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# De Orbe Novo

The Eight Decades of  
Peter Martyr D'Anghera

Translated from the Latin with Notes and Introduction

By

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Volume One

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To

THE MEMORY OF

MY MATERNAL GRANDFATHER

ANDREW FINLEY SCOTT

1811-1895



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# DE ORBE NOVO

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## INTRODUCTION

### I

DISTANT a few miles from the southern extremity of Lago Maggiore, the castle-crowned heights of Anghera and Arona face one another from opposite sides of the lake, separated by a narrow stretch of blue water. Though bearing the name of the former burgh, it was in Arona,<sup>1</sup> where his family also possessed a property, that Pietro Martire d'Anghera first saw the light, in the year 1457.<sup>2</sup> He was not averse to reminding his friends

<sup>1</sup> Ranke, in his *Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber*, and Rawdon Brown, in his *Calendar of State Papers relating to England, preserved in the Archives of Venice*, mention Anghera, or Anghiera, as the name is also written, as his birthplace. Earlier Italian writers such as Piccinelli (*Ateneo de' Letterati Milanesi*) and Giammatteo Toscano (*Peplus Italiæ*) are perhaps responsible for this error, which passages in the *Opus Epistolarum*, that inexplicably escaped their notice, expose. In a letter addressed to Fajardo occurs the following explicit statement: . . . *cum me utero mater gestaret sic volente patre, Aronam, ubi plæraque illis erant prædia domusque . . . ibi me mater dederat orbi.*" Letters 388, 630, and 794 contain equally positive assertions.

<sup>2</sup> Mazzuchelli (*Gli Scrittori d'Italia*, p. 773) states that Peter Martyr was born in 1455, and he has been followed by the Florentine Tiraboschi (*Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. vii.) and later historians, including even Hermann Schumacher in his masterly work, *Petrus Martyr der Geschichtsschreiber des Weltmeeres*. Nicolai Antonio (*Bibliotheca Hispana nova*, app. to vol. ii) is alone in giving the date as 1559. Ciampi, amongst modern

of the nobility of his family, whose origin he confidently traced to the Counts of Anghera, a somewhat fabulous dynasty, the glories of whose mythical domination in Northern Italy are preserved in local legends and have not remained entirely unnoticed by sober history. What name his family bore is unknown; the statement that it was a branch of the Sereni, originally made by Celso Rosini and repeated by later writers, being devoid of foundation. Ties of relationship, which seem to have united his immediate forebears with the illustrious family of Trivulzio and possibly also with that of Borromeo, furnished him with sounder justification for some pride of ancestry than did the remoter gestes of the apocryphal Counts of Anghera.<sup>1</sup>

The cult of the Dominican of Verona, murdered by the Waldensians in 1252 and later canonised under the title of St. Peter Martyr, was fervent and widespread in Lombardy in the fifteenth century. Milan possessed his bones,

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Italian authorities (*Le Fonti Storiche del Rinascimento*) and Heidenheimer (*Petrus Martyr Anglerius und sein Opus Epistolarum*) after carefully investigating the conflicting data, show from Peter Martyr's own writings that he was born on February 2, 1457. Three different passages are in agreement on this point. In Ep. 627 written in 1518 and referring to his embassy to the Sultan of Egypt upon which he set out in the autumn of 1501, occurs the following: . . . *quatuor et quadraginta tunc annos agebam, octo decem superadditi vires illas hebetarunt*. Again in Ep. 1497: *Ego extra annum ad habitis tuis litteris quadagesimum*; and finally in the dedication of the Eighth Decade to Clement VII.: *Septuagesimus quippe annus ætatis, cui nonæ quartæ Februarii anni millesimi quingentesimi vigesimi sexti proxime ruentis dabunt initium, sua mihi spongea memoriam ita confrigando delevit, ut vix e calamo sit lapsa periodus, quando quid egerimsi quis interrogaverit, nescire me profitebor*. *De Orbe Novo*, p. 567. Ed. Paris, 1587.

Despite the elucidation of this point, it is noteworthy that Prof. Paul Gaffarel both in his admirable French translation of the *Opus Epistolarum* (1897) and in his *Lettres de Pierre Martyr d'Anghiera* (1885) should still cite the chronology of Mazzuchelli and Tiraboschi.

<sup>1</sup> The Visconti, and after them the Sforza, bore the title of Conte d' Anghera, or Anghiera, as the name is also spelled. Lodovico il Moro restored to the place the rank of city, which it had lost, and of which it was again deprived when Lodovico went into captivity.



entombed in a chapel of Sant' Eustorgio decorated by Michelozzi. Under the patronage and name of Peter Martyr, the child of the Anghera was baptised and, since his family name fell into oblivion, *Martyr* has replaced it. Mention of his kinsmen is infrequent in his voluminous writings, though there is evidence that he furthered the careers of two younger brothers when the opportunity offered. For Giorgio he solicited and obtained from Lodovico Sforza, in 1487, the important post of governor of Monza. For Giambattista he procured from the Spanish sovereigns a recommendation which enabled him to enter the service of the Venetian Republic, under whose standard he campaigned with Nicola Orsini, Count of Pitigliano. Giambattista died in Brescia in 1516, leaving a wife and four daughters. A nephew, Gian Antonio, whose name occurs in several of his uncle's letters is described by the latter as *licet ex transverso natus*; he served under Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, and finally, despite his bar sinister, married a daughter of Francesco, of the illustrious Milanese family of Pepoli.<sup>1</sup>

Concerning his earlier years and his education Peter Martyr is silent, nor does he anywhere mention under whose direction he began his studies. In the education deemed necessary for young men of his quality, the exercises of chivalry and the recreations of the troubadour found equal place, and such was doubtless the training he received. He spent some years at the ducal court of Milan, but there is no indication that he frequented the schools of such famous Hellenists as Francesco Filelfo who, in 1471, was there lecturing on the Politics of Aris-

<sup>1</sup> Peter Martyr's will gave to his only surviving brother, Giorgio, his share of the family estate, but on condition that he should receive Giambattista's daughter, Laura, in his family and provide for her: *emponiendola en todas las buenas costumbres y crianza que hija de tal padre merece* (*Coll. de Documentos ineditos para la Hist. de España*, tom. xxxix., pp. 397). Another of Giambattista's daughters, Lucrezia, who was a nun, received one hundred ducats by her uncle's will.

totle, and of Constantine Lascaris whom the reigning duke, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, commissioned to compile a Greek grammar for the use of his daughter. In later years, when he found his chief delight and highest distinction in intercourse with men of letters, Peter Martyr would hardly have neglected to mention such precious early associations had they existed.

The fortunes of the family of Anghera were the reverse of opulent at that period of its history, and the sons obtained careers under the patronage of Count Giovanni Borromeo. The times were troublous in Lombardy. The assassination, in 1476, of Gian Galeazzo was followed by commotions and unrest little conducive to the cultivation of the humanities, and which provoked an exodus of humanists and their disciples. Many sought refuge from the turbulence prevailing in the north, in the more pacific atmosphere of Rome, where a numerous colony of Lombards was consequently formed. The following year Peter Martyr, being then twenty years of age, joined his compatriots in their congenial exile. His rank and personal qualities, as well as the protection accorded him by Giovanni Arcimboldo, Archbishop of Milan, and Ascanio Sforza, brother of the Duke, Lodovico il Moro, assured him a cordial welcome. For a youth devoid of pretensions to humanistic culture, he penetrated with singular ease and rapidity into the innermost academic circle, over which reigned the most amiable of modern pagans, Pomponius Lætus.

It was the age of the Academies. During the Ecumenical Council of Florence, Giovanni de' Medici, fired with enthusiasm for the study of Platonic philosophy, brilliantly expounded by the learned Greek, Gemisto, conceived the plan of promoting the revival of classical learning by the formation of an academy, in imitation of that founded by the immortal Plato. Under such lofty patronage, this genial conception, so entirely in consonance with

the intellectual tendencies of the age, attracted to its support every Florentine who aspired to a reputation for culture, at a time when culture was fashionable. The Greek Cardinal, Bessarion, whom Eugene IV. had raised to the purple at the close of the Council, carried the Medicean novelty to Rome, where he formed a notable circle, in which the flower of Hellenic and Latin culture was represented. Besides this group, characterised by a theological tincture alien to the neo-pagan spirit in flimsily disguised revolt against Christian dogma and morality, Pomponius Lætus and Platina founded the Roman Academy—an institution destined to world-wide celebrity. Pomponius Lætus, an unrecognised bastard of the noble house of Sanseverini, was professor of eloquence in Rome. Great amongst the humanists, in him the very spirit of ancient Hellas seemed revived. What to many was but the fad or fashionable craze of the hour, was to him the all-important and absorbing purpose of living. He dwelt aloof in poverty; shunning the ante-chambers and tables of the great, he and kindred souls communed with their disciples in the shades of his grove of classic laurels. He was indifferent alike to princely and to popular favour, passionately consecrating his efforts to the revival and preservation of such classics as had survived the destructive era known as the Dark Ages. Denied a name of his own, he adopted a Latin one to his liking, thus from necessity setting a fashion his imitators followed from affectation. When approached in the days of his fame by the Sanseverini with proposals to recognise him as a kinsman, he answered with a proud and laconic refusal.<sup>1</sup> The Academy, formed of super-men infected with

<sup>1</sup> His refusal was in the following curt form: *Pomponius Lætus cognatis et propinquis suis, salutem. Quod petitis fieri non potest.—Valete.* Consult Tiraboschi, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. vii., cap. v.; Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom in Mittelalter*; Burkhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, and Voigt in his *Wiederlegung des Klassischen Alterthums*.

pagan ideals, contemptuous of scholastic learning and impatient of the restraints of Christian morality, did not long escape the suspicions of the orthodox; suspicions only too well warranted and inevitably productive of antagonism ending in condemnation.<sup>1</sup>

From trifles, as they may seem to us at this distance of time, hostile ingenuity wove the web destined to enmesh the incautious Academicians. The adoption of fanciful Latin appellations—in itself a sufficiently innocent conceit—was construed into a demonstration of revolt against established Christian usage, almost savouring of contempt for the canonised saints of the Church.

Pomponius Lætus was nameless, and hence free to adopt whatever name he chose; his associates and admiring disciples paid him the homage of imitation, proud to associate themselves, by means of this pedantic fancy, with him they called master. The Florentine, Buonacorsi, took the name of Callimachus Experiens; the Roman, Marco, masqueraded as Asclepiades; two Venetian brothers gladly exchanged honest, vulgar Piscina for the signature of Marsus, while another, Marino, adopted that of Glaucus.

If the neo-pagans were harmless and playful merely, their opponents were dangerously in earnest. In 1468 a grave charge of conspiracy against the Pope's life and of organising a schism led to the arrest of Pomponius and Platina, some of the more wary members of the compromised fraternity saving themselves by timely flight.

<sup>1</sup> Sabellicus, in a letter to Antonio Morosini (*Liber Epistolarum*, xi., p. 459) wrote thus of Pomponius Lætus: . . . *fuit ab initio contemptor religionis, sed ingravescente ætate cæpit res ipsa, ut mihi dicitur curæ esse. In Crispo et Livio reposint quædam; et si nemo religiosius timidiusques tractavit veterum scripta . . . Græca . . . vix attingit.* While to a restricted number, humanism stood for intellectual emancipation, to the many it meant the rejection of the moral restraints on conduct imposed by the law of the Church, and a revival of the vices that flourished in the decadent epochs of Greece and Rome.

Imprisonment in Castel Sant' Angelo and even the use of torture—mild, doubtless—failing to extract incriminating admissions from the accused, both prisoners were unconditionally released. If the Pope felt serious alarm, his fears seem to have been easily allayed, for Pomponius was permitted to resume his public lectures undisturbed, but the Roman Academy had received a check, from which it did not recover during the remainder of the pontificate of Paul II. With the accession of Sixtus IV., the cloud of disfavour that still hung obscuringly over its glories was lifted. Encouraged by the Pope and frequented by distinguished members of the Curia, its era of greatness dawned in splendour.

The assault upon the Church by the humanists, which resulted in the partial capture of Latin Christianity, was ably directed. Although the renascence of learning did not take its rise in Rome, where the intellectual movement and enthusiasm imported from Florence flourished but fitfully, according to the various humours of the successive pontiffs, the papal capital drew within its walls eminent scholars from all the states of the Italian peninsula. Rome was the world-city, a centre from which radiated honours, distinctions, and fortune. Gifts of oratory, facility in debate, ability in the conduct of diplomatic negotiations, a masterly style in Latin composition, and even perfection in penmanship, were all marketable accomplishments, for which Rome was the highest bidder. If classical learning and the graces of literature received but intermittent encouragement from the sovereign pontiffs, both the secular interests of their government and the vindication of the Church's dogmatic teaching afforded the most profitable exercise for talents which sceptical humanists sold, as readily as did the condottieri their swords—to the best paymaster, regardless of their personal convictions. There consequently came into existence in Rome a new *ceto* or class, equally removed from



the nobles of feudal traditions and the ecclesiastics of the Curia, yet mingling with both. Literary style and the art of Latin composition, sedulously cultivated by these brilliant intellectual nomads, shed an undoubted lustre on the Roman chancery, giving it a stamp it has never entirely lost. They fought battles and scored victories for an orthodoxy they derided. They defended the Church's temporalities from the encroachments of covetous princes. Their influence on morals was frankly pagan. Expatriated and emancipated from all laws save those dictated by their own tastes and inclinations, these men were genially rebellious against the restraints and discipline imposed by the evangelical law. From the Franciscan virtues of chastity, poverty, and obedience, preached by the *Poverello* of Assisi, they turned with aversion to laud the antipodal trinity of lust, license, and luxury. The mysticism of medieval Christianity was repugnant to their materialism, and the symbolism of its art, expressed under rigid, graceless forms, offended eyes that craved beauty of line and beauty of colour. They ignored or condemned any ulterior purpose of art as a teaching medium for spiritual truths. To such men, a satire of Juvenal was more precious than an epistle of St. Paul; dogma, they demolished with epigrams, the philosophy of the schoolmen was a standing joke, and a passage from Plato or Horace outweighed the definitions of an Ecumenical Council.

The toleration extended to these heterodox scholars seems to have been unlimited,—perhaps it was not in some instances unmixed with contempt, for, though they lampooned the clergy of all grades, not sparing even the Pope himself, their writings, even when not free from positive scurrility, were allowed the freest circulation. In all that pertained to personal conduct and morality, they directed their exclusive efforts to assimilating classical standards of the decadent periods, ignoring the austere

virtues of civic probity, self-restraint, and frugality, that characterised the best society of Greek and Rome in their florescence. These same men lived on terms of close intimacy with princes of the Church, on whose bounty they thrived, and by degrees numbers of them even entered the ranks of the clergy, some with minor and others with holy orders. To their labours, the world owes the recovery of the classic literature of Greece and Rome from oblivion, while the invention and rapid adoption of the printing-press rendered these precious texts forever indestructible and accessible.

Into this brilliant, dissolute world of intellectual activity, Peter Martyr entered, and through it he passed unscathed, emerging with his Christian faith intact and his orthodoxy untainted. He gathered the gold of classical learning, rejecting its dross; his morals were above reproach and calumny never touched his reputation. Respected, appreciated, and, most of all, beloved by his contemporaries, his writings enriched the intellectual heritage of posterity with inexhaustible treasures of original information concerning the great events of the memorable epoch it was his privilege to illustrate.

General culture being widely diffused, the pedantic imitations of antiquity applauded by the preceding generation ceased to confer distinction. Latin still held its supremacy but the Italian language, no longer reputed vulgar, was coming more and more into favour as a vehicle for the expression of original thought. Had he remained in Italy Martyr might well have used it, but his removal to Spain imposed Latin as the language of his voluminous compositions.

Four years after his arrival in Rome, a Milanese noble, Bartolomeo Scandiano, who later went as nuncio to Spain, invited Peter Martyr to pass the summer months in his villa at Rieti, in company with the Bishop of Viterbo. In the fifteenth letter of the *Opus Epistolarum* he recalls

the impressions and recollections of that memorable visit, in the following terms: "Do you remember, Scandiano, with what enthusiasm we dedicated our days to poetical composition? Then did I first appreciate the importance of association with the learned and to what degree the mind of youth is elevated in the amiable society of serious men: then, for the first time, I ventured to think myself a man and to hope that I might become somebody." The summer of 1481 may, therefore, be held to mark his intellectual awakening and the birth of his definite ambitions. Endowed by nature with the qualities necessary to success, intimate association with men of eminent culture inspired him with the determination to emulate them, and from this ideal he never deflected. The remaining six years of his life in Rome were devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, and in the art of deciphering inscriptions and the geography of the ancients he acquired singular proficiency.

During the pontificate of Innocent VIII., Francesco Negro, a Milanese by birth, was governor of Rome and him Peter Martyr served as secretary; a service which, for some reason, necessitated several months' residence in Perugia. His relations with Ascanio Sforza, created cardinal in 1484, continued to be close, and at one period he may have held some position in the cardinal's household or in that of Cardinal Giovanni Arcimboldo, Archbishop of Milan, though it is nowhere made clear precisely what, while some authorities incline to number him merely among the assiduous courtiers of these dignitaries from his native Lombardy.

The fame of his scholarship had meanwhile raised him from the position of disciple to a place amongst the masters of learning, and in his turn he saw gathering about him a group of admirers and adulators. Besides Pomponius Lætus, his intimates of this period were Theodore of Pavia and Peter Marsus, the less celebrated of the Vene-



tian brothers. He stood in the relation of preceptor or mentor to Alonso Carillo, Bishop of Pamplona, and to Jorge da Costa, Archbishop of Braga, two personages of rank, who did but follow the prevailing fashion that decreed the presence of a humanist scholar to be an indispensable appendage in the households of the great. He read and commented the classics to his exalted patrons, was the arbiter of taste, their friend, the companion of their cultured leisure, and their confidant. Replying to the praises of his disciples, couched in extravagant language, he administered a mild rebuke, recalling them to moderation in the expression of their sentiments: "These are not the lessons you received from me when I explained to you the satire of the divine Juvenal; on the contrary, you have learned that nothing more shames a free man than adulation."<sup>1</sup>

The year 1486 was signalised in Rome by the arrival of an embassy from Ferdinand and Isabella to make the usual oath of obedience on behalf of the Catholic sovereigns of Castille and Leon to their spiritual over-lord, the Pope. Iñigo Lopez de Mendoza, Count of Tendilla, a son of the noble house of Mendoza, whose cardinal was termed throughout Europe *tertius rex*, was the ambassador charged with this mission.<sup>2</sup> Tendilla shone in a family in which intellectual brilliancy was a heritage, the accomplishments of its members adding distinction to a house of origin and descent exceptionally illustrious. Whether in the house of his compatriot, the Bishop of Pamplona, or elsewhere, the ambassador made the acquaintance of Peter Martyr and evidently fell under

<sup>1</sup> Epist. x. *Non hæc a me profecto, quam ambobus Juvenalis aliquando divinam illam, quæ proxima est a secunda, satiram aperirem, sed adulatione nihil esse ingenuo fœdius dedicistis.*

<sup>2</sup> From Burchard's *Diarium*, 1483-1506, and from the *Chronicle* of Pulgar we learn that Antonio Geraldini and Juan de Medina, the latter afterwards Bishop of Astorga, accompanied the embassy.

the charm of his noble character and uncommon talents. The duties of his embassy, and possibly his own good pleasure, detained Tendilla in Rome from September 13, 1486, until August 29th of the following year, and, as his stay drew to its close, he pressinglly invited the Italian scholar to return with him to Spain, an invitation which neither the remonstrances nor supplications of his friends in Rome availed to persuade him to refuse. No one could more advantageously introduce a foreigner at the Court of Spain than Tendilla. What prospects he held out or what arguments he used to induce Martyr to quit Rome and Italy, we do not know; apparently little persuasion was required. A true child of his times, Peter Martyr was prepared to accept his intellectual heritage wherever he found it. From the obscure parental village of Arona, his steps first led him to the ducal court of Milan, which served as a stepping-stone from which he advanced into the wider world of Rome. The papal capital knew him first as a disciple, then as a master, but the doubt whether he was satisfied to wait upon laggard pontifical favours is certainly permissible. He had made warm friendships, had enjoyed the intimacy of the great, and the congenial companionship of kindred spirits, but his talents had secured no permanent or lucrative recognition from the Sovereign Pontiff. The announcement of his resolution to accompany the ambassador to Spain caused consternation amongst his friends who opposed, by every argument they could muster, a decision they considered displayed both ingratitude and indifferent judgment. Nothing availed to change the decision he had taken and, since to each one he answered as he deemed expedient, and as each answer differed from the other, it is not easy to fix upon the particular reason which prompted him to seek his fortune in Spain.

To Ascanio Sforza, who spared neither entreaties nor reproaches to detain him, assuring him that during his life-

time his merits should not lack recognition, Martyr replied that the disturbed state of Italy, which he apprehended would grow worse, discouraged him; adding that he was urged on by an ardent desire to see the world and to make acquaintance with other lands. To Peter Marsus, he declared he felt impelled to join in the crusade against the Moors. Spain was the seat of this holy war, and the Catholic sovereigns, who had accomplished the unity of the Christian states of the Iberian peninsula, were liberal in their offers of honours and recompense to foreigners of distinction whom they sought to draw to their court and camp. Spain may well have seemed a virgin and promising field, in which his talents might find a more generous recognition than Rome had awarded them. Upon his arrival there, he showed himself no mean courtier when he declared to the Queen that his sole reason for coming was to behold the most celebrated woman in the world—herself. Perhaps the sincerest expression of his feelings is that contained in a letter to Carillo. (Ep. 86. 1490): *Formosum est cuique, quod maxime placet: id si cum patria minime quis se sperat habiturum, tanta est hujusce rei vis, ut extra patriam quæritet patria ipsius oblitus. Ego quam vos deservistis adivi quia quod mihi pulchrum suaveque videbatur in ea invenire speravi.* The divine restlessness, the *Wanderlust* had seized him, and to its fascination he yielded. The opportunity offered by Tendilla was too tempting to be resisted. Summing up the remonstrances and reproaches of his various friends, he declared that he held himself to deserve rather their envy than their commiseration, since amidst the many learned men in Italy he felt himself obscure and useless, counting himself indeed as *passerunculus inter accipitres, pygmeolus inter gigantes.*

Failing to turn his friend from his purpose, Cardinal Ascanio Sforza exacted from him a promise to send him regular and frequent information of all that happened at

the Spanish Court. It is to this pact between the two friends that posterity is indebted for the Decades and the *Opus Epistolarum*, in which the events of those singularly stirring years are chronicled in a style that portrays with absolute fidelity the temper of an age prolific in men of extraordinary genius and unsurpassed daring, incomparably rich in achievements that changed the face of the world and gave a new direction to the trend of human development.

On the twenty-ninth of August the Spanish ambassador, after taking leave of Innocent VIII.,<sup>1</sup> set out from Rome on his return journey to Spain, and with him went Peter Martyr d'Anghera.

## II

Spain in the year 1487 presented a striking contrast to Italy where, from the days of Dante to those of Machiavelli, the land had echoed to the vain cry: *Pax, pax et non erat pax*. Peter Martyr was impressed by the unaccustomed spectacle of a united country within whose boundaries peace reigned. This happy condition had followed upon the relentless suppression of feudal chiefs whose acts of brigandage, pillage, and general lawlessness had terrorised the people and enfeebled the State during the preceding reign.

The same nobles who had fought under Isabella's standard against Henry IV. did not scruple to turn their arms upon their young sovereign, once she was seated upon the throne. Lucio Marineo Siculo has drawn a sombre picture of life in Spain prior to the establishment of order under Ferdinand and Isabella. To accomplish the needed reform, it was necessary to break the power and humble the pretensions of the feudal nobles. The Duke of Villahermosa, in command of an army maintained by contri-

<sup>1</sup> *Dixi ante sacros pedes prostratus lacrymosum vale quarto calendi Septembris 1487.* (Ep. i.)

butions from the towns, waged a merciless campaign, burning castles and administering red-handed but salutary justice to rebels against the royal authority, and to all disturbers of public order throughout the realm.

This drastic work of internal pacification was completed before the arrival of our Lombard scholar at the Spanish Court. Castile and Aragon united, internal strife overcome, the remaining undertaking worthiest to engage the attention of the monarchs was the conquest of the unredeemed southern provinces. Ten years of intermittent warfare had brought the Christian troops to the very walls of Granada, but Granada still held out. Almeria and Guadiz were in possession of the enemy and over the towers of Baza the infidel flag proudly floated.

The reception accorded Tendilla's protégé by the King and Queen in Saragossa was benign and encouraging. Isabella already caressed the idea of encouraging the cultivation of the arts and literature amongst the Spaniards, and her first thought was to confide to the newcomer the education of the young nobles and pages about the Court—youths destined to places of influence in Church and State. She was not a little surprised when the reputed savant modestly deprecated his qualifications for such a responsible undertaking, and declared his wish was to join in the crusade against the infidels in Andalusia. Some mirth was even provoked by the idea of the foreign scholar masquerading as a soldier.

In 1489, King Ferdinand, who had assembled a powerful force at Jaen, marched to the assault of Baza, a strong place, ably defended at that time by Abdullah, known under the proud title of *El Zagal*—the Victorious—because of his many victories over the Christian armies he had encountered. During the memorable siege that ended in the fall of Baza, Peter Martyr played his dual rôle of soldier and historian. The Moors defended the city with characteristic bravery, for they were fighting for their



property, their liberty, and their lives. From Jaen, where Isabella had established herself to be near the seat of war, messages of encouragement daily reached the King and his commanders, inciting them to victory, for which the Queen and her ladies daily offered prayers. Impregnable Baza fell on the fourth of December, and, with its fall, the Moorish power in Spain was forever broken. Smaller cities and numerous strongholds in the surrounding country hastened to offer their submission and, after the humiliating surrender of El Zagal in the Spanish camp at Tabernas, Almeria opened its gates to the triumphant Christians who sang *Te Deum* within its walls on Christmas day. Peter Martyr's description of this victorious campaign has proved a rich source from which later writers have generously drawn, not always with adequate acknowledgment. From Jaen the Court withdrew to Seville, where the marriage of the princess royal to the crown prince of Portugal was celebrated.

Boabdilla still held Granada, oblivious of his engagement to surrender that city when his rival, El Zagal, should be conquered.<sup>1</sup> We need not here digress to rehearse the oft-told story of the siege of Granada, during which Moslem rivalled Christian in deeds of chivalry. Peter Martyr's letters in the *Opus Epistolarum* recount these events. He shared to the full the exultation of the victors, but was not oblivious of the grief and humiliation of the vanquished whom he describes as weeping and lamenting upon the graves of their forefathers, with a choice between captivity and exile before their despairing

<sup>1</sup> The Moorish power was at this time weakened by an internal dissension. El Zagal had succeeded his brother, Muley Abdul Hassan, who, at the time of his death ruled over Baza, Guadiz, Almeria, and other strongholds in the south-east, while his son Boabdil was proclaimed in Granada, thus dividing the kingdom against itself, at a moment when union was most essential to its preservation. Boabdil had accepted the protection of King Ferdinand and had even stipulated the surrender of Granada as the reward for his uncle's defeat. Consult Prescott's *Ferdinand and Isabella*.

eyes. He portrays his impressions upon entering with the victorious Christian host into the stately city. *Alhambrium, proh dii immortales! Qualem regiam, romane purpurate, unicam in orbe terrarum, crede*, he exclaims in his letter to Cardinal Arcimboldo of Milan.

Divers are the appreciations of the precise part played by Peter Martyr in the course of this war. He spent quite as much time with the Queen's court as he did at the front, and he himself advances but modest claims to war's laurels, writing rather as one who had missed his vocation amongst men whose profession was fighting. The career he sought did not lie in that direction. In later years writing to his friend Marliano, he observed: *De bello autem si consilium amici vis, bella gerant bellatores. Philosophis inhæreat lectionis et contemplationis studium.*

Glorious as the date of Granada's capture might have been in Spanish history, it acquired world-wide significance from the decision given in favour of the project of Christopher Columbus which followed as a consequence of the Christian victory. Though he nowhere states the fact, Martyr must at this time<sup>1</sup> have known the Genoese suppliant for royal patronage. Talavera, confessor to the Queen, was the friend and protector of both Italians.

Fascinated by the novelties and charms of Granada, Martyr remained in the conquered city when the Court withdrew. His friend Tendilla was appointed first governor of the province and Talavera became its first archbishop. Comparing the city with others, famous and beautiful in Italy, he declared Granada to be the loveliest of them all; for Venice was devoid of landscape and surrounded only by sea; Milan lay in a flat stretch of monotonous plain; Florence might boast her hills, but they made her winter climate frigid, while Rome was afflicted

<sup>1</sup> Navarrete states that the two Italians had known one another intimately prior to the siege of Granada. *Coleccion de documentos ineditos*, tom. i., p. 68.

by unwholesome winds from Africa and such poisonous exhalations from the surrounding marshes that few of her citizens lived to old age. Such, to eyes sensitive to Nature's charms and to a mind conscious of historical significance, was the prize that had fallen to the Catholic sovereigns.<sup>1</sup>

What influences worked to prepare the change which took place in Peter Martyr's life within the next few months are not known. After the briefest preparation, he took minor orders and occupied a canon's stall in the cathedral of Granada. Of a religious vocation, understood in the theological sense, there appears to have been no pretence, but ten years later we find him a priest, with the rank of apostolic protonotary. Writing on March 28, 1492, to Muro, the dean of Compostello he observed: *Ad Saturnum, cessante Marte, sub hujus sancti viri archiepiscopi umbra tento transfugere; a thorace jam ad togam me transtuli.* In the coherent organisation of society as it was then ordered, men were classified in distinct and recognisable categories, each of which opened avenues to the ambitious for attaining its special prizes. Spain was still scarcely touched by the culture of the Renaissance. Outside the Church there was little learning or desire for knowledge, nor did any other means for recompensing scholars exist than by the bestowal of ecclesiastical benefices. A prebend, a canonry, a professorship in the schools or university were the sole sources of income for a man of letters. Peter Martyr was such, nor did any other road to the distinction he frankly desired, open before him. Perhaps Archbishop Talavera made this point clear to him. Disillusionised, if indeed he had ever entertained serious hope of success as a soldier, it cost him no effort to change from the military to the more congenial sacerdotal caste.

Granada, for all its charms, quickly palled, and his first enthusiasm subsiding, gave place to a sense of confinement,

<sup>1</sup> In the month of June, 1492.



isolation, and unrest. Not the companionship of his two attached friends could make life in a provincial town, remote from the Court, tolerable to one who had spent ten years of his life in the cultured world of Rome. The monotonous routine of a canon's duties meant stagnation to his keen, curious temperament, athirst for movement and novelty. His place was amongst men, in the midst of events where he might observe, study, and philosophically comment. Writing to Cardinal Mendoza, he frankly confessed his unrest, declaring that the delights and beauties of Nature, praised by the classical writers, ended by disgusting him and that he could never know contentment save in the society of great men. His nature craved life on the mountain tops of distinction rather than existence in the valley of content. He did not yearn for Tusculum.

To manage a graceful re-entry to the Court was not easy. To Archbishop Talavera, genial and humane, had succeeded the austere Ximenes as confessor to Isabella. The post was an important one, for the ascendancy of its occupant over the Queen was incontestable, but, while Peter Martyr's perspicacity was quick to grasp the desirability of conciliating the new confessor, it equally divined the barriers forbidding access to the remote, detached Franciscan. In one of his letters he compared the penetration of Ximenes to that of St. Augustine, his austerity to that of St. Jerome, and his zeal for the faith to that of St. Ambrose. Cardinal Ximenes had admirers and detractors, but he had no friends.

In this dilemma Martyr felt himself alone, abandoned, and he was not a little troubled as to his future prospects, for he was without an advocate near the Queen. He wrote to several personages, even to the young Prince, Don Juan, and evidently without result, for he observed with a tinge of bitterness: "I see that King's favours, the chief object of men's efforts, are more shifting and empty than the wind." Fortune was kinder to him than she often shows

herself to others who no less assiduously cultivate her favour, nor was his patience over-taxed by long waiting. With the return of peace, Queen Isabella's interest in her plan for encouraging a revival of learning amongst her courtiers re-awakened. It was her desire that the Spanish nobles should cultivate the arts and literature, after the fashion prevailing in Italy. Lucio Marineo Siculo, also a disciple of Pomponius Lætus, had preceded Martyr in Spain by nearly two years, and was professor of poetry and grammar at Salamanca. He was the first of the Italians who came as torch-bearers of the Renaissance into Spain, to be followed by Peter Martyr, Columbus, the Cabots, Gattinara, the Geraldini and Marliano. Cardinal Mendoza availed himself of the propitious moment, to propose Martyr's name for the office of preceptor to direct the studies of the young noblemen. In response to a welcome summons, the impatient canon left Granada and repaired to Valladolid where the Court then resided.<sup>1</sup> The ungrateful character and dubious results of the task before him were obvious, the chief difficulties to be apprehended threatening to come from his noble pupils, whose minds and manners he was expected to form. Restive under any save military discipline, averse by temperament and custom to studies of any sort, it was hardly to be hoped that they would easily exchange their gay, idle habits for schoolroom tasks under a foreign pedagogue. Yet this miracle did Peter Martyr work. The charm of his personality counted for much, the enthusiasm of the Queen and the presence in the school of the Infante Don Juan, whose example the youthful courtiers dared not disdain, for still more, and the house of the Italian preceptor became the fashionable rendezvous of young gallants who, a few months earlier, would have scoffed at the idea of conning lessons in grammar and poetry, and listening to lectures on morals and conduct from a for-

<sup>1</sup> In the month of June, 1492.

eigner. Of his quarters in Saragossa in the first year of his classes he wrote: *Domum habeo tota die ebullientibus Procerum juvenibus repletam.*

During the next nine years of his life, Peter Martyr devoted himself to his task and with results that gratified the Queen and reflected credit upon her choice. In October of 1492 he had been appointed by the Queen, *Contino de su casa*,<sup>1</sup> with a revenue of thirty thousand maravedis. Shortly after, he was given a chaplaincy in the royal household, an appointment which increased both his dignity and his income. His position was now assured, his popularity and influence daily expanded.

It would be interesting to know something of his system of teaching in what proved to be a peripatetic academy, since he and his aristocratic pupils always followed the Court in its progress from city to city; but nowhere in his correspondence, teeming with facts and commentaries on the most varied subjects, is anything definite to be gleaned. Latin poetry and prose, the discourses of Cicero, rhetoric, and church history were important subjects in his curriculum. Though he frequently mentions Aristotle in terms of high admiration, it may be doubted whether he ever taught Greek. There is no evidence that he even knew that tongue. Besides the Infante Don Juan, the Duke of Braganza, Don Juan of Portugal, Villahermosa, cousin to the King, Don Iñigo de Mendoza, and the Marquis of Priego were numbered among his pupils. Nor did his personal influence cease when they left his classes. The renaissance of learning did not move with the spontaneous, almost revolutionary, vigour that characterised the revival in Italy, nor was Peter Martyr of the pagan-

<sup>1</sup> An office in the Queen's household, the duties and privileges of which are not quite clear. Mariéjol suggests that the *contini* corresponded to the *gentilshommes de la chambre* at the French Court. Lucio Marineo Siculo mentioned these palatine dignitaries immediately after the two captains and the two hundred gentlemen composing the royal body-guard. Consult Mariéjol, *Pierre Martyr d'Anghera, sa vie et ses œuvres*, Paris, 1887.

ised scholars in whom the cult for antiquity had undermined Christian faith—else had he not been acceptable to Queen Isabella.

Some authors, including Ranke, have described him as occupying the post of Secretary of Latin Letters. Officially he never did. His knowledge of Latin, in a land where few were masters of the language of diplomatic and literary intercourse, was brought into frequent service, and it was no uncommon thing for him to turn the Spanish draft of a state paper or despatch into Latin.<sup>1</sup> He refused a chair in the University of Salamanca, but consented on one occasion to deliver a lecture before its galaxy of distinguished professors and four thousand students. He chose for his subject the second satire of Juvenal, and for more than an hour held his listeners spellbound under the charm of his eloquence. He thus described his triumph: *Domum tanquam ex Olympo victorem primarii me comitantur*.<sup>2</sup>

During these prosperous years in Spain, the promise made to Cardinal Ascanio Sforza was faithfully kept, though the latter's early fall from his high estate in Rome diverted Martyr's letters to other personages. With fervent and unflagging interest he followed the swift march of disastrous events in his native Italy. The cowardly murder of Gian Galeazzo by his perfidious and ambitious nephew, Lodovico il Moro; the death of the magnificent Lorenzo in Florence; the accession to power of the unscrupulous Borgia family, with Alexander VI. upon the papal throne; the French invasion of Naples—all these and other similar calamities bringing in their train the destruction of Italy, occupied his attention and filled his correspondence with lamentations and sombre presages for the future.

<sup>1</sup> *Talvolta era incaricato di voltare in latino le corrispondenze diplomatiche più importanti. I ministri o i lor segretari ne faceano la minuta in ispannuolo, ed egli le recava nella lingua che era allora adoperata come lingua internazionale.* Ciampi, *Nuova Antologia*, tom. iii., p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> *Opus Epistolarum.* Ep. lvii.

He was the first to herald the discovery of the new world, and to publish the glory of his unknown compatriot to their countrymen. To Count Giovanni Borromeo he wrote concerning the return of Columbus from his first voyage: . . . *rediit ab Antipodibus occiduis Christophorus quidam Colonus, vir ligur, qui a meis regibus ad hanc provinciam tria vix impetraverat navigia, quia fabulosa, que dicebat, arbitrabantur; rediit preciosum multarum rerum sed auri precipue, qua suapte natura regiones generant tulit.* Significant is the introduction of the great navigator: *Christophorus quidam Colonus, vir ligur.* There was nothing more to know or say about the sailor of lowly origin and obscure beginnings, whose great achievement shed glory on his unconscious fatherland and changed the face of the world.

## III

In the year 1497 Peter Martyr was designated for a diplomatic mission that gratified his ambition and promised him an opportunity to revisit Rome and Milan.

Ladislav II., King of Bohemia, sought to repudiate his wife Beatrice, daughter of King Ferdinand of Naples, and widow of Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary. Being a princess of Aragon, the outraged lady's appeal in her distress to her powerful kinsman in Spain found Ferdinand of Aragon disposed to intervene in her behalf. It was to champion her cause that Peter Martyr was chosen to go as ambassador from the Catholic sovereigns to Bohemia, stopping on his way at Rome to lay the case before the Pope. In the midst of his preparations for the journey the unwelcome and disconcerting intelligence that Pope Alexander VI. leaned rather to the side of King Ladislav reached Spain. This gave the case a new and unexpected complexion. The Spanish sovereigns first wavered and then reversed their decision. The embassy was cancelled



and the disappointed ambassador cheated of the distinction and pleasure he already tasted in anticipation.

Four years later circumstances rendered an embassy to the Sultan of Egypt imperative. Ever since the fall of Granada, which was followed by the expulsion of Moors and Jews from Spain or their forcible conversion to Christianity if they remained in the country, the Mussulman world throughout Northern Africa had been kept in a ferment by the lamentations and complaints of the arriving exiles. Islam throbbed with sympathy for the vanquished, and thirsted for vengeance on the oppressors. The Mameluke Sultan of Egypt, aroused to action by the reports of the persecution of his brethren in blood and faith, threatened reprisals, which he was in a position to carry out on the persons and property of the numerous Christian merchants in the Levant, as well as on the pilgrims who annually visited the Holy Land. The Franciscan friars, guardians of the holy places in Palestine, were especially at his mercy. Representations had been made in Rome and referred by the Pope to Spain. King Ferdinand temporised, denying the truth of the reports of persecution and alleging that no oppressive measures had been adopted against the Moors, describing whatever hardships they may have suffered as unavoidably incidental to the reorganisation of the recently acquired provinces. His tranquillising assurances were not accepted with unreserved credence by the Sultan. By the year 1501, the situation had become so strained, owing to the knowledge spread through the Mussulman world that an edict of general expulsion was in preparation, that it was decided to despatch an embassy to soothe the Sultan's angry alarm and to protect, if possible, the Christians within his dominions from the threatened vengeance. For this delicate and novel negotiation, Peter Martyr was chosen. The avowed object of his mission has been suspected of masking some undeclared purpose, though what this may have

been is purely a matter of conjecture. He was also entrusted with a secret message to the Doge and Senate of Venice, where French influences were felt to be at work against the interests of Spain. Travelling by way of Narbonne and Avignon, the ambassador reached Venice a few days after the death of the Doge, Barbarigo, and before a successor had been elected. Brief as was his stay in the city of lagoons, every hour of it was profitably employed. He visited churches, palaces, and convents, inspecting their libraries and art treasures; he was enraptured by the beauty and splendour of all he beheld. Nothing escaped his searching inquiries concerning the form of government, the system of elections, the ship-building actively carried on in the great arsenal, and the extent and variety of commercial intercourse with foreign nations. Mention of his visit is made in the famous diary of the younger Marino Sanuto.<sup>1</sup>

Delightful and absorbing as he undoubtedly found it to linger amidst the glories of Venice, the ambassador was not forgetful that the important purpose of his mission lay elsewhere. Delivering his message to the Senate, he crossed to Pola, where eight Venetian ships lay, ready to sail to various ports in the Levant. The voyage to Egypt proved a tempestuous one, and it was the twenty-third of December when the storm-beaten vessel safely entered the port of Alexandria, after a narrow escape from being wrecked on the rocky foundations of the famous Pharos of antiquity. Christian merchants trading in the Levant were at that period divided into two groups, one of which was under the protection of Venice, the other, in which were comprised all Spanish subjects, being under that of France. The French consul, Felipe de Paredes, a Cata-

<sup>1</sup> *A dì 30 Septembris giunse qui uno orator dei reali di Spagna; va al Soldano al Cairo; qual montò su le Gallie nostre di Alessandria; si dice per pregare il Soliano relaxi i frati di Monte Syon e li tratti bene, e che 30 mila Mori di Granata si sono baptizzati di sua volontà, e non coatti.*

Ionian by birth, offered the hospitality of his house pending the arrival of the indispensable safe-conduct and escort from the Sultan. In the *Legatio Babylonica*, Peter Martyr describes, with lamentations, the squalor of the once splendid city of Alexandria, famous for its beautiful gardens, superb palaces, and rich libraries. The ancient capital of the Ptolemies was reduced to a mere remnant of its former size, and of its former glories not a vestige was perceptible.<sup>1</sup> Cansu Alguri<sup>2</sup> reigned in Cairo. A man personally inclined to toleration, his liberty of action was fettered by the fanaticism of his courtiers and the Mussulman clergy. The moment was not a propitious one for an embassy soliciting favours for Christians. The Portuguese had but recently sunk an Egyptian vessel off Calicut, commercial rivalries were bitter, and the harsh treatment of the conquered Moors in Spain had aroused religious antagonism to fever pitch and bred feelings of universal exasperation against the foes of Islam.

From Rosetta Peter Martyr started on January 26th on his journey to the Egyptian Babylon,<sup>3</sup> as he was pleased to style Cairo, travelling by boat on the Nile and landing at Boulaq in the night. The next morning a Christian renegade, Tangriberdy by name, who held the important office of Grand Dragoman to the Sultan, presented himself to arrange the ceremonial to be observed at the audience with his master. This singular man, a Spanish sailor from Valencia, had been years before wrecked on the Egyptian coast and taken captive. By forsaking his faith he saved

<sup>1</sup> Writing to Pedro Fajardo he thus expressed himself: *Alexandriam sepe perambulavi: lacrymosum est ejus ruinas intueri; centum millium atque eo amplius domorum uti per ejus vestigere licet colligere meo judicio quondam fuit Alexandria; nunc quatuor vix millibus contenta est focus; turturibus nunc et columbis pro habitationibus nidos prestat, etc.*

<sup>2</sup> Also spelled Quansou Ghoury and Cansa Gouri; Peter Martyr writes *Campsoo Gauro*.

<sup>3</sup> Cairo was thus called in the Middle Ages, the name belonging especially to one of the city's suburbs. See Quatremère *Mémoires géographiques et historiques sur l'Égypte*. Paris, 1811.



his life, and had gradually risen from a state of servitude to his post of confidence near the Sultan's person. Tangriberdy availed himself of the opportunity afforded by his duties, to relate to the ambassador the story of his life and his forcible conversion, declaring that, in his heart, he clung to the Christian faith and longed to return to his native Spain. Whether his sentiments were sincere or feigned, his presence in an influential capacity at the Sultan's court was a fortuitous circumstance of which the ambassador gladly took advantage. The audience was fixed for the following morning at daybreak, and that night Tangriberdy lodged the embassy in his own palace.

Traversing the streets of Cairo, thronged with a hostile crowd curious to view the *giaour*, Peter Martyr, accompanied by the Grand Dragoman and his Mameluke escort, mounted to the citadel, where stood the stately palace built by Salah-Eddin. After crossing two courts he found himself in a third, where sat the Sultan upon a marble dais richly draped and cushioned. The prostrations exacted by Eastern etiquette were dispensed with, the envoy being even invited to sit in the august presence. Thrice the Sultan assured him of his friendly disposition; no business was transacted, and after these formalities the ambassador withdrew as he had come, a second audience being fixed for the following Sunday.

Meanwhile, the envoys from the Barbary States, who were present for the purpose of defeating the negotiations, excited the populace by appeals to their fanaticism, reminding them of the cruelties endured by their brethern of the true faith at the hands of Spaniards. They even declared that if Cansu Alguri consented to treat with the infidels, he was no true son of Islam. A council of military chiefs was summoned which quickly decided to demand the immediate dismissal of the Christian ambassador. Tangriberdy, who sought to alter this determination, was even

threatened with death if he persisted in his opposition. Remembering that he owed his throne to the Mamelukes, who had exalted and destroyed no less than four Sultans within as many years, Cansu Alguri quailed before the outburst of popular fury. He ordered Tangriberdy to conduct the obnoxious visitor from the capital without further delay. Peter Martyr, however, received this intimation with unruffled calm and, to the stupefaction of Tangriberdy, refused to leave until he had accomplished his mission. Such audacity in a mild-mannered ecclesiastic was as impressive as it was unexpected. The Grand Dragoman had no choice but to report the refusal to the Sultan. By what arguments he prevailed upon Cansu Alguri to rescind his command, we know not, but a secret audience was arranged in which Martyr describes himself as speaking with daring and persuasive frankness to the Sultan. He availed himself in the most ample manner of diplomatic license in dealing with facts, and succeeded in convincing his listener that no Moors had been forced to change their religion, that the conquest of Granada was but the re-establishment of Spanish sovereignty over what had been taken by conquest, and finally that nobody had been expelled from the country, save lawless marauders, who refused to abide by the terms of the fair treaty of peace concluded between Boabdil and the Catholic sovereigns. He closed his plea by adroitly introducing a scapegoat in the person of the universally execrated Jew, against whom it was the easiest part of his mission to awaken the dormant hatred and contempt of the Sultan. Into willing Mussulman ears he poured a tirade of abuse, typical of the epoch and the nation he represented: . . . *proh si scires quam morbosum, quam pestiferum; quamque contagiosum pecus istud de quo loqueris sit, tactu omnia fedant, visu corrumpunt sermone destruunt, divina et humana preturbant, inficiunt, prostrant miseros vicinos circumveniunt, radicitus expellant, funestant; ubi-*

*cumque pecunias esse presentiunt, tamquam odori canes insequunt; detegunt, effundiunt, per mendacia, perjuria, dolos insidias per litas, si cetera non seppetunt, extorquere illas laborant: aliena miseria, dolore, gemitu, mestitia gaudent.* With every word of this diatribe, the representative of the Prophet was in perfect agreement. United in the bonds of a common hatred, than which no union is closer, a treaty between the two powers was easily concluded. The military chiefs were converted to the advantages of friendly relations with Spain, and means were devised to calm the popular excitement.

Assisted by some monks of the Mount Sion community, the successful ambassador drafted the concessions he solicited, all of which were graciously accorded by the mollified Egyptians. Christians were henceforth to be permitted to rebuild and repair the ruined sanctuaries throughout the Holy Land; the tribute levied on pilgrims was lightened and guaranties for their personal safety were given. It is noteworthy that only religious interests received attention, no mention being made of commercial privileges. More noteworthy still, is the absence of anything tangible given by the adroit envoy in exchange for what he got. The Sultan was reassured as to the status of such Moors as might remain under Spanish rule, and was encouraged to count upon unspecified future advantages from the friendship of King Ferdinand. A truly singular result of negotiations begun under such unfavourable auspices, though the value of concessions, to the observance of which nothing constrained the Sultan, seems problematical, and was certainly less than the ambassador, in his naive vanity, hastened to assume and proclaim.

While the text of the treaty was being prepared, Peter Martyr occupied himself in collecting information concerning the mysterious land where he found himself. Egypt was all but unknown to his contemporaries, whose most recent information concerning the country was derived

from the writings of the ancients. The *Legatio Babylonica*, consisting of three reports to the Spanish sovereigns, to which addenda were later made, contains a mass of historical and geographical facts, of which Europeans were ignorant; nothing escaped the ambassador's omnivorous curiosity and discerning scrutiny, during what proved to be a veritable voyage of discovery. He treats of the flora and fauna of the country; he studied and noted the characteristics of the great life-giver of Egypt—the Nile. The Mamelukes engaged his particular attention, though much of the information furnished him about them was erroneous. He plunged into antiquity, visited, measured, and described the Sphinx and the Pyramids—also with many errors. Christian tradition and pious legends have their place in his narrative, especially that of Matarieh—*ubi Christus latuerat* when carried by his parents into Egypt to escape the Herodian massacre of the Innocents.

On the twenty-first of February, Peter Martyr, escorted by a guard of honour composed of high court officials and respectfully saluted by a vast concourse of people, repaired to the palace for his farewell audience. In taking an affectionate leave of him, the Sultan presented him with a gorgeous robe, heavy with cunningly-wrought embroideries. Christian and Mussulman were friends. Six days later he left the capital for Alexandria, where he embarked on April 22d for Venice.

#### IV

Leonardo Loredano had meantime been elected Doge in succession to the deceased Agostino Barbarigo. Spanish interests in the kingdom of Naples were seriously compromised, and the diligence of the French envoys threatened to win Venice from the neutral policy the Republic had adopted and convert it into an ally of Louis XII.

On June 30th, Peter Martyr landed in Venice and immediately sought audience of the new Doge, to whom he repeated the message he had delivered a few months before to the Senate. Perceiving the headway made by French influence, he wrote to Spain, explaining the situation and urging the sovereigns immediately to despatch an embassy to counteract the mischievous activity of the French. He offered, as an alternative, to himself assume the negotiations if the requisite instructions were sent to him. King Ferdinand ignored the proffer of service, but, acting upon the information sent him, entrusted the business to Lorenzo Suarez de Figueroa, who had been his ambassador in Venice in 1495. Zealous for his adopted country and, possibly, overconfident in consequence of his easy success in Egypt, Peter Martyr did not wait for the credentials he had solicited but made the mistake of treating affairs for which he had received no mandate. The French envoys were quick to detect his opposition, and as prompt to take advantage of the false position in which the diplomatic novice had unwarily placed himself. His unaccredited presence and officiousness in the capital of the Doges were made to appear both offensive and ridiculous. The adherents of the French party denounced him as an intriguer, and spread the report that he was a spy in the pay of Spain. His position speedily became intolerable, unsafe even, and he was forced to escape secretly from the city; nor did he stop until he reached his native Lombardy, where he might rely upon the protection of his kinsmen, the Marshal Trivulzio and the Borromeos, to shield him from the consequences of his indiscretion.

He writes with emotion of the visit he paid to his native town of Arona and the scenes of his childhood, where he renewed acquaintance with the charms of one of the loveliest landscapes in Italy. He yielded to early memories,



and the gentle dream of one day returning to the shores of Maggiore, there to pass his declining years, took shape in his fancy. When peace between France and Spain was later restored, after King Ferdinand's marriage to the Princess Germaine de Foix, he obtained the King's intercession to procure for him the abbacy of St. Gratian at Arona. He himself solicited the protection of the Cardinal d'Amboise to obtain him this favour, declaring the revenues from the abbacy were indifferent to him, as he would only use them to restore to its pristine splendour the falling church in which reposed the holy relics of SS. Gratian, Fidelius, and Carpophorus. The peace between the two countries was too ephemeral to permit the realisation of his pious hope.

The Marshal Trivulzio accompanied his kinsman to Asti and from thence to Carmagnola where they obtained an audience of the Cardinal d'Amboise, Legate for France. Despite his undisguised hostility to Spaniards, the Legate furnished the ambassador with a safe-conduct over the frontier into Spain.

If the Catholic monarchs felt any vexation at the excess of zeal their envoy had displayed in Venice, they betrayed none. Peter Martyr's reception was not wanting in cordiality, the Queen, especially, expressing her gratitude for the important service he had rendered the Christian religion, and he received another appointment<sup>1</sup> which augmented his income by thirty thousand maravedis yearly. Having taken holy orders about this time and the dignity of prior of the cathedral chapter of Granada falling vacant, this benefice was also given to him, *regis et reginæ beneficentia*.

On November 26th in the year 1504, the death of

<sup>1</sup> *Maestro de los caballeros de su corte en las artes liberales*. He had long exercised the functions of this office, as has been described: the formal appointment was doubtless but a means invented for granting him an increase of revenue.

Isabella of Castile plunged the Court and people into mourning and produced a crisis in the government that threatened the arduously accomplished union of the peninsula with disruption. None mourned the Queen's death more sincerely than did her Italian chaplain. He accompanied the funeral cortège on its long journey to Granada, where the body was laid in the cathedral of the city her victorious arms had restored to the bosom of Christendom. During several months, Martyr lingered in Granada, hesitating before returning uninvited to King Ferdinand's Court. To a letter from the Secretary of State, Perez Almazan, summoning him to rejoin the King without delay, he somewhat coyly answered, deprecating his ability to be of further service to His Majesty, adding, however, that he asked nothing better than to obey the summons. Elsewhere, in one of his Epistles, he states that he returned to the court at Segovia, as representative of his chapter, to secure the continuation of certain revenues paid from the royal treasury to the clergy of Granada.

The political situation created by the Queen's death was both perplexing and menacing.<sup>1</sup> Doña Juana, wife of the Archduke Philip, inherited the crown of Castile from her mother in default of male heirs, but her mental state excluded the possibility of her assuming the functions of government. Already during her mother's lifetime, the health of this unhappy princess, who has passed into history under the title of Juana the Mad, gave rise to serious anxiety. Deserted by the handsome and frivolous Philip at a time when she most required his presence,

<sup>1</sup> The Infante Don Juan died in October, 1497, shortly after his early marriage with the Archduchess Margaret of Austria, and without issue. Isabella, Queen of Portugal, died after giving birth to a son, in whom the three crowns of Portugal, Castile, and Aragon would have been united had the prince not expired in 1500, while still a child. Doña Juana, second daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella and next heir, had married, in 1496, the Archduke Philip of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, and became the mother of Charles I. of Spain, commonly known by his imperial title of Charles V.

she sank into a state of profound melancholy. She waited, in vain, for the return of the husband whom her unreasoning jealousy and amorous importunities had driven from her.

In conformity with the late Queen's wishes, Ferdinand hastened to proclaim his daughter and Philip sovereigns of Castile, reserving to himself the powers of regent. He was willing to gratify the archduke's vanity by conceding him the royal title, while keeping the government in his own hands, and had there been no one but his absent son-in-law with whom to reckon, his policy would have stood a fair chance of success. It was thwarted by the intrigues of a powerful faction amongst the aristocracy, who deemed the opportunity a promising one for recovering some of the privileges of which they had been shorn.

Ferdinand of Aragon had gained little hold on the affections of the people of his wife's dominions, hence his position became one of extreme difficulty. His opponents urged the archduke to hasten his arrival in Spain and to assume the regency in the name of his invalid wife. Rumours that Louis XII. had accorded his son-in-law permission to traverse France at the head of a small army rendered the regency insecure, and to forestall the complication of a possible alliance between Philip and King Louis, Ferdinand, despite his advanced age and the recent death of his wife, asked the hand of a French princess, Germaine de Foix, in marriage, offering to settle the crown of Naples upon her descendants. To conciliate Philip, he proposed to share with him the regency. Upon the arrival of the latter at Coruña in the month of May, Martyr was chosen by the King to repair thither and obtain the archduke's adhesion to this proposal. That the latter had distinguished the Italian savant by admitting him to his intimacy during his former stay in Spain, did not save the mission from failure, and where Peter Martyr failed, Cardinal Ximenes was later equally unsuccessful. Ferdi-



nand ended by yielding and, after a final interview with his son-in-law in Remesal, at which Peter Martyr was present, he left Spain on his way to Naples, the latter remaining with the mad queen to observe and report the course of events.

The sudden death of King Philip augmented the unrest throughout the country, for the disappearance of this ineffective sovereign left the state without even a nominal head. Ferdinand, who had reached Porto Fino when the news was brought to him, made no move to return, confident that the Castilians would soon be forced to invite him to resume the government; on the contrary, he tranquilly continued his journey to Naples. Rivals, he had none, for his grandson, Charles, was still a child, while the unfortunate Juana passed her time in celebrating funeral rites for her dead husband, whose coffin she carried about with her, opening it to contemplate the body, of which she continued to be so jealous that all women were kept rigorously at a distance. A provisional government, formed to act for her, consisted of Cardinal Ximenes, the Constable of Castile and the Duke of Najera, but inspired little confidence. Peter Martyr perceived that, besides Ferdinand, there was no one capable of restoring order and governing the state. He wrote repeatedly to the secretary, Perez Almazan, and to the King himself, urging the latter's speedy return as the country's only salvation from anarchy. Events proved the soundness of his judgment, for the mere news of the King's landing at Valencia sufficed to restore confidence; he resumed the regency unopposed and continued to govern Castile, in his daughter's name, until his own death.

Doña Juana ceased her lugubrious peregrinations and took up her residence in the monastery of Santa Clara at Tordesillas, where she consented to the burial of her husband's body in a spot visible from her windows. Peter Martyr was one of the few persons who saw the unhappy

lady and even gained some influence over her feeble mind. Mazzuchelli states that, at one period, there were but two bishops and Peter Martyr to whom the Queen consented even to listen. Now and again the figure of the insane queen appears like a pallid spectre in Martyr's pages. Her caprices and vagaries are noted from time to time in the *Opus Epistolarum*; indeed the story of her sufferings is all there. The insanity of Doña Juana was not seriously doubted by her contemporaries—certainly not by Martyr, whose portrait of her character is perhaps the most accurate contemporary one we possess. He traces her malady from its incipency, through the successive disquieting manifestations of hysteria, melancholia, and fury, broken by periods of partial and even complete mental lucidity. Such intervals became rarer and briefer as time went on.<sup>1</sup>

Upon the death of King Ferdinand in 1516, the regency devolved upon Cardinal Ximenes, pending the arrival of the young King, Charles, from the Netherlands. The character of Cardinal Ximenes and his methods of government have been extolled by his admirers and condemned by his adversaries. The judgment of Peter Martyr is perhaps the least biassed of any expressed by that statesman's contemporaries. His personal dislike of the Cardinal

<sup>1</sup> The efforts of the historian Bergenroth to establish Doña Juana's sanity and to depict her as the victim of religious persecution because of her suspected orthodoxy have been conclusively refuted by Maurenbrecher, Gachard, and other writers, who have demolished his arguments and censured his methods of research and interpretation. The last mention of Doña Juana in the *Opus Epistolarum* occurs in Epistle DCCCII. Peter Martyr describes the visit paid her by her daughter Isabella, who was about to be married to the Infante of Portugal. The insanity of the Queen was used as a political pawn by both her husband and her father, each affirming or denying as it suited his purpose for the moment. The husband, however, was stronger than the father, for the unhappy Juana would have signed away her crown at his bidding in exchange for a caress. Consult Hoefer, *Doña Juana*; Gachard, *Jeanne la Folle*; Maurenbrecher, *Studien und Skizzen zur Geschichte der Reformationszeit*; Pedro de Alcocer, *Relacion de algunas Cosas*; and Bergenroth's *Calendar of Letters, Despatches, and State Papers*, etc. (1869).

did not blind him to his qualities, nor dull his appreciation of the obstacles with which the latter had to contend. In the *Opus Epistolarum* he seeks, not always with entire success, to do justice to the great regent. Through his laborious efforts to be fair to the statesman, there pierces his personal dislike of the man. Trivial jibes and small criticisms at the Cardinal's expense are not wanting. The writer shared the feeling of the Spanish Grandes, that it was "odious to be governed by a friar." He also derided the Cardinal's military spirit. One of the regent's earliest measures suppressed all pensions, but though he excepted Martyr by name, pending the King's decision, no answer came from the Netherlands; the Italian fared as did other pensioners, and he never forgave the Cardinal. Many of his letters of this period were addressed to his compatriot, Marliano, who was the young King's doctor, and were evidently intended for the monarch's eye. In these epistles, adverse judgments and censures of Cardinal Ximenes frequently recur, and the writer used the greatest frankness in describing men and events in Spain, and even in offering suggestions as to the King's policy upon his arrival.

