

of men to engage in an enterprise which did not now appear so captivating as it did at first. To supply the voluntary recruits, a measure was adopted at the suggestion of Columbus, which shows the desperate alternative to which he was reduced by the great reaction of public sentiment. This was to commute the sentences of criminals condemned to banishment, to the galleys, or to the mines, into transportation to the new settlements, where they were to labor in the public service without pay. This pernicious measure, calculated to poison the population of an infant community at its very source, was a fruitful cause of trouble, and misery, and detriment to the colony.

On the 30th of May, 1498, Columbus set sail on his third voyage, with a squadron of six vessels. Sailing much further south in this voyage than he had done in the two former, he landed on the coast of Paria, in the South American continent. The circumstances of this third voyage, part of which lay within the tropics, and the appearance of the new coasts to which it conducted him, made a strong impression on the mind of Columbus, which had a natural bent for theorising upon every phenomenon presented to it. Among other theories which he started about this time, was one by which he attempted to explain the variation of the compass, and other extraordinary changes which occurred in passing from the old world to the new. According to this theory, he supposed that the earth, instead of being spherical, as hitherto imagined, was elongated or pear-shaped, with one end bulbous, and the other produced and tapering—a theory which, however absurd it may seem, was really a step in advance of the science of the day.

After coasting along the South American continent, acquiring information which he thought all tended to shew that he was on the track of the long-desired Indies of Marco Polo, Columbus was obliged, by the shattered condition of his ships, to make for Hispaniola. Here he found all in confusion. Roldan, whom he had appointed chief justice, had rebelled against the authority of the adelantado, and was living in another part of the island as the head of a band of insurgents. Bartholomew had governed the colony vigorously and well; but being a foreigner, and not of high birth, he was unpopular with the Spaniards. It required all Columbus' skill and command of temper to restore the semblance of order.

By a seasonable proclamation, offering free pardon to such as should merit it by returning to duty, he made impression upon some of the malcontents. By engaging to grant such as should desire it, the liberty of returning to Spain, he allured all those unfortunate adventurers who, from sickness and disappointment, were disgusted with the country. By promising to re-establish Roldan in his former office, he soothed his pride; and by complying with most of his demands in behalf of his followers, he satisfied their avarice. Thus gradually, and without bloodshed, but after many tedious negotiations, he dissolved this dangerous combination, which threatened the colony with ruin, and restored the appearance of order, regular government, and tranquility.

Meanwhile, Columbus' enemies were again undermining his popularity in Spain. The accounts which Roldan and others sent home of the arrogance of Columbus and his brothers, received more credit than the admiral's own dispatches. Owing also to the cessation of labor in the colony, Columbus was unable to send home so much wealth as the sovereigns expected. Private adventurers were likewise fitting out expeditions of discovery to the New World; and Ferdinand began to be of opinion that it would be more for the interests of the crown to deprive Columbus of his great and exclusive privileges as his viceroy in the New World, and to place the colonial government on a new footing. Isabella alone seemed to befriend the admiral. At length, however, on the arrival of some ships from Hispaniola freighted with natives, whom Columbus had been forced to permit some of the refractory colonists to take with them on their return to Spain, to be sold in the slave-market, her queenly soul, abhorring the idea of making wealth by the sale of human beings, took fire, and she indignantly exclaimed: 'What right has the admiral to give away my vassals?' She no longer opposed Ferdinand's desire to send out a person to examine into the conduct of Columbus, and, if necessary, to order him home. The person chosen as commissioner, was Don Francisco de Bovadilla, an officer of the royal household.

On arriving at Hispaniola, Bovadilla reversed the order of his written instructions: he superseded Columbus before investigating into his conduct. Entering the admiral's residence at Isabella, he seized all his furniture,