebrated Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine merchant, well acquainted with geography and navigation. The principal pilot of the expedition was Juan de la Cosa, a mariner of great repute, a disciple of the admiral, whom he had accompanied in his first voyage of discovery, and in that along the southern coast of Cuba, and round the island of Jamaica. There were several also of the mariners, and Bartholomew Roldan, a distinguished pilot, who had been with Columbus in his voyage to Paria.⁵⁶ Such was the expedition which, by a singular train of circumstances, eventually gave the name of this Florentine merchant, Amerigo Vespucci, to the whole of the New World.

This expedition had sailed in May, 1499. The adventurers had arrived on the southern continent, and ranged along its coast, from two hundred leagues east of the Orinoco, to the Gulf of Paria. Guided by the charts of Columbus, they had passed through this gulf, and through the Boca del Dragon, and had kept along westward to Cape de la Vela, visiting the island of Margarita and the adjacent continent, and discovering the Gulf of Venezuela. They had subsequently touched at the Caribbee Islands, where they had fought with the fierce natives, and made many captives, with the intention of selling them in the slave-markets of Spain. Thence, being in need of supplies, they had

⁵⁵ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 3.

⁵⁶ Las Casas.

sailed to Hispaniola, having performed the most extensive voyage hitherto made along the shores of the New World.⁵⁷

Having collected all the information that he could obtain concerning these voyagers, their adventures and designs, and trusting to the declaration of Ojeda, that he should proceed forthwith to present himself to the admiral, Roldan returned to San Domingo to render a report of his mission.

⁵⁷ Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 4. Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, part in MS. unpublished.

Chapter VI

Manoeuvres of Roldan and Ojeda

[1500.]

When intelligence was brought to Columbus of the nature of the expedition of Ojeda, and the license under which he sailed, he considered himself deeply aggrieved, it being a direct infraction of his most important prerogatives, and sanctioned by authority which ought to have held them sacred. He awaited patiently, however, the promised visit of Alonzo de Ojeda to obtain fuller explanations. Nothing was further from the intention of that roving commander than to keep such promise: he had made it merely to elude the vigilance of Roldan. As soon as he had refitted his vessels and obtained a supply of provisions, he sailed round to the coast of Xaragua, where he arrived in February. Here he was well received by the Spaniards resident in that province, who supplied all his wants. Among them were many of the late comrades of Roldan; loose, random characters, impatient of order and restraint, and burning with animosity against the admiral, for having again brought them under the wholesome authority of the laws.

Knowing the rash and fearless character of Ojeda, and finding that there were jealousies between him and the admiral, they hailed him as a new leader, come to redress their fancied grievances, in place of Roldan, whom they considered as having deserted them. They made clamorous complaints to Ojeda of the injustice of the admiral, whom they charged with withholding from them the arrears of their pay.

Ojeda was a hot-headed man, with somewhat of a vaunting spirit, and immediately set himself up for a redresser of grievances. It is said also that he gave himself out as authorized by government, in conjunction with Carvajal, to act as counselors, or rather supervisors of the admiral; and that one of the first measures they were to take, was to enforce the payment of all salaries due to the servants of the crown.⁵⁸ It is questionable, however, whether Ojeda made any pretension of the kind, which could so readily be disproved, and would have tended to disgrace him with the government. It is probable that he was encouraged in his intermeddling, chiefly by his knowledge of the tottering state of the admiral's favor at court, and of his own security in the powerful protection of Fonseca. He may have imbibed also the opinion, diligently fostered by those with whom he had chiefly communicated in Spain, just before his departure, that these people had been driven to extremities by the oppression of the admiral and his brothers. Some feeling of generosity, therefore, may have mingled with his usual love of action and enterprise, when he proposed to redress all their wrongs, put himself at their head, march at once to San Domingo, and oblige the admiral to pay them on the spot, or expel him from the island.

The proposition of Ojeda was received with acclamations of transport by some of the rebels; others made objections. Quarrels arose: a ruffianly scene of violence and brawl ensued, in which several were killed and wounded on both sides; but the party for the expedition to San Domingo remained triumphant.

Fortunately for the peace and safety of the admiral, Roldan arrived in the neighborhood, just at this critical juncture, attended by a crew of resolute fellows. He had been dispatched by Columbus to watch the movements of Ojeda, on hearing of his arrival on the coast of Xaragua. Apprised of the

⁵⁸ Hist. del Almirante, cap. 84.

violent scenes which were taking place, Roldan, when on the way, sent to his old confederate Diego de Escobar, to follow him with all the trusty force he could collect. They reached Xaragua within a day of each other. An instance of the bad faith usual between bad men was now evinced. The former partisans of Roldan, finding him earnest in his intention of serving the government, and that there was no hope of engaging him in their new sedition, sought to waylay and destroy him on his march, but his vigilance and celerity prevented them.⁵⁹

Ojeda, when he heard of the approach of Roldan and Escobar, retired on board of his ships. Though of a daring spirit, he had no inclination, in the present instance, to come to blows, where there was a certainty of desperate fighting, and no gain; and where he must raise his arm against government. Roldan now issued such remonstrances as had often been ineffectually addressed to himself. He wrote to Ojeda, reasoning with him on his conduct, and the confusion he was producing in the island, and inviting him on shore to an amicable arrangement of all alleged grievances. Ojeda, knowing the crafty, violent character of Roldan, disregarded his repeated messages, and refused to venture within his power. He even seized one of his messengers, Diego de Truxillo, and landing suddenly at Xaragua, carried off another of his followers, named Toribio de Lenares; both of whom he detained in irons, on board of his vessel, as hostages for a certain Juan Pintor, a one-armed sailor, who had deserted, threatening to hang them if the deserter was not given up.⁶⁰

Various manoeuvres took place between these two well-matched opponents; each wary of the address and prowess of the other. Ojeda made sail, and stood twelve leagues to the northward, to the province of Cahay, one of the most beautiful and fertile parts of the country, and inhabited by a kind and gentle people. Here he landed with forty men, seizing upon whatever he could find of the provisions of the natives. Roldan and Escobar followed along shore, and were soon at his heels. Roldan then dispatched Escobar in a light canoe, paddled swiftly by Indians, who, approaching within hail of the ship, informed Ojeda that, since he would not trust himself on shore, Roldan would come and confer with him on board, if he would send a boat for him.

Ojeda now thought himself secure of his enemy; he immediately dispatched a boat within a short distance of the shore, where the crew lay on their oars, requiring Roldan to come to them. "How many may accompany me?" demanded the latter. "Only five or six," was the reply. Upon this Diego de Escobar and four others waded to the boat. The crew refused to admit more. Roldan then ordered one man to carry him to the barge, and another to walk by his side, and assist him. By this stratagem, his party was eight strong. The instant he entered the boat, he ordered the oarsmen to row to shore. On their refusing, he and his companions attacked them sword in hand, wounded several, and made all prisoners, excepting an Indian archer, who, plunging under the water, escaped by swimming.

This was an important triumph for Roldan. Ojeda, anxious for the recovery of his boat, which was indispensable for the service of the ship, now made overtures of peace. He approached the shore in his remaining boat, of small size, taking with him his principal pilot, an arquebusier, and four oarsmen. Roldan entered the boat he had just captured, with seven rowers and fifteen fighting men, causing fifteen others to be ready on shore to embark in a large canoe, in case of need. A characteristic interview took place between these doughty antagonists, each keeping warily on his guard. Their conference was carried on at a distance. Ojeda justified his hostile movements by alleging that Roldan had come with an armed force to seize him. This the latter positively denied, promising him the most amicable reception from the admiral, in case he would repair to San Domingo. An arrangement was at length effected; the boat was restored, and mutual restitution of the men took place, with the exception of Juan Pintor, the one-armed deserter, who had absconded; and on the following day,

⁵⁹ Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.

⁶⁰ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 169, MS.

Ojeda, according to agreement, set sail to leave the island, threatening however to return at a future time with more ships and men. ⁶¹

Roldan waited in the neighborhood, doubting the truth of his departure. In the course of a few days, word was brought that Ojeda had landed on a distant part of the coast. He immediately pursued him with eighty men in canoes, sending scouts by land. Before he arrived at the place, Ojeda had again made sail, and Roldan saw and heard no more of him. Las Casas asserts, however, that Ojeda departed either to some remote district of Hispaniola, or to the island of Porto Rico, where he made up what he called his *Cavalgada*, or drove of slaves; carrying off numbers of the unhappy natives, whom he sold in the slave-market of Cadiz. ⁶²

⁶¹ Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan.

⁶² Las Casas, lib. i. cap. 169.

Chapter VII

Conspiracy of Guevara and Moxica

[1500.]

When men have been accustomed to act falsely, they take great merit to themselves for an exertion of common honesty. The followers of Roldan were loud in trumpeting forth their unwonted loyalty, and the great services they had rendered to government in driving Ojeda from the island. Like all reformed knaves, they expected that their good conduct would be amply rewarded. Looking upon their leader as having every thing in his gift, and being well pleased with the delightful province of Cahay, they requested him to share the land among them, that they might settle there. Roldan would have had no hesitation in granting their request, had it been made during his freebooting career; but he was now anxious to establish a character for adherence to the laws. He declined, therefore, acceding to their wishes, until sanctioned by the admiral. Knowing, however, that he had fostered a spirit among these men which it was dangerous to contradict, and that their rapacity, by long indulgence, did not admit of delay, he shared among them certain lands of his own, in the territory of his ancient host Behechio, cacique of Xaragua. He then wrote to the admiral for permission to return to San Domingo, and received a letter in reply, giving him many thanks and commendations for the diligence and address which he had manifested, but requesting him to remain for a time in Xaragua, lest Ojeda should be yet hovering about the coast, and disposed to make another descent in that province.

The troubles of the island were not yet at an end, but were destined again to break forth, and from somewhat of a romantic cause. There arrived about this time, at Xaragua, a young cavalier of noble family, named Don Hernando de Guevara. He possessed an agreeable person and winning manners, but was headstrong in his passions and dissolute in his principles. He was cousin to Adrian de Moxica, one of the most active ringleaders in the late rebellion of Roldan, and had conducted himself with such licentiousness at San Domingo, that Columbus had banished him from the island. There being no other opportunity of embarking, he had been sent to Xaragua, to return to Spain in one of the ships of Ojeda, but arrived after their departure. Roldan received him favorably, on account of his old comrade, Adrian de Moxica, and permitted him to choose some place of residence until further orders concerning him should arrive from the admiral. He chose the province of Cahay, at the place where Roldan had captured the boat of Ojeda. It was a delightful part of that beautiful coast; but the reason why Guevara chose it, was the vicinity to Xaragua. While at the latter place, in consequence of the indulgence of Roldan, he was favorably received at the house of Anacaona, the widow of Caonabo, and sister of the cacique Behechio. That remarkable woman still retained her partiality to the Spaniards, notwithstanding the disgraceful scenes which had passed before her eyes; and the native dignity of her character had commanded the respect even of the dissolute rabble which infested her province. By her late husband, the cacique Caonabo, she had a daughter named Higuenamota, just grown up, and greatly admired for her beauty. Guevara being often in company with her, a mutual attachment ensued. It was to be near her that he chose Cahay as a residence, at a place where his cousin Adrian de Moxica kept a number of dogs and hawks, to be employed in the chase. Guevara delayed his departure. Roldan discovered the reason, and warned him to desist from his pretensions and leave the province. Las Casas intimates that Roldan was himself attached to the young Indian beauty, and jealous of her preference of his rival. Anacaona, the mother, pleased with the gallant appearance and ingratiating manners of the youthful cavalier, favored his attachment;

especially as he sought her daughter in marriage. Notwithstanding the orders of Roldan, Guevara still lingered in Xaragua, in the house of Anacaona; and sending for a priest, desired him to baptize his intended bride.

Hearing of this, Roldan sent for Guevara, and rebuked him sharply for remaining at Xaragua, and attempting to deceive a person of the importance of Anacaona, by ensnaring the affections of her daughter. Guevara avowed the strength of his passion, and his correct intentions, and entreated permission to remain. Roldan was inflexible. He alleged that some evil construction might be put on his conduct by the admiral; but it is probable his true motive was a desire to send away a rival, who interfered with his own amorous designs. Guevara obeyed; but had scarce been three days at Cahay, when, unable to remain longer absent from the object of his passion, he returned to Xaragua, accompanied by four or five friends, and concealed himself in the dwelling of Anacaona. Roldan, who was at that time confined by a malady in his eyes, being apprised of his return, sent orders for him to depart instantly to Cahay. The young cavalier assumed a tone of defiance. He warned Roldan not to make foes when he had such great need of friends; for, to his certain knowledge, the admiral intended to behead him. Upon this, Roldan commanded him to quit that part of the island, and repair to San Domingo, to present himself before the admiral. The thoughts of being banished entirely from the vicinity of his Indian beauty checked the vehemence of the youth. He changed his tone of haughty defiance into one of humble supplication; and Roldan, appeased by this submission, permitted him to remain for the present in the neighborhood.

Roldan had instilled willfulness and violence into the hearts of his late followers, and now was doomed to experience the effects. Guevara, incensed at his opposition to his passion, meditated revenge. He soon made a party among the old comrades of Roldan, who detested, as a magistrate, the man they had idolized as a leader. It was concerted to rise suddenly upon him, and either to kill him or put out his eyes. Roldan was apprised of the plot, and proceeded with his usual promptness. Guevara was seized in the dwelling of Anacaona, in the presence of his intended bride; seven of his accomplices were likewise arrested. Roldan immediately sent an account of the affair to the admiral, professing, at present, to do nothing without his authority, and declaring himself not competent to judge impartially in the case. Columbus, who was at that time at Fort Conception, in the Vega, ordered the prisoner to be conducted to the fortress of San Domingo.

The vigorous measures of Roldan against his old comrades produced commotions in the island. When Adrian de Moxica heard that his cousin Guevara was a prisoner, and that, too, by command of his former confederate, he was highly exasperated, and resolved on vengeance. Hastening to Bonao, the old haunt of rebellion, he obtained the co-operation of Pedro Riquelme, the recently-appointed alcalde. They went round among their late companions in rebellion, who had received lands and settled in various parts of the Vega, working upon their ready passions, and enlisting their feelings in the cause of an old comrade. These men seem to have had an irresistible propensity to sedition. Guevara was a favorite with them all; the charms of the Indian beauty had probably their influence; and the conduct of Roldan was pronounced a tyrannical interference, to prevent a marriage agreeable to all parties, and beneficial to the colony. There is no being so odious to his former associates as a reformed robber, or a rebel, enlisted in the service of justice. The old scenes of faction were renewed; the weapons which had scarce been hung up from the recent rebellions were again snatched down from the walls, and rash preparations were made for action. Moxica soon saw a body of daring and reckless men ready, with horse and weapon, to follow him on any desperate enterprise. Blinded by the impunity which had attended their former outrages, he now threatened acts of greater atrocity, meditating not merely the rescue of his cousin, but the death of Roldan and the admiral.

Columbus was at Fort Conception, with an inconsiderable force, when this dangerous plot was concerted in his very neighborhood. Not dreaming of any further hostilities from men on whom he had lavished favors, he would doubtless have fallen into their power, had not intelligence been brought him of the plot by a deserter from the conspirators. He saw at a glance the perils by which he was

surrounded, and the storm about to burst upon the island. It was no longer a time for lenient measures; he determined to strike a blow which should crush the very head of rebellion.

Taking with him but six or seven trusty servants, and three esquires, all well armed, he set out in the night for the place where the ringleaders were quartered. Confiding probably in the secrecy of their plot, and the late passiveness of the admiral, they appear to have been perfectly unguarded. Columbus came upon them by surprise, seized Moxica and several of his principal confederates, and bore them off to Fort Conception. The moment was critical; the Vega was ripe for a revolt; he had the fomentor of the conspiracy in his power, and an example was called for, that should strike terror into the factious. He ordered Moxica to be hanged on the top of the fortress. The latter entreated to be allowed to confess himself previous to execution. A priest was summoned. The miserable Moxica, who had been so arrogant in rebellion, lost all courage at the near approach of death. He delayed to confess, beginning and pausing, and re-commencing, and again hesitating, as if he hoped, by whiling away time, to give a chance for rescue. Instead of confessing his own sins, he accused others of criminality, who were known to be innocent; until Columbus, incensed at this falsehood and treachery, and losing all patience, in his mingled indignation and scorn, ordered the dastard wretch to be swung off from the battlements.⁶³

This sudden act of severity was promptly followed up. Several of the accomplices of Moxica were condemned to death and thrown in irons to await their fate. Before the conspirators had time to recover from their astonishment, Pedro Riquelme was taken, with several of his compeers, in his ruffian den at Bonao, and conveyed to the fortress of San Domingo; where was also confined the original mover of this second rebellion, Hernando de Guevara, the lover of the young Indian princess. These unexpected acts of rigor, proceeding from a quarter which had been long so lenient, had the desired effect. The conspirators fled for the most part to Xaragua, their old and favorite retreat. They were not suffered to congregate there again, and concert new seditions. The Adelantado, seconded by Roldan, pursued them with his characteristic rapidity of movement and vigor of arm. It has been said that he carried a priest with him, in order that, as he arrested delinquents, they might be confessed and hanged upon the spot; but the more probable account is that he transmitted them prisoners to San Domingo. He had seventeen of them at one time confined in one common dungeon, awaiting their trial, while he continued in indefatigable pursuit of the remainder.⁶⁴

These were prompt and severe measures; but when we consider how long Columbus had borne with these men; how much he had ceded and sacrificed to them; how he had been interrupted in all his great undertakings, and the welfare of the colony destroyed by their contemptible and seditious brawls; how they had abused his lenity, defied his authority, and at length attempted his life, – we cannot wonder that he should at last let fall the sword of justice, which he had hitherto held suspended.

The power of faction was now completely subdued; and the good effects of the various measures taken by Columbus, since his last arrival, for the benefit of the island, began to appear. The Indians, seeing the inefficacy of resistance, submitted to the yoke. Many gave signs of civilization, having, in some instances, adopted clothing and embraced Christianity. Assisted by their labors, the Spaniards now cultivated their lands diligently, and there was every appearance of settled and regular prosperity.

Columbus considered all this happy change as brought about by the especial intervention of heaven. In a letter to Doña Juana de la Torre, a lady of distinction, aya or nurse of Prince Juan, he gives an instance of those visionary fancies to which he was subject in times of illness and anxiety. In the preceding winter, he says, about the festival of Christmas, when menaced by Indian war and domestic rebellion, when distrustful of those around him and apprehensive of disgrace at court, he sank for a time into complete despondency. In this hour of gloom, when abandoned to despair, he heard in the night a voice addressing him in words of comfort, "Oh man of little faith! why art thou

⁶³ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 5.

⁶⁴ Lag Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 170, MS. Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 7.

cast down? Fear nothing, I will provide for thee. The seven years of the term of gold are not expired; in that, and in all other things, I will take care of thee."

The seven years term of gold here mentioned, alludes to a vow made by Columbus on discovering the New World, and recorded by him in a letter to the sovereigns, that within seven years he would furnish, from the profits of his discoveries, fifty thousand foot and five thousand horse, for the deliverance of the holy sepulchre, and an additional force of like amount, within five years afterwards.

The comforting assurance given him by the voice was corroborated, he says, that very day, by intelligence received of the discovery of a large tract of country rich in mines.⁶⁵ This imaginary promise of divine aid thus mysteriously given, appeared to him at present in still greater progress of fulfillment. The troubles and dangers of the island had been succeeded by tranquillity. He now anticipated the prosperous prosecution of his favorite enterprise, so long interrupted, – the exploring of the regions of Paria, and the establishment of a fishery in the Gulf of Pearls. How illusive were his hopes! At this moment events were maturing which were to overwhelm him with distress, strip him of his honors, and render him comparatively a wreck for the remainder of his days!

⁶⁵ Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan. Hist, del Almirante, cap. 84.

Book XIII

Chapter I

Representations at Court Against Columbus. – Bobadilla Empowered to Examine into His Conduct

[1500.]

While Columbus was involved in a series of difficulties in the factious island of Hispaniola, his enemies were but too successful in undermining his reputation in the court of Spain. The report brought by Ojeda of his anticipated disgrace was not entirely unfounded; the event was considered near at hand, and every perfidious exertion was made to accelerate it. Every vessel from the New World came freighted with complaints, representing Columbus and his brothers as new men, unaccustomed to command, inflated by their sudden rise from obscurity; arrogant and insulting towards men of birth and lofty spirit; oppressive of the common people, and cruel in their treatment of the natives. The insidious and illiberal insinuation was continually urged, that they were foreigners, who could have no interest in the glory of Spain, or the prosperity of Spaniards; and contemptible as this plea may seem, it had a powerful effect. Columbus was even accused of a design to cast off all allegiance to Spain, and either make himself sovereign of the countries he had discovered, or yield them into the hands of some other power: a slander which, however extravagant, was calculated to startle the jealous mind of Ferdinand.

It is true, that by every ship Columbus likewise sent home statements, written with the frankness and energy of truth, setting forth the real cause and nature of the distractions of the island, and pointing out and imploring remedies, which, if properly applied, might have been efficacious. His letters, however, arriving at distant intervals, made but single and transient impressions on the royal mind, which were speedily effaced by the influence of daily and active misrepresentation. His enemies at court, having continual access to the sovereigns, were enabled to place every thing urged against him in the strongest point of view, while they secretly neutralized the force of his vindications. They used a plausible logic to prove either bad management or bad faith on his part. There was an incessant drain upon the mother country for the support of the colony. Was this compatible with the extravagant pictures he had drawn of the wealth of the island, and its golden mountains, in which he had pretended to find the Ophir of ancient days, the source of all the riches of Solomon? They inferred that he had either deceived the sovereigns by designing exaggerations, or grossly wronged them by malpractices, or was totally incapable of the duties of government.

