

several authorities, to many hundred thousands, were sacrificed by war, famine, and disease. These figures are undoubtedly exaggerations, but the number was very large. It is due to Columbus, always a just and humane man, to state that he did all in his power to prevent this sad state of affairs, and was forced by his own people to war on the Indians; and equally due to Isabella at home, to record that she was in no way a party to it, but expressed the utmost horror.* These excesses, and a total neglect of agriculture—for none would condescend to dig unless for gold—nearly brought about a famine, and Columbus had to put them on very short rations, and compel all to work, whether high or low bred. These regulations led to further mutiny and discontent.

On the return of Columbus to Spain, he brought home, as before, some gold and other samples of Nature's productions in the islands. But other voyagers returned, who loudly abused the new colony, and whose often wan and sallow features provoked the satirical remarks of the people, that they had come back with more gold in their features than in their pockets! In short, the novelty of the excitement had passed, and like many really valuable colonies of our own day which have been at first over-lauded and over-estimated, Hispaniola fell utterly in public estimation. The Spanish sovereigns, more especially Isabella, appear to have lent an unwilling ear to the accusations of mal-administration by Columbus. Meantime the treasury was drained by the expenses of an Italian war, and large expenses had been incurred for the actual maintenance of the colony. But Isabella, who really believed in Columbus, whose serious and yet enthusiastic character resembled her own, at length found some means for a new expedition, by sacrificing funds intended for another purpose. But now it was found as difficult to induce men to join the new expedition as it had been easy in the previous one. Even convicts were employed as sailors, and this proved a ruinous expedient. All being at length ready, Columbus once again embarked on May 30th, 1498, his little squadron consisting of six vessels. On this voyage he discovered Trinidad, the mouth of the Orinoco—which river he imagined to proceed from the tree of life in the midst of Paradise—and the coasts of Paria, South America. This was really, then his first visit to the *mainland* of America. On August 14th he sailed for Hispaniola once more, where he found that an insurrection had been raised against his brother, Bartolomeo, whom he had left as his deputy. At this juncture all the real interests of the colony were neglected, and even the gold-mines, which were beginning to prove remunerative, were unwrought. The convicts on the vessels helped to swell the mass of general mutiny, and it took Columbus nearly a year before it was in part quelled. Meantime discontented and worthless men kept returning to Spain, where, encouraged by idle courtiers, they worried the king daily with accounts of the unproductiveness of the colony. They even surrounded him, as he rode out on horseback, clamouring loudly for the arrears of which they said Columbus had defrauded them.

It is very difficult to exactly understand the course pursued at this juncture by the

* It must be remembered that it was the received opinion of the good Roman Catholics of the period, that heathen nations were outside the pale of spiritual and civil rights, and that their bodies were the property of their conquerors. Even Columbus recommended an exchange of native slaves for the commodities required in the colony; representing, moreover, that their conversion would be the more surely effected in slavery! *Vide* Prescott's "History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella."