

heavy iron, sufficient in itself almost to sink him. He had not got far when he was obliged to shout for help, and the unfortunate governor was brought back half drowned to his unrelenting partners. They delivered him a prisoner into the hands of the authorities, but held fast to the strong box, taking from it, Ojeda afterwards stated, whatever they thought proper, without regard to the royal supervisor or the royal rights. Ojeda was tried in the city of San Domingo, where the chief judge gave a verdict against him, depriving him of all his effects, and brought him in debt to the crown. He afterwards appealed to the crown, and after some time was honourably acquitted by the Royal Council, and his property ordered to be restored. "Like too many other litigants," says Irving, "he finally emerged from the labyrinth of the law a triumphant client, but a ruined man." Costs had swallowed his all, and for years we know little of his life.

In 1508 he was in Hispaniola, "as poor in purse, though as proud in spirit, as ever." About this period there was a great excitement in Spain concerning the gold mines of Veragua, first discovered by Columbus, and described in glowing terms by subsequent voyagers. King Ferdinand should in honour have given Bartholomew, the brother of Christopher Columbus, the command of any expedition sent out to that country, but he appears to have thought that the family had received reward enough, and more than enough, already, so the claims of Ojeda were advanced by his friend the Bishop Fonseca, and the king lent a favouring ear. There was, however, a rival candidate in the field, one Diego de Nicuesa, an accomplished courtier of noble birth and considerable means, and the king compromised matters by granting both equal "patents and dignities which cost nothing, and might bring rich returns." He divided the territory they were to explore equally; and this is all, for they were to furnish their own ships and supplies. Poor Ojeda had no means whatever, but at this juncture he fortunately met the veteran Juan de la Cosa in Hispaniola, and that hardy old navigator had managed to fill his purse in the course of his cruising. La Cosa had, as we know, sailed with Ojeda long before, and had a great admiration of his courage and talents, so in the spirit of a true sailor he now offered assistance to his old comrade, and it was arranged that he should go to Spain, and if necessary should fit out the required vessels at his own expense.

Juan de la Cosa, soon after reaching Spain, was appointed lieutenant, under Ojeda, and he thereupon freighted a ship and two brigantines, in which he embarked with about two hundred men. "It was," says Irving, "a slender armament, but the purse of the honest voyager was not very deep, and that of Ojeda was empty." Nicuesa was able to start in much more gallant style, with four large vessels and two brigantines.

The rival armaments arrived at San Domingo at about the same time, Nicuesa having done a stroke of business on the way by capturing a hundred natives from one of the Caribbean Islands. "This was deemed justifiable in those days even by the most scrupulous divines, from the belief that the Caribs were anthropophagi, or man-eaters; fortunately the opinion of mankind in this more enlightened age makes but little difference in atrocity between the cannibal and the kidnapper." It need hardly be said that Ojeda was overjoyed at the sight of his old comrade, although he was mortified to note the superiority of Nicuesa's armament to his own. He, however, looking about him for the means of increasing his strength, was so far fortunate that he succeeded in inducing a lawyer, the Bachelor Martin Fernandez de Enciso,