

1496. of his ambition ; the discipline, maintained by his prudence, as excess of rigour ; the punishments, that he inflicted on the mutineers, as cruelty. Resolved to return to Spain, to vindicate himself from these false charges, already made against him to the Spanish court, he exerted the small remains of his authority in settling affairs for the prevention of such disorders, as had taken place during his former absence. He built forts in the principal parts of the island ; established the civil government on a better footing ; and redoubled his diligence for the discovery of mines. Having made these prudential arrangements, he set sail from Isabella, on the tenth of March,¹ with 225 Spaniards and 30 Indians ; leaving the supreme power in the government of the Province to his brother Bartholomew, with the title of Adelantado ; and the administration of justice to Francis Roldan, with the title of Alcalde.²

Columbus
sails for
Spain.

The natives of Hispaniola, by wars with the Spaniards, and a pestilential disease, occasioned by the damp places in which they concealed themselves to shun their enemy, were already essentially reduced in numbers and in strength. It is asserted by a very credible historian, that one third of these wretched inhabitants had now perished.³

Three ships having arrived in July at Isabella with provisions from Cadiz, Bartholomew Columbus, on dispatching them for their return to Spain, sent on board three hundred Indian slaves. This measure was in compliance with the royal mandate ; for their Catholic majesties, on receiving information, that some caziques had killed the Spaniards, had ordered, that, whoever should be found guilty of that crime, should be sent to Spain.⁴

¹ He visited several of the West India islands, before his departure for Spain, which was not till the 20th of April. Herrera, i. 154.

² P. Martyr, 8, 46. Herrera, i. 153.

³ Herrera, i. 147.

⁴ Ibid. i. 168.

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