Yielding to the repeated instances of the regent, Charles finally set out to take possession of his unknown kingdom. He landed, after a tempestuous voyage, near Gijon, bringing with him a numerous train of Flemish courtiers and officials, whose primary interest lay in preventing a meeting between himself and the regent, and whose presence was destined to cause a serious estrangement between the monarch and his Castilian subjects. Their first purpose was easily accomplished. While the Cardinal awaited him near Roa, the King avoided him by proceeding directly to Tordesillas to visit his mother. This ungracious and unmerited snub was applauded by Martyr, who dismissed the incident with almost flippant mention; nor did he afterwards touch upon the aged Cardinal's death

which occurred simultaneously with the reception of the unfeeling message sent by Charles to the greatest, the most faithful and the most disinterested of his servants.<sup>1</sup>

During the opening years of his reign, the boy-king proved a docile pupil under the control of his ministers.<sup>2</sup> Peter Martyr wrote of him: "He directs nothing but is himself directed. He has a happy disposition, is magnanimous, liberal, generous—but what of it, since these qualities contribute to his country's ruin?" So reserved was the royal youth in his manner, so slow of speech, that his mental capacity began to be suspected. People remembered his mother. The story of the troubled beginnings of what proved to be one of the most remarkable reigns in modern history, is related in the *Opus Epistolarum*. The writer watched from vantage-ground the conflict of interests, the strife of parties; zealous for the welfare of his adopted country, he was still a foreigner, identified with no party. Gifted with rare perspicacity, moderation, and keen judgment, he maintained his attitude of impartial observation. By temperament and habit he was an aristocrat—*placet Hispana nobilitas*—he confessed, admitting also that *de populo nil mihi curæ*, yet he sided with the *comuneros* against the Crown. While deploring their excesses, he sympathised with the cause they defended, and he lashed the insolence and the rapacity of the Flemish favourites with all the resources of invective and sarcasm of which he was master. In one

<sup>1</sup>Consult Héfélé, *Vie de Ximenez*; *Cartas de los Secretarios del Cardinal*; Ferrer del Rio, *Comunidades de Castilla*; Ranke, *Spanien unter Karl V.*

<sup>2</sup>Guillaume de Croÿ, Sieur de Chièvres, who had been the young prince's governor during his minority, became all powerful in Spain, where he and his Flemish associates pillaged the treasury, trafficked in benefices and offices, and provoked the universal hatred of the Spaniards. Peter Martyr shared the indignation of his adopted countrymen against the King's Flemish parasites. His sympathies for the *Comuneros* were frankly avowed in numerous of his letters. Consult Hoefler, *Der Aufstand der Castilianischen Städte*; Robertson, *Charles V.*

of his letters (Ep. 709), he describes the disorders everywhere prevalent throughout the country. "The safest roads are no longer secure from brigands and you enrich bandits and criminals, and oppress honest folks. The ruling power is now in the hands of assassins." Despite his undisguised hostility to the Flemings and his outspoken criticisms on the abuses they fomented, Charles V. bestowed new honours and emoluments upon the favoured counsellor of his grandparents. In September, 1518, the Royal Council proposed his name to the King as ambassador to Constantinople, there to treat with the victorious Sultan, whose sanguinary triumphs in Persia and Egypt were feared to foreshadow an Ottoman invasion of Europe. Alleging his advanced age and infirmities, the cautious nominee declined the honour, preferring doubtless to abide by his facile diplomatic laurels won in Cairo. There was reason to anticipate that the formidable Selim would be found less pliant than Cansu Alguri. The event proved his wisdom, as Garcia Loaysa who went in his stead, learned to his cost.

In 1520, Peter Martyr was appointed historiographer, an office yielding a revenue of eighty thousand maravedis. The conscientious discharge of the duties of this congenial post, for which he was conspicuously fitted, won the approval of Mercurino Gattinara, the Italian chancellor of Charles V. Lucio Marineo Siculo speaks of Martyr as far back as December, 1510, as *Consiliarius regius*, though this title could, at that time, be given him only in his quality of chronicler of the India Council, his effective membership really dating from the year 1518. He was later appointed secretary to that important body, which had control over all questions relating to colonial expansion in the new world. In 1521 he renewed his efforts to obtain the abbacy of St. Gratian in Arona, which had been refused him ten years earlier. To his friend, Giovanni di Forli, Archbishop of Cosenza, he wrote, protesting his



disinterestedness, adding: "Don't be astonished that I covet this abbey: you know I am drawn to it by love of my native soil." It was not to be, and his failure to obtain this benefice was one of the severest disappointments of his life. The ambitions of Peter Martyr were never excessive, for he was in all things a man of moderation; the honours he obtained, though many, were sufficiently modest to protect him from the competition and jealousy of aspiring rivals, yet he would certainly not have refused a bishopric. After seeing four royal confessors raised to episcopal rank, he slyly remarked that, "amongst so many confessors, it would have been well to have one Martyr."<sup>1</sup>

Arriving in Spain a foreign scholar of modest repute, and dependent on the protection of his patron, the Count of Tendilla, Peter Martyr had risen in royal favour, until he came to occupy honourable positions in the State and numerous benefices in the Church. His services to his protectors were valued and valuable. His house, wherever he happened for the time to be, was the hospitable meeting-place where statesmen, noblemen, foreign envoys, great ecclesiastics, and papal legates came together with navigators and conquerors, cosmographers, colonial officials, and returning explorers from antipodal regions—Spain's empire builders. It was in such society he collected the mass of first-hand information he sifted and chronicled in the *Decades* and the *Opus Epistolarum*, which have proven such an inexhaustible mine for students of Spanish and Spanish-American history. Truly of him may it be said that nothing human was alien to his spirit. Intercourse with him was prized as a privilege by the great men of his time, while he converted his association with them to his own and posterity's profit.

Amongst the Flemish counsellors of Charles V., Adrian

<sup>1</sup> "Tra tanti confessori, sarebbe stato ancora bene un Martire," *Chevræana*, p. 39. Ed. 1697.

of Utrecht, preceptor of the young prince prior to his accession, had arrived in Spain in the year 1515 as representative of his interests at King Ferdinand's court. Upon that monarch's death, Adrian, who had meantime been made Bishop of Tortosa and created Cardinal, shared the regency with Cardinal Ximenes. A man of gentle manners and scholastic training, his participation in the regency was hardly more than nominal. Ignorant alike of the Spanish tongue and the intricacies of political life, he willingly effaced himself in the shadow of his imperious and masterful colleague. Peter Martyr placed his services entirely at the disposition of Adrian, piloting him amongst the shoals and reefs that rendered perilous the mysterious sea of Spanish politics. When Adrian was elected Pope in 1522, his former mentor wrote felicitating him upon his elevation and reminding him of the services he had formerly rendered him: *Fuistis a me de rebus quæ gerebantur moniti; nec parum commodi ad emergentia tunc negotia significationes meas Cæsaris rebus attulisse vestra Beatitudo fatetur*. Although the newly elected Pontiff expressed an amiable wish to see his old friend in Rome, he offered him no definite position in Curia. The correspondence that ensued between them was inconclusive; Martyr, always declaring that he sought no favour, still persisted in soliciting a meeting which the Pope discouraged. Adrian accepted his protests of disinterestedness literally, and their last meeting at Logroño was unproductive of aught from the Pope, save expressions of personal esteem and regard. Peter Martyr excused himself from following His Holiness to Rome, on the plea of his advanced years and failing health. If disappointed at receiving no definite appointment, he concealed his chagrin, and, though evidently not desiring his services in Curia, one of Adrian's first acts upon arriving in Rome was to invest him with the archpriest's benefice of Ocaña in Spain. The ever generous King was less

niggardly, and, in 1523, conferred upon Martyr the German title of Pfalzgraf, with the privilege of naming imperial notaries and legitimising natural children.

On August 15, 1524, the King presented his name to Clement VII. for confirmation as mitred abbot of Santiago in the island of Jamaica, a benefice rendered vacant by the translation of Don Luis Figueroa to the bishopric of San Domingo and La Concepcion.<sup>1</sup> A greater title would have doubtless pleased him less, since this one linked his name with the Church in the New World, of which he was the first historian. He surrendered his priory of Granada to accept the Jamaican dignity, the revenues from which he devoted to the construction of the first stone church built at Sevilla del 'Oro in that island. Above its portal an inscription bore witness to his generosity: *Petrus Martyr ab Angleria, italus civis mediolanensis, protonotarius apostolicus hujus insulæ, abbas, senatus indici consiliarius, ligneam priusædem hanc bis igne consumptam, latericio et quadrato lapide primus a fundamentis extruxit.*<sup>2</sup>

In the month of June, 1526, the Court took up its residence in Granada with Peter Martyr, as usual, in attendance. Before the walls of Moorish Granada he had begun his career in Spain; within the walls of Christian Granada he was destined to close it and be laid to his final rest. A sufferer during many years from a disease of the liver, he was aware of his approaching end, and made his will on September 23,<sup>3</sup> bequeathing the greater part of the property he had amassed to his nephews and nieces in Lombardy, though none of his friends and serv-

<sup>1</sup> The King instructed his ambassador in Rome to propose Luis Figueroa to succeed Alessandro Geraldino as bishop of Santo Domingo and Concepcion, and for the vacant abbacy of Jamaica *presentareis de nuestra parte al protonotario Pedro Mártir de nuestro Consejo. Dejando tambien Mártir el priorado de Granada que posée*, etc. *Coleccion de Indias*, vii., 449.

<sup>2</sup> Cantu, *Storia Universale*, tom. i., p. 900.

<sup>3</sup> His last will was published in the *Documentos Ineditos*, tom. xxxix., pp. 400-414.



ants in Spain was forgotten. He devoted careful attention to the preparations for his funeral; eminently a friend of order and decorum, he left nothing to chance, but provided for the precise number of masses to be said, the exact amount of wax to be consumed, and the kind of mourning liveries to be worn by his servants. He asked that his body should be borne to its grave by the dean and the canons of the cathedral, an honour to which his dignity of prior of that chapter entitled him; but in order to ensure the chapter's participation, as he quaintly expressed it, "with more goodwill," he set aside a legacy of three thousand maravedis as compensation. Not only were his wishes in this and all respects carried out, but the cathedral chapter erected a tablet to his memory, upon which an epitaph he would not have disdained was inscribed: *Rerum Ætate Nostra Gestarum—Et Novi Orbis Ignoti Hactenus—Illustratori Petro Martyri Mediolanensi—Cæsareo Senatori—Qui, Patria Relicta—Bello Granatensi Miles Interfuit—Mox Urbe Capta, Primum Canonico—Deinde Priori Hujus Ecclesiæ—Decanus Et Capitulum—Carissimo Collegae Posuere Sepulchrum—Anno MDXXVI.*<sup>1</sup>

## V

Peter Martyr was perhaps the first man in Spain to realise the importance of the discovery made by Columbus. Where others beheld but a novel and exciting incident in the history of navigation, he, with all but prophetic forecast, divined an event of unique and far-reaching importance. He promptly assumed the functions of historian of the new epoch whose dawn he

<sup>1</sup> HARRISSE, in his *Christoph Colomb*, fixes upon the 23d or 24th of September as the date of Martyr's death, believing that his last will was executed on his deathbed. There is, however, nothing that absolutely proves that such was the fact. The epitaph gives but the year. In the *Documentos Ineditos* the month of September is given in one place, that of October in another.

presaged, and in the month of October, 1494, he began the series of letters to be known as the Ocean Decades, continuing his labours, with interruptions, until 1526, the year of his death. The value of his manuscripts obtained immediate recognition; they were the only source of authentic information concerning the New World, accessible to men of letters and politicians outside Spain.

His material was new and original; every arriving caravel brought him fresh news; ship-captains, cosmographers, conquerors of fabulous realms in the mysterious west, all reported to him; even the common sailors and camp-followers poured their tales into his discriminating ears. Las Casas averred that Peter Martyr was more worthy of credence than any other Latin writer.<sup>1</sup>

No sooner had Columbus returned from his first voyage than Martyr hastened to announce his success to his friends, Count Tendilla and Archbishop Talavera. *Meministis Colonum Ligurem instituisse in Castris apud reges de percurrendo per occiduos antipodes novo terrarum hæmisphærio; meminisse oportet.* He was present in Barcelona and witnessed the reception accorded the successful discoverer by the Catholic sovereigns. He, who had gone forth an obscure adventurer upon whose purposes, and even sanity, doubts had been cast, returned, a Grandee of Spain, Admiral of the Ocean, and Viceroy of the Indies. In the presence of the court, standing, he, alone, by invitation of the sovereigns, sat. The ambassadors from his native Republic of Genoa, Marchisio and Grimaldi, witnessed the exaltation of their fellow countryman with eyes that hardly trusted their own vision.

An alien amidst the most exclusive and jealous of occidental peoples, Martyr's abilities and fidelity won a recog-

<sup>1</sup> Las Casas, *Histo. de las Indias.*, tom. ii, p. 272: *A Pedro Martyr se le debe was credito que à otro ninguno de los que escribieran en latin, porque se hallo entonces en Castilla por aquellos tiempos y hablaba con todos, y todos holgaban de le dar cuenta de lo que vian y hallaban, como à hombre de autioridad y el que tenia cuidado de preguntarlo.*

nition from the successive monarchs he served, that was only equalled by the voluntary tributes of respect and affection paid him by the generation of Spanish nobles whose characters he was so influential in forming. Of all the Italians who invaded Spain in search of fortune and glory, he was the most beloved because he was the most trusted. Government functionaries sought his protection, Franciscan and Dominican missionaries gave him their confidence and, after he was appointed to a seat in the India Council, he had official cognisance of all correspondence relating to American affairs. Prior to the appearance in Spain of the celebrated Letters of Cortes, Peter Martyr's narrative stood alone. Heidenheimer rightly describes him: *Als echter Kind seiner Zeit, war Peter Martyr Lehrer und Gelehrter, Soldat und Priester, Schriftsteller und Diplomat*. It was characteristic of the epoch of the Renaissance that a man of culture should embrace all branches of learning, thus Martyr's observation extended over the broadest field of human knowledge. Diligent, discriminating, and conscientious, he was keen, clever, and tactful, not without touches of dry humour, but rarely brilliant. Scientific questions, the variations of the magnetic pole, calculations of latitude and longitude, the newly discovered Gulf Stream and the *mare sargassum*, and the whereabouts of a possible strait uniting the Atlantic with the Pacific Ocean, occupied his speculations. Likewise are the flora and the fauna of the New World described to his readers, as they were described to him by the home-coming explorers. Pages of his writings are devoted to the inhabitants of the islands and of the mainland, their customs and superstitions, their religions and forms of government. He has tales of giants, harpies, mermaids, and sea-serpents. Wild men living in trees, Amazons dwelling on lonely islands, cannibals scouring seas and forests in search of human prey, figure in his narrative. Erroneous facts, mistaken judg-

ments due to a credulity that may seem to us ingenuous, are frequent, but it must be borne in mind that he worked without a pre-established plan, his chronicle developing as fresh material reached him; also that he wrote at a time when the world seemed each day to expand before the astonished eyes of men, revealing magic isles floating in unknown seas, vaster horizons in whose heavens novel constellations gleamed; mysterious ocean currents, flowing whence no man knew, to break upon the shores of immense continents inhabited by strange races, living amidst conditions of fabulous wealth and incredible barbarism. The limits of the possible receded, discrimination between truth and fiction became purely speculative, since new data, uninterruptedly supplied, contradicted former experience and invalidated accepted theories. The Decades were compiled from verbal and written reports from sources the writer was warranted in trusting.

Since geographical surprises are now exhausted, and the division of land and water on the earth's surface has passed from the sphere of navigation into that of politics, no writer will ever again have such material at his disposition. The arrival of his letters in Italy was eagerly awaited and constituted a literary event of the first magnitude. Popes sent him messages urging him to continue, the King of Naples borrowed copies from Cardinal Sforza, and the contents of these romantic chronicles furnished the most welcome staple of conversation in palaces and universities. Leo X. had them read aloud during supper, in the presence of his sister and a chosen group of cardinals. It must be noted that the form of the Decades did not escape criticism at the pontifical court, nor did the censures, passed on the liberties he took with the tongue of Cicero, fail to reach and sting his ears. In several passages, he defends his use of words taken from the Italian and Spanish languages. He handled Latin as a living, not as a dead language, and his style is vigorous, terse, vital-

ised. He cultivated brevity and was chary of lengthy excursions into the classics in search of comparisons and sanctions. His letters frequently show signs of the haste in which they were composed: sometimes the messenger who was to carry them to Rome, was waiting, booted and spurred, in the ante-chamber. Juan Vergara, secretary to Cardinal Ximenes, declared his opinion that no more exact and lucid record of contemporary events existed than the letters of Peter Martyr, adding that he had himself often been present and witnessed with what haste they were written, no care being taken to correct and polish their style.

The cultivated ears of Ciceronian Latinists—such as Cardinal Bembo who refused to read the Vulgate for fear of spoiling his style—were naturally offended by the phraseology of the Decades. Measured by standards so precious, the Latin of Peter Martyr is faulty and crude, resembling rather a modern dialect than the classical tongue of ancient Rome.<sup>1</sup>

It is their substance, not their form, that gives Martyr's writings their value, though his facile style is not devoid of elegance, if measured by other than severely classical standards. Not as a man of letters, but as an historian does he enjoy the perennial honour to which in life he aspired. Observation is the foundation of history, and Martyr was pre-eminently a keen and discriminating observer, a diligent and conscientious chronicler of the events he observed, hence are the laurels of the historian equitably his. Similar to the hasty entries in a journal, daily written, his letters possess an unstudied freshness, a convincing actuality, that would undoubtedly have been

<sup>1</sup> Ciampi's comment is accurate and just: *Non sì, può dire che sia un latino bellissimo. E quale lo parlavano e scriveano gli uomini d'affari. A noi è, pero, men discaro che non sia ai forestieri, in quanto che noi troviamo dentro il movimento, il frassegiare proprio della nostra lingua, e sotto la frase incolta latina, indoviniamo il pensiero nato in italiano che, spogliato da noi della veste imbarazzante ci ritorna ignudo sì, ma schietto ed efficace.*



marred by the retouching required to perfect their literary style. The reproach of carelessness in neglecting to systematise his manuscripts applies more to the collection in the *Opus Epistolarum* than to the letters composing the Decades which we are especially considering, and likewise in the former work are found those qualities of lightness and frivolity, justifying Sir Arthur Helps's description of him as a gossipy man of letters, reminding English readers occasionally of Horace Walpole and Mr. Pepys. Hakluyt praised his descriptions of natural phenomena as excelling those penned by Aristotle, Pliny, Theophrastus, and Columella.<sup>1</sup>

After a period of partial oblivion, Alexander von Humboldt, in the early years of the nineteenth century, rediscovered the neglected merits of our author and, by his enlightened criticism and commentaries, restored to his writings the consideration they had originally enjoyed. Ratified by Prescott, Humboldt's judgment has been confirmed by all subsequent historians.

No further claim is made for this present translation of the Decades than fidelity and lucidity. Its purpose is to render more easily accessible to English readers, unfamiliar with the original Latin, the earliest historical work on the New World.

<sup>1</sup> Lebrija praised Martyr's verses, declaring him to be the best poet amongst the Italians in Spain. One of his poems, *Pluto Furens*, was dedicated to Alexander VI., whom he cordially detested and whose election to the papal chair he deplored. Unfortunately none of his poems has been preserved.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### EDITIONS OF PETER MARTYR'S WORKS

*P. Martyris Angli [sic] mediolanensis opera. Legatio Babylonica, Oceani Decas, Poemata, Epigrammata.* Cum privilegio. Impressum Hispali cum summa diligentia per Jacobum Corumberger Alemanum, anno millesimo quingentesimo XI, mense vero Aprili, in fol.

This Gothic edition contains only the First Decade.

Two Italian books compiled from the writings of Peter Martyr antedate the above edition of 1511. Angelo Trevisan, secretary to the Venetian ambassador in Spain, forwarded to Domenico Malipiero certain material which he admitted having obtained from a personal friend of Columbus, who went as envoy to the Sultan of Egypt. The reference to Peter Martyr is sufficiently clear. The work of Trevisan appeared in 1504 under the title, *Libretto di tutta la navigazione del re di Spagna de le isole et terreni novamente trovati*. Published by Albertino Vercellese da Lisbona. Three years later, in 1507, a compilation containing parts of this same work was printed at Vicenza by Fracanzio, at Milan by Arcangelo Madrignano in 1508, and at Basle and Paris by Simon Gryneo. The volume was entitled *Pæsi novamente ritrovati et Novo Mondo*, etc. Peter Martyr attributed the piracy to Aloisio da Cadamosto, whom he consequently scathingly denounces in the seventh book of the Second Decade.

In the year 1516 the first edition of the Decades, *De rebus oceanis et Orbe Novo Decades tres*, etc., was printed at Alcalá de Henares under the supervision of Peter Martyr's friend,

the eminent Latinist, Antonio de Nebrija, who even took care to polish the author's Latin where the composition fell short of his own exacting standard. *Cura et diligentia Antonii Nebrisensis fuerent hæ tres protonotari Petri Martyris decades impressas in contubernio Arnaldi Guillelmi in illustri oppido Carpelanæ provinciæ, compluto quod vulgariter dicitur Alcalá.* Factum est nonis Novembris, anno 1516 in fol. The appearance of this edition had the character of a veritable literary event and the success of the work was immediate and widespread. The narrative covered a period of somewhat more than twenty years, beginning with the first expedition of Columbus.

Four years later a Fourth Decade was published by its author, this being the last work he gave to the press during his lifetime. The earliest known copy was printed in Basle in 1521, the title being *De insulis nuper repertis simultaque incolarum moribus.* An Italian and a German edition of the same in 1520 are noted by HARRISSE. (Consult *Bibliotheca Americana Vetusissima*, p. 77, Additions, p. 80.)

*De Insulis nuper inventis Ferdinandi Cortesii ad Carolum V. Rom. Imperatorem Narrationes, cum alio quodam Petri Martyris ad Clementem VII. Pontificem Maximum consimilis argumenti libello.* Coloniae ex officina Melchioris Novesiani, anno MDXXXII. Decimo Kalendar Septembris.

The Fourth Decade under the title, *De Insulis nuper inventis*, etc., was republished in Basle in 1533 and again in Antwerp in 1536.

*De Legatione Babylonica*, Parisiis, 1532, contains also the first three Decades. Mazzuchelli mentions an edition of the eight Decades published in Paris in 1536.

*De Orbe Novo Petri Martyris ab Angleria, mediolanensis protonotarii Cæsaris senatoris Decades.* Cum privilegio imperiali. Compluti apud Michælem d'Eguia, anno MDXXX, in fol.

*De rebus Oceanicis et Novo Orbe Decades tres Petri Martyres ab Angheria Mediolanensis, item ejusdem de Babylonica*



*Legationis libri tres. Et item, De Rebus Æthiopicis, etc.* Coloniae, apud Gervinum Caleniumet hæredes Quentelios. MDLXXIII.

*De Orbe Novo Petri Martyris Anglerii mediolanensis, protonotarii et Caroli quinti Senatoris, decades octo, diligente temporum observatione et utilissimis annotationibus illustratæ, suoque nitore restitutæ labore et industria Richardi Hakluyti Oxoniensis, Arnghi.* Parisiis apud Guillelmum Auvray, 1587.

This edition is dedicated to Sir Walter Raleigh: "*illustri et magannimo viro Gualtero Ralegho.*"

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## The First Decade









Cardinal Ascanio Sforza.

From the Medallion by Luini, in the Museum at Milan.

Photo by Anderson, Rome.



## BOOK I

PETER MARTYR, APOSTOLIC PROTONOTARY AND ROYAL  
COUNSELLOR TO THE VISCOUNT ASCANIO SFORZA,  
CARDINAL VICE-CHANCELLOR

**I**T was a gentle custom of the ancients to number amongst the gods those heroes by whose genius and greatness of soul unknown lands were discovered. Since we, however, only render homage to one God in Three Persons, and consequently may not adore the discoverers of new lands, it remains for us to offer them our admiration. Likewise should we admire the sovereigns under whose inspiration and auspices the intentions of the discoverers were realised; let us praise the one and the other, and exalt them according to their merits.

Attend now to what is told concerning the recently discovered islands in the Western ocean. Since you have expressed in your letters a desire for information I will, to avoid doing injustice to any one, recount the events from their beginnings.

A certain Christopher Columbus, a Genoese, proposed to the Catholic King and Queen, Ferdinand and Isabella, to discover the islands which touch the Indies, by sailing from the western extremity of this country. He asked for ships and whatever was necessary to navigation, promising not only to propagate the Christian religion, but also certainly to bring back pearls, spices and gold beyond anything ever imagined. He succeeded in per-

suading them and, in response to his demands, they provided him at the expense of the royal treasury with three ships<sup>1</sup>; the first having a covered deck, the other two being merchantmen without decks, of the kind called by the Spaniards *caravels*. When everything was ready Columbus sailed from the coast of Spain, about the calends of September in the year 1492, taking with him about 220 Spaniards.<sup>2</sup>

The Fortunate Isles, or, as the Spaniards call them, the Canaries, were long since discovered in the middle of the ocean. They are distant from Cadiz about three hundred leagues; for, according to the masters of the art of navigation, each marine league is equal to four thousand paces.<sup>3</sup> In ancient times these islands were called Fortunate, because of the mild temperature they enjoyed. The islanders suffered neither from the heat of summer nor the rigours of winter: some authors consider that the real Fortunate Isles correspond to the archipelago which the Portuguese have named Cape Verde. If they are at present called the Canaries, it is because they are inhabited by men who are naked and have no religion. They lie to the south and are outside European climates. Columbus stopped there to replenish his supply of provisions and

<sup>1</sup> This statement is not absolutely exact, as the funds came from various sources. Columbus, assisted by the Pinzon brothers of Palos, furnished one eighth of the amount, or the cost of one vessel. Two vessels were supplied by the town of Palos, in response to a royal order; the town owing such service to the crown. The ready money required was advanced by Santangel, receiver of the ecclesiastical revenues of Aragon.

<sup>2</sup> From Palos on August 3d, 1492. The inscription on the floor of Seville Cathedral reads: *con tres galeras y 90 personas*. It follows that Peter Martyr's figures are exaggerated, for only Oviedo amongst early authorities exceeds the number ninety, and he numbers the united crews at 120 men.

<sup>3</sup> According to the computations of Columbus, four miles were equal to one marine league; the Italian mile, assumed to have been used by him, was equal to 1842 English feet. Fifty-six and two-thirds miles were equal to a degree.

water, and to rest his crew before starting on the difficult part of his enterprise.

Since we are speaking of the Canaries, it may not be thought uninteresting to recall how they were discovered and civilised. During many centuries they were unknown or rather forgotten. It was about the year 1405 that a Frenchman called Bethencourt<sup>1</sup> rediscovered the seven Canaries. They were conceded to him in gift by the Queen Katherine, who was Regent during the minority of her son John. Bethencourt lived several years in the archipelago, where he took possession of the two islands of Lancerote and Fuerteventura, and civilised their inhabitants. Upon his death, his heir sold these two islands to the Spaniards. Afterwards Ferdinando Pedraria and his wife landed upon two other of the Canaries, Ferro and Gomera. Within our own times the Grand Canary was conquered by Pedro de Vera, a Spanish nobleman from Xeres; Palma and Teneriffe were conquered by Alonzo de Lugo, but at the cost of the royal treasury. The islands of Gomera and Ferro were conquered by the same Lugo, but not without difficulty; for the natives, although they lived naked in the woods and had no other arms than sticks and stones, surprised his soldiers one day and killed about four hundred of them. He finally succeeded in subduing them, and to-day the whole archipelago recognises the Spanish authority.

Upon leaving these islands and heading straight to the west, with a slight deviation to the south-west, Columbus sailed thirty-three successive days without seeing anything but sea and sky. His companions began to murmur in secret, for at first they concealed their discontent, but

<sup>1</sup> Maciot de Bethencourt. Consult Bergeron, *Histoire de la première découverte et conquête des îles Canaries*; Pascal d'Avezac, *Notice des découvertes . . . dans l'océan Atlantique*, etc., Paris, 1845; Viera y Clavigo, *Historia gênerál de las islas de Canaria*, 1773; also the works of Major, Barker-Webb, Sabin Berthelot, and Bory de St. Vincent.



soon, openly, desiring to get rid of their leader, whom they even planned to throw into the sea. They considered that they had been deceived by this Genoese, who was leading them to some place from whence they could never return. After the thirtieth day they angrily demanded that he should turn back and go no farther; Columbus, by using gentle words, holding out promises and flattering their hopes, sought to gain time, and he succeeded in calming their fears; finally also reminding them that if they refused him their obedience or attempted violence against him, they would be accused of treason by their sovereigns. To their great joy, the much-desired land was finally discovered.<sup>1</sup> During this first voyage Columbus visited six islands, two of which were of extraordinary magnitude; one of these he named Hispaniola, and the other Juana,<sup>2</sup> though he was not positive that the latter was an island. While sailing along the coasts of these islands, in the month of November, the Spaniards heard nightingales singing in the dense forests, and they discovered great rivers of fresh water, and natural harbours sufficient for the largest fleets. Columbus reconnoitred the coast of Juana in a straight line towards the north-west for no less than eight hundred thousand paces or eighty leagues, which led him to believe that it was a continent, since as far as the eye could reach, no signs of any limits

<sup>1</sup> Land was discovered on the morning of October 12th, Julian calendar. Efforts to identify the island on which Columbus first landed have been numerous. The natives called it Guanahani and Columbus named it San Salvador. Muñoz believed it to be the present Watling's Island; Humboldt and Washington Irving thought Cat Island more likely, while Navarrete identified it as Grand Turk. Captain G. V. Fox, U. S. N., published in Appendix 18 to the Report for 1880, the conclusions he had reached after exhaustive examinations conducted in the Bahamas, with which islands and their seas long service had made him familiar. He selected Samana or Atwood Cay as the first land discovered.

<sup>2</sup> In honour of the Infante Don Juan, heir to the Castilian crown. It has, however, always borne its native name of Cuba.



to the island were perceptible. He decided to return,<sup>1</sup> also because of the tumultuous sea, for the coast of Juana towards the north is very broken, and at that winter season, the north winds were dangerous to his ships. Laying his course eastwards, he held towards an island which he believed to be the island of Ophir; examination of the maps, however, shows that it was the Antilles and neighbouring islands. He named this island Hispaniola. Having decided to land, Columbus put in towards shore, when the largest of his ships struck a concealed rock and was wrecked. Fortunately the reef stood high in the water, which saved the crew from drowning; the other two boats quickly approached, and all the sailors were taken safely on board.

It was at this place that the Spaniards, on landing, first beheld the islanders. Upon seeing strangers approaching, the natives collected and fled into the depths of the forests like timid hares pursued by hounds. The Spaniards followed them, but only succeeded in capturing one woman, whom they took on board their ships, where they gave her plenty of food and wine and clothes (for both sexes lived absolutely naked and in a state of nature); afterwards this woman, who knew where the fugitives were concealed, returned to her people, to whom she showed her ornaments, praising the liberality of the Spaniards; upon which they all returned to the coast, convinced that the newcomers were descended from heaven. They swam out to the ships, bringing gold, of which they had a small quantity, which they exchanged gladly for trifles of glass or pottery. For a needle, a bell, a fragment of mirror, or any such thing, they gladly gave in exchange whatever gold was asked of them, or all that they had about them. As soon as more intimate relations were established and the Spaniards came to understand

<sup>1</sup> But for this infelicitous change in his course, Columbus must have discovered the coast of Mexico.

the local customs, they gathered by signs and by conjectures that the islanders were governed by kings. When they landed from their ships they were received with great honour by these kings and by all the natives, making every demonstration of homage of which they were capable. At sunset, the hour of the Angelus, the Spaniards knelt according to Christian custom, and their example was immediately followed by the natives. The latter likewise adored the Cross as they saw the Christians doing.<sup>1</sup>

These people also brought off the men from the wrecked ship, as well as all it contained, transporting everything in barques which they called canoes. They did this with as much alacrity and joy as though they were saving their own relatives; and certainly amongst ourselves greater charity could not have been displayed.

Their canoes are constructed out of single tree-trunks, which they dig out with tools of sharpened stone. They are very long and narrow, and are made of a single piece of wood. It is alleged that some have been seen capable of carrying eighty rowers. It has been nowhere discovered that iron is used by the natives of Hispaniola. Their houses are most ingeniously constructed, and all the objects they manufacture for their own use excited the admiration of the Spaniards. It is positive that they make their tools out of very hard stones found in the streams, and which they polish.

The Spaniards learned that there were other islands not far distant, inhabited by fierce peoples who live on human flesh; this explained why the natives of Hispaniola fled so promptly on their arrival. They told the Spaniards

<sup>1</sup> The first report Columbus made to the Catholic sovereigns was most flattering to the American aborigines. *Certifico a vuestras altezas que en el mundo creo que no hay mejor gente ni mejor tierra: ellos aman a sus proximos como a si mismo.* Like most generalisations, these were found, upon closer acquaintance with native character and customs, to be too comprehensive as well as inaccurate.

later that they had taken them for the cannibals, which is the name they give to these barbarians. They also call them *Caraibes*. The islands inhabited by these monsters lie towards the south, and about half-way to the other islands. The inhabitants of Hispaniola, who are a mild people, complained that they were exposed to frequent attacks from the cannibals who landed amongst them and pursued them through the forests like hunters chasing wild beasts. The cannibals captured children, whom they castrated, just as we do chickens and pigs we wish to fatten for the table, and when they were grown and become fat they ate them.<sup>1</sup> Older persons, who fell into their power, were killed and cut into pieces for food; they also ate the intestines and the extremities, which they salted, just as we do hams. They did not eat women, as this would be considered a crime and an infamy. If they captured any women, they kept them and cared for them, in order that they might produce children; just as we do with hens, sheep, mares, and other animals. Old women, when captured, were made slaves. The inhabitants of these islands (which, from now on we may consider ours), women and men, have no other means of escaping capture by the cannibals, than by flight. Although they use wooden arrows with sharpened points, they are aware that these arms are of little use against the fury and violence of their enemies, and they all admit that ten cannibals could easily overcome a hundred of their own men in a pitched battle.

Although these people adore the heavens and the stars, their religion is not yet sufficiently understood; as for their other customs, the brief time the Spaniards stopped there and the want of interpreters did not allow full information to be obtained. They eat roots which in size and form resemble our turnips, but which in taste are similar to our

<sup>1</sup> See Henry Harrisse, *Christophe Colombe*, ii., p. 72. Letter of Simone Verde to Nicoli.

tender chesnuts. These they call *ages*. Another root which they eat they call *yucca*; and of this they make bread. They eat the *ages* either roasted or boiled, or made into bread. They cut the *yucca*, which is very juicy, into pieces, mashing and kneading it and then baking it in the form of cakes. It is a singular thing that they consider the juice of the *yucca* to be more poisonous than that of the *aconite*, and upon drinking it, death immediately follows. On the other hand, bread made from this paste is very appetising and wholesome: all the Spaniards have tried it. The islanders also easily make bread with a kind of millet, similar to that which exists plenteously amongst the Milanese and Andalusians. This millet is a little more than a palm in length, ending in a point, and is about the thickness of the upper part of a man's arm. The grains are about the form and size of peas. While they are growing, they are white, but become black when ripe. When ground they are whiter than snow. This kind of grain is called *maiz*.

The islanders set some value on gold and wear it in the form of fine leaves, fixed in the lobes of their ears and their nostrils. As soon as our compatriots were certain that they had no commercial relations with other peoples and no other coasts than those of their own islands, they asked them by signs whence they procured the gold. As nearly as could be conjectured, the natives obtain gold from the sands of the rivers which flow down from the high mountains. This process was not a difficult one. Before beating it into leaves, they form it into ingots; but none was found in that part of the island where the Spaniards had landed. It was shortly afterwards discovered, for when the Spaniards left that locality and landed at another point to obtain fresh water and to fish, they discovered a river of which the stones contained flakes of gold.

With the exception of three kinds of rabbits, no quadruped is found in these islands. There are serpents, but

they are not dangerous. Wild geese, turtle-doves, ducks of a larger size than ours, with plumage as white as that of a swan, and red heads, exist. The Spaniards brought back with them some forty parrots, some green, others yellow, and some having vermilion collars like the parakeets of India, as described by Pliny; and all of them have the most brilliant plumage. Their wings are green or yellow, but mixed with bluish or purple feathers, presenting a variety which enchants the eye. I have wished, most illustrious Prince, to give you these details about the parrots; and although the opinion of Columbus<sup>†</sup> seems to be contradictory to the theories of the ancients concerning the size of the globe and its circumnavigation, the birds and many other objects brought thence seem to indicate that these islands do belong, be it by proximity or by their products, to India; particularly when one recalls what Aristotle, at the end of his treatise *De Cælo et Mundo*, and Seneca, and other learned cosmographers have always affirmed, that India was only separated from the west coast of Spain by a very small expanse of sea.

Mastic, aloes, cotton, and similar products flourish in abundance. Silky kinds of cotton grow upon trees as in China; also rough-coated berries of different colours more pungent to the taste than Caucasian pepper; and twigs cut from the trees, which in their form resemble cinnamon, but in taste, odour, and the outer bark, resemble ginger.

Happy at having discovered this unknown land, and to have found indications of a hitherto unknown continent, Columbus resolved to take advantage of favouring winds and the approach of spring to return to Europe; but he left thirty-eight of his companions under the protection of the king of whom I have spoken, in order that they might, during his absence, acquaint themselves with the

<sup>†</sup> Columbus died in the belief that the countries he had discovered formed part of the Indies. They were thus described officially by the Spanish sovereigns.



country and its condition. After signing a treaty of friendship with this king who was called by his enemies Guaccanarillo,<sup>1</sup> Columbus took all precautions for ensuring the health, the life, and the safety of the men whom he left behind. The king, touched with pity for these voluntary exiles, shed abundant tears, and promised to render them every assistance in his power. After mutual embraces, Columbus gave the order to depart for Spain. He took with him six islanders,<sup>2</sup> thanks to whom all the words of their language have been written down with Latin characters. Thus they call the heavens *tueri*, a house *boa*, gold *cauni*, a virtuous man *taino*, nothing *nagani*. They pronounce all these names just as distinctly as we do Latin.

You are now acquainted with such details concerning this first voyage as it has seemed expedient to me to record. The King and Queen, who, above everything and even in their sleep, thought about the propagation of the Christian faith, hoping that these numerous and gentle peoples might be easily converted to our religion, experienced the liveliest emotions upon hearing these news. Columbus was received upon his return with the great honour he merited for what he had accomplished.<sup>3</sup> They bade him sit in their presence, which for the Spanish sovereigns is regarded as a proof of the greatest friendship and the highest mark of gratitude. They commanded that henceforward Columbus should be called "*Præfectus Marinus*," or, in the Spanish tongue, *Amiral*. His brother Bartholomew, likewise very proficient in the art of navigation, was honoured by them with the title of Prefect of the Island of Hispaniola, which is in the vulgar

<sup>1</sup> Otherwise Guacanagari.

<sup>2</sup> One of these Indians died at sea on the voyage, and three others landed very ill at Palos; the remaining six were presented to Ferdinand and Isabella at Barcelona, and were afterwards baptised.

<sup>3</sup> The historian Oviedo, who was present, describes the reception of Columbus at Barcelona. *Hist. Nat. de las Indias*, tom. ii., p. 7.

tongue called *Adelantado*.<sup>1</sup> To make my meaning clear I shall henceforth employ these usual words of Admiral and Adelantado as well as the terms which are now commonly used in navigation. But let us return to our narrative.

It was thought, as Columbus had moreover declared in the beginning, that in these islands would be found riches such as all struggle to obtain. There were two motives which determined the royal pair to plan a second expedition, for which they ordered seventeen ships to be equipped; three of these were vessels with covered decks, twelve were of the kind called caravels by the Spaniards, which had none, and two were larger caravels, of which the height of the masts made it possible to adapt decks. The equipment of this fleet was confided to Juan de Fonseca, Dean of Seville, a man of illustrious birth, of genius and initiative.<sup>2</sup> In obedience to his orders more than twelve hundred foot-soldiers, amongst whom were all sorts of labourers and numerous artisans, were commanded to embark. Some noblemen were found amongst the company. The Admiral took on board mares, sheep, cows and the corresponding males for the propagation of their species; nor did he forget vegetables, grain, barley, and similar seeds, not only for provisions but also for sowing; vines and young plants such as were wanting in that country were carefully taken. In fact the Spaniards have not found any tree in that island which was known to them except pines and palms; and even the palms were extraordinarily high, very hard, slender, and straight, owing, no doubt, to the fertility of the soil. Even the fruits they produce in abundance were unknown.

<sup>1</sup> This statement is premature; Bartholomew's appointment was made considerably later.

<sup>2</sup> The evil that has been attributed to Juan Fonseca, Bishop of Burgos, may exceed his dues, but the praise here and elsewhere given him by Peter Martyr is excessive and all but unique. That he cordially hated Columbus and after him Cortes, Las Casas and most of the men of action in the New World, is undeniable.



The Spaniards declare that there is not in the whole universe a more fertile region. The Admiral ordered his work people to take with them the tools of their trades, and in general everything necessary to build a new city. Won by the accounts of the Admiral and attracted by the love of novelty, some of the more intimate courtiers also decided to take part in this second voyage. They sailed from Cadiz with a favourable wind, the seventh day of the calends of October in the year of grace 1493.<sup>1</sup> On the calends they touched the Canaries. The last of the Canaries is called Ferro by the Spaniards. There is no potable water on it, save a kind of dew produced by one sole tree standing upon the most lofty point of the whole island; and from which it falls drop by drop into an artificial trough. From this island, Columbus put to sea the third day of the ides of October. We have learned this news a few days after his departure. You shall hear the rest later. Fare you well.

From the Court of Spain, the ides of November, 1493.

<sup>1</sup> The sailing date was Sept. 25, 1493.

## BOOK II

TO THE VISCOUNT ASCANIO SFORZA, CARDINAL VICE-  
CHANCELLOR

YOU renew to me, Most Illustrious Prince, your desire to know all that treats of the Spanish discoveries in the New World. You have let me know that the details I have given you concerning the first voyage pleased you; listen now to the continuation of events.

Medina del Campo is a town of Ulterior Spain, as it is called in Italy, or of Old Castile, as it is called here. It is distant about four hundred miles from Cadiz. While the Court sojourned there the ninth day of the calends of April, messengers sent to the King and Queen informed them that twelve ships returning from the islands had arrived at Cadiz, after a happy voyage. The commander of the squadron did not wish to say more by the messengers to the King and Queen except that the Admiral had stopped with five ships and nine hundred men at Hispaniola, which he wished to explore. He wrote that he would give further details by word of mouth. The eve of the nones of April, this commander of the squadron, who was the brother of the nurse of the eldest royal princes, arrived at Medina, being sent by Columbus. I questioned him and other trustworthy witnesses, and shall now repeat what they told me, hoping by so doing to render myself agreeable to you. What I learned from their mouths you shall now in turn learn from me.

The third day of the ides of October the Spaniards left the island of Ferro,<sup>1</sup> which is the most distant of the Canaries from Europe, and put out upon the high seas in seventeen ships. Twenty-one full days passed before they saw any land; driven by the north wind they were carried much farther to the south-west than on the first voyage, and thus they arrived at the archipelago of the cannibals, or the Caribs, which we only know from the descriptions given by the islanders. The first island they discovered was so thickly wooded that there was not an inch of bare or stony land. As the discovery took place on a Sunday, the Admiral wished to call the island Domingo.<sup>2</sup> It was supposed to be deserted, and he did not stop there. He calculated that they had covered 820 leagues in these twenty-one days. The ships had always been driven forward by the south-west wind. At some little distance from Domingo other islands were perceived, covered with trees, of which the trunks, roots, and leaves exhaled sweet odours. Those who landed to visit the island found neither men nor animals, except lizards of extraordinarily great size. This island they called Galana. From the summit of a promontory, a mountain was visible on the horizon and thirty miles distant from that mountain a river of important breadth descended into the plain. This was the first inhabited land<sup>3</sup> found since leaving the Canaries, but it was inhabited by those odious cannibals, of whom they had only heard by report, but have now learned to know, thanks to those interpreters whom the Admiral had taken to Spain on his first voyage.

While exploring the island, numerous villages, composed of twenty or thirty houses each, were discovered; in

<sup>1</sup> The chronology throughout is erroneous. Columbus had sailed from Cadiz on September 25th, arriving at Gomera on October 5th.

<sup>2</sup> The first island was discovered on November 3d, and was named La Deseada, or The Desired; five others, including Domingo and Maria Galante were discovered on the same date.

<sup>3</sup> The island of Guadeloupe, called by the natives Caracueira.

the centre is a public square, round which the houses are placed in a circle. And since I am speaking about these houses, it seems proper that I should describe them to you. It seems they are built entirely of wood in a circular form. The construction of the building is begun by planting in the earth very tall trunks of trees; by means of them, shorter beams are placed in the interior and support the outer posts. The extremities of the higher ones are brought together in a point, after the fashion of a military tent. These frames they then cover with palm and other leaves, ingeniously interlaced, as a protection against rain. From the shorter beams in the interior they suspend knotted cords made of cotton or of certain roots similar to rushes, and on these they lay coverings.<sup>1</sup>

The island produces cotton such as the Spaniards call *algodon* and the Italians *bombasio*. The people sleep on these suspended beds or on straw spread upon the floor. There is a sort of court surrounded by houses where they assemble for games. They call their houses *boios*. The Spaniards noticed two wooden statues, almost shapeless, standing upon two interlaced serpents, which at first they took to be the gods of the islanders; but which they later learned were placed there merely for ornament. We have already remarked above that it is believed they adore the heavens; nevertheless, they make out of cotton-fabric certain masks, which resemble imaginary goblins they think they have seen in the night.

But let us return to our narrative. Upon the arrival of the Spaniards, the islanders, both men and women, abandoned their houses and fled. About thirty women and children whom they had captured in the neighbouring islands and kept either as slaves or to be eaten, took refuge with the Spaniards. In the houses were found pots of all kinds, jars and large earthen vessels, boxes and tools

<sup>1</sup> Hammocks, which are still commonly used in *tierra caliente* of the West Indies, Mexico, and Central America.

resembling ours. Birds were boiling in their pots, also geese mixed with bits of human flesh, while other parts of human bodies were fixed on spits, ready for roasting. Upon searching another house the Spaniards found arm and leg bones, which the cannibals carefully preserve for pointing their arrows; for they have no iron. All other bones, after the flesh is eaten, they throw aside. The Spaniards discovered the recently decapitated head of a young man still wet with blood. Exploring the interior of the island they discovered seven rivers,<sup>1</sup> without mentioning a much larger watercourse similar to the Guadalquivir at Cordoba and larger than our Ticino, of which the banks were deliciously umbrageous. They gave the name of Guadaloupe to this island because of the resemblance one of its mountains bore to the Mount Guadaloupe, celebrated for its miraculous statue of the Virgin Immaculate. The natives call their island Caracueira, and it is the principal one inhabited by the Caribs. The Spaniards took from Guadaloupe seven parrots larger than pheasants, and totally unlike any other parrots in colour. Their entire breast and back are covered with purple plumes, and from their shoulders fall long feathers of the same colour, as I have often remarked in Europe is the case with the capons peasants raise. The other feathers are of various colours,—green, bluish, purple, or yellow. Parrots are as numerous in all these islands as sparrows or other small birds are with us; and just as we keep magpies, thrushes, and similar birds to fatten them, so do these islanders also keep birds to eat, though their forests are full of parrots.

The female captives who had taken refuge with our people received by the Admiral's order some trifling presents, and were begged by signs to go and hunt for the cannibals, for they knew their place of concealment. In fact they went back to the men during the night, and

<sup>1</sup> In reality, these so-called rivers were unimportant mountain torrents.

the following morning returned with several cannibals who were attracted by the hope of receiving presents; but when they saw our men, these savages, whether because they were afraid or because they were conscious of their crimes, looked at one another, making a low murmur, and then, suddenly forming into a wedge-shaped group, they fled swiftly, like a flock of birds, into the shady valleys.

Having called together his men who had passed some days exploring the interior of the island, Columbus gave the signal for departure. He took no cannibal with him, but he ordered their boats, dug out of single tree-trunks, to be destroyed, and on the eve of the ides of November he weighed anchor and left Guadaloupe.

Desiring to see the men of his crew whom he had left the preceding year at Hispaniola to explore that country, Columbus passed daily by other islands which he discovered to the right and left. Straight ahead to the north appeared a large island. Those natives who had been brought to Spain on his first voyage, and those who had been delivered from captivity, declared that it was called Madanina, and that it was inhabited exclusively by women.<sup>1</sup> The Spaniards had, in fact, heard this island spoken of during their first voyage. It appeared that the cannibals went at certain epochs of the year to visit these women, as in ancient history the Thracians crossed to the island of Lesbos inhabited by the Amazons. When their children were weaned, they sent the boys to their fathers, but kept the girls, precisely as did the Amazons. It is claimed that these women know of vast caverns where they conceal themselves if any man tries to visit them at another than the established time. Should any one attempt to force his way into these caverns by violence or by trickery, they defend themselves with arrows, which they shoot with great precision. At least,

<sup>1</sup> This is the island of Martinique; the legend of its Amazons is purely fantastic.



this is the story as it is told, and I repeat it to you. The north wind renders this island unapproachable, and it can only be reached when the wind is in the south-west.

While still in view of Madanina at a distance of about forty miles, the Spaniards passed another island, which, according to the accounts of the natives, was very populous and rich in foodstuffs of all kinds. As this island was very mountainous they named it Montserrat. Amongst other details given by the islanders on board, and as far as could be ascertained from their signs and their gestures, the cannibals of Montserrat frequently set out on hunts to take captives for food, and in so doing go a distance of more than a thousand miles from their coasts. The next day the Spaniards discovered another island, and as it was of spherical form, Columbus named it Santa Maria Rotunda. In less time he passed by another island discovered next day, and which, without stopping, he dedicated to St. Martin, and the following day still a third island came into view. The Spaniards estimated its width from east to west at fifty miles.

It afterwards became known that these islands were of the most extraordinary beauty and fertility, and to this last one the name of the Blessed Virgin of Antigua was given. Sailing on past numerous islands which followed Antigua, Columbus arrived, forty miles farther on, at an island which surpassed all the others in size, and which the natives called Agay. The Admiral gave it the name of Santa Cruz. Here he ordered the anchor to be lowered, in order that he might replenish his supply of water, and he sent thirty men from his vessel to land and explore. These men found four dogs on the shore, and the same number of youths and women approached with hands extended, like supplicants. It was supposed they were begging for assistance or to be rescued from the hands of those abominable people. Whatever decision the Spaniards might take in regard to them, seemed better to them



than their actual condition. The cannibals fled as they had done at Guadaloupe, and disappeared into the forests.

Two days were passed at Santa Cruz, where thirty of our Spaniards placed in an ambuscade saw, from the place where they were watching, a canoe in the distance coming towards them, in which there were eight men and as many women. At a given signal they fell upon the canoe; as they approached, the men and women let fly a volley of arrows with great rapidity and accuracy. Before the Spaniards had time to protect themselves with their shields, one of our men, a Galician, was killed by a woman, and another was seriously wounded by an arrow shot by that same woman. It was discovered that their poisoned arrows contained a kind of liquid which oozed out when the point broke. There was one woman amongst these savages whom, as nearly as could be conjectured, all the others seemed to obey, as though she was their queen. With her was her son, a fierce, robust young man, with ferocious eyes and a face like a lion's. Rather than further expose themselves to their arrows, our men chose to engage them in a hand to hand combat. Rowing stoutly, they pushed their barque against the canoe of the savages, which was overturned by the shock; the canoe sank, but the savages, throwing themselves into the water, continued while swimming to shoot their arrows with the same rapidity. Climbing upon a rock level with the water, they still fought with great bravery, though they were finally captured, after one had been killed and the son of the queen had received two wounds. When they were brought on board the Admiral's ship, they no more changed their ferocious and savage mood than do the lions of Africa, when they find themselves caught in nets. There was no one who saw them who did not shiver with horror, so infernal and repugnant was the aspect nature and their own cruel character had given them. I affirm this after what I have myself seen, and so likewise

do all those who went with me in Madrid to examine them.

I return to my narrative. Each day the Spaniards advanced farther. They had covered a distance of five hundred miles. Driven first by the south wind, then by the west wind, and finally by the wind from the north-west, they found themselves in a sea dotted with innumerable islands, strangely different one from another; some were covered with forests and prairies and offered delightful shade, while others, which were dry and sterile, had very lofty and rocky mountains. The rocks of these latter were of various colours, some purple, some violet, and some entirely white. It is thought they contain metals and precious stones.

The ships did not touch, as the weather was unfavourable, and also because navigation amongst these islands is dangerous. Postponing until another time the exploration of these islands which, because of their confused grouping could not be counted, the Spaniards continued their voyage. Some lighter ships of the fleet did, however, cruise amongst them, reconnoitring forty-six of them, while the heavier ships, fearing the reefs, kept to the high sea. This collection of islands is called an archipelago. Outside the archipelago and directly across the course rises the island called by the natives Burichena, which Columbus placed under the patronage of San Juan.<sup>1</sup> A number of the captives rescued from the hands of the cannibals declared they were natives of that island, which they said was populous and well cultivated; they explained that it had excellent ports, was covered with forests, and that its inhabitants hated the cannibals and were constantly at war with them. The inhabitants possessed no boats by which they could reach the coasts of the cannibals from their island; but whenever they were lucky in repulsing a cannibal invasion for the purpose of plundering, they

<sup>1</sup> Porto Rico.

cut their prisoners into small bits, roasted, and greedily ate them; for in war there is alternative good and bad fortune.

All this was recounted through the native interpreters who had been taken back to Spain on the first voyage. Not to lose time, the Spaniards passed by Burichena; nevertheless some sailors, who landed on the extreme western point of the island to take a supply of fresh water, found there a handsome house built in the fashion of the country, and surrounded by a dozen or more ordinary structures, all of which were abandoned by their owners. Whether the inhabitants betake themselves at that period of the year to the mountains to escape the heat, and then return to the lowlands when the temperature is fresher, or whether they had fled out of fear of the cannibals, is not precisely known. There is but one king for the whole of the island, and he is reverently obeyed. The south coast of this island, which the Spaniards followed, is two hundred miles long.

During the night two women and a young man, who had been rescued from the cannibals, sprang into the sea and swam to their native island. A few days later the Spaniards finally arrived at the much-desired Hispaniola, which is five hundred leagues from the nearest of the cannibal islands. Cruel fate had decreed the death of all those Spaniards who had been left there.

There is a coast region of Hispaniola which the natives call Xarama, and it was from Xarama that Columbus had set sail on his first voyage, when he was about to return to Spain, taking with him the ten interpreters of whom I spoke above, of whom only three survived; the others having succumbed to the change of climate, country, and food.

Hardly were the ships in sight of the coast of Xarama, which Columbus called Santa Reina,<sup>1</sup> than the Admiral

<sup>1</sup> Xarama is also spelled in the Latin editions *Xamana*, and Santa Reina, *Sancteremus*.

ordered one of these interpreters to be set at liberty, and two others managed to jump into the sea and swim to the shore. As Columbus did not yet know the sad fate of the thirty-eight men whom he had left on the island the preceding year, he was not concerned at this flight. When the Spaniards were near to the coast a long canoe with several rowers came out to meet them. In it was the brother of Guaccanarillo, that king with whom the Admiral had signed a treaty when he left Hispaniola, and to whose care he had urgently commended the sailors he had left behind. The brother brought to the Admiral, in the king's name, a present of two golden statues; he also spoke in his own language—as was later understood,—of the death of our compatriots; but as there was no interpreter, nobody at the time understood his words.

Upon arriving, however, at the blockhouse and the houses, which were surrounded by an entrenchment, they were all found reduced to ashes, while over the place a profound silence reigned. The Admiral and his companions were deeply moved by this discovery. Thinking and hoping that some of the men might still be alive, he ordered cannon and guns to be fired, that the noise of these formidable detonations echoing amongst the mountains and along the coasts might serve as a signal of his arrival to any of our men who might be hidden among the islanders or among wild beasts. It was in vain; for they were all dead.

The Admiral afterwards sent messengers to Guaccanarillo, who, as far as they could understand, related as follows: there are on the island, which is very large, a number of kings, who are more powerful than he; two of these, disturbed by the news of the arrival of the Spaniards, assembled considerable forces, attacked and killed our men and burned their entrenchments, houses, and possessions; Guaccanarillo had striven to save our men, and in the struggle had been wounded with an arrow, his

leg being still bandaged with cotton; and for this reason he had not, despite his keen desire, been able to go to meet the Admiral.

There do exist several sovereigns on the island, some more powerful than the others; just as we read that the fabulous Æneas found Latium divided amongst several kings, Latinus, Mezentius, Turnus, and Tarchon, all near neighbours who fought over the territory. The islanders of Hispaniola, in my opinion, may be esteemed more fortunate than were the Latins, above all should they become converted to the true religion. They go naked, they know neither weights nor measures, nor that source of all misfortunes, money; living in a golden age, without laws, without lying judges, without books, satisfied with their life, and in no wise solicitous for the future. Nevertheless ambition and the desire to rule trouble even them, and they fight amongst themselves, so that even in the golden age there is never a moment without war; the maxim *Cede, non cedam*, has always prevailed amongst mortal men.

The following day the Admiral sent to Guaccanarillo a Sevillian called Melchior, who had once been sent by the King and the Queen to the sovereign Pontiff when they captured Malaga. Melchior found him in bed, feigning illness, and surrounded by the beds of his seven concubines. Upon removing the bandage [from his leg] Melchior discovered no trace of any wound, and this caused him to suspect that Guaccanarillo was the murderer of our compatriots. He concealed his suspicions, however, and obtained the king's assurance that he would come the following day to see the Admiral on board his ship, which he did. As soon as he came on board, and after saluting the Spaniards and distributing some gold among the officers, he turned to the women whom we had rescued from the cannibals and, glancing with half-opened eyes at one of them whom we called Catherine, he spoke to her



very softly; after which, with the Admiral's permission, which he asked with great politeness and urbanity, he inspected the horses and other things he had never before seen, and then left.

Some persons advised Columbus to hold Guaccanarillo prisoner, to make him expiate in case it was proven that our compatriots had been assassinated by his orders; but the Admiral, deeming it inopportune to irritate the islanders, allowed him to depart.

The day after the morrow, the brother of the king, acting in his own name or in that of Guaccanarillo, came on board and won over the women, for the following night Catherine, in order to recover her own liberty and that of all her companions, yielded to the solicitation of Guaccanarillo or his brother, and accomplished a feat more heroic than that of the Roman Clelia, when she liberated the other virgins who had served with her as hostages, swam the Tiber and thus escaped from the power of Lars Porsena. Clelia crossed the river on a horse, while Catherine and several other women trusted only to their arms and swam for a distance of three miles in a sea by no means calm; for that, according to every one's opinion, was the distance between the ships and the coast. The sailors pursued them in light boats, guided by the same light from the shore which served for the women, of whom they captured three. It is believed that Catherine and four others escaped to Guaccanarillo, for at daybreak, men sent out by the Admiral announced that he and the women had fled together, taking all their goods with them; and this fact confirmed the suspicion that he had consented to the assassination of our men.

Melchior, whom I have mentioned, was then despatched with three hundred men to search for him. In the course of his march he came upon a winding gorge, overlooked by five lofty hills in such wise as to suggest the estuary of a large river. There was found a large harbour, safe and

spacious, which they named Port Royal. The entrance of this harbour is crescent-shaped, and is so regularly formed that it is difficult to detect whether ships have entered from the right or the left; this can only be ascertained when they return to the entrance. Three large ships can enter abreast. The surrounding hills form the coasts, and afford shelter from the winds. In the middle of the harbour there rises a promontory covered with forests, which are full of parrots and many other birds which there build their nests and fill the air with sweet melodies. Two considerable rivers empty into this harbour.

In the course of their explorations of this country the Spaniards perceived in the distance a large house, which they approached, persuaded that it was the retreat of Guaccanarillo. They were met by a man with a wrinkled forehead and frowning brows, who was escorted by about a hundred warriors armed with bows and arrows, pointed lances and clubs. He advanced menacingly towards them. "*Tainos*," the natives cried, that is to say, good men and not cannibals. In response to our amicable signs, they dropped their arms and modified their ferocious attitude. To each one was presented a hawk's bell, and they became so friendly that they fearlessly went on board the ships, sliding down the steep banks of the river, and overwhelmed our compatriots with gifts. Upon measuring the large house which was of spherical form, it was found to have a diameter of thirty-five long paces; surrounding it were thirty other ordinary houses. The ceilings were decked with branches of various colours most artfully plaited together. In reply to our inquiries about Guaccanarillo, the natives responded,—as far as could be understood,—that they were not subjects of his, but of a chief who was there present; they likewise declared they understood that Guaccanarillo had left the coast to take refuge in the mountains. After concluding a treaty of friendship



with that cacique, such being the name given to their kings, the Spaniards returned to report what they had learned to the Admiral.

Columbus had meanwhile sent some officers with an escort of men to effect a reconnaissance farther in the interior; two of the most conspicuous of these were Hojeda and Corvalano, both young and courageous noblemen. One of them discovered three rivers, the other four, all of which had their sources in these same mountains. In the sands of these rivers gold was found, which the Indians, who acted as their escort, proceeded in their presence to collect in the following manner: they dug a hole in the sand about the depth of an arm, merely scooping the sand out of this trough with the right and left hands. They extracted the grains of gold, which they afterwards presented to the Spaniards. Some declared they saw grains as big as peas. I have seen with my own eyes a shapeless ingot similar to a round river stone, which was found by Hojeda, and was afterwards brought to Spain; it weighed nine ounces. Satisfied with this first examination they returned to report to the Admiral.

Columbus, as I have been told, had forbidden them to do more than examine and reconnoitre the country. The news spread that the king of the mountain country, where all these rivers rise, was called the Cacique Caunaboa, that is to say, the Lord of the Golden House; for in their language *boa* is the word for a house, *cauna* for gold, and *cacique* for king, as I have above written. Nowhere are better fresh-water fish to be found, nor more beautiful nor better in taste, and less dangerous. The waters of all these rivers are likewise very wholesome.

Melchior has told me that amongst the cannibals the days of the month of December are equal to the nights, but knowledge contradicts this observation. I well know that in this self-same month of December, some birds

made their nests and others already hatched out their little ones; the heat was also considerable. When I inquired particularly concerning the elevation of the north star above the horizon, he answered me that in the land of the cannibals the Great Bear entirely disappeared beneath the arctic pole. There is nobody who came back from this second voyage whose testimony one may more safely accept than his; but had he possessed knowledge of astronomy he would have limited himself to saying that the day is about as long as the night. For in no place in the world does the night during the solstice precisely equal the day; and it is certain that on this voyage the Spaniards never reached the equator, for they constantly beheld on the horizon the polar star, which served them as guide. As for Melchior's companions, they were without knowledge or experience, therefore I offer you few particulars, and those only casually, as I have been able to collect them. I hope to narrate to you what I may be able to learn from others. Moreover Columbus, whose particular friend I am, has written me that he would recount me fully all that he has been fortunate enough to discover.<sup>1</sup>

The Admiral selected an elevation near the port as the site for a town<sup>2</sup>; and, within a few days, some houses and a church were built, as well as could be done in so short a time. And there, on the feast of the Three Kings (for when treating of this country one must speak of a new world, so distant is it and so devoid of civilisation and religion) the Holy Sacrifice was celebrated by thirteen priests.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The letter of Columbus here mentioned is not known to exist.

<sup>2</sup> The first Spanish settlement was named Isabella, as was likewise the cape on which it stood. Long after it was abandoned and had fallen into ruin, the site was reputed to be haunted. See Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, vol. i., p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> There were certainly not as many as thirteen priests with Columbus. The text reads . . . *divina nostro ritu sacra sunt decantata tredecim sacerdotibus ministrantibus*. The number doubtless includes all laymen who took any part, as acolytes, etc., in the ceremonies.

As the time when he had promised to send news to the King and Queen approached, and as the season was moreover favourable [for sailing], Columbus decided not to prolong his stay. He therefore ordered the twelve caravels, whose arrival we have announced, to sail, though he was much afflicted by the assassination of his comrades; because, but for their death, we should possess much fuller information concerning the climate and the products of Hispaniola.

That you may inform your apothecaries, druggists, and perfumers concerning the products of this country and its high temperature, I send you some seeds of all kinds, as well as the bark and the pith of those trees which are believed to be cinnamon trees. If you wish to taste either the seeds or the pith or the bark, be careful, Most Illustrious Prince, only to do so with caution; not that they are harmful, but they are very peppery, and if you leave them a long time in your mouth, they will sting the tongue. In case you should burn your tongue a little in tasting them, take some water, and the burning sensation will be allayed. My messenger will also deliver to Your Eminence some of those black and white seeds out of which they make bread. If you cut bits of the wood called aloes, which he brings, you will scent the delicate perfumes it exhales.

Fare you well.

From the Court of Spain, the third day of the calends of May, 1494.

## BOOK III

TO CARDINAL LUDOVICO D'ARAGON

YOU desire that another skilful Phaeton should drive the car of the Sun. You seek to draw a sweet potion from a dry stone. A new world, if I may so express myself, has been discovered under the auspices of the Catholic sovereigns, your uncle Ferdinand and your aunt Isabella, and you command me to describe to you this heretofore unknown world; and to that effect you sent me a letter of your uncle, the illustrious King Frederick.<sup>1</sup> You will both receive this precious stone, badly mounted and set in lead. But when you later observe that my beautiful nereids of the ocean are exposed to the furious attacks of erudite friends and to the calumnies of detractors, you must frankly confess to them that you have forced me to send you this news, despite my pressing occupations and my health. You are not ignorant that I have taken these accounts from the first reports of the Admiral as rapidly as your secretary could write under my dictation. You hasten me by daily announcing your departure for Naples in company of the Queen, sister of our King and your paternal aunt, whom you had accompanied to Spain. Thus you have forced

<sup>1</sup> Frederick III., of Aragon, succeeded his nephew Frederick II., as King of Naples in 1496. Five years later, when dispossessed by Ferdinand the Catholic, he took refuge in France, where Louis XII. granted him the duchy of Anjou and a suitable pension. He died in 1504.

me to complete my writings. You will observe that the first two chapters are dedicated to another, for I had really begun to write them with a dedication to your unfortunate relative Ascanio Sforza, Cardinal and Vice-chancellor. When he fell into disgrace,<sup>1</sup> I felt my interest in writing also decline. It is owing to you and to the letters sent me by your illustrious uncle, King Frederick, that my ardour has revived. Enjoy, therefore, this narrative, which is not a thing of the imagination.

Fare you well.

From Granada, the ninth of the calends of May of the year 1500.

I have narrated in a preceding book how the Admiral Columbus, after having visited the cannibal islands, landed at Hispaniola on the fourth day of the nones of February, 1493, without having lost a single vessel. I shall now recount what he discovered while exploring that island and another neighbouring one, which he believed to be a continent.

According to Columbus, Hispaniola is the island of

<sup>1</sup> Upon the death of Innocent VIII., four members of the Sacred College were conspicuous *papabili*: Raffaele Riario and Giuliano della Rovere, nephews of Sixtus IV., and Roderigo Borgia and Ascanio Sforza. Borgia was elected and took the title of Alexander VI. He rewarded Cardinal Sforza for his timely assistance in securing his elevation, by giving him the Vice-Chancellorship he had himself occupied as Cardinal, the town of Nepi and the Borgia Palace in Rome. Dissensions between Alexander and the Sforza family soon became acute; Giovanni Sforza, Lord of Pesaro and sometime husband of Lucrezia Borgia, was expelled, and his brother, Cardinal Ascanio was included in the papal disfavour. He sought refuge in Lombardy, where he was taken prisoner by Louis XII., of France. Peter Martyr had foreseen, in a measure, the turbulent events of Alexander's pontificate; the Spanish sovereigns charged him to express to Cardinal Sforza their disapproval of his action in supporting the Borgia party, that Cardinal, though a Spaniard, being *persona non grata* to them; and in so doing he wrote to his friend the dubious augury, "God grant he may be grateful to you." Ep. 119.

Ophir mentioned in the third book of Kings.<sup>1</sup> Its width covers five degrees of south latitude, for its north coast extends to the twenty-seventh degree and the south coast to the twenty-second; its length extends 780 miles, though some of the companions of Columbus give greater dimensions.<sup>2</sup> Some declare that it extends to within forty-nine degrees of Cadiz, and others to an even greater distance. The calculation concerning this has not been made with precision.

The island is shaped like a chestnut leaf. Columbus decided to found a town<sup>3</sup> upon an elevated hill on the northern coast, since in that vicinity there was a mountain with stone-quarries for building purposes and chalk to make lime. At the foot of this mountain a vast plain<sup>4</sup> extends for a distance of sixty miles in length, and of an average of twelve leagues in breadth, varying from six in the narrowest part to twenty in the broadest. This plain is fertilised by several rivers of wholesome water, of which the largest is navigable and empties into a bay situated half a stadium from the town. As the narrative proceeds you will learn how fruitful this valley is, and how fertile is its soil. The Spaniards laid out parcels of land on the river bank, which they intended to make into gardens, and where they planted all kinds of vegetables, roots, lettuces, cabbages, salads, and other things. Sixteen days after the sowing, the plants had everywhere grown; melons, pumpkins, cucumbers, and other similar products were ripe for picking thirty-six days after they were

<sup>1</sup> Ortelius, in his *Geographia Sacra*, gives the name of Ophir to Hayti; and it was a commonly held opinion that Solomon's mines of Ophir were situated in America. Columbus shared this belief, and he later wrote of Veragua, when he discovered the coasts of Darien, that he was positive the gold mines there were those of Ophir.

<sup>2</sup> Hayti is 600 kilometres long from east to west, and 230 broad, from north to south, with a superficial area of 74,000 square kilometres.

<sup>3</sup> The town of Santo Domingo, standing at the mouth of the Ozama river.

<sup>4</sup> This valley is the actual Vega Real.



planted, and nowhere had our people tasted any of finer flavour. Throughout the whole year one might thus have fresh vegetables. Cane-roots, from the juice of which sugar is extracted (but not crystallised sugar) grew to a height of a cubit within fifteen days after planting, and the same happened to graftings of vines. Excellent grapes may be eaten from these vines the second year after planting, but on account of their exaggerated size, the bunches were not numerous. A certain peasant planted a foot of wheat about the calends of February, and wonderful to say, in the sight of everybody he brought into the town a bunch of ripe grain on the third day of the calends of April, which fell in that year on the eve of Easter. Two harvests of vegetables may be counted upon within the year. I have repeated what is told to me about the fertility of the country by all those, without exception, who have returned from there. I would notice, however, that according to some observations wheat does not grow equally well throughout the whole country.

During this time the Admiral despatched some thirty of his men in different directions to explore the district of Cipangu, which is still called Cibao. This is a mountainous region covered with rocks and occupying the centre of the island, where, the natives explained by signs, gold is obtained in abundance. The Admiral's explorers brought back marvellous reports of the riches of the country. Four large rivers rise in these mountains, into which other streams flow, thus dividing the island by an extraordinary natural arrangement into four almost equal parts. The first, which the natives call Junua, lies towards the east; the second, which borders on it and extends to the west, is called Attibinico; the third lies to the north and is called Iachi, while the fourth, Naiba, lies to the south.

But let us consider how the town was founded. After



having surrounded the site with ditches and entrenchments for defence against possible attacks by the natives on the garrison he left there, during his absence, the Admiral started on the eve of the ides of March accompanied by all the gentlemen and about four hundred foot-soldiers for the southern region where the gold was found. Crossing a river, he traversed the plain and climbed the mountain beyond it. He reached another valley watered by a river even larger than the former one, and by others of less importance. Accompanied by his force he crossed this valley, which was in no place more elevated than the first one, and thus he reached the third mountain which had never been ascended. He made the ascent and came down on the other side into a valley where the province of Cibao begins. This valley is watered by rivers and streams which flow down from the hills, and gold is also found in their sands. After penetrating into the interior of the gold region a distance of some seventy-two miles from the town, Columbus resolved to establish a fortified post on an eminence commanding the river banks, from which he might study more closely the mysteries of this region. He named this place San Tomas.

While he was occupied in building this fortification he was delayed by the natives, who came to visit him in the hope of getting some bells or other trifles. Columbus gave them to understand that he was very willing to give them what they asked, if they would bring him gold. Upon hearing this promise the natives turned their backs and ran to the neighbouring river, returning soon afterwards with hands full of gold. One old man only asked a little bell in return for two grains of gold weighing an ounce. Seeing that the Spaniards admired the size of these grains, and quite amazed at their astonishment, he explained to them by signs that they were of no value; after which, taking in his hands four stones, of

which the smallest was the size of a nut and the largest as big as an orange, he told them that in his country, which was half a day's journey distant, one found here and there ingots of gold quite as large. He added that his neighbours did not even take the trouble to pick them up. It is now known that the islanders set no value on gold as such; they only prize it when it has been worked by a craftsman into some form which pleases them. Who amongst us pays attention to rough marble or to unworked ebony? Certainly nobody; but if this marble is transformed by the hand of a Phidias or a Praxiteles, and if it then presents to our eyes the form of a Nereid with flowing hair, or a hamadryad with graceful body, buyers will not be wanting. Besides this old man, a number of natives brought ingots, weighing ten or twelve drachmas,<sup>1</sup> and they had the effrontery to say that in the region where they had found them, they sometimes discovered ingots as big as the head of a child whom they indicated.

During the days he passed at San Tomas, the Admiral sent a young nobleman named Luxan, accompanied by an escort, to explore another region. Luxan told even more extraordinary things, which he had heard from the natives, but he brought back nothing; it is probable that he did this in obedience to the Admiral's orders. Spices, but not those we use, abound in their forests, and these they gather just as they do gold; that is to say, whenever they wish to trade with the inhabitants of the neighbouring islands for something which pleases them; for example, long plates, seats, or other articles manufactured out of a black wood which does not grow in Hispaniola. On his return journey, towards the ides of March, Luxan found wild grapes of excellent flavour, already ripe in the forest, but the islanders take no account of them. The country, although

<sup>1</sup> The Greek drachma weighed one eighth of an ounce.

very stony (for the word Cibao means in their language *rocky*) is nevertheless covered with trees and grasses. It is even said that the growth on the mountains, which strictly speaking is only grass, grows taller than wheat within four days after it has been mown. The rains being frequent, the rivers and streams are full of water, and as gold is everywhere found mixed with the sand of the river-beds, it is conjectured that this metal is washed down from the mountains by the streams. It is certain that the natives are extremely lazy, for they shiver with cold among their mountains in winter, without ever thinking of making clothes for themselves, although cotton is found in abundance. In the valleys and lowlands they have nothing to fear from cold.

Having carefully examined the region of Cibao, Columbus returned on the calends of April, the day after Easter, to Isabella; this being the name he had given to the new city. Confiding the government of Isabella and the entire island to his brother<sup>1</sup> and one Pedro Margarita, an old royal courtier, Columbus made preparations for exploring the island which lies only seventy miles from Hispaniola, and which he believed to be a continent. He had not forgotten the royal instructions, which urged him to visit the new coasts, without delay, lest some other sovereign might take possession of them. For the King of Portugal made no secret of his intention also to discover unknown islands. True it is that the Sovereign Pontiff, Alexander VI., had sent to the King and Queen of Spain his bull, sealed with lead, by which it was forbidden to any other sovereign to visit those unknown regions.<sup>2</sup> To avoid all conflict,

<sup>1</sup> According to the judgment of Las Casas, Bartholomew Columbus was a man of superior character and well qualified to rule, had he not been eclipsed by his famous brother. *Hist. Ind.*, ii., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Bull granted May 4, 1493: *Ac quibuscumque personis . . . districtius inhibemus, ne ad insulas et terras firmas inventas, et inveniendas detectas et detegendas, versus occidentem et meridiem, fabricando et construendo lineam a Polo Arctico ad Polum antarcticum, sive terræ firmæ, insulæ inventæ et inven-*

a straight line from north to south had been drawn, first at one hundred leagues and afterwards by common accord at three hundred leagues west of the parallel of the isles of Cape Verde. We believe these islands to be those formerly called the Hesperides. They belong to the King of Portugal. The Portuguese mariners have continued their explorations to the east of that line; following the coast of Africa on their left, they directed their course to the east, crossing the Ethiopian seas, and up to the present time none of them has yet sailed to the west of the Hesperides, or towards the south.

Leaving Hispaniola,<sup>1</sup> the Admiral sailed with three vessels in the direction of the land he had taken for an island on his first voyage, and had named Juana. He arrived, after a brief voyage, and named the first coast he touched Alpha and Omega, because he thought that there our East ended when the sun set in that island, and our West began when the sun rose. It is indeed proven that on the west side India begins beyond the Ganges, and ends on the east side. It is not without cause that cosmographers have left the boundaries of Ganges India undetermined.<sup>2</sup> There are not wanting those among them who think that the coasts of Spain do not lie very distant from the shores of India.

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*iendæ sint versus aliam quamcumque partem quæ linea distet a qualibet insularum quæ vulgariter appellantur de los Azores et Capo Verde, centum leucis versus occidentem et meridiem ut præfertur pro mercibus habendis, vel quavis alia de causa accedere præsumant, absque vestra et hæredum et subcesorum vestrorum prædictorum licentia speciali. . . .* By the agreement signed at Tordesillas, the distance was increased by common consent between Spain and Portugal, not as Martyr says, to 300, but to 370 leagues.

<sup>1</sup> He left Hispaniola on April 24th.

<sup>2</sup> This was the general opinion of cosmographers and navigators at that period; contemporary maps and globes show the Asiatic continent in the place actually occupied by Florida and Mexico. See map of Ptolemeus de Ruysch, *Universalior coquiti orbis tabula ex recentibus confecta observationibus*, Rome, 1508.

The natives called this country Cuba.<sup>1</sup> Within sight of it, the Admiral discovered at the extremity of Hispaniola a very commodious harbour formed by a bend in the island. He called this harbour, which is barely twenty leagues distant from Cuba, San Nicholas.

Columbus covered this distance, and desiring to skirt the south coast of Cuba, he laid his course to the west; the farther he advanced the more extensive did the coast become, but bending towards the south, he first discovered, to the left of Cuba, an island called by the natives Jamaica,<sup>2</sup> of which he reports that it is longer and broader than Sicily. It is composed of one sole mountain, which rises in imperceptible gradations from the coasts to the centre, sloping so gently that in mounting it, the ascent is scarcely noticeable. Both the coast country and the interior of Jamaica are extremely fertile and populous. According to the report of their neighbours, the natives of this island have a keener intelligence and are cleverer in mechanical arts, as well as more warlike than others. And indeed, each time the Admiral sought to land in any place, they assembled in armed bands, threatening him, and not hesitating to offer battle. As they were always conquered, they ended by making peace with him. Leaving Jamaica to one side, the Admiral sailed to the west for seventy days with favourable winds. He expected to arrive in the part of the world underneath us just near the Golden Chersonese, which is situated to the east of Persia. He thought, as a matter of fact, that of the twelve hours of the sun's course of which we are ignorant he would have only lost two.

It is known that the ancients have only followed the

<sup>1</sup> Always deeming Cuba to be an extension of Asia, Columbus was anxious to complete his reconnaissance, and then to proceed to India and Cathay.

<sup>2</sup> The island is about eighty-five miles from Cuba. The name Jamaica, which has survived, meant in the native tongue "land of wood and water." It was really discovered on May 13th, but was not colonised until 1509.



sun during the half of its course, since they only knew that part of the globe which lies between Cadiz and the Ganges, or even to the Golden Chersonese.

During this voyage, the Admiral encountered marine currents as impetuous as torrents, with great waves and undercurrents, to say nothing of the dangers presented by the immense number of neighbouring islands; but he was heedless of these perils, and was determined to advance until he had ascertained whether Cuba was an island or a continent. He continued, therefore, coasting the shores of the island, and always towards the west, to a distance, according to his report, of two hundred and twenty-two leagues, which is equal to about one thousand three hundred miles. He gave names to seven thousand islands, and moreover beheld on his left hand more than three thousand others rising from the waves. But let us return to those matters worthy to be remembered which he encountered during this voyage.

While the Admiral was carefully examining the character of these places, coasting along the shore of Cuba, he first discovered, not far from Alpha (that is from the end of it), a harbour sufficient for many ships. Its entrance is in the form of a scythe, shut in on the two sides by promontories that break the waves; and it is large and of great depth. Following the coast of this harbour, he perceived at a short distance from the shore two huts, and several fires burning here and there. A landing was made, but no people were found; nevertheless there were wooden spits arranged about the fire, on which hung fish, altogether of about a hundred pounds' weight, and alongside lay two serpents eight feet long.<sup>1</sup> The Spaniards were astonished, and looked about for some one with whom to speak, but saw nobody. Indeed, the owners of the fish had

<sup>1</sup> As will be later seen, these so-called serpents are iguanas. They are still a common article of food throughout the islands, and *tierra caliente* of Mexico and Central America, and make savoury dishes.

fled to the mountains on seeing them approach. The Spaniards rested there to eat, and were pleased to find the fish, which had cost them nothing, much to their taste; but they did not touch the serpents. They report that these latter were in no wise different from the crocodiles of the Nile, except in point of size. According to Pliny, crocodiles as long as eighteen cubits have been found; while the largest in Cuba do not exceed eight feet. When their hunger was satisfied, they penetrated into the neighbouring woods, where they found a number of these serpents tied to the trees with cords; some were attached by their heads, others had had their teeth pulled out. While the Spaniards busied themselves in visiting the neighbourhood of the harbour, they discovered about seventy natives who had fled at their approach, and who now sought to know what these unknown people wanted. Our men endeavoured to attract them by gestures and signs, and gentle words, and one of them, fascinated by the gifts which they exhibited from a distance, approached, but no nearer than a neighbouring rock. It was clear that he was afraid.

During his first voyage the Admiral had taken a native of Guanahani (an island near by Cuba), whom he had named Diego Columbus, and had brought up with his own children. Diego served him as interpreter, and as his maternal tongue was akin to the language of the islander who had approached, he spoke to him. Overcoming his fears, the islander came amongst the Spaniards, and persuaded his companions to join him as there was nothing to fear. About seventy natives then descended from their rocks and made friends, and the Admiral offered them presents.

They were fishermen, sent to fish by their cacique, who was preparing a festival for the reception of another chief. They were not at all vexed when they found that their fish had been eaten and their serpents left,



for they considered these serpents the most delicate food. Common people among them eat less often of the serpents than they would with us of pheasants or peacocks. Moreover they could catch as many fish as the Spaniards had eaten, in one hour. When asked why they cooked the fish they were to carry to their cacique, they replied that they did so to preserve it from corruption. After swearing a mutual friendship they separated.

From that point of the Cuban coast which he had named Alpha, as we have said, the Admiral sailed towards the west. The middle portions of the shores of the bay were well wooded but steep and mountainous. Some of the trees were in flower, and the sweet perfumes they exhaled were wafted out across the sea,<sup>1</sup> while others were weighted with fruit. Beyond the bay the country was more fertile and more populous. The natives were likewise more civilised and more desirous of novelties, for, at the sight of the vessels, a crowd of them came down to the shore, offering our men the kind of bread they ate, and gourds full of water. They begged them to come on land.

On all these islands there is found a tree about the size of our elms, which bears a sort of gourd out of which they make drinking cups; but they never eat it, as its pulp is bitterer than gall, and its shell is as hard as a turtle's back. On the ides of May the watchers saw from the height of the lookout an incredible multitude of islands to the south-west; two of them were covered with grass and green trees, and all of them were inhabited.

On the shore of the continent there emptied a navigable river of which the water was so hot that one could not leave one's hand long in it. The next day, having seen a canoe of fishermen in the distance, and fearing that these fishermen might take to flight at sight of them, the Admiral

<sup>1</sup> The fragrant odours blown out to sea from the American coasts are mentioned by several of the early explorers.

ordered a barque to cut off their retreat; but the men waited for the Spaniards without sign of fear.

Listen now to this new method of fishing. Just as we use French dogs to chase hares across the plain, so do these fishermen catch fish by means of a fish trained for that purpose. This fish in no wise resembles any that we know. Its body is similar to that of a large eel, and upon its head it has a large pouch made of a very tough skin. They tie the fish to the side of the boat, with just the amount of cord necessary to hold it under the water; for it cannot stand contact with the air. As soon as a large fish or turtle is seen (and these latter are as large as a huge shield), they let the fish go. The moment it is freed, it attacks, with the rapidity of an arrow, the fish or turtle, on some part exposed from the shell, covering it with the pouch-like skin, and attaching itself with such tenacity that the only way to pull it off alive is by rolling a cord round a pole and raising the fish out of the water, when contact with the air causes it to drop its prey. This is done by some of the fishermen who throw themselves into the water, and hold it above the surface, until their companions, who remained in the barque, have dragged it on board. This done, the cord is loosened enough for the fisherman-fish to drop back into the water, when it is fed with pieces of the prey which has been caught.

The islanders call this fish *guaicano*, and our people call it *riverso*.<sup>1</sup> Four turtles which they caught in this fashion and presented to the Spaniards almost filled a native barque. They highly prize the flesh of turtles, and the Spaniards made them some presents in exchange which highly pleased them. When our sailors questioned

<sup>1</sup> A sea-lamprey, also called *remora* and *echineis*. Oviedo gives details concerning the manner of catching, raising, and training the young lampreys to serve as game-fish. *Hist. delle Indie*, cap. x., in Ramusio. The account is interesting and despite obvious inaccuracies may have a basis of truth.

them concerning the size of the land, they answered that it had no end towards the west. They insisted that the Admiral should land, or should send some one in his name to salute their cacique, promising moreover that if the Spaniards would go to visit the cacique, the latter would make them various presents; but the Admiral, not wishing to retard the execution of his project, refused to yield to their wishes. The islanders asked him his name, and told him the name of their cacique.

Continuing his route towards the west, the Admiral arrived several days later in the neighbourhood of a very lofty mountain, where, because of the fertility of the soil, there were many inhabitants. The natives assembled in crowds, and brought bread, cotton, rabbits, and birds on board the ships. They inquired with great curiosity of the interpreter, if this new race of men was descended from heaven. Their king, and a number of wise men who accompanied him, made known by signs that this land was not an island. Landing on another neighbouring island, which almost touched Cuba, the Spaniards were unable to discover a single inhabitant; everybody, men and women, had fled on their approach. They found there four dogs which could not bark and were of hideous aspect. The people eat them just as we do kids. Geese, ducks, and herons abound in that island. Between these islands and the continent there were such strong currents that the Admiral had great difficulty in tacking, and the water was so shallow that the keels of the ships sometimes scraped the sand. For a space of forty miles the water of these currents was white, and so thick that one would have sworn the sea was sprinkled with flour. Having finally regained the open, the Admiral discovered, eighty miles farther on, another very lofty mountain. He landed to replenish his supply of water and wood. In the midst of the thick palm and pine groves two springs of sweet water were found. While the men were busy cutting

wood and filling their barrels, one of our archers went off in the woods to hunt. He there suddenly encountered a native, so well dressed in a white tunic, that at the first glance he believed he saw before him one of the Friars of Santa Maria de la Merced, whom the Admiral had brought with him. This native was soon followed by two others, likewise coming out of the forest, and then by a troop of about thirty men, all of them clothed. Our archer turned and ran shouting, as quickly as he could, towards the ships. These people dressed in tunics shouted after him, and tried by all means of persuasion in their power to calm his fears. But he did not stop in his flight. Upon hearing this news, the Admiral, delighted finally to discover a civilised nation, at once landed a troop of armed men, ordering them to advance, if necessary, as far as forty miles into the country, until they should find those people dressed in tunics, or at least some other inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> The Spaniards marched through the forest and emerged on an extensive plain overgrown with brush, amidst which there was no vestige of a path. They sought to cut a pathway through the undergrowth, but wandered about so hopelessly that they hardly advanced a mile. This underbrush was indeed as high as our grain when ripe. Worn out and fatigued, they returned without having discovered a trail. The next day the Admiral sent out a new troop of twenty-five men, urging them to use the greatest diligence to discover the inhabitants of that country. They, however, having come upon the tracks of some large animals, amongst

<sup>1</sup> None of the natives of the islands wore white tunics, nor indeed any but the most scanty covering. It has been surmised that the soldier who made this report may indistinctly and from a distance have descried a flock of tall white cranes, otherwise he was either the victim of an hallucination or an inventor of strange tales to astonish his fellows. Humboldt (*Histoire de la Géographie du nouveau Continent*) quotes an instance of the colonists of Angostora once mistaking a flock of cranes for a band of soldiers.

which they thought they recognised those of lions, were terrified and retraced their steps.<sup>1</sup> In the course of their march, they had found a forest overgrown with wild vines, which hung suspended from the loftiest trees, and also many other spice-producing trees. They brought back to Spain heavy and juicy bunches of grapes. As for the other fruits they collected, it was impossible to bring them to Spain, because there were no means of preserving them on board the ships; hence they rotted, and when they were spoiled they threw them into the sea. The men said that they had seen flocks of cranes twice as large as ours in the forest.

Pursuing his course, the Admiral sailed towards other mountains; he observed upon the shore two huts, in which only one man was found, who, when he was brought on board the ships, shook his head and hands, indicating by signs that the country about these mountains was very populous. All along this coast the Admiral encountered numerous canoes which came to meet him, and on one side and the other friendly signals were exchanged. The man Diego, who, from the beginning of the voyage understood the language of the islanders, did not understand that of this newcomer. It was known, indeed, that the languages vary in the different provinces of Cuba.<sup>2</sup> The natives gave it to be understood that a powerful sovereign, who wore clothes, lived in the interior of the country. The whole of the coast was inundated by waters, the beach being muddy and strewn with trees like in our swamps. When they landed to replenish their supply of water, they found some shells with pearls in them. Columbus nevertheless continued on his way, for he sought at that time, in obedience to

<sup>1</sup> There were no lions nor large beasts of prey in the island; it has been suggested that these tracks may have been footprints of an alligator.

<sup>2</sup> Pezuela gives interesting information concerning the tribal languages of Cuba. *Diccionario Geografico, Estadistico, Historico de la isla de Cuba.*



the royal instructions, to explore the greatest possible extent of sea. As they proceeded on their course, lighted fires were observed on all the hilltops of the coast country, as far as to another mountain eighty miles distant. There was not a single lookout upon the rocks from which smoke did not rise.

It was doubtful whether these fires had been lighted by the natives for domestic purposes or whether it was their custom in time of war thus to signal to warn their neighbours to provide for their safety and unite their forces to repel our attacks.

What is more probable is that they assembled to inspect our ships, as though they were something prodigious, concerning which they knew not what course to adopt. The coast-line began to recede in a southerly direction, and the sea continued to be encumbered with islands. Some of the ships, which had been scraped by the reefs, had sprung; ropes, sails, and other tackle were rotted, and provisions were spoiled by the humidity. The Admiral was, consequently, obliged to retrace his course.<sup>1</sup> The extreme point of this country reached by him, and which he believed to be a continent, he named Evangelista.

During the return voyage, Columbus passed among many other islands more distant from the continent, and reached a sea where he found such numbers of huge turtles that they obstructed the advance of his fleet. He likewise crossed currents of whitish water, similar to those he had already seen.<sup>2</sup> Fearing to sail amongst these islands he returned, and coasted along the one he believed to be a continent.

As he had never maltreated the natives, the inhabitants,

<sup>1</sup> Two or three days more would have sufficed to demonstrate the insular character of Cuba, and would doubtless have made Columbus the discoverer of Yucatan.

<sup>2</sup> The milky colour was produced by quantities of chalky sand, churned up from the bottom by the currents.

both men and women, gladly brought him gifts, displaying no fear. Their presents consisted of parrots, bread, water, rabbits, and most of all, of doves much larger than ours, according to the Admiral's account. As he noticed that these birds gave forth an aromatic odour when they were eaten, he had the stomach of one of them opened, and found it filled with flowers. Evidently that is what gave such a superior taste to these doves; for it is credible that the flesh of animals assimilates the qualities of their food.

While assisting at Mass one day, Columbus beheld a man eighty years old, who seemed respectable though he wore no clothes, coming towards him, accompanied by a number of his people. During the rest of the ceremony this man looked on full of admiration; he was all eyes and ears. Then he presented the Admiral with a basket he was carrying, which was filled with native fruits, and finally sitting beside him, made the following speech which was interpreted by Diego Columbus, who, being from a neighbouring country, understood his language:

"It is reported to us that you have visited all these countries, which were formerly unknown to you, and have inspired the inhabitants with great fear. Now I tell and warn you, since you should know this, that the soul, when it quits the body, follows one of two courses; the first is dark and dreadful, and is reserved for the enemies and the tyrants of the human race; joyous and delectable is the second, which is reserved for those who during their lives have promoted the peace and tranquillity of others. If, therefore, you are a mortal, and believe that each one will meet the fate he deserves, you will harm no one."

Thanks to his native interpreter, the Admiral understood this speech and many others of the same tenor, and was astonished to discover such sound judgment in



a man who went naked. He answered: "I have knowledge of what you have said concerning the two courses and the two destinies of our souls when they leave our bodies; but I had thought until now that these mysteries were unknown to you and to your countrymen, because you live in a state of nature." He then informed the old man that he had been sent thither by the King and Queen of Spain to take possession of those countries hitherto unknown to the outside world, and that, moreover, he would make war upon the cannibals and all the natives guilty of crimes, punishing them according to their deserts. As for the innocent, he would protect and honour them because of their virtues. Therefore, neither he nor any one whose intentions were pure need be afraid; rather, if he or any other honourable man had been injured in his interests by his neighbours he had only to say so.

These words of the Admiral afforded such pleasure to the old man that he announced that, although weakened by age, he would gladly go with Columbus, and he would have done so if his wife and sons had not prevented him. What occasioned him great surprise was to learn that a man like Columbus recognised the authority of a sovereign; but his astonishment still further increased when the interpreter explained to him how powerful were the kings and how wealthy, and all about the Spanish nation, the manner of fighting, and how great were the cities and how strong the fortresses. In great dejection the man, together with his wife and sons, threw themselves at the feet of Columbus, with their eyes full of tears, repeatedly asking if the country which produced such men and in such numbers was not indeed heaven.

It is proven that amongst them the land belongs to everybody, just as does the sun or the water. They know no difference between *meum* and *tuum*, that source of all evils. It requires so little to satisfy them, that in that vast region there is always more land to cultivate

than is needed. It is indeed a golden age, neither ditches, nor hedges, nor walls to enclose their domains; they live in gardens open to all, without laws and without judges; their conduct is naturally equitable, and whoever injures his neighbour is considered a criminal and an outlaw. They cultivate maize, yucca, and ages, as we have already related is the practice in Hispaniola.

