

But when Portugal was thus increasing her revenues, and exciting the jealousy of less fortunate States, all Europe was aroused by the astounding news—that a new World was discovered in the West. This event, so startling, as to absorb all else hitherto considered wonderful, quickly awoke the attention of mankind to objects of enterprise and ambition; and excited by fondness for change, and the love of gold, the restless and daring were ready to exert all their energies in this new direction. Could the veil which guards the unseen future have then been removed, what a change in the destinies of that world by Colonies from Europe, would a glance into futurity have discovered!

The Colonies of Spain, under whose patronage America was discovered, seem first to demand our attention. Extensive conquests had been made by the Spaniards, guided by individual enterprise, and many Colonies had been planted, while the Government at home was so engrossed with schemes of ambition, as to afford little attention to objects so remote. But after that “gambling spirit” which actuated the first settlers in America had in part subsided; and the Colonies, enlarged by frequent emigrations from home, began to turn their attention to those commercial and agricultural pursuits, for which their country afforded so many advantages, the home Government began to perceive the necessity of its interference both to restrain the cruel oppression of the Colonists, and to secure the mother Country all the advantages of their commerce.

The prerogatives of the Sovereigns of Spain, being at that time widely extended, and all the lands in America having been granted to them by the Pope, every thing relating either to the government or general interests of the Colonists necessarily emanated from the crown. And, if we consider the manner in which this