The disappointment of Ferdinand, in finding his newly-discovered possessions a source of expense instead of profit, was known to press sorely on his mind. The wars, dictated by his ambition, had straitened his resources, and involved him in perplexities. He had looked with confidence to the New World for relief, and for ample means to pursue his triumphs; and grew impatient at the repeated demands which it occasioned on his scanty treasury. For the purpose of irritating his feelings and heightening his resentment, every disappointed and repining man who returned from the colony was encouraged, by the hostile faction, to put in claims for pay withheld by Columbus, or losses sustained in his service. This was especially the case with the disorderly ruffians shipped off to free the island from sedition. Finding their way to the court of Granada, they followed the king when he rode out,

filling the air with their complaints, and clamoring for their pay. At one time, about fifty of these vagabonds found their way into the inner court of the Alhambra, under the royal apartments; holding up bunches of grapes, as the meagre diet left them by their poverty, and railing aloud at the deceits of Columbus, and the cruel neglect of government. The two sons of Columbus, who were pages to the queen, happening to pass by, they followed them with imprecations, exclaiming, "There go the sons of the admiral, the whelps of him who discovered the land of vanity and delusion, the grave of Spanish hidalgos." ⁶⁶

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

These considerations had much weight in the candid mind of Isabella, but they were all-powerful with the cautious and jealous Ferdinand. He had never regarded Columbus with real cordiality; and ever since he had ascertained the importance of his discoveries, had regretted the extensive powers vested in his hands. The excessive clamors which had arisen during the brief administration of the Adelantado, and the breaking out of the faction of Roldan, at length determined the king to send out some person of consequence and ability, to investigate the affairs of the colony, and, if necessary for its safety, to take upon himself the command. This important and critical measure it appears had been decided upon, and the papers and powers actually drawn out, in the spring of 1499. It was not carried into effect, however, until the following year. Various reasons have been assigned for this delay. The important services rendered by Columbus in the discovery of Paria and the Pearl Islands may have had some effect on the royal mind. The necessity of fitting out an armament just at that moment, to co-operate with the Venetians against the Turks; the menacing movements of the new king of France, Louis XII; the rebellion of the Moors of the Alpuxarra mountains in the lately-conquered kingdom of Granada; all these have been alleged as reasons for postponing a measure which called for much consideration, and might have important effects upon the newly-discovered possessions. ⁶⁷ The most probable reason, however, was the strong disinclination of Isabella to take so harsh a step against a man for whom she entertained such ardent gratitude and high admiration.

At length the arrival of the ships with the late followers of Roldan, according to their capitulation, brought matters to a crisis. It is true that Ballester and Barrantes came in these ships, to place the affairs of the island in a proper light; but they brought out a host of witnesses in favor of Roldan, and letters written by himself and his confederates, attributing all their late conduct to the tyranny of Columbus and his brothers. Unfortunately, the testimony of the rebels had the greatest weight with Ferdinand; and there was a circumstance in the case which suspended for a time the friendship of Isabella, hitherto the greatest dependence of Columbus.

Having a maternal interest in the welfare of the natives, the queen had been repeatedly offended by what appeared to her pertinacity on the part of Columbus, in continuing to make slaves of those taken in warfare, in contradiction to her known wishes. The same ships which brought home the companions of Roldan, brought likewise a great number of slaves. Some, Columbus had been obliged to grant to these men by the articles of capitulation; others they had brought away clandestinely.

⁶⁶ Hist. del Almirante, cap. 85.

⁶⁷ Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, part unpublished.

Among them were several daughters of caciques, seduced away from their families and their native island by these profligates. Some of these were in a state of pregnancy, others had new-born infants. The gifts and transfers of these unhappy beings were all ascribed to the will of Columbus, and represented to Isabella in the darkest colors. Her sensibility as a woman, and her dignity as a queen, were instantly in arms. "What power," exclaimed she indignantly, "has the admiral to give away my vassals?"⁶⁸ Determined, by one decided and peremptory act, to show her abhorrence of these outrages upon humanity, she ordered all the Indians to be restored to their country and friends. Nay more, her measure was retrospective. She commanded that those formerly sent to Spain by the admiral should be sought out, and sent back to Hispaniola. Unfortunately for Columbus, at this very juncture, in one of his letters, he advised the continuance of Indian slavery for some time longer, as a measure important for the welfare of the colony. This contributed to heighten the indignation of Isabella, and induced her no longer to oppose the sending out of a commission to investigate his conduct, and, if necessary, to supersede him in command.

Ferdinand was exceedingly embarrassed in appointing this commission, between his sense of what was due to the character and services of Columbus, and his anxiety to retract with delicacy the powers vested in him. A pretext at length was furnished by the recent request of the admiral that a person of talents and probity, learned in the law, might be sent out to act as chief judge; and that an impartial umpire might be appointed, to decide in the affair between himself and Roldan. Ferdinand proposed to consult his wishes, but to unite those two officers in one; and as the person he appointed would have to decide in matters touching the highest functions of the admiral and his brothers, he was empowered, should he find them culpable, to supersede them in the government; a singular mode of insuring partiality!

The person chosen for this momentous and delicate office was Don Francisco de Bobadilla, an officer of the royal household, and a commander of the military and religious order of Calatrava. Oviedo pronounces him a very honest and religious man;⁶⁹ but he is represented by others, and his actions corroborate the description, as needy, passionate, and ambitious; three powerful objections to his exercising the rights of judicature in a case requiring the utmost patience, candor, and circumspection, and where the judge was to derive wealth and power from the conviction of one of the parties.

The authority vested in Bobadilla is defined in letters from the sovereigns still extant, and which deserve to be noticed chronologically; for the royal intentions appear to have varied with times and circumstances. The first was dated on the 21st of March, 1499, and mentions the complaint of the admiral, that an *alcalde*, and certain other persons, had risen in rebellion against him. "Wherefore," adds the latter, "we order you to inform yourself of the truth of the foregoing; to ascertain who and what persons they were who rose against the said admiral and our magistracy, and for what cause; and what robberies and other injuries they have committed; and furthermore, to extend your inquiries to all other matters relating to the premises; and the information obtained, and the truth known, whomsoever you find culpable, *arrest their persons, and sequester their effects*; and thus taken, proceed against them and the absent, both civilly and criminally, and impose and inflict such fines and punishments as you may think fit." To carry this into effect, Bobadilla was authorized, in case of necessity, to call in the assistance of the admiral, and of all other persons in authority.

The powers here given are manifestly directed merely against the rebels, and in consequence of the complaints of Columbus. Another letter, dated on the 21st of May, two months subsequently, is of quite different purport. It makes no mention of Columbus, but is addressed to the various functionaries and men of property of the islands and Terra Firma, informing them of the appointment of Bobadilla to the government, with full civil and criminal jurisdiction. Among the powers specified,

⁶⁸ Las Casas, lib. i.

⁶⁹ Oviedo, Cronica, lib. iii. cap. 6.

is the following; – "It is our will, that if the said commander, Francisco de Bobadilla, should think it necessary for our service, and the purposes of justice, that any cavaliers, or other persons who are at present in those islands, or may arrive there, should leave them, and not return and reside in them, and that they should come and present themselves before us, he may command it in our name, and oblige them to depart; and whomsoever he thus commands, we hereby order, that immediately, without waiting to inquire or consult us, or to receive from us any other letter or command, and without interposing appeal or supplication, they obey whatever he shall say and order, under the penalties which he shall impose on our part," &c. &c.

Another letter, dated likewise on the 21st of May, in which Columbus is styled simply, "admiral of the ocean sea," orders him and his brothers to surrender the fortress, ships, houses, arms, ammunition, cattle, and all other royal property, into the hands of Bobadilla, as governor, under penalty of incurring the punishments to which those subject themselves who refuse to surrender fortresses and other trusts, when commanded by their sovereigns.

A fourth letter, dated on the 26th of May, and addressed to Columbus, simply by the title of admiral, is a mere letter of credence, ordering him to give faith and obedience to whatever Bobadilla should impart.

The second and third of these letters were evidently provisional, and only to be produced, if, on examination, there should appear such delinquency on the part of Columbus and his brothers as to warrant their being divested of command.

This heavy blow, as has been shown, remained suspended for a year; yet, that it was whispered about, and triumphantly anticipated by the enemies of Columbus, is evident from the assertions of Ojeda, who sailed from Spain about the time of the signature of those letters, and had intimate communications with Bishop Fonseca, who was considered instrumental in producing this measure. The very license granted by the bishop to Ojeda to sail on a voyage of discovery in contravention of the prerogatives of the admiral, has the air of being given on a presumption of his speedy downfall; and the same presumption, as has already been observed, must have encouraged Ojeda in his turbulent conduct at Xaragua.

At length the long-projected measure was carried into effect. Bobadilla set sail for San Domingo about the middle of July, 1500, with two caravels, in which were twenty-five men, enlisted for a year, to serve as a kind of guard. There were six friars likewise, who had charge of a number of Indians sent back to their country. Besides the letters patent, Bobadilla was authorized, by royal order, to ascertain and discharge all arrears of pay due to persons in the service of the crown; and to oblige the admiral to pay what was due on his part, "so that those people might receive what was owing to them, and there might be no more complaints." In addition to all these powers, Bobadilla was furnished with many blank letters signed by the sovereigns, to be filled up by him in such manner, and directed to such persons, as he might think advisable, in relation to the mission with which he was intrusted.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 7.

Chapter II

Arrival of Bobadilla at San Domingo – His Violent Assumption of the Command

[1500.]

Columbus was still at Fort Conception, regulating the affairs of the Vega, after the catastrophe of the sedition of Moxica; his brother, the Adelantado, accompanied by Roldan, was pursuing and arresting the fugitive rebels in Xaragua; and Don Diego Columbus remained in temporary command at San Domingo. Faction had worn itself out; the insurgents had brought down ruin upon themselves; and the island appeared delivered from the domination of violent and lawless men.

Such was the state of public affairs, when, on the morning of the 23d of August, two caravels were descried off the harbor of San Domingo, about a league at sea. They were standing off and on, waiting until the sea breeze, which generally prevails about ten o'clock, should carry them into port. Don Diego Columbus supposed them to be ships sent from Spain with supplies, and hoped to find on board his nephew Diego, whom the admiral had requested might be sent out to assist him in his various concerns. A canoe was immediately dispatched to obtain information; which, approaching the caravels, inquired what news they brought, and whether Diego, the son of the admiral, was on board. Bobadilla himself replied from the principal vessel, announcing himself as a commissioner sent out to investigate the late rebellion. The master of the caravel then inquired about the news of the island, and was informed of the recent transactions. Seven of the rebels, he was told, had been hanged that week, and five more were in the fortress of San Domingo, condemned to suffer the same fate. Among these were Pedro Riquelme and Fernando de Guevara, the young cavalier whose passion for the daughter of Anacaona had been the original cause of the rebellion. Further, conversation passed, in the course of which Bobadilla ascertained that the admiral and the Adelantado were absent, and Don Diego Columbus in command.

When the canoe returned to the city, with the news that a commissioner had arrived to make inquisition into the late troubles, there was a great stir and agitation throughout the community. Knots of whisperers gathered at every corner; those who were conscious of malpractices were filled with consternation; while those who had grievances, real or imaginary, to complain of, especially those whose pay was in arrear, appeared with joyful countenances.⁷¹

As the vessels entered the river, Bobadilla beheld on either bank a gibbet with the body of a Spaniard hanging on it, apparently but lately executed. He considered these as conclusive proofs of the alleged cruelty of Columbus. Many boats came off to the ship, every one being anxious to pay early court to this public censor. Bobadilla remained on board all day, in the course of which he collected much of the rumors of the place; and as those who sought to secure his favor were those who had most to fear from his investigations, it is evident that the nature of the rumors must generally have been unfavorable to Columbus. In fact, before Bobadilla landed, if not before he arrived, the culpability of the admiral was decided in his mind.

