

INTRODUCTION.

BY THE EDITOR.

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES OF EARLY SPANISH-AMERICAN HISTORY.

THE earliest of the historians to use, to any extent, documentary proofs, was Herrera, in his *Historia general*, first published in 1601.¹ As the official historiographer of the Indies, he had the best of opportunities for access to the great wealth of documents which the Spanish archivists had preserved; but he never distinctly quotes them, or says where they are to be found.² It is through him that we are aware of some important manuscripts not now known to exist.³

The formation of the collections at Simancas, near Valladolid, dates back to an order of Charles the Fifth, Feb. 19, 1543. New accommodations were added from time to time, as documents were removed thither from the bureaus of the Crown Secretaries, and from those of the Councils of Seville and of the Indies. It was reorganized by Philip II., in 1567, on a larger basis, as a depository for historical research, when masses of manuscripts from other parts of Spain were transported thither;⁴ but the comparatively small extent of the Simancas Collection does not indicate that the order was very extensively observed; though it must be remembered that Napoleon made havoc among these papers, and that in 1814 it was but a remnant which was rearranged.⁵

¹ See further on Herrera *passim*, p. 67.

² J. C. Brevoort, on "Spanish-American documents, printed or incited," in *Magazine of American History*, March, 1879; Prescott, *Mexico*, ii. 91.

³ "Of all the narratives and reports furnished to Herrera for his History, and of which he made such scanty and unintelligent use, very few have been preserved."—Markham, *Rites and Laws of the Incas*, p. vii.

⁴ An overcrowding of archives in the keeping of the Council of the Indies was sometimes relieved by sending part of them to Simancas. Bancroft, *Central America*, i. 281. Harris, *Christophe Colomb*, i. 33, says all, or nearly all,

the papers relating to Columbus have been removed to Seville.

⁵ Some of the documents at Simancas and in other repositories, beginning with 1485, have been edited in the Rolls Series (published for the English Government) by G. A. Bergenroth and by Gayangos (London, 1862-1879), in the *Calendar of Letters, Despatches, and State Papers relating to Negotiations between England and Spain*, contained in five volumes. Vol. i. comes through 1509; and the second paper in it is a complaint of Ferdinand and Isabella against Columbus, a French Admiral, for aiding the pirates of the French in 1485. Various documents from the archives of Simancas are given in Ala