

ed; nor have they been able to ascertain that any other government than Spain has made claim to any part of it, from Cape Horn to the sixtieth degree of north latitude.

When this continent was first made known to Europe, by the bold and enterprising genius of Christopher Columbus, it seemed for a long time conceded that the Spanish monarchy, which alone could be prevailed upon to listen to his plans and propositions, was most entitled to the benefits resulting from the successful issue of his undertaking. Though Ferdinand and Isabella, who, at that time, filled the throne of that country, did not rest their title upon the tacit consent of other nations, or even upon their armies or fleet, which was, at that period, formidable and well provided; but, instructed by the example of the Portuguese, who had obtained a grant for all countries east of the Azores, from pole to pole, they obtained a similar grant from the Roman Pontiff, of all the territories they wished to occupy west of the same point, as the superstition of the times conferred on him a right of dominion over all the kingdoms of the earth. Thus, in virtue of his power, as the vicar and representative of Jesus Christ, did Alexander VI, in 1493, grant to the crown of Spain, in full right, all the countries inhabited by infidels, which they had or should discover.

Enormous as the power was, which the Popes then exercised, it was recognized and submitted to by the monarchs of that day, and considered as having vested in Spain a title which they deemed completely valid, and authorized her to extend her discoveries and establish her dominion over a great portion of the new world. The Spanish crown, as well as individuals, the subjects of that power, continued to fit out ships for voyages of discovery, and, in the space of a few years, had visited various parts of the coast of America, from the Gulf of Mexico to many degrees south of the equinoctial line, taking possession, according to the custom of that day, in the name of the Spanish King. Nor was their zeal for discovery confined to the Atlantic shores alone; parties, under daring and enterprising leaders, penetrated far into the interior of the continent, and even to the shores of the Pacific ocean, wresting by violence the rich empires of Peru and Mexico from the peaceful and legitimate sovereigns who reigned over them, and annexed them to the crown of Spain, by the triple title of conquest, discovery, and the grant of the Pope.

So well satisfied do the rest of Europe seem to have been of the rights of Spain, derived from such high authority, that they permitted her to progress unmolested in her career of discovery and conquest for many years, until she had acquired the undisputed possession of most of the Atlantic coast of South America, and the whole shore of the Pacific, as high as the northern extremity of California, and, as they affirmed, after they came in possession of Louisiana, to a point far to the northward of that.

Though discoveries were frequently made of countries among the most beautiful and fertile, where nature seemed to invite the industry of man to the enjoyment of luxuriant abundance, yet none seemed to