The next morning he landed with all his followers, and went to the church to attend mass, where he found Don Diego Columbus, Rodrigo Perez, the lieutenant of the admiral, and other persons of note. Mass being ended, and those persons, with a multitude of the populace, being assembled at the door of the church, Bobadilla ordered his letters patent to be read, authorizing him to investigate the

⁷¹ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib i. cap. 169. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 8.

rebellion, seize the persons, and sequester the property of delinquents, and proceed against them with the utmost rigor of the law; commanding also the admiral, and all others in authority, to assist him in the discharge of his duties. The letter being read, he demanded of Don Diego and the alcaldes, to surrender to him the persons of Fernando Guevara, Pedro Riquelme, and the other prisoners, with the depositions taken concerning them; and ordered that the parties by whom they were accused, and those by whose command they had been taken, should appear before him.

Don Diego replied, that the proceedings had emanated from the orders of the admiral, who held superior powers to any Bobadilla could possess, and without whose authority he could do nothing. He requested, at the same time, a copy of the letter patent, that he might send it to his brother, to whom alone the matter appertained. This Bobadilla refused, observing that, if Don Diego had power to do nothing, it was useless to give him a copy. He added, that since the office and authority he had proclaimed appeared to have no weight, he would try what power and consequence there was in the name of governor; and would show them that he had command, not merely over them, but over the admiral himself.

The little community remained in breathless suspense, awaiting the portentous movements of Bobadilla. The next morning he appeared at mass, resolved on assuming those powers which were only to have been produced after full investigation, and ample proof of the mal-conduct of Columbus. When mass was over, and the eager populace had gathered round the door of the church, Bobadilla, in presence of Don Diego and Rodrigo Perez, ordered his other royal patent to be read, investing him with the government of the islands, and of Terra Firma.

The patent being read, Bobadilla took the customary oath, and then claimed the obedience of Don Diego, Rodrigo Perez, and all present, to this royal instrument; on the authority of which he again demanded the prisoners confined in the fortress. In reply, they professed the utmost deference to the letter of the sovereigns, but again observed that they held the prisoners in obedience to the admiral, to whom the sovereigns had granted letters of a higher nature.

The self-importance of Bobadilla was incensed at this non-compliance, especially as he saw it had some effect upon the populace, who appeared to doubt his authority. He now produced the third mandate of the crown, ordering Columbus and his brothers to deliver up all fortresses, ships, and other royal property. To win the public completely to his side, he read also the additional mandate issued on the 30th of May, of the same year, ordering him to pay the arrears of wages due to all persons in the royal service, and to compel the admiral to pay the arrears of those to whom he was accountable.

This last document was received with shouts by the multitude, many having long arrears due to them in consequence of the poverty of the treasury. Flushed with his growing importance, Bobadilla again demanded the prisoners; threatening, if refused, to take them by force. Meeting with the same reply, he repaired to the fortress to execute his threats. This post was commanded by Miguel Diaz, the same Arragonian cavalier who had once taken refuge among the Indians on the banks of the Ozema, won the affections of the female cacique Catalina, received from her information of the neighboring gold mines, and induced his countrymen to remove to those parts.

When Bobadilla came before the fortress, he found the gates closed, and the alcaide, Miguel Diaz, upon the battlements. He ordered his letters patent to be read with a loud voice, the signatures and seals to be held up to view, and then demanded the surrender of the prisoners. Diaz requested a copy of the letters; but this Bobadilla refused, alleging that there was no time for delay, the prisoners being under sentence of death, and liable at any moment to be executed. He threatened, at the same time, that if they were not given up, he would proceed to extremities, and Diaz should be answerable for the consequences. The wary alcaide again required time to reply, and a copy of the letters; saying that he held the fortress for the king, by the command of the admiral, his lord, who had gained these territories and islands, and that when the latter arrived, he should obey his orders.⁷²

⁷² Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 179.

The whole spirit of Bobadilla was roused within him at the refusal of the alcaide. Assembling all the people he had brought from Spain, together with the sailors of the ships, and the rabble of the place, he exhorted them to aid him in getting possession of the prisoners, but to harm no one unless in case of resistance. The mob shouted assent, for Bobadilla was already the idol of the multitude. About the hour of vespers he set out, at the head of this motley army, to storm a fortress destitute of a garrison, and formidable only in name, being calculated to withstand only a naked and slightly-armed people. The accounts of this transaction have something in them bordering on the ludicrous, and give it the air of absurd rhodomontade. Bobadilla assailed the portal with great impetuosity, the frail bolts and locks of which gave way at the first shock, and allowed him easy admission. In the meantime, however, his zealous myrmidons applied ladders to the walls, as if about to carry the place by assault, and to experience a desperate defence. The alcaide, Miguel Diaz, and Don Diego de Alvarado, alone appeared on the battlements; they had drawn swords, but offered no resistance. Bobadilla entered the fortress in triumph, and without molestation. The prisoners were found in a chamber in irons. He ordered that they should be brought up to him to the top of the fortress, where, having put a few questions to them, as a matter of form, he gave them in charge to an alguazil named Juan de Espinosa.⁷³

Such was the arrogant and precipitate entrance into office of Francisco de Bobadilla. He had reversed the order of his written instructions; having seized upon the government before he had investigated the conduct of Columbus. He continued his career in the same spirit; acting as if the case had been prejudged in Spain, and he had been sent out merely to degrade the admiral from his employments, not to ascertain the manner in which he had fulfilled them. He took up his residence in the house of Columbus, seized upon his arms, gold, plate, jewels, horses, together with his letters, and various manuscripts, both public and private, even to his most secret papers. He gave no account of the property thus seized; and which he no doubt considered already confiscated to the crown, excepting that he paid out of it the wages of those to whom the admiral was in arrears.⁷⁴ To increase his favor with the people, he proclaimed, on the second day of his assumption of power, a general license for the term of twenty years, to seek for gold, paying merely one eleventh to government, instead of a third as heretofore. At the same time, he spoke in the most disrespectful and unqualified terms of Columbus, saying that he was empowered to send him home in chains, and that neither he nor any of his lineage would ever again be permitted to govern in the island.⁷⁵

⁷³ Las Casas, ubi sup. Herrera, ubi sup.

⁷⁴ Hist. del Almirante, cap. 85. Las Casas. Herrera, ubi sup.

⁷⁵ Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan.

Chapter III

Columbus Summoned to Appear before Bobadilla

[1500.]

When the tidings reached Columbus at Fort Conception of the high-handed proceedings of Bobadilla, he considered them the unauthorized acts of some rash adventurer like Ojeda. Since government had apparently thrown open the door to private enterprise, he might expect to have his path continually crossed, and his jurisdiction infringed by bold intermeddlers, feigning or fancying themselves authorized to interfere in the affairs of the colony. Since the departure of Ojeda another squadron had touched upon the coast, and produced a transient alarm, being an expedition under one of the Pinzons, licensed by the sovereigns to make discoveries. There had also been a rumor of another squadron hovering about the island, which proved, however, to be unfounded.⁷⁶

The conduct of Bobadilla bore all the appearance of a lawless usurpation of some intruder of the kind. He had possessed himself forcibly of the fortress, and consequently of the town. He had issued extravagant licenses injurious to the government, and apparently intended only to make partisans among the people; and had threatened to throw Columbus himself in irons. That this man could really be sanctioned by government, in such intemperate measures, was repugnant to belief. The admiral's consciousness of his own services, the repeated assurances he had received of high consideration on the part of the sovereigns, and the perpetual prerogatives granted to him under their hand and seal, with all the solemnity that a compact could possess, all forbade him to consider the transactions at San Domingo otherwise than as outrages on his authority by some daring or misguided individual.

To be nearer to San Domingo, and obtain more correct information, he proceeded to Bonao, which was now beginning to assume the appearance of a settlement, several Spaniards having erected houses there, and cultivated the adjacent country. He had scarcely reached the place, when an alcalde, bearing a staff of office, arrived there from San Domingo, proclaiming the appointment of Bobadilla to the government, and bearing copies of his letters patent. There was no especial letter or message sent to the admiral, nor were any of the common forms of courtesy and ceremony observed in superseding him in the command; all the proceedings of Bobadilla towards him were abrupt and insulting.

Columbus was exceedingly embarrassed how to act. It was evident that Bobadilla was intrusted with extensive powers by the sovereigns, but that they could have exercised such a sudden, unmerited, and apparently capricious act of severity, as that of divesting him of all his commands, he could not believe. He endeavored to persuade himself that Bobadilla was some person sent out to exercise the functions of chief judge, according to the request he had written home to the sovereigns, and that they had intrusted him likewise with provisional powers to make an inquest into the late troubles of the island. All beyond these powers he tried to believe were mere assumptions and exaggerations of authority, as in the case of Aguado. At all events, he was determined to act upon such presumption, and to endeavor to gain time. If the monarchs had really taken any harsh measures with respect to him, it must have been in consequence of misrepresentations. The least delay might give them an opportunity of ascertaining their error, and making the necessary amends.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

He wrote to Bobadilla, therefore, in guarded terms, welcoming him to the island; cautioning him against precipitate measures, especially in granting licenses to collect gold; informing him that he was on the point of going to Spain, and in a little time would leave him in command, with every thing fully and clearly explained. He wrote at the same time to the like purport to certain monks who had come out with Bobadilla, though he observes that these letters were only written to gain time. ⁷⁷ He received no replies: but while an insulting silence was observed towards him, Bobadilla filled up several of the blank letters, of which he had a number signed by the sovereigns, and sent them to Roldan, and other of the admiral's enemies, the very men whom he had been sent out to judge. These letters were full of civilities and promises of favor. ⁷⁸

To prevent any mischief which might arise from the licenses and indulgences so prodigally granted by Bobadilla, Columbus published by word and letter, that the powers assumed by him could not be valid, nor his licenses availing, as he himself held superior powers granted to him in perpetuity by the crown, which could no more be superseded in this instance, than they had been in that of Aguado.

For some time Columbus remained in this anxious and perplexed state of mind, uncertain what line of conduct to pursue in so singular and unlooked-for a conjuncture. He was soon brought to a decision. Francisco Velasquez, deputy treasurer, and Juan de Trasierra, a Franciscan friar, arrived at Bonao, and delivered to him the royal letter of credence, signed by the sovereigns on the 26th of May, 1499, commanding him to give implicit faith and obedience to Bobadilla; and they delivered, at the same time, a summons from the latter to appear immediately before him.

This laconic letter from the sovereigns struck at once at the root of all his dignity and power. He no longer made hesitation or demur, but, complying with the peremptory summons of Bobadilla, departed, almost alone and unattended, for San Domingo. ⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Letter of Columbus to the nurse of Prince Juan.

⁷⁸ Idem. Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv.

⁷⁹ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 9. Letter to the nurse of Prince Juan.

Chapter IV

Columbus and His Brothers Arrested and Sent to Spain in Chains

[1500.]

The tidings that a new governor had arrived, and that Columbus was in disgrace, and to be sent home in chains, circulated rapidly through the Vega, and the colonists hastened from all parts to San Domingo to make interest with Bobadilla. It was soon perceived that there was no surer way than that of vilifying his predecessor. Bobadilla felt that he had taken a rash step in seizing upon the government, and that his own safety required the conviction of Columbus. He listened eagerly, therefore, to all accusations, public or private; and welcome was he who could bring any charge, however extravagant, against the admiral and his brothers.

Hearing that the admiral was on his way to the city, he made a bustle of preparation, and armed the troops, affecting to believe a rumor that Columbus had called upon the caciques of the Vega to aid him with their subjects in a resistance to the commands of government. No grounds appear for this absurd report, which was probably invented to give a coloring of precaution to subsequent measures of violence and insult. The admiral's brother, Don Diego, was seized, thrown in irons, and confined on board of a caravel, without any reason being assigned for his imprisonment.

In the meantime Columbus pursued his journey to San Domingo, traveling in a lonely manner, without guards or retinue. Most of his people were with the Adelantado, and he had declined being attended by the remainder. He had heard of the rumors of the hostile intentions of Bobadilla; and although he knew that violence was threatened to his person, he came in this unpretending manner, to manifest his pacific feelings, and to remove all suspicion.⁸⁰

No sooner did Bobadilla hear of his arrival, than he gave orders to put him in irons, and confine him in the fortress. This outrage to a person of such dignified and venerable appearance, and such eminent merit, seemed, for the time, to shock even his enemies. When the irons were brought, every one present shrank from the task of putting them on him, either from a sentiment of compassion at so great a reverse of fortune, or out of habitual reverence for his person. To fill the measure of ingratitude meted out to him, it was one of his own domestics, "a graceless and shameless cook," says Las Casas, "who, with unwashed front, riveted the fetters with as much readiness and alacrity, as though he were serving him with choice and savory viands. I knew the fellow," adds the venerable historian, "and I think his name was Espinosa."⁸¹

Columbus conducted himself with characteristic magnanimity under the injuries heaped upon him. There is a noble scorn which swells and supports the heart, and silences the tongue of the truly great, when enduring the insults of the unworthy. Columbus could not stoop to deprecate the arrogance of a weak and violent man like Bobadilla. He looked beyond this shallow agent, and all his petty tyranny, to the sovereigns who had employed him. Their injustice or ingratitude alone could wound his spirit; and he felt assured that when the truth came to be known, they would blush to find how greatly they had wronged him. With this proud assurance, he bore all present indignities in silence.

⁸⁰ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 180.

⁸¹ Idem, lib. i. cap. 180.

Bobadilla, although he had the admiral and Don Diego in his power, and had secured the venal populace, felt anxious and ill at ease. The Adelantado, with an armed force under his command, was still in the distant province of Xaragua, in pursuit of the rebels. Knowing his soldier-like and determined spirit, he feared he might take some violent measure when he should hear of the ignominious treatment and imprisonment of his brothers. He doubted whether any order from himself would have any effect, except to exasperate the stern Don Bartholomew. He sent a demand, therefore, to Columbus, to write to his brother, requesting him to repair peaceably to San Domingo, and forbidding him to execute the persons he held in confinement: Columbus readily complied. He exhorted his brother to submit quietly to the authority of his sovereigns, and to endure all present wrongs and indignities, under the confidence that when they arrived at Castile, every thing would be explained and redressed.⁸²

On receiving this letter, Don Bartholomew immediately complied. Relinquishing his command, he hastened peacefully to San Domingo, and on arriving experienced the same treatment with his brothers, being put in irons and confined on board of a caravel. They were kept separate from each other, and no communication permitted between them. Bobadilla did not see them himself, nor did he allow others to visit them; but kept them in ignorance of the cause of their imprisonment, the crimes with which they were charged, and the process that was going on against them.⁸³

It has been questioned whether Bobadilla really had authority for the arrest and imprisonment of the admiral and his brothers;⁸⁴ and whether such violence and indignity was in any case contemplated by the sovereigns. He may have fancied himself empowered by the clause in the letter of instructions, dated March 21st, 1499, in which, speaking of the rebellion of Roldan, "he is authorized to *seize the persons and sequester the property* of those who appeared to be culpable, and then to proceed against them and against the absent, with the highest civil and criminal penalties." This evidently had reference to the persons of Roldan and his followers, who were then in arms, and against whom Columbus had sent home complaints; and this, by a violent construction, Bobadilla seems to have wrested into an authority for seizing the person of the admiral himself. In fact, in the whole course of his proceedings, he reversed and confounded the order of his instructions. His first step should have been to proceed against the rebels; this he made the last. His last step should have been, in case of ample evidence against the admiral, to have superseded him in office; and this he made the first, without waiting for evidence. Having predetermined, from the very outset, that Columbus was in the wrong, by the same rule he had to presume that all the opposite parties were in the right. It became indispensable to his own justification to inculcate the admiral and his brothers; and the rebels he had been sent to judge became, by this, singular perversion of rule, necessary and cherished evidences, to criminate those against whom they had rebelled.

The intentions of the crown, however, are not to be vindicated at the expense of its miserable agent. If proper respect had been felt for the rights and dignities of Columbus, Bobadilla would never

⁸² Peter Martyr mentions a vulgar rumor of the day, that the admiral, not knowing what might happen, wrote a letter in cipher to the Adelantado, urging him to come with arms in his hands to prevent any violence that might be contrived against him; that the Adelantado advanced, in effect, with his armed force, but having the imprudence to proceed some distance ahead of it, was surprised by the governor, before his men could come to his succor, and that the letter in cipher had been sent to Spain. This must have been one of the groundless rumors of the day, circulated to prejudice the public mind. Nothing of the kind appears among the charges in the inquest made by Bobadilla, and which was seen, and extracts made from it, by Las Casas, for his history. It is, in fact, in total contradiction to the statements of Las Casas, Herrera, and Fernando Columbus.

⁸³ Charlevoix, in his *History of San Domingo* (lib. iii. p. 199), states that the suit against Columbus was conducted in writing; that written charges were sent to him, to which he replied in the same way. This is contrary to the statements of Las Casas, Herrera, and Fernando Columbus. The admiral himself, in his letter to the nurse of Prince Juan, after relating the manner in which he and his brothers had been thrown into irons, and confined separately, without being visited by Bobadilla, or permitted to see any other persons, expressly adds, "I make oath that I do not know for what I am imprisoned." Again, in a letter written some time afterwards from Jamaica, he says, "I was taken and thrown with two of my brothers in a ship, loaded with irons, with little clothing and much ill-treatment, without being summoned or convicted by justice."

⁸⁴ Herrera, *decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 10. Oviedo, Cronica. lib. iii. cap. 6.*

have been intrusted with powers so extensive, undefined, and discretionary; nor would he have dared to proceed to such lengths, with such rudeness and precipitation, had he not felt assured that it would not be displeasing to the jealous-minded Ferdinand.

The old scenes of the time of Aguado were now renewed with tenfold virulence, and the old charges revived, with others still more extravagant. From the early and never-to-be-forgotten outrage upon Castilian pride, of compelling hidalgos, in time of emergency, to labor in the construction of works necessary to the public safety, down to the recent charge of levying war against the government, there was not a hardship, abuse, nor sedition in the island, that was not imputed to the misdeeds of Columbus and his brothers. Besides the usual accusations of inflicting oppressive labor, unnecessary tasks, painful restrictions, short allowances of food, and cruel punishments upon the Spaniards, and waging unjust wars against the natives, they were now charged with preventing the conversion of the latter, that they might send them slaves to Spain, and profit by their sale. This last charge, so contrary to the pious feelings of the admiral, was founded on his having objected to the baptism of certain Indians of mature age, until they could be instructed in the doctrines of Christianity; justly considering it an abuse of that holy sacrament to administer it thus blindly.⁸⁵

Columbus was charged, also, with having secreted pearls, and other precious articles, collected in his voyage along the coast of Paria, and with keeping the sovereigns in ignorance of the nature of his discoveries there, in order to exact new privileges from them; yet it was notorious that he had sent home specimens of the pearls, and journals and charts of his voyage, by which others had been enabled to pursue his track.

Even the late tumults, now that the rebels were admitted as evidence, were all turned into matters of accusation. They were represented as spirited and loyal resistances to tyranny exercised upon the colonists and the natives. The well-merited punishments inflicted upon certain of the ring-leaders were cited as proofs of a cruel and revengeful disposition, and a secret hatred of Spaniards. Bobadilla believed, or affected to believe, all these charges. He had, in a manner, made the rebels his confederates in the ruin of Columbus. It was become a common cause with them. He could no longer, therefore, conduct himself towards them as a judge. Guevara, Riquelme, and their fellow-convicts, were discharged almost without the form of a trial, and it is even said were received into favor and countenance. Roldan, from the very first, had been treated with confidence by Bobadilla, and honored with his correspondence. All the others, whose conduct had rendered them liable to justice, received either a special acquittal or a general pardon. It was enough to have been opposed in any way to Columbus, to obtain full justification in the eyes of Bobadilla.

The latter had now collected a weight of testimony, and produced a crowd of witnesses, sufficient, as he conceived, to insure the condemnation of the prisoners, and his own continuance in command. He determined, therefore, to send the admiral and his brothers home in chains, in the vessels ready for sea, transmitting at the same time the inquest taken in their case, and writing private letters, enforcing the charges made against them, and advising that Columbus should on no account be restored to the command, which he had so shamefully abused.

San Domingo now swarmed with miscreants just delivered from the dungeon and the gibbet. It was a perfect jubilee of triumphant villany and dastard malice. Every base spirit, which had been awed into obsequiousness by Columbus and his brothers when in power, now started up to revenge itself upon them when in chains. The most injurious slanders were loudly proclaimed in the streets; insulting pasquinades and inflammatory libels were posted up at every corner; and horns were blown in the neighborhood of their prisons, to taunt them with the exultings of the rabble.⁸⁶ When these rejoicings of his enemies reached him in his dungeon, and Columbus reflected on the inconsiderate

⁸⁵ Muñoz, *Hist. N. Mundo*, part unpublished.

⁸⁶ *Hist. del Almirante*, cap. 86.

violence already exhibited by Bobadilla, he knew not how far his rashness and confidence might carry him, and began to entertain apprehensions for his life.

The vessels being ready to make sail, Alonzo de Villejo was appointed to take charge of the prisoners, and carry them to Spain. This officer had been brought up by an uncle of Fonseca, was in the employ of that bishop, and had come out with Bobadilla. The latter instructed him, on arriving at Cadiz, to deliver his prisoners into the hands of Fonseca, or of his uncle, thinking thereby to give the malignant prelate a triumphant gratification. This circumstance gave weight with many to a report that Bobadilla was secretly instigated and encouraged in his violent measures by Fonseca, and was promised his protection and influence at court, in case of any complaints of his conduct.⁸⁷

Villejo undertook the office assigned him, but he discharged it in a more generous manner than was intended. "This Alonzo de Villejo," says the worthy Las Casas, "was a hidalgo of honorable character, and my particular friend." He certainly showed himself superior to the low malignity of his patrons. When he arrived with a guard to conduct the admiral from the prison to the ship, he found him in chains in a state of silent despondency. So violently had he been treated, and so savage were the passions let loose against him, that he feared he should be sacrificed without an opportunity of being heard, and his name go down sullied and dishonored to posterity. When he beheld the officer enter with the guard, he thought it was to conduct him to the scaffold. "Villejo," said he, mournfully, "whither are you taking me?" "To the ship, your Excellency, to embark," replied the other. "To embark!" repeated the admiral, earnestly; "Villejo! do you speak the truth?" "By the life of your Excellency," replied the honest officer, "it is true!" With these words the admiral was comforted, and felt as one restored from death to life. Nothing can be more touching and expressive than this little colloquy, recorded by the venerable Las Casas, who doubtless had it from the lips of his friend Villejo.

The caravels set sail early in October, bearing off Columbus shackled like the vilest of culprits, amidst the scoffs and shouts of a miscreant rabble, who took a brutal joy in heaping insults on his venerable head, and sent curses after him from the shores of the island he had so recently added to the civilized world. Fortunately the voyage was favorable, and of but moderate duration, and was rendered less disagreeable by the conduct of those to whom he was given in custody. The worthy Villejo, though in the service of Fonseca, felt deeply moved at the treatment of Columbus. The master of the caravel, Andreas Martin, was equally grieved: they both treated the admiral with profound respect and assiduous attention. They would have taken off his irons, but to this he would not consent. "No," said he proudly, "their majesties commanded me by letter to submit to whatever Bobadilla should order in their name; by their authority he has put upon me these chains; I will wear them until they shall order them to be taken off, and I will preserve them afterwards as relics and memorials of the reward of my services."⁸⁸

"He did so," adds his son Fernando; "I saw them always hanging in his cabinet, and he requested that when he died they might be buried with him."⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 180, MS.

⁸⁸ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 180, MS.

⁸⁹ Hist. del Almirante, cap. 86.

Book XIV

Chapter I

Sensation in Spain on the Arrival of Columbus in Irons. – His Appearance at Court

[1500.]

The arrival of Columbus at Cadiz, a prisoner and in chains, produced almost as great a sensation as his triumphant return from his first voyage. It was one of those striking and obvious facts, which speak to the feelings of the multitude, and preclude the necessity of reflection. No one stopped to inquire into the case. It was sufficient to be told that Columbus was brought home in irons from the world he had discovered. There was a general burst of indignation in Cadiz, and in the powerful and opulent Seville, which was echoed throughout all Spain. If the ruin of Columbus had been the intention of his enemies, they had defeated their object by their own violence. One of those reactions took place, so frequent in the public mind, when persecution is pushed to an unguarded length. Those of the populace who had recently been loud in their clamor against Columbus, were now as loud in their reprobation of his treatment, and a strong sympathy was expressed, against which it would have been odious for the government to contend.

The tidings of his arrival, and of the ignominious manner in which he had been brought, reached the court at Granada, and filled the halls of the Alhambra with murmurs of astonishment. Columbus, full of his wrongs, but ignorant how far they had been authorized by the sovereigns, had forbore to write to them. In the course of his voyage, however, he had penned a long letter to Doña Juana de la Torre, the aya of Prince Juan, a lady high in favor with Queen Isabella. This letter, on his arrival at Cadiz, Andreas Martin, the captain of the caravel, permitted him to send off privately by express. It arrived, therefore, before the protocol of the proceedings instituted by Bobadilla, and from this document the sovereigns derived their first intimation of his treatment.⁹⁰ It contained a statement of the late transactions of the island, and of the wrongs he had suffered, written with his usual artlessness and energy. To specify the contents would be but to recapitulate circumstances already recorded. Some expressions, however, which burst from him in the warmth of his feelings, are worthy of being noted. "The slanders of worthless men," says he, "have done me more injury than all my services have profited me." Speaking of the misrepresentations to which he was subjected, he observes: "Such is the evil name which I have acquired, that if I were to build hospitals and churches, they would be called dens of robbers." After relating in indignant terms the conduct of Bobadilla, in seeking testimony respecting his administration from the very men who had rebelled against him, and throwing himself and his brothers in irons, without letting them know the offences with which they were charged, "I have been much aggrieved," he adds, "in that a person should be sent out to investigate my conduct, who knew that if the evidence which he could send home should appear to be of a serious nature, he would remain in the government." He complains that, in forming an opinion of his administration, allowances had not been made for the extraordinary difficulties with which he had to contend, and the wild state of the country over which he had to rule. "I was judged," he observes, "as a governor who had been sent to take charge of a well-regulated city, under the dominion of well-established

⁹⁰ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i. cap. 182.

laws, where there was no danger of every thing running to disorder and ruin; but I ought to be judged as a captain, sent to subdue a numerous and hostile people, of manners and religion opposite to ours, living not in regular towns, but in forests and mountains. It ought to be considered that I have brought all these under subjection to their majesties, giving them dominion over another world, by which Spain, heretofore poor, has suddenly become rich. Whatever errors I may have fallen into, they were not with an evil intention; and I believe their majesties will credit what I say. I have known them to be merciful to those who have willfully done them disservice; I am convinced that they will have still more indulgence for me, who have erred innocently, or by compulsion, as they will hereafter be more fully informed; and I trust they will consider my great services, the advantages of which are every day more and more apparent."

When this letter was read to the noble-minded Isabella, and she found how grossly Columbus had been wronged and the royal authority abused, her heart was filled with mingled sympathy and indignation. The tidings were confirmed by a letter from the alcalde or corregidor of Cadiz, into whose hands Columbus and his brothers had been delivered, until the pleasure of the sovereigns should be known;⁹¹ and by another letter from Alonzo de Villejo, expressed in terms accordant with his humane and honorable conduct towards his illustrious prisoner.

However Ferdinand might have secretly felt disposed against Columbus, the momentary tide of public feeling was not to be resisted. He joined with his generous queen in her reprobation of the treatment of the admiral, and both sovereigns hastened to give evidence to the world, that his imprisonment had been without their authority, and contrary to their wishes. Without waiting to receive any documents that might arrive from Bobadilla, they sent orders to Cadiz that the prisoners should be instantly set at liberty, and treated with all distinction. They wrote a letter to Columbus, couched in terms of gratitude and affection, expressing their grief at all that he had suffered, and inviting him to court. They ordered, at the same time, that two thousand ducats should be advanced to defray his expenses.⁹²

The loyal heart of Columbus was again cheered by this declaration of his sovereigns. He felt conscious of his integrity, and anticipated an immediate restitution of all his rights and dignities. He appeared at court in Granada on the 17th of December, not as a man ruined and disgraced, but richly dressed, and attended by an honorable retinue. He was received by the sovereigns with unqualified favor and distinction. When the queen beheld this venerable man approach, and thought on all he had deserved and all he had suffered, she was moved to tears. Columbus had borne up firmly against the rude conflicts of the world, – he had endured with lofty scorn the injuries and insults of ignoble men; but he possessed strong and quick sensibility. When he found himself thus kindly received by his sovereigns, and beheld tears in the benign eyes of Isabella, his long-suppressed feelings burst forth: he threw himself on his knees, and for some time could not utter a word for the violence of his tears and sobbings.⁹³

Ferdinand and Isabella raised him from the ground, and endeavored to encourage him by the most gracious expressions. As soon as he regained self-possession, he entered into an eloquent and high-minded vindication of his loyalty, and the zeal he had ever felt for the glory and advantage of the Spanish crown, declaring that if at any time he had erred, it had been through inexperience in government, and the extraordinary difficulties by which he had been surrounded.

There needed no vindication on his part. The intemperance of his enemies had been his best advocate. He stood in presence of his sovereigns a deeply-injured man, and it remained for them to vindicate themselves to the world from the charge of ingratitude towards their most deserving subject.

⁹¹ Oviedo, *Cronica*, lib. iii. cap. 6.

⁹² Las Casas, lib. i. cap. 182. Two thousand ducats, or two thousand eight hundred and forty-six dollars, equivalent to eight thousand five hundred and thirty-eight dollars of the present day.

⁹³ Herrera, *decad.* i. lib. iv. cap. 10.

They expressed their indignation at the proceedings of Bobadilla, which they disavowed, as contrary to their instructions, and declared that he should be immediately dismissed from his command.

In fact, no public notice was taken of the charges sent home by Bobadilla, nor of the letters written in support of them. The sovereigns took every occasion to treat Columbus with favor and distinction, assuring him that his grievances should be redressed, his property restored, and he reinstated in all his privileges and dignities.

It was on the latter point that Columbus was chiefly solicitous. Mercenary considerations had scarcely any weight in his mind. Glory had been the great object of his ambition, and he felt that, as long as he remained suspended from his employments, a tacit censure rested on his name. He expected, therefore, that the moment the sovereigns should be satisfied of the rectitude of his conduct, they would be eager to make him amends; that a restitution of his viceroyalty would immediately take place, and he should return in triumph to San Domingo. Here, however, he was doomed to experience a disappointment which threw a gloom over the remainder of his days. To account for this flagrant want of justice and gratitude in the crown, it is expedient to notice a variety of events which had materially affected the interests of Columbus in the eyes of the politic Ferdinand.

Chapter II

Contemporary Voyages of Discovery

The general license granted by the Spanish sovereigns in 1495, to undertake voyages of discovery, had given rise to various expeditions by enterprising individuals, chiefly persons who had sailed with Columbus in his first voyages. The government, unable to fit out many armaments itself, was pleased to have its territories thus extended, free of cost, and its treasury at the same time benefited by the share of the proceeds of these voyages, reserved as a kind of duty to the crown. These expeditions had chiefly taken place while Columbus was in partial disgrace with the sovereigns. His own charts and journal served as guides to the adventurers; and his magnificent accounts of Paria and the adjacent coasts had chiefly excited their cupidity.

Beside the expedition of Ojeda, already noticed, in the course of which he touched at Xaragua, one had been undertaken at the same time by Pedro Alonzo Niño, native of Moguer, an able pilot, who had been with Columbus in the voyages to Cuba and Paria. Having obtained a license, he interested a rich merchant of Seville in the undertaking, who fitted out a caravel of fifty tons burden, under condition that his brother Christoval Guevra should have the command. They sailed from the bar of Saltes, a few days after Ojeda had sailed from Cadiz, in the spring of 1499, and arriving on the coast of Terra Firma, to the south of Paria, ran along it for some distance, passed through the Gulf, and thence went one hundred and thirty leagues along the shore of the present republic of Columbia, visiting what was afterwards called the Pearl Coast. They landed in various places; disposed of their European trifles to immense profit, and returned with a large store of gold and pearls; having made, in their diminutive bark, one of the most extensive and lucrative voyages yet accomplished.

About the same time, the Pinzons, that family of bold and opulent navigators, fitted out an armament of four caravels at Palos, manned in a great measure by their own relations and friends. Several experienced pilots embarked in it who had been with Columbus to Paria, and it was commanded by Vicente Yañez Pinzon, who had been captain of a caravel in the squadron of the admiral on his first voyage.

Pinzon was a hardy and experienced seaman, and did not, like the others, follow closely in the track of Columbus. Sailing in December, 1499, he passed the Canary and Cape Verde Islands, standing southwest until he lost sight of the polar star. Here he encountered a terrible storm, and was exceedingly perplexed and confounded by the new aspect of the heavens. Nothing was yet known of the southern hemisphere, nor of the beautiful constellation of the cross, which in those regions has since supplied to mariners the place of the north star. The voyagers had expected to find at the south pole a star correspondent to that of the north. They were dismayed at beholding no guide of the kind, and thought there must be some prominent swelling of the earth, which hid the pole from their view.⁹⁴

Pinzon continued on, however, with great intrepidity. On the 26th of January, 1500, he saw, at a distance, a great headland, which he called Cape Santa Maria de la Consolacion, but which has since been named Cape St. Augustine. He landed and took possession of the country in the name of their catholic majesties; being a part of the territories since called the Brazils. Standing thence westward, he discovered the Maragnon, since called the River of the Amazons; traversed the Gulf of Paria, and continued across the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, until he found himself among the Bahamas, where he lost two of his vessels on the rocks, near the island of Jumeto. He returned to Palos in September, having added to his former glory that of being the first European who had crossed the equinoctial line in the western ocean, and of having discovered the famous kingdom of

⁹⁴ Peter Martyr, decad. i. lib. ix.