On his return from Cuba to Hispaniola, the Admiral again came in sight of Jamaica, and this time he skirted its southern coast from west to east. Upon reaching the eastern extremity of this island, he beheld in the north and on his left high mountains, which he believed to be the southern coast of Hispaniola which he had not before visited. On the calends of September he reached the port he had named San Nicholas, and there repaired his ships, intending to again ravage the cannibal islands and burn the canoes of the natives. He was determined that these rapacious wolves should no longer injure the sheep, their neighbours; but his project could not be realised because of his bad health. Long watches had weakened him; borne on shore half dead by the sailors of Port Isabella, and surrounded by his two brothers and his friends, he finally recovered his former health, but he could not renew his attack on the cannibal islands, because of the disturbances which had broken out amongst the Spaniards he had left in Hispaniola. Concerning these I shall later explain. Fare you well.

## BOOK IV

TO CARDINAL LUDOVICO D'ARAGON, NEPHEW OF OUR KING

WHEN Columbus returned from the land which he believed to be the Indian continent, he learned that the Friar Boyl<sup>1</sup> and Pedro Margarita,<sup>2</sup> the nobleman who formerly enjoyed the King's friendship, as well as several others to whom he had confided the government of Hispaniola, had departed for Spain animated by evil intentions. In order that he might justify himself before the sovereigns, in case they should have been prejudiced by the reports of his enemies, and also for the purpose of recruiting colonists to replace those who had left, and to replenish the failing foodstuffs, such as wheat, wine, oil, and other provisions which form the ordinary food of Spaniards, who do not easily accustom themselves to that of the natives, he decided to betake himself to the Court, which at that time was resident at Burgos, a celebrated town of Old Castile. But I must relate briefly what he did before his departure.

The caciques of the island had always been contented

<sup>1</sup> The character of Padre Boyl has been somewhat rehabilitated by Padre Fita, S. J. (*Memoires du Congr. Amer. de Madrid*, 1881), but he can hardly be deemed comparable as a missionary to the zealous, self-sacrificing friars who followed with such perfect evangelic spirit a few years later. He was at perpetual enmity with both the Admiral and his brother.

<sup>2</sup> Pedro de Margarita had been appointed by Columbus military commander in the island; his conduct was marked by ingratitude towards the Admiral.

with little, for they lived a peaceful and tranquil life. When they saw the Spaniards establishing themselves upon their native soil, they were considerably troubled, and desired above all things either to expel the newcomers or to destroy them so completely that not even their memory should remain. It is a fact that the people who accompanied the Admiral in his second voyage were for the most part undisciplined, unscrupulous vagabonds, who only employed their ingenuity in gratifying their appetites. Incapable of moderation in their acts of injustice, they carried off the women of the islanders under the very eyes of their brothers and their husbands; given over to violence and thieving, they had profoundly vexed the natives. It had happened in many places that when our men were surprised by the natives, the latter strangled them, and offered them as sacrifices to their gods. Convinced that he should put down a general insurrection by punishing the murderers of the Spaniards, Columbus summoned the cacique of this valley, lying at the foot of the Ciguano Mountains, which are described in the preceding book. This cacique was called Guarionex. He had been pleased to give his sister to be the wife of that Diego Columbus who had been from his infancy brought up by the Admiral, and had served him as interpreter during his occupation of Cuba. Guarionex had hoped by these means to establish a more intimate friendship with the Admiral. He afterwards sent one of his officers to Caunaboa, cacique of the mountains of Cibao, which is the gold region. The people of this Caunaboa had besieged Hojeda and fifty soldiers in the blockhouse of San Tomas and, had they not heard of the approaching arrival of Columbus in person at the head of imposing reinforcements, they would never have raised the siege.<sup>1</sup> The Admiral

<sup>1</sup> A cacique of the Vega, who was a vassal of Guarionex, Juatinango by name, had succeeded in killing ten Spaniards and in setting fire to a

chose Hojeda as his envoy, and while the latter was engaged in his mission, several caciques<sup>1</sup> sent from different parts to urge Caunaboa not to allow the Christians to settle in the island, unless he wished to exchange independence for slavery; for if the Christians were not expelled to the last man from the island, all the natives would sooner or later become their slaves. Hojeda, on the other hand, negotiated with Caunaboa, urging him to come in person to visit the Admiral, and contract a firm alliance with him. The envoys of the caciques promised Caunaboa their unlimited support for the expulsion of the Spaniards, but Hojeda threatened to massacre him if he chose war rather than peace with the Christians. Caunaboa was very undecided. Besides, the consciousness of his crimes disturbed him, for he had cut off the heads of twenty of our men whom he had surprised. If, therefore, he desired peace on the one hand, on the other he feared the interview with the Admiral. Having carefully planned his treachery, he decided that under cover of peace he would seize the first occasion to destroy Columbus and his men. He set out, escorted by all his household and a large number of soldiers, armed after the fashion of the country, to meet the Admiral. When asked why he took such a numerous troop of men, he answered that it was not becoming for such a great king as he to quit his house and journey without an escort. In this event, however, things turned out differently from what he had expected and he fell into the net that he had himself prepared. Hardly had he left his house before he regretted his

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house which served as a hospital for forty others who were confined there ill. After these exploits, he besieged the blockhouse of Magdalena, which Luis de Arriaga only succeeded in defending by the greatest efforts. Herrera, *Hist. Ind.*, tom. i., lib. ii., cap. xvi.

<sup>1</sup> The principal caciques of Hayti at that time numbered five. They were: Caunaboa, who was the most powerful of all; Guarionex, Gaucanagari, Behechio, and Cotubanama.

decision, but Hojeda succeeded by flatteries and promises in bringing him to Columbus, where he was at once seized and put in irons.<sup>1</sup> The souls of our dead might rest in peace.

After the capture of Caunaboa and all his household, the Admiral resolved to march throughout the whole island. He was informed that the natives suffered from such a severe famine that more than 50,000 men had already perished, and that people continued to die daily as do cattle in time of pest.

This calamity was the consequence of their own folly; for when they saw that the Spaniards wished to settle in their island, they thought they might expel them by creating a scarcity of food. They, therefore, decided not only to plant no more crops, but also to destroy and tear up all the various kinds of cereals used for bread which had already been sown, and which I have mentioned in the first book. This was to be done by the people in each district, and especially in the mountainous region of Cipangu and Cibao; that was the country where gold was found in abundance, and the natives were aware that the principal attraction which kept the Spaniards in Hispaniola was gold. At that time the Admiral sent an officer with a troop of armed men to reconnoitre the southern coast of the island, and this officer reported that the regions he had visited had suffered to such an extent from the famine, that during six days he and his men had eaten nothing but the roots of herbs and small plants, or such fruits as grow on the trees. Guarionex, whose territory had suffered less than the others, distributed some provisions amongst our people.

Some days later Columbus, with the object of lessening

<sup>1</sup> Hojeda tricked this cacique into allowing him to fasten handcuffs on him; after which the helpless chief was carried sixty leagues through the forests. Pizarro, in his *Varones Ilustres*, relates the story, as does likewise Herrera.



journeys and also to provide more numerous retreats for his men in case of sudden attack by the natives, had another blockhouse built, which he called Concepcion. It is situated between Isabella and San Tomas in the territory of Cibao, upon the frontiers of the country of Guarionex. It stands upon an elevation, well watered by a number of fresh streams. Seeing this new construction daily nearing completion, and our fleet half ruined lying in the port, the natives began to despair of liberty and to ask one another dejectedly whether the Christians would ever evacuate the archipelago.

It was during these explorations in the interior of the mountainous district of Cibao that the men of Concepcion obtained an ingot of massive gold, shaped in the form of a sponge-like stone; it was as large as a man's fist, and weighed twenty ounces. It had been found by a cacique, not on a river bank but in a dry mound. I saw it with my own eyes in a shop at Medina del Campo in Old Castile, where the Court was passing the winter; and to my great admiration I handled it and tested its weight. I also saw a piece of native tin, which might have served for bells or apothecaries' mortars or other such things as are made of Corinthian brass. It was so heavy that not only could I not lift it from the ground with my two hands, but could not even move it to the right or left. It was said that this lump weighed more than three hundred pounds at eight ounces to the pound. It had been found in the courtyard of a cacique's house, where it had lain for a long time, and the old people of the country, although no tin has been found in the island within the memory of any living man, nevertheless knew where there was a mine of this metal. But nobody could ever learn this secret from them, so much were they vexed by the Spaniards' presence.<sup>1</sup> Finally they decided to reveal its whereabouts, but it was entirely destroyed, and filled

<sup>1</sup> *Adeo jam stomacho pleni in nostros vivebant.*



in with earth and rubbish. It is nevertheless easier to extract the metal than to get out iron from the mines, and it is thought that if workmen and skilled miners were sent out, it would be possible to again work that tin mine.

Not far from the blockhouse of Concepcion and in these same mountains, the Spaniards discovered a large quantity of amber, and in some caverns was distilled a greenish colour very much prized by painters. In marching through the forest there were places where all the trees were of a scarlet colour which are called by Italian merchants *verzino*, and by the Spaniards brazil wood.

At this point, Most Illustrious Prince, you may raise an objection and say to yourself: "If the Spaniards have brought several shiploads of scarlet wood and some gold, and a little cotton and some bits of amber back to Europe, why did they not load themselves with gold and all the precious products which seem to abound so plenteously in the country you describe?"

Columbus answered such questions by saying that the men he had taken with him thought more of sleeping and taking their ease than about work, and they preferred fighting and rebellion to peace and tranquillity. The greater part of these men deserted him. To establish uncontested authority over the island, it was necessary to conquer the islanders and to break their power. The Spaniards have indeed pretended that they could not endure the cruelty and hardship of the Admiral's orders, and they have formulated many accusations against him. It is in consequence of these difficulties that he has not so far thought about covering the expenses of the expeditions. I will nevertheless observe that in this same year, 1501, in which I am writing to you, the Spaniards have gathered 1200 pounds of gold in two months.

But let us return to our narrative. At the proper time I will describe to you in detail what I have only just touched upon in this digression.

The Admiral was perfectly aware of the alarm and disturbance that prevailed amongst the islanders, but he was unable to prevent the violence and rapacity of his men, whenever they came into contact with the natives. A number of the principal caciques of the frontier regions assembled to beg Columbus to forbid the Spaniards to wander about the island because, under the pretext of hunting for gold or other local products, they left nothing uninjured or undefiled. Moreover, all the natives between the ages of fourteen and seventy years bound themselves to pay him tribute in the products of the country at so much per head, promising to fulfil their engagement. Some of the conditions of this agreement were as follows: The mountaineers of Cibao were to bring to the town every three months a specified measure filled with gold. They reckon by the moon and call the months moons. The islanders who cultivated the lands which spontaneously produced spices and cotton, were pledged to pay a fixed sum per head. This pact suited both parties, and it would have been observed by both sides as had been agreed, save that the famine nullified their resolutions. The natives had hardly strength to hunt food in the forests and for a long time they contented themselves with roots, herbs, and wild fruits. Nevertheless the majority of the caciques, aided by their followers, did bring part of the established tribute. They begged as a favour of the Admiral to have pity on their misery, and to exempt them till such time as the island might recover its former prosperity. They bound themselves then to pay double what was for the moment failing.

Owing to the famine, which had affected them more cruelly than the others, very few of the mountaineers of Cibao paid tribute. These mountaineers did not differ in their customs and language from the people of the plain more than do the mountaineers of other countries differ

from those who live in the capital. There exist amongst them, however, some points of resemblance, since they lead the same kind of simple, open-air life.

But let us return to Caunaboa, who, if you remember, had been taken prisoner.

This cacique, when he found himself put in irons, gnashed his teeth like an African lion and fell to thinking, night and day, upon the means to recover his liberty.<sup>1</sup> He begged the Admiral, since the region of Cipangu was now under his authority, to send Spanish garrisons to protect the country against the attacks of neighbours who were his ancient enemies. He said that it was reported to him that the country was ravaged, and the property of his subjects considered by his enemies as their lawful plunder. As a matter of fact it was a trap he was preparing. He hoped that his brother and other relatives in Cibao would, either by force or by trickery, capture as many Spaniards as would be required to pay his ransom. Divining this plot, Columbus sent Hojeda, but with an escort of soldiers sufficient to overcome all resistance of the inhabitants of Cibao. Hardly had the Spaniards entered that region when the brother of Caunaboa assembled about 5000 men, equipped in their fashion, that is to say, naked, armed with arrows without iron points, clubs, and spears. He succeeded in surrounding the Spaniards, and held them besieged in a small house. This chief showed himself under the circumstances to be a veritable soldier. When he had approached within a distance of one stadium, he divided his men into five groups, stationing them in a circle, and assigning to each one his post, while he himself marched directly against the Spaniards. When all his arrangements were

<sup>1</sup> Las Casas (*Hist. de las Indias*, tom. i., p. 102) relates that Caunaboa never forgave Columbus for his treatment of him, while he had, on the contrary, great respect for Hojeda, the latter's clever ruse, deftly executed, being precisely the kind of trickery he was able to appreciate and admire.

completed, he ordered his soldiers to advance, shouting all together, so as to engage in a hand-to-hand combat. He hoped that, by thus surrounding the Spaniards, none of them would escape. But our men, persuaded that it was better to attack than to await their assault, fell upon the most numerous band they saw in the open country. The ground was adapted for cavalry manœuvres and the horsemen, opening their charge, rode down the enemy, who were easily put to flight. Those who awaited the encounter were massacred; the others, overcome with fright, fled, abandoning their huts, and seeking refuge in the mountains and upon inaccessible rocks. They begged for mercy, promising and swearing to observe all the conditions imposed upon them, if they were only permitted to live with their families. The brother of the cacique was finally captured, and each of his men was sent to his own home. After this victory that region was pacified.

The mountain valley where the cacique lived is called Magona. It is traversed by auriferous rivers, is generously productive and marvellously fertile. In the month of June of this same year occurred a frightful tempest; whirlwinds reaching to the skies uprooted the largest trees that were swept within their vortex. When this typhoon reached the port of Isabella, only three ships were riding at anchor; their cables were broken, and after three or four shocks—though there was no tempest or tide at the time—they sank. It is said that in that year the sea penetrated more deeply than usual into the earth, and that it rose more than a cubit. The natives whispered that the Spaniards were the cause of this disturbance of the elements and these catastrophes. These tempests, which the Greeks called typhoons, are called by the natives *hurricanes*.<sup>1</sup> According to their accounts hurricanes

<sup>1</sup> The word *hurricane* is from *Hurakan*, the name of the god or culture hero who, in the mythology of Yucatan, corresponded to Quetzalcoatl

are sufficiently frequent in the island, but they never attain such violence and fury. None of the islanders living, nor any of their ancestors remembers that such an atmospheric disturbance, capable of uprooting the greatest trees, had ever swept the island; nor, on the other hand, had the sea ever been so turbulent, or the tidewater so ravaged. Wherever plains border the sea, flowery meadows are found nearby.

Let us now return to Caunaboa. When it was sought to take them to the sovereigns of Spain, both he and his brother died of grief on the voyage. The destruction of his ships detained the Admiral at Hispaniola; but, as he had at his disposal the necessary artisans, he ordered two caravels to be built immediately.

While these orders were being carried out, he despatched his brother, Bartholomew Columbus,—Adelantado, the Spaniards call him, of the island,—with a number of miners and a troop of soldiers, to the gold mines, which had been discovered by the assistance of the natives sixty leagues from Isabella in the direction of Cipangu. As some very ancient pits were found there, the Admiral believed that he had rediscovered in those mines the ancient treasures which, it is stated in the Old Testament, King Solomon of Jerusalem had found in the Persian Gulf. Whether this be true or false is not for me to decide. These mines cover an area of six miles. The miners, in sifting some dry earth gathered at different places, declared that they had found such a great quantity of gold hidden in that earth that a miner could easily collect three drachmas in a day's work. After they had explored that region, the Adelantado and the miners wrote to Columbus acquainting him with their discovery. The ships being then ready, Columbus immediately and with great delight

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of the Mexicans. Being the god of the winds, storms were ascribed to his fury, and the typhoons and tempests which broke out at times with destructive violence over the seas and countries were called by his name.

embarked to return to Spain; that is to say, the fifth day of the ides of March in the year 1495.<sup>1</sup> He confided the government of the province with full powers to his brother, the Adelantado, Bartholomew Columbus.

<sup>1</sup> Columbus sailed on March 10, 1496.



## BOOK V

TO CARDINAL LUDOVICO D'ARAGON, NEPHEW OF OUR KING

ACTING upon the parting counsel of his brother, the Adelantado, Bartholomew Columbus, constructed a blockhouse at the mines, which he called El Dorado,<sup>1</sup> because the labourers discovered gold in the earth with which they were building its walls. It required three months to manufacture the necessary tools for washing and sifting the gold, but famine obliged him to abandon this enterprise before it was terminated. At a place sixty miles farther on, where he and the greater part of his soldiers went, he succeeded in procuring from the islanders a small quantity of the bread they make, to such a bad state were affairs at that time reduced. Unable to prolong his stay, he left ten men at El Dorado, furnishing them with a small part of the bread that remained. He moreover left with them an excellent hunting dog for chasing the game, which I have above said resembles our rabbits, and which are called *utias*; after which he left to return to Concepcion. It was at that time that the tribute from the cacique Guarionex and one of his neighbours called Manicavex was due. The Adelantado remained there the whole month of June, and obtained from the caciques, not only the sum total of the tribute, but also provisions necessary to support himself and the 400 men of his escort.

<sup>1</sup> The name first given to the place was San Cristobal.

About the calends of July three caravels arrived, bringing provisions—wheat, oil, wine, and salted pork and beef. In obedience to the orders from Spain, they were distributed amongst all the Europeans, but as some of the provisions had rotted, or were spoiled by the damp, people complained. Fresh instructions from the sovereigns and from the Admiral were sent to Bartholomew Columbus by these ships. After frequent interviews with the sovereigns, Columbus directed his brother to transfer his residence to the southern coast of the island, nearer to the mines. He was likewise ordered to send back to Spain, in chains, the caciques who had been convicted of assassinating the Christians, and also those of their subjects who had shared their crimes. Three hundred islanders were thus transported to Spain.<sup>1</sup>

After having carefully explored the coast, the Adelantado transferred his residence and built a lofty blockhouse near a safe harbour, naming the fort Santo Domingo, because he had arrived at that place on a Sunday. There flows into that harbour a river, whose wholesome waters abound in excellent fish, and whose banks are delightfully wooded. This river has some unusual natural features. Wherever its waters flow, the most useful and agreeable products flourish, such as palms and fruits of all kinds. The trees sometimes droop their branches, weighted with flowers and fruit over the heads of the Spaniards, who declare that the soil of Santo Domingo is as fertile, or even perhaps more so, than at Hispaniola. At Isabella there only remained the invalids and some engineers to complete the construction of two caravels which had been begun, all the other colonists coming south to Santo Domingo. When the blockhouse was finished, he placed there a garrison of twenty men, and prepared to lead the remainder of his people on a tour of exploration through the western parts of the island, of which not even the name

<sup>1</sup> This transport marks the beginning of the slave trade in America.

was known. Thirty leagues distant from Santo Domingo, that is to say, at the ninetieth mile, they came upon the river Naiba, which flows south from the mountains of Cibao and divides the island into two equal parts. The Adelantado crossed this river, and sent two captains, each with an escort of twenty-five soldiers, to explore the territory of the caciques who possessed forests of red trees. These men, marching to the left, came upon forests, in which they cut down magnificent trees of great value, heretofore respected. The captains piled the red-coloured wood in the huts of the natives, wishing thus to protect it until they could load it on the ships. During this time the Adelantado, who had marched to the right, had encountered at a place not far from the river Naiba a powerful cacique, named Beuchios Anacauchoa, who was at that time engaged in an expedition to conquer the people along the river, as well as some other caciques of the island. This powerful chieftain lives at the western extremity of the island, called Xaragua. This rugged and mountainous country is thirty leagues distant from the river Naiba, but all the caciques whose territory lies in between are subject to him.<sup>1</sup> All that country from the Naiba to the western extremity produces no gold. Anacauchoa, observing that our men put down their arms and made him amicable signs, adopted a responsive air, either from fear or from courtesy, and asked them what they wanted of him. The Adelantado replied: "We wish you to pay the same tribute to my brother, who is in command here in the name of the Spanish sovereigns, as do the other caciques." To which he answered: "How can you ask tribute from me, since none of the numerous provinces under my authority produce gold?" He had learned that strangers in search of gold had landed on the island, and he did not suspect that our men would ask

<sup>1</sup> Xaragua includes the entire western coast from Cape Tiburon to the island of Beata on the south.

for anything else. "We do not pretend," continued the Adelantado, "to exact tribute from anybody which cannot be easily paid, or of a kind not obtainable; but we know that this country produces an abundance of cotton, hemp, and other similar things, and we ask you to pay tribute of those products." The cacique's face expressed joy on hearing these words, and with a satisfied air he agreed to give what he was asked, and in whatever quantities they desired; for he sent away his men, and after despatching messengers in advance, he himself acted as guide for the Adelantado, conducting him to his residence, which, as we have already said, was situated about thirty leagues distant. The march led through the countries of subject caciques; and upon some of them a tribute of hemp was imposed, for this hemp is quite as good as our flax for weaving ships' sails; upon others, of bread, and upon others, of cotton, according to the products of each region.

When they finally arrived at the chieftain's residence in Xaragua, the natives came out to meet them, and, as is their custom, offered a triumphal reception to their king, Beuchios Anacauchoa, and to our men. Please note amongst other usages these two, which are remarkable amongst naked and uncultivated people. When the company approached, some thirty women, all wives of the cacique, marched out to meet them, dancing, singing, and shouting; they were naked, save for a loin-girdle, which, though it consisted but of a cotton belt, which dropped over their hips, satisfied these women devoid of any sense of shame. As for the young girls, they covered no part of their bodies, but wore their hair loose upon their shoulders and a narrow ribbon tied around the forehead. Their face, breast, and hands, and the entire body was quite naked, and of a somewhat brunette tint. All were beautiful, so that one might think he beheld those splendid naiads or nymphs of the fountains, so much celebrated

by the ancients. Holding branches of palms in their hands, they danced to an accompaniment of songs, and bending the knee, they offered them to the Adelantado. Entering the chieftain's house, the Spaniards refreshed themselves at a banquet prepared with all the magnificence of native usage. When night came, each, according to his rank, was escorted by servants of the cacique to houses where those hanging beds I have already described were assigned to them, and there they rested.

Next day they were conducted to a building which served as a theatre, where they witnessed dances and listened to songs, after which two numerous troops of armed men suddenly appeared upon a large open space, the king having thought to please and interest the Spaniards by having them exercised, just as in Spain Trojan games (that is to say, tourneys) are celebrated. The two armies advanced and engaged in as animated a combat as though they were fighting to defend their property, their homes, their children or their lives. With such vigour did they contest, in the presence of their chieftain, that within the short space of an hour four soldiers were killed and a number were wounded; and it was only at the instance of the Spaniards that the cacique gave the signal for them to lay down their arms and cease fighting. After having advised the cacique to henceforth plant more cotton along the river banks, in order that he might more easily pay the tribute imposed on each household, the Adelantado left on the third day for Isabella to visit the invalids, and to see the ships in construction. About three hundred of his men had fallen victims to divers maladies, and he was therefore much concerned and hardly knew what course to adopt, for everything was lacking, not only for caring for the sick, but also for the necessities of life; since no ship had arrived from Spain to put an end to his uncertainty, he ordered the invalids to be distributed in the several blockhouses



built in different provinces. These citadels, existing in a straight line from Isabella to Santo Domingo, that is to say, from north to south, were as follows: thirty-six miles from Isabella stood Esperanza; twenty-four miles beyond Esperanza came Santa Caterina; twenty miles beyond Santa Caterina, Santiago. Twenty miles beyond Santiago had been constructed a fortification stronger than any of the others; for it stood at the foot of the mountains of Cibao, in a broad and fertile plain which was well peopled. This was called La Concepcion. Between La Concepcion and Santo Domingo, the Adelantado built an even stronger fortress, which stood in the territory of a chieftain, who was obeyed by several thousands of subjects. As the natives called the village where their cacique lived, *Bonana*, the Adelantado wished the fortress to have the same name.

Having distributed the invalids amongst these fortresses or in the houses of the natives in the neighbourhood, the Adelantado left for Santo Domingo, collecting tribute from the caciques he encountered on his way. He had been at Santo Domingo but a few days when the report was brought that two of the caciques in the neighbourhood of La Concepcion were driven to desperation by the Spaniards' rule, and were planning a revolt. Upon the reception of this news he set out for that region by rapid marches.

He learned upon his arrival that Guarionex had been chosen by the other caciques as their commander-in-chief. Although he had already tested and had reason to fear our arms and our tactics, he had allowed himself to be partly won over. The caciques had planned a rising of about 15,000 men, armed in their fashion, for a fixed day, thus making a new appeal to the fortunes of battle. After consultation with the commander at La Concepcion and the soldiers he had with him, the Adelantado determined to take the caciques in their



villages, while they were off their guard and before they had assembled their soldiers. Captains were thus sent against the caciques, and surprising them in their sleep, before their scattered subjects could collect, invaded their houses which were unprotected either by ditches, walls, or entrenchments; they attacked and seized them, binding them with cords, and bringing them, as they had been ordered, to the Adelantado. The latter had dealt with Guarionex himself, as he was the most formidable enemy, and had seized him at the appointed hour. Fourteen caciques were thus brought prisoners to La Concepcion, and shortly afterwards two of those who had corrupted Guarionex and the others, and who had favoured the revolt were condemned to death. Guarionex and the rest were released, for the Adelantado feared that the natives, affected by the death of the caciques, might abandon their fields, which would have occasioned a grievous damage to our people, because of the crops. About six thousand of their subjects had come to solicit their freedom. These people had laid down their arms, making the air ring and the earth shake with their clamour. The Adelantado spoke to Guarionex and the other caciques, and by means of promises, presents, and threats, charged them to take good care for the future to engage in no further revolt. Guarionex made a speech to the people, in which he praised our power, our clemency to the guilty, and our generosity to those who remained faithful; he exhorted them to calm their spirits and for the future neither to think nor to plan any hostilities against the Christians, but rather to be obedient, humble, and serviceable to them, unless they wished worse things to overtake them. When he had finished his speech, his people took him on their shoulders in a hammock, and in this wise they carried him to the village where he lived, and within a few days the entire country was pacified.

Nevertheless the Spaniards were disturbed and depressed, for they found themselves abandoned in a strange country. Fifteen months had elapsed since the departure of the Admiral. The clothes and the food to which they were accustomed were wanting, and so they marched with sad faces and eyes bent on the ground.<sup>1</sup> The Adelantado strove as best he might to offer consolation. At this juncture, Beuchios Anacauchoa, for such was the name of the king of the western province of Xaragua of which we have before spoken, sent to the Adelantado notifying him that the cotton and other tribute he and his subjects were to pay, were ready. Bartholomew Columbus marched thither, therefore, and was received with great honours, by the cacique and by his sister. This woman, formerly the wife of Caunaboa, King of Cibao, was held in as great esteem throughout the kingdom as her brother. It seems she was gracious, clever, and prudent.<sup>2</sup> Having learned a lesson from the example of her husband, she had persuaded her brother to submit to the Christians, to soothe and to please them. This woman was called Anacaona.

Thirty-two caciques were assembled in the house of Anacauchoa, where they had brought their tribute. In addition to what had been agreed upon, they sought to win favour by adding numerous presents, which consisted of two kinds of bread, roots, grains, utias, that is to say, rabbits, which are numerous in the island, fish, which they had preserved by cooking them, and those same

<sup>1</sup> The story of the disorders, privations, and unrest, as told by Las Casas, Columbus, and others, makes cheerless reading; the misfortunes of the colonists were due to their inveterate idleness, their tyranny, which had alienated the good-will of the natives, and to the disillusionment that had dispersed their hope of speedily and easily won riches.

<sup>2</sup> Herrera (iii., 6) speaks of her as *la insigne Anacaona . . . mujer prudente y entendida* . . . etc. She composed with unusual talent the *arreytos* or folk-ballads the natives were fond of singing. Las Casas describes her dreadful death in his *Brevissima Relacion*.

serpents, resembling crocodiles, which they esteem a most delicate food. We have described them above, and the natives call them iguanas. They are special to Hispaniola.<sup>1</sup> Up to that time none of the Spaniards had ventured to eat them because of their odour, which was not only repugnant but nauseating, but the Adelantado, won by the amiability of the cacique's sister, consented to taste a morsel of iguana; and hardly had his palate savoured this succulent flesh than he began to eat it by the mouthful. Henceforth the Spaniards were no longer satisfied to barely taste it, but became epicures in regard to it, and talked of nothing else than the exquisite flavour of these serpents, which they found to be superior to that of peacocks, pheasants, or partridges. If, however, they are cooked as we do peacocks and pheasants, which are first larded and then roasted, the serpent's flesh loses its good flavour. First they gut them, then wash and clean them with care, and roll them into a circle, so that they look like the coils of a sleeping snake; after which they put them in a pot, just large enough to hold them, pouring over them a little water flavoured with the pepper found in the island. The pot is covered and a fire of odorous wood which gives very little light is kindled underneath it. A juice as delicious as nectar runs drop by drop from the insides. It is reported that there are few dishes more appetising than iguana eggs cooked over a slow fire. When they are fresh and served hot they are delicious, but if they are preserved for a few days they still further improve. But this is enough about cooking recipes. Let us pass on to other subjects.

The tribute of cotton sent by the caciques filled the Adelantado's hut, and, in addition, he accepted their promise to furnish him all the bread he needed. While waiting for the bread to be made in the different districts, and brought to the house of Beuchios Anacauchoa, King

<sup>1</sup> Iguanas are found in all the *tierras calientes* of the continent.

of Xaragua, he sent to Isabella directing that one of the caravels he had ordered to be built be brought to him, promising the colonists that he would send it back to them loaded with bread. The delighted sailors made the tour of the island with alacrity, and landed on the coast of Xaragua. As soon as that brilliant, prudent, and sensible woman called Anacaona, sister of Beuchios Anacauchoa, heard that our ship had reached the coast of her country, she persuaded her brother to accompany her to visit it. The distance from the royal residence to the coast was only six miles. They halted for the night at a village about halfway, where the queen kept her treasure; this treasure did not consist of gold, silver, or pearls, but of utensils necessary to the different requirements of life, such as seats, platters, basins, cauldrons, and plates made of black wood, brilliantly polished; they display great art in the manufacture of all these articles. That distinguished savant, your doctor, Joannes Baptista Elysus, thinks that this black wood is ebony. It is to the manufacture of these articles that the islanders devote the best of their native ingenuity. In the island of Ganabara which, if you have a map, you will see lies at the western extremity of Hispaniola and which is subject to Anacauchoa, it is the women who are thus employed; the various pieces are decorated with representations of phantoms which they pretend to see in the night-time, and serpents and men and everything that they see about them. What would they not be able to manufacture, Most Illustrious Prince, if they knew the use of iron and steel? They begin by softening the inner part of pieces of wood in the fire, after which they dig them out and work them with shells from the rivers.

Anacaona presented to the Adelantado fourteen seats and sixty earthen vessels for the kitchen, besides four rolls of woven cotton of immense weight. When they all reached the shore where the other royal town is situ-

ated, the Adelantado ordered out a barque fully equipped. The king also commanded two canoes to be launched, the first for the use of himself and his attendants, the second for his sister and her followers, but Anacaona was unwilling to embark on any other than the boat which carried the Adelantado. As they approached the ship, a cannon was fired at a given signal. The sound echoed over the sea like thunder, and the air was filled with smoke. The terrified islanders trembled, believing that this detonation had shattered the terrestrial globe; but when they turned towards the Adelantado their emotion subsided. Upon approaching closer to the ship the sound of flutes, fifes, and drums was heard, charming their senses by sweet music, and awakening their astonishment and admiration. When they had been over the whole ship, from stern to prow, and had carefully visited the forecastle, the tiller, and the hold, the brother and sister looked at one another in silence; their astonishment being so profound that they had nothing to say. While they were engaged in visiting the ship, the Adelantado ordered the anchor to be raised, the sails set, and to put out on the high sea. Their astonishment was redoubled when they observed that, without oars or the employment of any human force, such a great boat flew over the surface of the water. It was blowing a land wind, which was favourable to this manœuvre, and what astonished them most was to see that the ship which was advanced by the help of this wind likewise turned about, first to the right and then to the left, according to the captain's will.

At the conclusion of these manœuvres the ship was loaded with bread, roots, and other gifts, and the Adelantado after offering them some presents took leave of Beuchios Anacauchoa and his sister, their followers and servants of both sexes. The impression left upon the latter by this visit was stupefying. The Spaniards marched overland and returned to Isabella. On arriving



there, it was learned that a certain Ximenes Roldan, formerly chief of the miners and camp-followers, whom the Admiral had made his equerry and raised to the grade of chief justice, was ill-disposed towards the Adelantado. It was simultaneously ascertained that the Cacique Guarionex, unable longer to put up with the rapacity of Roldan and the other Spaniards at Isabella, had been driven by despair to quit the country with his family and a large number of his subjects, taking refuge in the mountains which border the northern coast only ten leagues to the west of Isabella. Both these mountains and their inhabitants bear the same name, *Ciguaia*. The chief of all the caciques inhabiting the mountain region is called Maiobanexios, who lived at a place called Capronus. These mountains are rugged, lofty, inaccessible, and rise from the sea in a semicircle. Between the two extremities of the chain, there lies a beautiful plain, watered by numerous rivers which rise in these mountains. The natives are ferocious and warlike, and it is thought they are of the same race as the cannibals, for when they descend from their mountains to fight with their neighbours in the plain, they eat all whom they kill. It was with the cacique of these mountains that Guarionex took refuge, bringing him gifts, consisting of things which the mountaineers lack. He told him that the Spaniards had spared him neither ill-treatment nor humiliation nor violence, while neither humility nor pride had been of the least use in his dealings with them. He came, therefore, to him as a suppliant, hoping to be protected against the injustice of these criminals. Maiobanexios promised him help and succour to the extent of his power.

Hastening back to La Concepcion the Adelantado summoned Ximenes Roldan, who, accompanied by his adherents, was prowling amongst the villages of the island, to appear before him. Greatly irritated, the Adelantado asked him what his intentions were. To



which Roldan impudently answered: "Your brother, the Admiral is dead, and we fully understand that our sovereigns have little care for us. Were we to obey you, we should die of hunger, and we are forced to hunt for provisions in the island. Moreover, the Admiral confided to me, as well as to you, the government of the island; hence, we are determined to obey you no longer." He added other equally misplaced observations. Before the Adelantado could capture him, Roldan, followed by about seventy men, escaped to Xaragua in the western part of the island, where, as the Adelantado reported to his brother, they gave themselves over to violence, thievery, and massacre.<sup>1</sup>

While these disturbances were in progress, the Spanish sovereigns finally granted the Admiral eight vessels, which Columbus promptly ordered to sail from the town of Cadiz, a city consecrated to Hercules. These ships were freighted with provisions for the Adelantado. By chance they approached the western coast of the island, where Ximenes Roldan and his accomplices were. Roldan won over the crews by promising them fresh young girls instead of manual labour, pleasures instead of exertion, plenty in place of famine, and repose instead weariness and watching.

During this time Guarionex, who had assembled a troop of allies, made frequent descents upon the plain, killing all the Christians he surprised, ravaging the fields, driving off the workmen, and destroying villages.

Although Roldan and his followers were not ignorant that the Admiral might arrive from one day to another, they had no fears, since they had won over to their side the crews of the ships that had been sent on ahead. In

<sup>1</sup> Some of the principal colonists, including Valdivieso and Diego de Escobar, favoured Roldan. The sketchy description of this notable rebellion here given may be completed by consulting Herrera, Dec. I., 3, i.; Fernando Columbus, *Storia del Almirante*; Irving, *Columbus and his Companions*, book xi., caps iv., v., etc.

the midst of such miseries did the unfortunate Adelantado await from day to day the arrival of his brother. The Admiral sailed from Spain with the remainder of the squadron but instead of sailing directly to Hispaniola, he first laid his course to the south.<sup>1</sup> What he accomplished during this new voyage, what seas and countries he visited, what unknown lands he discovered, I shall narrate, and I shall also explain at length the sequel of these disorders in the following books. Fare you well.

<sup>1</sup> This was the third voyage of Columbus, concerning which some of the best sources of information are as follows: Oviedo, *Hist. Gen. de las Indias*, lib. iii., 2, 4; Navarrete, tom iii., *Lettera di Simone Verde a Mateo Curi*; Fernando Columbus, *op. cit.*; Herrera, dec. i., 7; R. H. Major, Hakluyt Society, 1870, *Select Letters of Columbus*.

## BOOK VI

TO THE SAME CARDINAL LUDOVICO D'ARAGON

ON the third day of the calends of June, 1498,<sup>1</sup> Columbus sailed from the port of San Lucar de Barrameda, which is situated at the mouth of the Guadalquivir not far from Cadiz. His fleet consisted of eight heavily freighted ships. He avoided his usual route by way of the Canaries, because of certain French pirates who were lying in wait for him. Seven hundred and twenty miles north of the Fortunate Isles he sighted Madeira, which lies four degrees to the south of Seville; for at Seville, according to the mariners' report, the north star rises to the 36th degree, whereas at Madeira it is in the 32d. Madeira was, therefore, his first stop, and from thence he despatched five or six ships loaded with provisions directly to Hispaniola, only keeping for himself one ship with decks and two merchant caravels. He laid his course due south and reached the equinoctial line, which he purposed to follow directly to the west, making new discoveries and leaving Hispaniola to the north on his starboard side. The thirteen islands of the Hesperides lie in the track of this voyage. They belong to the Portuguese, and all, save one, are inhabited.

<sup>1</sup>The date was May 30, 1498, and the number of ships under his command was six, instead of eight. Much delay had occurred in fitting out the fleet for the voyage, owing to the poor management of the royal functionaries, especially the Bishop of Burgos, whose enmity towards Columbus was from thenceforward relentless.

They are called the Cape Verde islands, and are distant only a day's sail from the western part of Ethiopia. To one of these islands the Portuguese have given the name of Bona Vista<sup>1</sup>; and each year numerous lepers are cured of their malady by eating the turtles of this island.

The climate being very bad, the Admiral quickly left the archipelago behind, and sailed 480 miles towards the west-south-west. He reports that the dead calms and the fierce heat of the June sun caused such sufferings that his ships almost took fire. The hoops of his water barrels burst, and the water leaked out. His men found this heat intolerable. The pole star was then at an elevation of five degrees. Of the eight days during which they endured these sufferings only the first was clear; the others being cloudy and rainy, but not on that account less oppressive. More than once, indeed, did he repent having taken this course. After eight days of these miseries a favourable wind rose from the south-west, by which the Admiral profited to sail directly west, and under this parallel he observed new stars in the heavens, and experienced a more agreeable temperature. In fact, all his men agree in saying that after three days' sailing in that direction, the air was much cooler. The Admiral affirms that, while he was in the region of dead calms and torrid heat, the ship always mounted the back of the sea, just as when climbing a high mountain one seems to advance towards the sky, and yet, nevertheless, he had seen no land on the horizon. Finally, on the eve of the calends of July, a watcher announced with a joyful cry, from the crow's nest, that he saw three lofty mountains.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Properly *Boavista*. A leper colony had been established here by the Portuguese.

<sup>2</sup> Alonzo Perez Nirando, a sailor from Huelva, made the joyous announcement, and the sailors sang the *Salve Regina* in thanksgiving. Columbus named the island *Trinidad*, having already decided to dedicate the first sighted land to the Holy Trinity. The three mountain peaks close together seemed to render the name all the more appropriate.

He exhorted his companions to keep up their courage. The men were, indeed, much depressed, not merely because they had been scorched by the sun, but because the water-supply was short. The barrels had been sprung by the extreme heat, and lost the water through the cracks. Full of rejoicing they advanced, but as they were about to touch land they perceived that this was impossible, because the sea was dotted with reefs, although in the neighbourhood they descried a harbour which seemed a spacious one. From their ships the Spaniards could see that the country was inhabited and well cultivated; for they saw well-ordered gardens and shady orchards, while the sweet odours, exhaled by plants and trees bathed in the morning dew, reached their nostrils.

Twenty miles from that place, the Admiral found a sufficiently large port to shelter his ships, though no river flowed into it. Sailing farther on he finally discovered a satisfactory harbour for repairing his vessels and also replenishing his supply of water and wood. He called this land *Punta del Arenal*.<sup>1</sup> There was no sign of any habitation in the neighbourhood of the harbour, but there were many tracks of animals similar to goats, and in fact the body of one of those animals, closely resembling a goat, was found. On the morrow, a canoe was seen in the distance carrying eighty men, all of whom were young, good-looking, and

<sup>1</sup> The narrative at this point is somewhat sketchy, but the author, doubtless, faithfully recounted the events as they were reported to him. The ships approached the island from the east, and then coasted its shore for five leagues beyond the cape named by Columbus *La Galera*, because of its imagined resemblance to a galley under sail. The next day he continued his course westwards, and named another headland *Punta de la Playa*; this was a Wednesday, August the first; and as the fleet passed between *La Galera* and *La Playa*, the South American continent was first discovered, some twenty-five leagues distant. Fernando Columbus affirms that his father, thinking it was another island, called it *Isla Santa*; but in reality Columbus named the continent *Tierra de Gracia*. *Punta del Arenal* forms the south-western extremity of the island and is separated by a channel, according to Columbus, two leagues broad.

of lofty stature. Besides their bows and arrows they were armed with shields, which is not the custom among the other islanders. They wore their hair long, parted in the middle, and plastered down quite in the Spanish fashion. Save for their loin-cloths of various coloured cottons, they were entirely naked.

The Admiral's opinion was that this country was nearer to the sky than any other land situated in the same parallel and that it was above the thick vapours which rose from the valleys and swamps, just as the high peaks of lofty mountains are distant from the deep valleys. Although Columbus declared that during this voyage he had followed without deviation the parallel of Ethiopia, there are the greatest possible physical differences between the natives of Ethiopia and those of the islands; for the Ethiopians are black and have curly, woolly hair, while these natives are on the contrary white, and have long, straight, blond hair. What the causes of these differences may be, I do not know. They are due rather to the conditions of the earth than to those of the sky; for we know perfectly well that snow falls and lies on the mountains of the torrid zone, while in northern countries far distant from that zone the inhabitants are overcome by great heat.

In order to attract the natives they had met, the Admiral made them some presents of mirrors, cups of bright polished brass, bells, and other similar trifles, but the more he called to them, the more they drew off. Nevertheless, they looked intently and with sincere admiration at our men, their instruments and their ships, but without laying down their oars. Seeing that he could not attract them by his presents, the Admiral ordered his trumpets and flutes to be played, on the largest ship, and the men to dance and sing a chorus. He hoped that the sweetness of the songs and the strange sounds might win them over, but the young men imagined that the Spaniards were singing preparatory to engaging



in battle, so in the twinkling of an eye they dropped their oars and seized their bows and arrows, protecting their arms with their shields, and, while waiting to understand the meaning of the sounds, stood ready to let fly a volley against our men. The Spaniards sought to draw near little by little, in such wise as to surround them; but the natives retreated from the Admiral's vessel and, confident in their ability as oarsmen, they approached so near to one of the smaller ships that from the poop a cloak was given to the pilot of the canoe, and a cap to another chief. They made signs to the captain of the ship to come to land, in order that they might the more easily come to an understanding; but when they saw that the captain drew near to the Admiral's vessel to ask permission to land, they feared some trap, and quickly jumped into their canoe and sped away with the rapidity of the wind.

The Admiral relates that to the west of that island and not far distant he came upon a strong current flowing from east to west.<sup>1</sup> It ran with such force that he compared its violence to that of a vast cataract flowing from a mountain height. He declared that he had never been exposed to such serious danger since he began, as a boy, to sail the seas. Advancing as best he could amongst these raging waves, he discovered a strait some eight miles long, which resembled the entrance of a large harbour. The current flowed towards that strait, which he called Boca de la Sierpe, naming an island beside it, Margarita. From this strait there flowed another current of fresh water, thus coming into conflict with the salt waters and causing such waves that there seemed to rage between the two currents a terrible combat. In spite of these difficulties, the Admiral succeeded in penetrating into the gulf, where he found the waters drinkable and agreeable.

<sup>1</sup> Columbus was then near the mouth of the Orinoco River.

Another very singular thing the Admiral has told me, and which is confirmed by his companions (all worthy of credence and whom I carefully questioned concerning the details of the voyage), is that he sailed twenty-six leagues, that is to say, one hundred and forty-eight miles, in fresh water; and the farther he advanced to the west, the fresher the water became.<sup>1</sup> Finally, he sighted a very lofty mountain, of which the eastern part was inhabited only by a multitude of monkeys with very long tails. All this side of the mountain is very steep, which explains why no people live there. A man, sent to reconnoitre the country, reported however that it was all cultivated and that the fields were sown, though nowhere were there people or huts. Our own peasants often go some distance from their homes to sow their fields. On the western side of the mountain was a large plain. The Spaniards were well satisfied to drop anchor in such a great river.<sup>2</sup> As soon as the natives knew of the landing of an unknown race on their coasts, they collected about the Spaniards anxious to examine them, and displaying not the slightest fear. It was learned by signs that that country was called Paria, that it was very extensive, and that its population was most numerous in its western part. The Admiral invited four natives to come on board and continued his course to the west.

Judging by the agreeable temperature, the attractive-

<sup>1</sup> See *Orinoco Illustrado*, by Gumilla, 1754, also Schomburgk's *Reisen in Guiana und Orinoco*. The fresh waters of the estuary are in fact driven a considerable distance out to sea.

<sup>2</sup> This was the first landing of the Spaniards on the American continent, but Columbus, being ill, did not go on shore. Pedro de Torreros took possession in the Admiral's name (Navarrete, tom. iii., p. 569). Fernando Columbus states that his father suffered from inflamed eyes, and that from about this time he was forced to rely for information upon his sailors and pilots (*Storia*, cap. lxv.-lxxiii.). He seemed nevertheless to divine the immensity of the newly discovered land, for he wrote to the sovereigns *y creo esta tierra que agora mandaron discribir vuestras altezzas sea grandissima*.

ness of the country, and the number of people they daily saw during their voyage, the Spaniards concluded that the country is a very important one, and in this opinion they were not wrong, as we shall demonstrate at the proper time. One morning at the break of dawn the Spaniards landed, being attracted by the charm of the country and the sweet odours wafted to them from the forests. They discovered at that point a larger number of people than they had thus far seen, and as they were approaching the shore, messengers came in the name of the caciques of that country, inviting them to land and to have no fears. When Columbus refused, the natives urged by curiosity, flocked about the ships in their barques. Most of them wore about their necks and arms, collars and bracelets of gold and ornaments of Indian pearls, which seemed just as common amongst them as glass jewelry amongst our women. When questioned as to whence came the pearls, they answered by pointing with their fingers to a neighbouring coast; by grimaces and gestures they seemed to indicate that if the Spaniards would stop with them they would give them basketfuls of pearls. The provisions which the Admiral destined for the colony at Hispaniola were beginning to spoil, so he resolved to defer this commercial operation till a more convenient opportunity. Nevertheless he despatched two boats loaded with soldiers, to barter with the people on land for some strings of pearls and, at the same time, to discover whatever they could about the place and its people. The natives received these men with enthusiasm and pleasure, and great numbers surrounded them, as though they were inspecting something marvellous. The first who came forward were two distinguished persons, for they were followed by the rest of the crowd. The first of these men was aged and the second younger, so that it was supposed they were the father and his son and future successor. After exchanging salutations the Spaniards

were conducted to a round house near a large square. Numerous seats of very black wood decorated with astonishing skill were brought, and when the principal Spaniards and natives were seated, some attendants served food and others, drink. These people eat only fruits, of which they have a great variety, and very different from ours. The beverages they offered were white and red wine, not made from grapes but from various kinds of crushed fruits, which were not at all disagreeable.

This repast concluded, in company with the elder chief, the younger one conducted the Spaniards to his own house, men and women crowding about in great numbers, but always in separate groups from one another.

The natives of both sexes have bodies as white as ours, save those perhaps who pass their time in the sun. They were amiable, hospitable, and wore no clothes, save waist-cloths of various coloured cotton stuffs. All of them wore either collars or bracelets of gold or pearls, and some wore both, just as our peasants wear glass jewelry. When they were asked whence the gold came, they indicated with the finger that it was from a mountainous country, appearing at the same time to dissuade our men from going there, for they made them understand by gestures and signs that the inhabitants of that country were cannibals. It was not, however, entirely clear whether they meant cannibals or savage beasts. They were much vexed to perceive that the Spaniards did not understand them, and that they possessed no means of making themselves intelligible to one another. At three o'clock in the afternoon the men who had been sent on shore returned, bringing several strings of pearls, and the Admiral, who could not prolong his stay, because of his cargo of provisions, raised anchor and sailed. He intends, however, after putting the affairs of Hispaniola in order, shortly to return. It was another than he who profited by this important discovery.

The shallowness of the sea and the numerous currents, which at each change of the tide dashed against and injured the lesser vessels, much retarded the Admiral's progress, and to avoid the perils of the shallows he always sent one of the lighter caravels ahead; this vessel being of short draught took repeated soundings and the other larger ones followed. At that time two provinces of the vast region of Paria, Cumaná and Manacapana, were reached, and along their shores the Admiral coasted for two hundred miles. Sixty leagues farther on begins another country called Curiana. As the Admiral had already covered such a distance, he thought the land lying ahead of him was an island, and that if he continued his course to the west he would be unable to get back to the north and reach Hispaniola. It was then that he came upon the mouth of a river whose depth was thirty cubits, with an unheard-of width which he described as twenty-eight leagues. A little farther on, always in a westerly direction though somewhat to the south, since he followed the line of the coast, the Admiral sailed into a sea of grass of which the seeds resemble those of the lentil. The density of this growth retarded the advance of the ships.

The Admiral declares that in the whole of that region the day constantly equals the night. The north star is elevated as in Paria to five degrees above the horizon, and all the coasts of that newly discovered country are on the same parallel. He likewise reports details concerning the differences he observed in the heavens, which are so contradictory to astronomical theories that I wish to make some comments. It is proven, Most Illustrious Prince, that the polar star, which our sailors call Tramontane, is not the point of the arctic pole upon which the axis of the heavens turns. To realise this easily, it is only necessary to look through a small hole at the pole star itself, when the stars are rising. If one then looks through the same aperture at the



same star when dawn is paling the stars, it will be seen that it has changed its place; but how can it be in this newly discovered country that the star rises at the beginning of twilight in the month of June to a height of only five degrees above the horizon, and when the stars are disappearing before the sunrise, it should be found by the same observer to be in the fifteenth degree? I do not at all understand it, and I must confess the reasons the Admiral gives by no means satisfy me. Indeed, according to his conjectures, the terrestrial globe is not an absolute sphere, but had at the time of its creation a sort of elevation rising on its convex side, so that instead of resembling a ball or an apple, it was more like a pear, and Paria would be precisely that elevated part, nearest to the sky. He has also persisted in affirming that the earthly paradise<sup>1</sup> is situated on the summit of those three mountains, which the watcher from the height of the crow's nest observed in the distance, as I have recounted. As for the impetuous current of fresh water which rushed against the tide of the sea at the beginning of that strait, he maintains that it is formed of waters which fall in cascades from the heights of these mountains. But we have had enough of these things which to me seem fabulous. Let us return to our narrative.

Seeing his course across that vast gulf had, contrary to his expectation, been arrested, and fearing to find no exit towards the north through which he might reach Hispaniola, the Admiral retraced his course and sailing north of that country he bent towards the east in the direction of Hispaniola.

Those navigators who later explored this region more carefully believe that it is the Indian continent, and not

<sup>1</sup> Speaking of the earthly paradise, Columbus describes it as *adonde ne puede llegar nadie, sabro por voluntad divina*. Vespucci it was who thought it would be found in the New World; *se nel mondo e alcun paradiso terrestre*.



Cuba, as the Admiral thought; and there are not wanting mariners who pretend that they have sailed all round Cuba. Whether they are right or whether they seek to gratify their jealousy of the author of a great discovery, I am not bound to decide.<sup>1</sup> Time will decide, and Time is the only truthful judge. The Admiral likewise discusses the question whether or not Paria is a continent; he himself thinks it is. Paria lies to the south of Hispaniola, a distance of 882 leagues, according to Columbus. Upon the third day of the calends of September of the year 1498, he reached Hispaniola, most anxious to see again his soldiers and his brother whom he had left there. But, as commonly happens in human affairs, fortune, however favourable, mingles with circumstances, sweet and pleasant, some grain of bitterness. In this case it was internecine discord which marred his happiness.

<sup>1</sup> Rivalry and perhaps jealousy existed among the navigators, each bent on eclipsing the achievements of his fellows, and the former feeling was a spur to enterprise. Yañez Pinzon, Amerigo Vespucci, Juan Diaz de Solis all explored the American coasts, discovering Yucatan, Florida, Texas, and Honduras.

## BOOK VII

TO THE SAME CARDINAL LUDOVICO D'ARAGON

UPON his arrival at Hispaniola, the Admiral found an even greater state of disorder than he had feared, for Roldan had taken advantage of his absence to refuse obedience to his brother, Bartholomew Columbus. Resolved not to submit to him who had formerly been his master and had raised him in dignity, he had stirred up the multitude in his own favour and had also vilified the Adelantado and had written heinous accusations to the King against the brothers. The Admiral likewise sent envoys to inform the sovereigns of the revolt, begging them at the same time to send soldiers to put down the insurrection and punish the guilty, according to their crimes. Roldan and his accomplices preferred grave charges against the Admiral and the Adelantado, who, according to them, were impious, unjust men, enemies to the Spaniards, whose blood they had profusely shed. They were accused of torturing, strangling, decapitating and, in divers other ways, killing people on the most trifling pretexts. They were envious, proud, and intolerable tyrants; therefore, people avoided them as they would fly from wild beasts, or from the enemies of the Crown. It had in fact been discovered that the sole thought of the brothers was to usurp the government of the island. This had been proven by different circumstances, but chiefly by the fact that

they allowed none but their own partisans to work the gold-mines.

In soliciting reinforcements from the sovereigns, sufficient to deal with the rebels according to their merits, the Admiral explained that those men who dared thus to accuse him were guilty of misdemeanours and crimes; for they were debauchees, profligates, thieves, seducers, ravishers, vagabonds. They respected nothing and were perjurers and liars, already condemned by the tribunals, or fearful, owing to their numerous crimes, to appear before them. They had formed a faction amongst themselves, given over to violence and rapine; lazy, gluttonous, caring only to sleep and to carouse. They spared nobody; and having been brought to the island of Hispaniola originally to do the work of miners or of camp servants, they now never moved a step from their houses on foot, but insisted on being carried about the island upon the shoulders of the unfortunate natives, as though they were dignitaries of the State.<sup>1</sup> Not to lose practice in the shedding of blood, and to exercise the strength of their arms, they invented a game in which they drew their swords, and amused themselves in cutting off the heads of innocent victims with one sole blow. Whoever succeeded in more quickly landing the head of an unfortunate islander on the ground with one stroke, was proclaimed the bravest, and as such was honoured.<sup>2</sup> Such were the mutual accusations bandied about between the Admiral and the partisans of Roldan, not to mention many other imputations.

Meanwhile the Admiral, desiring to put a stop to the dangerous attacks of the Ciguana tribe which had revolted under the leadership of Guarionex, sent his brother the

<sup>1</sup> *Ab insularibus namque miseris pensiles per totam insulam, tanquam adiles curules, feruntur.*

<sup>2</sup> See Las Casas, *Brevissima Relacion*, English translation, pub. by G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909.

Adelantado with ninety foot-soldiers and some horsemen against them. It may be truthfully added that about three thousand of the islanders who had suffered from the invasions of the Ciguana tribe, who were their sworn enemies, joined forces with the Spaniards. The Adelantado led his troops to the bank of a great river which waters the plain between the sea and the two extremes of the mountain chain of Ciguana, of which we have already spoken. He surprised two of the enemy's spies who were concealed in the underbrush, one of whom sprang into the sea, and, swimming across the river at its mouth, succeeded in escaping to his own people. From the one who was captured, it was learned that six thousand natives of Ciguana were hidden in the forest beyond the river and were prepared to attack the Spaniards when they crossed over. The Adelantado therefore marched along the river bank seeking a ford. This he soon found in the plain, and was preparing to cross the river when the Ciguana warriors rushed out from the forest in compact battalions, yelling in a most horrible manner. Their appearance is fearsome and repulsive, and they march into battle daubed with paint, as did the Thracians and Agathyrse. These natives indeed paint themselves from the forehead to the knees, with black and scarlet colours which they extract from certain fruits similar to pears, and which they carefully cultivate in their gardens. Their hair is tormented into a thousand strange forms, for it is long and black, and what nature refuses they supply by art. They look like goblins emerged from the infernal caverns. Advancing towards our men who were trying to cross the river, they contested their passage with flights of arrows and by throwing pointed sticks; and such was the multitude of projectiles that they half darkened the light of the sun, and had not the Spaniards received the blows on their shields the engagement would have ended badly for them.

A number of men were wounded in this first encounter, but the Adelantado succeeded in crossing the river and the enemy fled, the Spaniards pursuing them, though they killed few, as the islanders are good runners. As soon as they gained the protection of the woods, they used their bows to repulse their pursuers, for they are accustomed to woods, and run naked amongst underbrush, shrubs, and trees, like wild boars, heedless of obstacles. The Spaniards, on the contrary, were hindered amongst this undergrowth by their shields, their clothes, their long lances, and their ignorance of the surroundings. After a night passed uselessly in the woods the Adelantado, realising the next morning that they could catch nobody, followed the counsel of those islanders who are the immemorial enemies of the Ciguana tribe, and under their guidance marched towards the mountains where the King Maiobanexius lived at a place called Capronus. Twelve miles' march brought them to the village of another cacique, which had been abandoned by its terrified inhabitants, and there he established his camp. Two natives were captured, from whom it was learned that King Maiobanexius and ten caciques with eight thousand soldiers were assembled at Capronus. During two days there were a few light skirmishes between the parties, the Adelantado not wishing to do more than reconnoitre the country. Scouts were sent out the following night under the guidance of some islanders who knew the land. The people of Ciguana caught sight of our men from the heights of their mountains, and prepared to give battle, uttering war-cries as is their custom. But they did not venture to quit their woods, because they thought the Adelantado had his entire army with him. Twice on the following day, when the Adelantado marched on with his men, the natives tested the fortune of war; hurling themselves against the Spaniards with fury, they wounded many before they could protect themselves with their

shields, but the latter, getting the better of them, pursued them, cutting some in pieces, and taking a large number prisoners. Those who escaped took refuge in the forests, from which they were careful not to emerge.

The Adelantado selected one of the prisoners, and sending with him one of his allies, he despatched them both to Maiobanexius with the following message: "The Adelantado has not undertaken to make war upon you and your people, O Maiobanexius, for he desires your friendship; but he formally demands that Guarionex, who has taken refuge with you and has drawn you into this conflict to the great damage of your people, shall be delivered to him to be punished as he merits. He counsels you, therefore, to give up this cacique; if you consent, the Admiral will count you among his friends and protect and respect your territory. If you refuse you will be made to repent, for your entire country will be devastated with fire and sword, and all you possess will be destroyed." Maiobanexius, upon hearing this message, replied: "Everybody knows that Guarionex is a hero, adorned with all the virtues, and therefore I have esteemed it right to assist and protect him. As for you, you are violent and perfidious men, and seek to shed the blood of innocent people: I will neither enter into relations with you, nor form any alliance with so false a people."

When this answer was brought to the Adelantado, he burnt the village where he had established his camp and several others in the neighbourhood. He again sent envoys to Maiobanexius, to ask him to name one of his trusty advisers to treat for peace. Maiobanexius consented to send one of the most devoted of his counsellors, accompanied by two other chiefs. The Adelantado earnestly conjured them not to jeopardise the territory of Maiobanexius solely in the interests of Guarionex. He advised Maiobanexius, if he did not wish to be ruined himself and to be treated as an enemy, to give him up.



When his envoys returned, Maiobanexius called together his people and explained the conditions. The people cried that Guarionex must be surrendered, cursing and execrating the day he had come amongst them to disturb their tranquillity. The cacique reminded them, however, that Guarionex was a hero, and had rendered him services when he fled to him for protection, for he had brought him royal presents. Moreover, he had taught both the cacique himself and his wife to sing and dance, a thing not to be held in mediocre consideration. Maiobanexius was determined never to surrender the prince who had appealed to his protection, and whom he had promised to defend. He was prepared to risk the gravest perils with him rather than to merit the reproach of having betrayed his guest. Despite the complaints of the people, the cacique dissolved the assembly, and calling Guarionex to him, he pledged himself for the second time to protect him and to share his fortunes as long as he lived.

Maiobanexius resolved to give no further information to the Adelantado: on the contrary he ordered his first messenger to station himself with some faithful soldiers at a place on the road where the Adelantado's envoys usually passed, and to kill any Spaniards who appeared, without further discussion. The Adelantado had just sent his messengers, and both these men, one of whom was a prisoner from Ciguana and the other from amongst the native allies, were decapitated. The Adelantado, escorted by only ten foot-soldiers and four horsemen, followed his envoys and discovered their bodies lying in the road, which so incensed him that he determined to no longer spare Maiobanexius. He invaded the cacique's village of Capronus with his army. The caciques fled in every direction, abandoning their chief, who withdrew with his entire family into places of concealment in the mountain districts. Some others of the

Ciguana people sought to capture Guarionex, since he was the occasion of the catastrophe; but he succeeded in escaping and concealed himself almost alone amidst the rocks and desert mountains. The soldiers of the Adelantado were exhausted by this long war, which dragged on for three months; the watches, the fatigues, and the scarcity of food. In response to their request they were authorised to return to Concepcion, where they owned handsome plantations of the native sort; and thither many withdrew. Only thirty companions remained with the Adelantado, all of whom were severely tried by these three months of fighting, during which they had eaten nothing but cazabi, that is to say, bread made of roots, and even they were not always ripe. They also procured some utias, or rabbits, by hunting with their dogs, while their only drink had been water, which was sometimes exquisitely fresh, but just as often muddy and marshy. Moreover the character of the war obliged them to pass most of the time in the open air and perpetual movement.