Brazil, from its commencement at the River Maragnon to its most eastern point. As a reward for his achievements, power was granted to him to colonize and govern the lands which he had discovered, and which extended southward from a little beyond the River of Maragnon to Cape St. Augustine.⁹⁵

The little port of Palos, which had been so slow in furnishing the first squadron for Columbus, was now continually agitated by the passion for discovery. Shortly after the sailing of Pinzon, another expedition was fitted out there, by Diego Lepe, a native of the place, and manned by his adventurous townsmen. He sailed in the same direction with Pinzon; but discovered more of the southern continent than any other voyager of the day, or for twelve years afterwards. He doubled Cape St. Augustine, and ascertained that the coast beyond ran to the southwest. He landed and performed the usual ceremonies of taking possession in the name of the Spanish sovereigns, and in one place carved their names on a magnificent tree, of such enormous magnitude, that seventeen men with their hands joined could not embrace the trunk. What enhanced the merit of his discoveries was, that he had never sailed with Columbus. He had with him, however, several skillful pilots, who had accompanied the admiral in his voyage.⁹⁶

Another expedition of two vessels sailed from Cadiz, in October, 1500, under the command of Rodrigo Bastides of Seville. He explored the coast of Terra Firma, passing Cape de la Vela, the western limits of the previous discoveries on the main-land, continuing on to a port since called The Retreat, where afterwards was founded the seaport of Nombre de Dios. His vessels being nearly destroyed by the teredo, or worm which abounds in those seas, he had great difficulty in reaching Xaragua in Hispaniola, where he lost his two caravels, and proceeded with his crew by land to San Domingo. Here he was seized and imprisoned by Bobadilla, under pretext that he had treated for gold with the natives of Xaragua.⁹⁷

Such was the swarm of Spanish expeditions immediately resulting from the enterprises of Columbus; but others were also undertaken by foreign nations. In the year 1497, Sebastian Cabot, son of a Venetian merchant resident in Bristol, sailing in the service of Henry VII of England, navigated to the northern seas of the New World. Adopting the idea of Columbus, he sailed in quest of the shores of Cathay, and hoped to find a northwest passage to India. In this voyage he discovered Newfoundland, coasted Labrador to the fifty-sixth degree of north latitude, and then returning, ran down southwest to the Floridas, when, his provisions beginning to fail, he returned to England.⁹⁸ But vague and scanty accounts of this voyage exist, which was important as including the first discovery of the northern continent of the New World.

The discoveries of rival nations, however, which most excited the attention and jealousy of the Spanish crown, were those of the Portuguese. Vasco de Gama, a man of rank and consummate talent and intrepidity, had, at length, accomplished the great design of the late Prince Henry of Portugal, and by doubling the Cape of Good Hope, in the year 1497, had opened the long-sought-for route to India.

Immediately after Gama's return, a fleet of thirteen sail was fitted out to visit the magnificent countries of which he brought accounts. This expedition sailed on the 9th of March, 1500, for Calicut, under the command of Pedro Alvarez de Cabral. Having passed the Cape de Verde Islands, he sought to avoid the calms prevalent on the coast of Guinea, by stretching far to the west. Suddenly, on the 25th of April, he came in sight of land unknown to any one in his squadron; for, as yet, they had not heard of the discoveries of Pinzon and Lepe. He at first supposed it to be some great island; but after coasting it for some time, he became persuaded that it must be part of a continent. Having ranged along it somewhat beyond the fifteenth degree of southern latitude, he landed at a harbor which he called Porto Securo, and taking possession of the country for the crown of Portugal, dispatched a

⁹⁵ Herrera, decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 12. Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, part unpublished.

⁹⁶ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 2. Muñoz, part unpublished.

⁹⁷ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 2. Muñoz, part unpublished.

⁹⁸ Hakluyt's Collection of Voyages, vol. iii. p. 7. Vol. II. -9

ship to Lisbon with the important tidings.⁹⁹ In this way did the Brazils come into the possession of Portugal, being to the eastward of the conventional line settled with Spain as the boundaries of their respective territories. Dr. Robertson, in recording this voyage of Cabral, concludes with one of his just and elegant remarks.

"Columbus's discovery of the New World was," he observes, "the effort of an active genius, guided by experience, and acting upon a regular plan, executed with no less courage than perseverance. But from this adventure of the Portuguese, it appears that chance might have accomplished that great design, which it is now the pride of human reason to have formed and perfected. If the sagacity of Columbus had not conducted mankind to America, Cabral, by a fortunate accident, might have led them, a few years later, to the knowledge of that extensive continent."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Lafiteau, *Conquetes des Portugais*, lib. ii.

¹⁰⁰ Robertson, *Hist. America*, book ii.

Chapter III

Nicholas de Ovando Appointed to Supersede Bobadilla

[1501.]

The numerous discoveries briefly noticed in the preceding chapter had produced a powerful effect upon the mind of Ferdinand. His ambition, his avarice, and his jealousy were equally inflamed. He beheld boundless regions, teeming with all kinds of riches, daily opening before the enterprises of his subjects; but he beheld at the same time other nations launching forth into competition, emulous for a share of the golden world which he was eager to monopolize. The expeditions of the English, and the accidental discovery of the Brazils by the Portuguese, caused him much uneasiness. To secure his possession of the continent, he determined to establish local governments or commands, in the most important places, all to be subject to a general government, established at San Domingo, which was to be the metropolis.

With these considerations, the government, heretofore granted to Columbus, had risen vastly in importance; and while the restitution of it was the more desirable in his eyes, it became more and more a matter of repugnance to the selfish and jealous monarch. He had long repented having vested such great powers and prerogatives in any subject, particularly in a foreigner. At the time of granting them, he had no anticipation of such boundless countries to be placed under his command. He appeared almost to consider himself outwitted by Columbus in the arrangement; and every succeeding discovery, instead of increasing his grateful sense of the obligation, only made him repine the more at the growing magnitude of the reward. At length, however, the affair of Bobadilla had effected a temporary exclusion of Columbus from his – high office, and that without any odium to the crown, and the wary monarch, secretly determined that the door thus closed between him and his dignities should never again be opened.

Perhaps Ferdinand may really have entertained doubts as to the innocence of Columbus, with respect to the various charges made against him. He may have doubted also the sincerity of his loyalty, being a stranger, when he should find himself strong in his command, at a great distance from the parent country, with immense and opulent regions under his control. Columbus, himself, in his letters, alludes to reports circulated by his enemies, that he intended either to set up an independent sovereignty, or to deliver his discoveries into the hands of other potentates; and he appears to fear that these slanders might have made some impression on the mind of Ferdinand. But there was one other consideration which had no less force with the monarch in withholding this great act of justice – Columbus was no longer indispensable to him. He had made his great discovery; he had struck out the route to the New World, and now any one could follow it. A number of able navigators had sprung up under his auspices, and acquired experience in his voyages. They were daily besieging the throne with offers to fit out expeditions at their own cost, and to yield a share of the profits to the crown. Why should he, therefore, confer princely dignities and prerogatives for that which men were daily offering to perform gratuitously?

Such, from his after conduct, appears to have been the jealous and selfish policy which actuated Ferdinand in forbearing to reinstate Columbus in those dignities and privileges so solemnly granted to him by treaty, and which it was acknowledged he had never forfeited by misconduct.

This deprivation, however, was declared to be but temporary; and plausible reasons were given for the delay in his reappointment. It was observed that the elements of those violent factions, recently

in arms against him, yet existed in the island; his immediate return might produce fresh exasperation; his personal safety might be endangered, and the island again thrown into confusion. Though Bobadilla, therefore, was to be immediately dismissed from command, it was deemed advisable to send out some officer of talent and discretion to supersede him, who might dispassionately investigate the recent disorders, remedy the abuses which had arisen, and expel all dissolute and factious persons from the colony. He should hold the government for two years, by which time it was trusted that all angry passions would be allayed, and turbulent individuals removed: Columbus might then resume the command with comfort to himself and advantage to the crown. With these reasons, and the promise which accompanied them, Columbus was obliged to content himself. There can be no doubt that they were sincere on the part of Isabella, and that it was her intention to reinstate him in the full enjoyment of his rights and dignities, after his apparently necessary suspension. Ferdinand, however, by his subsequent conduct, has forfeited all claim to any favorable opinion of the kind.

The person chosen to supersede Bobadilla was Don Nicholas de Ovando, commander of Lares, of the order of Alcantara. He is described as of the middle size, fair complexioned, with a red beard, and a modest look, yet a tone of authority. He was fluent in speech, and gracious and courteous in his manners. A man of great prudence, says Las Casas, and capable of governing many people, but not of governing the Indians, on whom he inflicted incalculable injuries. He possessed great veneration for justice, was an enemy to avarice, sober in his mode of living, and of such humility, that when he rose afterwards to be grand commander of the order of Alcantara, he would never allow himself to be addressed by the title of respect attached to it.¹⁰¹ Such is the picture drawn of him by historians; but his conduct in several important instances is in direct contradiction to it. He appears to have been plausible and subtle, as well as fluent and courteous; his humility concealed a great love of command, and in his transactions with Columbus he was certainly both ungenerous and unjust.

The various arrangements to be made, according to the new plan of colonial government, delayed for some time the departure of Ovando. In the meantime, every arrival brought intelligence of the disastrous state of the island, under the mal-administration of Bobadilla. He had commenced his career by an opposite policy to that of Columbus. Imagining that rigorous rule had been the rock on which his predecessors had split, he sought to conciliate the public by all kinds of indulgence. Having at the very outset relaxed the reins of justice and morality, he lost all command over the community; and such disorder and licentiousness ensued, that many, even of the opponents of Columbus, looked back with regret upon the strict but wholesome rule of himself and the Adelantado.

Bobadilla was not so much a bad as an imprudent and a weak man. He had not considered the dangerous excesses to which his policy would lead. Rash in grasping authority, he was feeble and temporizing in the exercise of it: he could not look beyond the present exigency. One dangerous indulgence granted to the colonists called for another; each was ceded in its turn, and thus he went on from error to error, – showing that in government there is as much danger to be apprehended from a weak as from a bad man.

He had sold the farms and estates of the crown at low prices, observing that it was not the wish of the monarchs to enrich themselves by them, but that they should redound to the profit of their subjects. He granted universal permission to work the mines, exacting only an eleventh of the produce for the crown. To prevent any diminution in the revenue, it became necessary, of course, to increase the quantity of gold collected. He obliged the caciques, therefore, to furnish each Spaniard with Indians, to assist him both in the labors of the field and of the mine. To carry this into more complete effect, he made an enumeration of the natives of the island, reduced them into classes, and distributed them, according to his favor or caprice, among the colonists. The latter, at his suggestion, associated themselves in partnerships of two persons each, who were to assist one another with their respective capitals and Indians, one superintending the labors of the field, and the other the search

¹⁰¹ Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. ii. cap. 3.

for gold. The only injunction of Bobadilla was, to produce large quantities of ore. He had one saying continually in his mouth, which shows the pernicious and temporizing principle upon which he acted: "Make the most of your time," he would say, "there is no knowing how long it will last," alluding to the possibility of his being speedily recalled. The colonists acted up to his advice, and so hard did they drive the poor natives, that the eleventh yielded more revenue to the crown than had ever been produced by the third under the government of Columbus. In the meantime, the unhappy natives suffered under all kinds of cruelties from their inhuman taskmasters. Little used to labor, feeble of constitution, and accustomed in their beautiful and luxuriant island to a life of ease and freedom, they sank under the toils imposed upon them, and the severities by which they were enforced. Las Casas gives an indignant picture of the capricious tyranny exercised over the Indians by worthless Spaniards, many of whom had been transported convicts from the dungeons of Castile. These wretches, who in their own countries had been the vilest among the vile, here assumed the tone of grand cavaliers. They insisted upon being attended by trains of servants. They took the daughters and female relations of caciques for their domestics, or rather for their concubines, nor did they limit themselves in number. When they traveled, instead of using the horses and mules with which they were provided, they obliged the natives to transport them upon their shoulders in litters, or hammocks, with others attending to hold umbrellas of palm-leaves over their heads to keep off the sun, and fans of feathers to cool them; and Las Casas affirms that he has seen the backs and shoulders of the unfortunate Indians who bore these litters raw and bleeding from the task. When these arrogant upstarts arrived at an Indian village, they consumed and lavished away the provisions of the inhabitants, seizing upon whatever pleased their caprice, and obliging the cacique and his subjects to dance before them for their amusement. Their very pleasures were attended with cruelty. They never addressed the natives but in the most degrading terms, and on the least offence, or the least freak of ill-humor, inflicted blows and lashes, and even death itself.¹⁰²

Such is but a faint picture of the evils which sprang up under the feeble rule of Bobadilla; and are sorrowfully described by Las Casas, from actual observation, as he visited the island just at the close of his administration. Bobadilla had trusted to the immense amount of gold, wrung from the miseries of the natives, to atone for all errors, and secure favor with the sovereigns; but he had totally mistaken his course. The abuses of his government soon reached the royal ear, and above all, the wrongs of the natives reached the benevolent heart of Isabella. Nothing was more calculated to arouse her indignation, and she urged the speedy departure of Ovando, to put a stop to these enormities.

In conformity to the plan already mentioned, the government of Ovando extended over the islands and Terra Firma, of which Hispaniola was to be the metropolis. He was to enter upon the exercise of his powers immediately upon his arrival, by procuration, sending home Bobadilla by the return of the fleet. He was instructed to inquire diligently into the late abuses, punishing the delinquents without favor or partiality, and removing all worthless persons from the island. He was to revoke immediately the license granted by Bobadilla for the general search after gold, it having been given without royal authority. He was to require, for the crown, a third of what was already collected, and one half of all that should be collected in future. He was empowered to build towns, granting them the privileges enjoyed by municipal corporations of Spain, and obliging the Spaniards, and particularly the soldiers, to reside in them, instead of scattering themselves over the island. Among many sage provisions, there were others injurious and illiberal, characteristic of an age when the principles of commerce were but little understood; but which were continued by Spain long after the rest of the world had discarded them as the errors of dark and unenlightened times. The crown monopolized the trade of the colonies. No one could carry merchandises there on his own account. A royal factor was appointed, through whom alone were to be obtained supplies of European articles. The crown reserved to itself not only exclusive property in the mines, but in precious stones, and

¹⁰² Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 1, MS.

like objects of extraordinary value, and also in dyewoods. No strangers, and above all, no Moors nor Jews, were permitted to establish themselves in the island, nor to go upon voyages of discovery. Such were some of the restrictions upon trade which Spain imposed upon her colonies, and which were followed up by others equally illiberal. Her commercial policy has been the scoff of modern times; but may not the present restrictions on trade, imposed by the most intelligent nations, be equally the wonder and the jest of future ages?

Isabella was particularly careful in providing for the kind treatment of the Indians. Ovando was ordered to assemble the caciques, and declare to them, that the sovereigns took them and their people under their especial protection. They were merely to pay tribute like other subjects of the crown, and it was to be collected with the utmost mildness and gentleness. Great pains were to be taken in their religious instruction; for which purpose twelve Franciscan friars were sent out, with a prelate named Antonio de Espinal, a venerable and pious man. This was the first formal introduction of the Franciscan order into the New World.¹⁰³

All these precautions with respect to the natives were defeated by one unwary provision. It was permitted that the Indians might be compelled to work in the mines, and in other employments; but this was limited to the royal service. They were to be engaged as hired laborers, and punctually paid. This provision led to great abuses and oppressions, and was ultimately as fatal to the natives as could have been the most absolute slavery.

But, with that inconsistency frequent in human conduct, while the sovereigns were making regulations for the relief of the Indians, they encouraged a gross invasion of the rights and welfare of another race of human beings. Among their various decrees on this occasion, we find the first trace of negro slavery in the New World. It was permitted to carry to the colony negro slaves born among Christians;¹⁰⁴ that is to say, slaves born in Seville and other parts of Spain, the children and descendants of natives brought from the Atlantic coast of Africa, where such traffic had for some time been carried on by the Spaniards and Portuguese. There are signal events in the course of history, which sometimes bear the appearance of temporal judgments. It is a fact worthy of observation, that Hispaniola, the place where this flagrant sin against nature and humanity was first introduced into the New World, has been the first to exhibit an awful retribution.

Amidst the various concerns which claimed the attention of the sovereigns, the interests of Columbus were not forgotten. Ovando was ordered to examine into all his accounts, without undertaking to pay them off. He was to ascertain the damages he had sustained by his imprisonment, the interruption of his privileges, and the confiscation of his effects. All the property confiscated by Bobadilla was to be restored; or if it had been sold, to be made good. If it had been employed in the royal service, Columbus was to be indemnified out of the treasury; if Bobadilla had appropriated it to his own use, he was to account for it out of his private purse. Equal care was to be taken to indemnify the brothers of the admiral for the losses they had wrongfully suffered by their arrest.

Columbus was likewise to receive the arrears of his revenues; and the same were to be punctually paid to him in future. He was permitted to have a factor resident in the island, to be present at the melting and marking of the gold, to collect his dues, and in short to attend to all his affairs. To this office he appointed Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal; and the sovereigns commanded that his agent should be treated with great respect.

The fleet appointed to convey Ovando to his government was the largest that had yet sailed to the New World. It consisted of thirty sail, five of them from ninety to one hundred and fifty tons burden, twenty-four caravels from thirty to ninety, and one bark of twenty-five tons.¹⁰⁵ The number

¹⁰³ Las Casas, Hist. Ind. lib. ii. cap. 3, MS.

¹⁰⁴ Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. i. lib. iv. cap. 12.

¹⁰⁵ Muñoz, part inedit. Las Casas says the fleet consisted of thirty-two sail. He states from memory, however; Muñoz from documents.

of souls embarked in this fleet was about twenty-five hundred; many of them persons of rank and distinction, with their families.

That Ovando might appear with dignity in his new office, he was allowed to use silks, brocades, precious stones, and other articles of sumptuous attire, prohibited at that time in Spain, in consequence of the ruinous ostentation of the nobility. He was permitted to have seventy-two esquires, as his body-guard, ten of whom were horsemen. With this expedition sailed Don Alonzo Maldonado, appointed as alguazil mayor, or chief justice, in place of Roldan, who was to be sent to Spain. There were artisans of various kinds: to these were added a physician, surgeon, and apothecary; and seventy-three married men ¹⁰⁶ with their families, all of respectable character, destined to be distributed in four towns, and to enjoy peculiar privileges, that they might form the basis of a sound and useful population. They were to displace an equal number of the idle and dissolute who were to be sent from the island: this excellent measure had been especially urged and entreated by Columbus. There was also live-stock, artillery, arms, munitions of all kinds; every thing, in short, that was required for the supply of the island.

Such was the style in which Ovando, a favorite of Ferdinand, and a native subject of rank, was fitted out to enter upon the government withheld from Columbus. The fleet put to sea on the thirteenth of February, 1502. In the early part of the voyage it was encountered by a terrible storm; one of the ships foundered, with one hundred and twenty passengers; the others were obliged to throw overboard every thing on deck, and were completely scattered. The shores of Spain were strewn with articles from the fleet, and a rumor spread that all the ships had perished. When this reached the sovereigns, they were so overcome with grief that they shut themselves up for eight days, and admitted no one to their presence. The rumor proved to be incorrect: but one ship was lost. The others assembled again at the island of Gomera in the Canaries, and, pursuing their voyage, arrived at San Domingo on the 15th of April. ¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Muñoz, H. N. Mundo, part inedit.

¹⁰⁷ Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii. cap. 3, MS.

Chapter IV

Proposition of Columbus Relative to the Recovery of the Holy Sepulchre

[1500-1501.]

Columbus remained in the city of Granada upwards of nine months, endeavoring to extricate his affairs from the confusion into which they had been thrown by the rash conduct of Bobadilla, and soliciting the restoration of his offices and dignities. During this time he constantly experienced the smiles and attentions of the sovereigns, and promises were repeatedly made him that he should ultimately be reinstated in all his honors. He had long since, however, ascertained the great interval that may exist between promise and performance in a court. Had he been of a morbid and repining spirit, he had ample food for misanthropy. He beheld the career of glory which he had opened, thronged by favored adventurers; he witnessed preparations making to convey with unusual pomp a successor to that government from which he had been so wrongfully and rudely ejected; in the meanwhile his own career was interrupted, and as far as public employ is a gauge of royal favor, he remained apparently in disgrace.

His sanguine temperament was not long to be depressed; if checked in one direction it broke forth in another. His visionary imagination was an internal light, which, in the darkest times, repelled all outward gloom, and filled his mind with splendid images and glorious speculations. In this time of evil, his vow to furnish, within seven years from the time of his discovery, fifty thousand foot-soldiers, and five thousand horse, for the recovery of the holy sepulchre, recurred to his memory with peculiar force. The time had elapsed, but the vow remained unfulfilled, and the means to perform it had failed him. The New World, with all its treasures, had as yet produced expense instead of profit; and so far from being in a situation to set armies on foot by his own contributions, he found himself without property, without power, and without employ.

Destitute of the means of accomplishing his pious intentions, he considered it his duty to incite the sovereigns to the enterprise; and he felt emboldened to do so, from having originally proposed it as the great object to which the profits of his discoveries should be dedicated. He set to work, therefore, with his accustomed zeal, to prepare arguments for the purpose. During the intervals of business, he sought into the prophecies of the holy Scriptures, the writings of the fathers, and all kinds of sacred and speculative sources, for mystic portents and revelations which might be construed to bear upon the discovery of the New World, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the recovery of the holy sepulchre: three great events which he supposed to be predestined to succeed each other. These passages, with the assistance of a Carthusian friar, he arranged in order, illustrated by poetry, and collected into a manuscript volume, to be delivered to the sovereigns. He prepared, at the same time, a long letter, written with his usual fervor of spirit and simplicity of heart. It is one of those singular compositions which lay open the visionary part of his character, and show the mystic and speculative reading with which he was accustomed to nurture his solemn and soaring imagination.

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