With his little troop the Adelantado determined to scour the mountains to seek out the secret retreats where Maiobanexius and Guarionex had concealed themselves. Some Spaniards, who had been driven by hunger to hunt utias for want of something better, met two servants of Maiobanexius, whom the cacique had sent into the villages of his territory, and who were carrying back native bread. They forced these men to betray the hiding-place of their chief, and under their leadership, twelve soldiers who had stained their bodies like the people of Ciguana succeeded by trickery in capturing Maiobanexius, his wife, and his son, all of whom they brought to the Admiral at Concepcion. A few days later hunger compelled Guarionex to emerge from the cavern where he was concealed, and the islanders, out of fear of the Admiral, betrayed him to the hunters. As soon as he

learned his whereabouts, the Admiral sent a body of foot-soldiers to take him, just at the moment when he was about to quit the plain, and return to the mountains. These men caught him and brought him back, after which that region was pacified, and tranquillity restored.

A relative of Maiobanexius who was married to a cacique whose territory had not yet been invaded, shared the former's misfortunes. Everybody agreed in saying that she was the most beautiful of the women nature had created in the island of Hispaniola. Her husband loved her dearly, as she merited, and when she was captured by the Spaniards he almost lost his reason, and wandered distractedly in desert places, doubtful what course to pursue. Finally he presented himself before the Admiral, promising that he and his people would submit without conditions, if he would only restore him his wife. His prayer was granted and at the same time several others of the principal captives were likewise freed. This same cacique then assembled five thousand natives who instead of weapons carried agricultural implements, and went himself to labour and plant the crops in one of the largest valleys in his territories. The Admiral thanked him by means of presents, and the cacique came back rejoicing. This news spread throughout Ciguana, and the other caciques began to hope that they too might be treated with clemency, so they came in person to promise they would in future obey the orders given them. They asked that their chief and his family might be spared, and in response to their petition, the wife and children were delivered to them, but Maiobanexius was held a prisoner.

While the Admiral was thus engaged in administering the affairs of Hispaniola, he was ignorant of the intrigues his adversaries were carrying on against him at the Spanish

Court.<sup>1</sup> Wearied by these continuous quarrels, and above all annoyed at receiving but a small quantity of gold and valuable products because of these dissensions and revolts, the sovereigns, appointed another Governor,<sup>2</sup> who, after a careful enquiry, should punish the guilty and send them back to Spain. I do not precisely know what has come to light against either the Admiral or his brother the Adelantado, or their enemies; but this is certain, that the Admiral and his brother were seized, put in irons, deprived of all their property, and brought to Spain; and of this, Most Illustrious Prince, you are not ignorant. It is true that the sovereigns, when they learned that the Columbus brothers had arrived at Cadiz loaded with irons, promptly sent their secretaries to order their release and that their children should be allowed to visit them; nor did they conceal their disapproval of this rough treatment.<sup>3</sup> It is claimed that the new Governor has sent to the sovereigns some letters in the handwriting of the Admiral, but in cipher, in which the latter summoned his brother the Adelantado, who was at that time absent with his soldiers, to hasten back and repel force with force, in case the Governor sought to use violence. The Adelantado preceded his soldiers, and the Governor seized him and his brother before their partisans could rejoin them. What will be the outcome, time will show, for time is the supreme arbiter of events. Fare you well.

<sup>1</sup> One of the most inveterate of his enemies was Juan de Fonseca, afterwards Bishop of Burgos, who was unfortunately in a position to do Columbus serious harm.

<sup>2</sup> Francisco de Bobadilla, commander of Calatrava.

<sup>3</sup> The sovereigns made what amends they could for the abusive execution of their orders by over-zealous agents; they sent Columbus a present of two thousand ducats—not an insignificant sum at the time—and wrote him a letter, full of affectionate expressions of confidence; he was admitted to audience on December 17th.

## BOOK VIII

TO THE SAME CARDINAL LUDOVICO D'ARAGON

I HAVE presented to you this immense and hitherto unknown ocean which the Admiral, Christopher Columbus, discovered, under the auspices of our sovereigns, in the guise of a necklace of gold, although, owing to the poor skill of the artisan, it is but poorly executed. Yet I have judged it worthy, Most Illustrious Prince, of your splendour. Accept now a necklace of pearls which, suspended from the former, will ornament your breast.

Some of the Admiral's ship-captains who had made a study of the different wind-currents sought the royal permission to prosecute discoveries at their own expense,<sup>1</sup> proposing to relinquish to the Crown its due, that is to say, one fifth of the profits. The most fortunate of these adventurers was a certain Pedro Alonzo Nuñez,<sup>2</sup> who sailed towards the south; and it is of his expedition that I will first write. To come at once to the essential details of this voyage, this Nuñez had but one ship, fitted out at his expense, though some people claimed that he was helped.<sup>3</sup> The royal edict forbade him to anchor within

<sup>1</sup> See Navarrete, tom. ii., 1867; Gomara, *Historia General*, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Also called Niño; he had sailed with Columbus on his first two voyages. Oviedo, *op. cit.*, xix., 1, also describes this expedition.

<sup>3</sup> Nuñez was poor and only found assistance from a merchant of Seville called Guerro, on condition that the latter's brother, Christobal, should command the one ship his loan sufficed to provide. This vessel was only fifty tons burden, and carried a crew of thirty-three persons.

fifty leagues of any place discovered by the Admiral. He sailed towards Paria, where, as I have said, Columbus found both native men and women wearing bracelets and necklaces of pearls. In obedience to the royal decree he coasted along this shore, leaving behind him the provinces of Cumana and Manacapana, and thus arrived at a country called by its inhabitants Curiana, where he discovered a harbour quite similar to that of Cadiz.

Upon entering this harbour he found a number of houses scattered along the banks, but when he landed it was discovered to be a group of eight houses; about fifty men, led by their chief, promptly came from a populous village only three miles distant. These men, who were naked, invited Alonzo Nuñez to land on their coast, and he consented. He distributed some needles, bracelets, rings, glass pearls, and other pedlar's trifles amongst them, and in less than an hour he obtained from them in exchange fifteen ounces of the pearls they wore on their necks and arms. The natives embraced Nuñez affectionately, insisting more and more that he should come to their village, where they promised to give him any amount of pearls he might desire. The next day at dawn the ship drew near to the village and anchored. The entire population assembled and begged the men to land, but Nuñez, seeing that they were very numerous and considering that he had only thirty men, did not venture to trust himself to them. He made them understand by signs and gestures that they should come to the ship in barques and canoes. These barques, like the others, are dug out of a single tree-trunk, but are less well shaped and less easy to handle than those used by the cannibals and the natives of Hispaniola. They are called *gallitas*. The natives all brought strings of pearls, which are called *tenoras*, and showed themselves desirous of Spanish merchandise.



They are amiable men; simple, innocent, and hospitable, as was made clear after twenty days of intercourse with them. The Spaniards very soon ceased to fear to enter their houses, which are built of wood covered with palm leaves. Their principal food is the meat of the shellfish from which they extract pearls, and their shores abound with such. They likewise eat the flesh of wild animals, for deer, wild-boar, rabbits whose hair and colour resemble our hares, doves, and turtle-doves exist in their country. The women keep ducks and geese about the houses, just as ours do; peacocks fly about in the woods, but their colours are not so rich or so varied as ours and the male bird differs little from the female. Amongst the undergrowth in the swamps, pheasants are from time to time seen. The people of Curiana are skilful hunters and generally with one single arrow shot they kill beasts or birds at which they aim. The Spaniards spent several days amongst the abundance of the country. They traded four needles for a peacock, only two for a pheasant, and one for a dove or a turtle-dove. The same, or a glass bead, was given for a goose. In making their offers and bargaining and disputing, the natives conducted their commercial affairs just about the same as do our women when they are arguing with pedlars. As they wore no clothes, the natives were puzzled to know the use of needles, but when the Spaniards satisfied their naive curiosity by showing them that needles were useful for getting thorns from beneath the skin, and for cleaning the teeth, they conceived a great opinion of them. Another thing which pleased them even more was the colour and sound of hawk-bells, which they were ready to buy at good prices.

From the native houses the roaring of large animals<sup>1</sup> was audible amidst the dense and lofty forest trees, but these animals are not fierce, for, although the natives

<sup>1</sup> Supposed to have been tapirs, animals unknown in Europe.

constantly wander through the woods with no other weapons than their bows and arrows, there is no recollection of any one being killed by these beasts. They brought the Spaniards as many deer and wild-boar, slain with their arrows, as the latter desired. They did not possess cattle or goats or sheep, and they ate bread made of roots and bread made of grain the same as the islanders of Hispaniola. Their hair is black, thick, half curly, and long. They try to spoil the whiteness of their teeth, for almost the entire day they chew a herb which blackens them, and when they spit it out, they wash their mouth. It is the women who labour in the fields rather than the men, the latter spending their time in hunting, fighting, or leading dances and games.

Pitchers, cups with handles, and pots are their earthenware utensils, which they procure from elsewhere, for they frequently hold markets, which all the neighbouring tribes attend, each bringing the products of his country to be exchanged for those of other places. In fact, there is nobody who is not delighted to obtain what is not to be had at home, because the love of novelty is an essential sentiment of human nature. They hang little birds and other small animals, artistically worked in base gold,<sup>1</sup> to their pearls. These trinkets they obtain by trade, and the metal resembles the German gold used for coining florins.

The men either carry their private parts enclosed in a little gourd which has been opened at the back, like our cod-piece, or they use a seashell. The gourd hangs from a cord tied round the waist.<sup>2</sup> The presence of the animals above mentioned, and many other indications not found in any of the islands, afford evidence that this land is a continent. The most conclusive proof<sup>3</sup> seems to be

<sup>1</sup> A kind of alloyed gold called by the natives *guanin*; the Spaniards were often deceived by its glitter.

<sup>2</sup> The text continues: *alibi in eo tractu intra vaginam mentularemque nervum reducunt, funiculoque præputium alligant.*

<sup>3</sup> Navarrete, iii., 14.

that the Spaniards followed the coast of Paria for a distance of about three thousand miles always in a westerly direction, but without discovering any end to it. When asked whence they procured their gold, the people of Curiana answered that it came from a country called Cauchieta situated about six suns distant (which means six days) to the west, and that it was the artisans of that region who worked the gold into the form in which they saw it. The Spaniards sailed towards Cauchieta and anchored there near the shore on the calends of November, 1500. The natives fearlessly approached and brought them gold, which in its rough state is not valued amongst them. The people also wore pearls round their throats; but these came from Curiana, where they had been obtained in exchange for gold, and none of them wanted to part with anything they had obtained by trade. That is to say the people of Curiana kept their gold, and the people of Cauchieta their pearls, so that very little gold was obtained at Cauchieta.<sup>1</sup> The Spaniards brought away some very pretty monkeys and a number of parrots of varied colours, from that country.

The temperature in the month of November was delicious, without a sign of cold. Each evening the stars which mark the north pole disappeared, so near is that region to the equator; but it was not possible to calculate precisely the polar degrees. The natives are sensible and not suspicious, and some of the people of Curiana passed the entire night in company with our men, coming out in their barques to join them. Pearls they call *corixas*. They are jealous, and when strangers visit them, they make their women withdraw behind the house, from whence the latter examine the guests as though they were prodigies. Cotton is plentiful and grows wild in Cauchieta, just as shrubs do in our forests, and of this they make trousers which they wear.

<sup>1</sup> *Auri tamen parum apud Cauchietenses: lectum reperere* meaning, doubtless, that they traded away most of their gold for pearls.

Continuing their course along the same coast, the Spaniards suddenly encountered about two thousand men armed according to the fashion of the country, who prevented them from landing. They were so barbarous and ferocious that it was impossible to establish the smallest relations with them or to effect any trade; so, as our men were satisfied with the pearls they had procured, they returned by the same course to Curiana, where they remained for another twenty days bountifully supplied with provisions.

It seems to me neither out of place nor useless to this history, to here narrate what happened when they arrived within sight of the coasts of Paria. They encountered by chance a squadron of eighteen canoes full of cannibals engaged in a man-hunt: this was near the Boca de la Sierpe and the strait leading to the gulf of Paria, which I have before described. The cannibals unconcernedly approached the ship, surrounding it, and shooting flights of arrows and javelins at our men. The Spaniards replied by a cannon shot, which promptly scattered them. In pursuing them, the ship's boat came up with one of their canoes, but was able to capture only a single cannibal and a bound prisoner, the others having all escaped by swimming. This prisoner burst into tears, and by his gestures and rolling his eyes, gave it to be understood that six of his companions had been cruelly disembowelled, cut into pieces, and devoured by those monsters, and that the same fate awaited him on the morrow. They made him a present of the cannibal, upon whom he immediately threw himself, gnashing his teeth and belabouring him with blows of a stick and his fists and with kicks, for he believed that the death of his companions would not be sufficiently avenged till he beheld the cannibal insensible and beaten black and blue. When questioned as to the customs and usages of the cannibals when they made expeditions to other countries, he said they always carried

with them, wherever they went, sticks prepared beforehand which they planted in the ground at the place of their encampment, and beneath whose shelter they passed the night.

Hanging over the door of one of the chieftains in Curiana, the Spaniards found the head of a cannibal, which was regarded as a sort of standard or helmet captured from the enemy, and constituted a great honour for this chief.

There is a district on the coast of Paria, called Haraia, which is remarkable for a peculiar kind of salt found there. It is a vast plain over which the waves of the sea are driven in heavy weather and when the waves subside and the sun comes out, the pools of water crystallise into masses of the whitest salt, in sufficient quantity for the natives to load all the ships that sail, did they arrive before it rained. The first rainfall melts the salt, which is then absorbed by the sands and thus returns through fissures in the earth, to the sea which produces it. Others pretend that this plain is not inundated by the sea, but that it possesses saline springs, more bitter than sea water, which send forth their waters when the tempest rages. The natives set great store on these salines, and they not only use the salt in the same way that we do, but they mould it into brick-shaped forms and trade it to foreigners for articles which they do not themselves possess.

The bodies of the chiefs of the country are laid upon biers under which a slow fire is lighted which consumes the flesh, little by little, but leaves the bones and the skin intact. These dried bodies are then piously preserved, as though they were their *penates*. The Spaniards say that in one district they saw a man being thus dried for preservation and in another a woman.

When, on the eighth day of the ides of February, the Spaniards were ready to leave the country of Curiana,



they found they had ninety-six pounds of pearls at eight ounces to the pound, which they had obtained at an average price of five cents.

Although their return voyage was shorter than when they came from Hispaniola, it lasted sixty-one days, because continual currents running from east to west not only retarded their speed, but sometimes completely stopped the ship. Finally they arrived, loaded with pearls like other people come loaded with straw. The commander, Pedro Alonzo Nuñez, concealed an important quantity of valuable pearls, and thus cheated the royal revenues, to which a fifth of all merchandise belongs.<sup>1</sup> His fellows denounced him, and Fernando de Vega, a learned statesman, who was Governor of Galicia where they landed, arrested him, and he was held in prison for a long time, but was finally released; and even to this day he still claims they robbed him of his share of the pearls. Many of these stones are as large as nuts, and resemble oriental pearls, but as they are badly pierced, they are less valuable.

One day, when lunching with the illustrious Duke of Medina-Sidonia in Seville, I saw one of these pearls which had been presented to him. It weighed more than a hundred ounces, and I was charmed by its beauty and brilliancy. Some people claim that Nuñez did not find these pearls at Curiana, which is more than one hundred and twenty leagues distant from Boca de la Sierpe, but in the little districts of Cumana and Manacapana near by the Boca and the island of Margarita. They declare that Curiana is not rich in pearls. This question has not been decided; so let us treat of another subject. You now perceive what, in the course of years, may be the value of this newly discovered country and western coasts, since after a superficial exploration they have yielded such evidences of wealth.

<sup>1</sup> Navarrete, iii., 78. The treasure was sold in August, 1501, and the proceeds divided among the sailors.



## BOOK IX

TO THE SAME CARDINAL LUDOVICO D'ARAGON

VINCENT YAÑEZ PINZON and his nephew Arias, who accompanied the Admiral Columbus on his first voyage as captains of two of the smaller vessels which I have above described as caravels, desirous of undertaking new expeditions and making fresh discoveries, built at their own expense four caravels in their native port of Palos, as it is called by the Spaniards.<sup>1</sup> They sought the authorisation of the King and towards the calends of December, 1499, they left port. Now Palos is on the western coast of Spain, situated about seventy-two miles distant from Cadiz and sixty-four miles from Seville in Andalusia, and all the inhabitants without exception are seafaring people, exclusively occupied in navigation.

Pinzon coasted along the Fortunate Isles,<sup>2</sup> and first

<sup>1</sup> An interesting account of this expedition may be read in Washington Irving's *Companions of Columbus*; see also Navarrete, *op. cit.*, 82, 102, 113.

<sup>2</sup> Meaning the Canaries in which the ancients placed the Garden of the Hesperides. From them Ptolemy began to reckon longitude. The names Hesperia, Hesperides, Hesperus, etc., were used to indicate the west; thus Italy is spoken of by Macrobius: *illi nam scilicet Græci a stella Hespero dicunt Venus et Hesperia Italia quæ occasui sit*; *Saturnaliū*, lib. i., cap. iii. Ptolemy likewise says: *Italia Hesperia ab Hespero stella quod illius occasui subjecta sit*, and again in his *Historia tripartita*, lib. viii: *Quum Valentinianus Imperator as oras Hesperias navigaret, id est ad Italiam, et Hispaniam*. Elsewhere the same author mentions the islands off the west coast of Africa, of which he received some vague information as

laid his course for the Hesperides, otherwise called the islands of Cape Verde, or still better, the Medusian Gorgons. Sailing directly south on the ides of January, from that island of the Hesperides called by the Portuguese San Juan, they sailed before the south-west wind for about three hundred leagues, after which they lost sight of the north star. As soon as it disappeared they were caught in winds and currents and continual tempests, though in spite of these great dangers they accomplished by the aid of this wind two hundred and forty leagues. The north star was no longer to be seen. They are in contradiction with the ancient poets, philosophers, and cosmographers over the question whether that portion of the world on the equinoctial line is or is not an inaccessible desert. The Spaniards affirm that it is inhabited by numerous peoples,<sup>1</sup> while the ancient writers maintain that it is uninhabitable because of the perpendicular rays of the sun. I must admit, however, that even amongst ancient authorities some have been found who sought to maintain that that part of the world was habitable.<sup>2</sup> When I asked the sailors of the Pinzons if they had seen the polar star to the south, they said that they had seen no star resembling the polar star of our hemisphere, but they did see entirely different stars,<sup>3</sup> and hanging on the higher horizon a thick sort of vapour which shut off the view. They believe that the middle

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*Incognitam terram qui communi vocabulo Hesperii appellantur Ethiopes.* Pliny, Strabo, in the last chapter *De Situ Orbis*, Diodorus, and others make similar usage of the terms. St. Anselm, *De Imagine Mundi*, lib. i., cap. xx., *Juxta has, scilicet Gorgonas Hesperidum ortus*; Pomponius Mela, lib. iii. cap. ix., x., xi.

<sup>1</sup> The sub-equatorial regions of Africa had already been visited by numerous navigators since the time of Prince Henry of Portugal, and the fact that they were inhabited was well known to the Spaniards.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, Cicero, Aristotle, Anaxagoras, Mela, and others were amongst those who believed in the existence of the Antipodes.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *De Cælo et Terra*, ii., 14. The constellation of the Southern Cross was known from the writings of the Arab geographers.

part of the globe rises to a ridge,<sup>1</sup> and that the antarctic star is perceptible after that elevation is passed. At all events they have seen constellations entirely different from those of our hemisphere. Such is their story, which I give you as they told it. *Davi sunt, non Œdipi*.<sup>2</sup>

On the seventh day of the calends of February, land was finally discovered on the horizon.<sup>3</sup> As the sea was troubled, soundings were taken and the bottom found at sixteen fathoms. Approaching the coast they landed at a place where they remained two entire days without seeing a single inhabitant, though some traces of human beings were found on the banks. After writing their names and the name of the King, with some details of their landing, on the trees and rocks, the Spaniards departed. Guiding themselves by some fires they saw during the night, they encountered not far from their first landing-place a tribe encamped and sleeping in the open air. They decided not to disturb them until day-break and when the sun rose forty men, carrying arms, marched towards the natives. Upon seeing them, thirty-two savages, armed with bows and javelins, advanced, followed by the rest of the troop armed in like manner. Our men relate that these natives were larger than Germans or Hungarians. With frowning eyes and menacing looks they scanned our compatriots, who thought it unwise to use their arms against them. Whether they acted thus out of fear or to prevent them running away, I am ignorant, but at any rate, they sought to attract the natives by gentle words and by offering them presents; but the natives showed themselves determined to have

<sup>1</sup> First noted by Columbus in a letter written from Hispaniola in October, 1498.

<sup>2</sup> *Davus sum non Œdipus*, *Andria*, Act I, Scene II. The quotation, transposed by Martyr from the singular into the plural number, is from Terrence, Davus being a comic character in the comedy of *Andria*.

<sup>3</sup> The present Cape San Augustin; it was sighted Jan. 28, 1500, and named Santa Maria de la Consolacion.

no relation with the Spaniards, refusing to trade and holding themselves ready to fight. They limited themselves to listening to the Spaniards' speech and watching their gestures, after which both parties separated. The natives fled the following night at midnight, abandoning their encampment.

The Spaniards describe these people as a vagabond race similar to the Scythians, who had no fixed abode but wandered with their wives and children from one country to another at the harvest seasons. They swear that the footprints left upon the sand show them to have feet twice as large as those of a medium-sized man.<sup>1</sup> Continuing their voyage, the Spaniards arrived at the mouth of another river, which was, however, too shallow for the caravels to enter. Four shallops of soldiers were therefore sent to land and reconnoitre. They observed on a hillock near the bank a group of natives, to whom they sent a messenger to invite them to trade. It is thought the natives wanted to capture one of the Spaniards and take him with them, for, in exchange for a hawk's-bell which he had offered them as an attraction, they threw a golden wedge of a cubit's length towards the messenger, and when the Spaniard stooped to take up the piece of gold, the natives surrounded him in less time than it takes to tell it, and tried to drag him off. He managed to defend himself against his assailants, using his sword and buckler until such time as his companions in the boats could come to his assistance. To conclude in a few words, since you spoke to me so urgently of your approaching departure, the natives killed eight of the Spaniards and wounded several others with their arrows and javelins. They attacked the barques with great daring from the river banks, seeking to drag the boats ashore; although they were killed like sheep by

<sup>1</sup> One of the numerous tales of giants in America, which circulated and for a long time obtained credence.

sword strokes and lance thrusts (for they were naked); they did not on that account yield. They even succeeded in carrying off one of the barques, which was empty, and whose pilot had been struck by an arrow and killed. The other barques succeeded in escaping, and thus the Spaniards left these barbarous natives.

Much saddened by the loss of their companions, the Spaniards followed the same coast in a north-westerly direction and, after proceeding some forty leagues, they arrived at a sea whose waters are sufficiently fresh to admit of their replenishing their supply of drinking water. Seeking the cause of this phenomenon they discovered that several swift rivers which pour down from the mountains came together at that point, and flowed into the sea.<sup>1</sup> A number of islands dotted this sea, which are described as remarkable for their fertility and numerous population. The natives are gentle and sociable, but these qualities are of little use to them because they do not possess the gold or precious stones which the Spaniards seek. Thirty-six of them were taken prisoners. The natives call that entire region Mariatambal. The country to the east of this great river is called Canomora, and that on the west Paricora. The natives gave it to be understood by signs that in the interior of the country gold of good quality was found. Continuing their march, directly north, but always following the windings of the coast, the Spaniards again sighted the polar star. All this coast is a part of Paria, that land so rich in pearls which Columbus himself discovered, as we have related; he being the real author of these discoveries. The coast reconnoitred by the Pinzons continues past the Boca de la Sierpe, already described, and the districts of Cumana, Manacapana, Curiana, Cauchieta, and Cauchibachoa, and it is thought that it extends to the continent of

<sup>1</sup> Possibly the estuary of the Amazon.

India.<sup>1</sup> It is evident that this coast is too extended to belong to an island, and yet, if one takes it altogether, the whole universe may be called an island.<sup>2</sup>

From the time when they left the land where they lost sight of the pole star, until they reached Paria, the Spaniards report that they proceeded towards the west for a distance of three hundred uninterrupted leagues. Midway they discovered a large river called Maragnon, so large in fact that I suspect them of exaggerating; for when I asked them on their return from their voyage if this river was not more likely a sea separating two continents, they said that the water at its mouth was fresh, and that this quality increased the farther one mounted the river. It is dotted with islands and full of fish. They above all declare that is it more than thirty leagues broad, and that its waters flow with such impetuosity that the sea recedes before its current.<sup>3</sup>

When we recall what is told of the northern and southern mouths of the Danube, which drive back the waters of the sea to such a great distance and may be drunk by sailors, we cease to be astonished if the river described be represented as still larger. What indeed hinders nature from creating a river even larger than the Danube, or indeed a still larger one than the Maragnon? I think it is some river<sup>4</sup> already mentioned by Columbus when he explored the coasts of Paria. But all these problems will be elucidated later, so let us now turn our attention to the natural products of the country.

In most of the islands of Paria the Spaniards found a forest of red-coloured wood, of which they brought back three thousand pounds. This is the wood which the Italians call *verzino* and the Spaniards brazil wood. They claim

<sup>1</sup> *Propterea Gangetidis Indiæ continentem putans.* The Ruysch map (1516) shows the junction of the American continent with Asia.

<sup>2</sup> *Licet universum terræ orbem, large sumptum, insulam dicere fas sit.*

<sup>3</sup> The mouth of the Maragnon or Amazon is, in fact, sixty leagues wide.

<sup>4</sup> Referring to the Orinoco.



that the dye-woods of Hispaniola are superior for the dyeing of wools. Profiting by the north-west wind, which the Italians call the *grecco*,<sup>1</sup> they sailed past numerous islands, depopulated by the ravages of the cannibals, but fertile, for they discovered numerous traces of destroyed villages. Here and there they descried natives, who, prompted by fear, quickly fled to the mountain crags and the depths of the forests, as soon as they saw the ships appear. These people no longer had homes but wandered at large because they feared the cannibals. Huge trees were discovered, which produce what is commonly called cinnamon-bark and which is claimed to be just as efficacious for driving off fevers as the cinnamon which the apothecaries sell. At that season the cinnamon was not yet ripe. I prefer to rely on those who have made these reports rather than to weary myself to discuss these questions. Pinzon's men further claim that they have found huge trees in that country which sixteen men holding hands and forming a circle could scarcely encompass with their arms.

An extraordinary animal<sup>2</sup> inhabits these trees, of which the muzzle is that of the fox, while the tail resembles that of a marmoset, and the ears those of a bat. Its hands are like man's, and its feet like those of an ape. This beast carries its young wherever it goes in a sort of exterior pouch, or large bag. You have seen one of these animals, at the same time that I did. It was dead, but you have measured it, and you have wondered at that pouch or curious stomach with which nature has provided this remarkable animal for carrying its young and protecting them either against hunters or beasts. Observa-

<sup>1</sup> The different points of the compass were designated by the winds: north being *tramontane*; north-east, *grecco*; east *levante*; south-east *scirocco*; south, *ostro*; south-west, *libeccio*; west, *ponente*; north-west, *maestrale*.

<sup>2</sup> The animal here described is doubtless the opossum; the only non-Australian marsupial found in America.

tion has proven that this animal never takes its young out of this pouch save when they are at play or nursing, until the time comes when they are able to fend for themselves. The Spaniards captured one such with its young, but the little ones died one after another, on shipboard. The mother survived a few months, but was unable to bear the change of climate and food. Enough, however, about this animal, and let us return to the discoverers.

The Pinzons, uncle and nephew, have endured severe hardships during this voyage. They had explored six hundred leagues along the coast of Paria, believing themselves the while to be at the other side of Cathay on the coast of India, not far from the river Ganges, when in the month of July they were overtaken by such a sudden and violent storm that, of the four caravels composing the squadron, two were engulfed before their eyes. The third was torn from its anchorage and disappeared; the fourth held good, but was so shattered that its seams almost burst. The crew of this fourth ship, in despair of saving it, landed. They did not know what to do next, and first thought of building a village and then of killing all the neighbouring people to forestall being massacred themselves. But happily the luck changed. The tempest ceased; the caravel which had been driven off by the fury of the elements returned with eighty of the crew, while the other ship, which held to her anchorage, was saved. It was with these ships that, after being tossed by the waves and losing many of their friends, they returned to Spain, landing at their native town of Palos, where their wives and children awaited them. This was the eve of the calends of October.

Pinzon's companions brought a quantity of woods<sup>1</sup> which they believed to be cinnamon and ginger; but, to excuse the poor quality of these spices, they said they

<sup>1</sup> Pinzon obtained license to sell a quantity of brazil wood to pay his debts, his creditors having seized the ships and their cargoes.

were not ripe when they were gathered. Baptista Elysus, who is a remarkable philosopher and doctor of medicine, was in possession of certain small stones they had gathered on the shores of that region, and he thinks they are topazes. He told you this in my presence. Following the Pinzons and animated by the spirit of imitation, other Spaniards have made long voyages toward the south, following the track of their forerunners, such as Columbus, and coasting, in my opinion, along the shores of Paria. These latter explorers have collected cinnamon bark, and that precious substance the fumes of which banish headaches, and which the Spaniards call *Anime Album*.<sup>1</sup> I have learned nothing else worthy of your attention; thus I will conclude my narration since you hasten me by announcing your departure.

Nevertheless, to conclude my decade, listen still to some details concerning the ridiculous superstitions of Hispaniola. If it is not a decade in the style of Livy, it is only because its author, your Martyr, has not been blessed, as he should have been according to the theory of Pythagoras, with the spirit of Livy. You also know what mountains in travail bring forth. These things are only the fancies of the islanders; nevertheless, though fanciful, they are more interesting than the true histories of Lucian, for they really do exist in the form of beliefs, while the histories were invented as a pastime; one may smile at those who believe them.

The Spaniards lived for some time in Hispaniola without suspecting that the islanders worshipped anything else than the stars, or that they had any kind of religion; I have indeed several times reported that these islanders only adored the visible stars and the heavens. But after mingling with them for some years, and the languages becoming mutually intelligible, many of the Spaniards

<sup>1</sup> *Cassiam et hi fistulam pretiosumque illud ad capitis gravidinem suo suffumigio tollendam quod Hispani animen album vocant referre.*

began to notice among them divers ceremonies and rites Brother Roman,<sup>1</sup> a hermit, who went, by order of Columbus, amongst the caciques to instruct them in the principles of Christianity, has written a book in the Spanish language on the religious rites of the islanders. I undertake to review this work, leaving out some questions of small importance. I now offer it to you as follows:

It is known that the idols to whom the islanders pay public worship represent goblins which appear to them in the darkness, leading them into foolish errors; for they make images, in the forms of seated figures, out of plaited cotton, tightly stuffed inside, to represent these nocturnal goblins and which resemble those our artists paint upon walls.

I have sent you four of these images, and you have been able to examine them and verify their resemblance to the goblins. You will also be able to describe them to the most serene King, your uncle, better than I could do in writing. The natives call these images *zemes*. When they are about to go into battle, they tie small images representing little demons upon their foreheads, for which reason these figures, as you will have seen, are tied round with strings. They believe that the *zemes* send rain or sunshine in response to their prayers, according to their needs. They believe the *zemes* to be intermediaries between them and God, whom they represent as one, eternal, omnipotent, and invisible. Each cacique has his *zemes*, which he honours with particular care. Their ancestors gave to the supreme and eternal Being two names,

<sup>1</sup> Roman Pane was a Jeronymite friar who, as here stated, wrote by order of Columbus. His work was in twenty-six chapters covering eighteen pages, and was inserted at the end of the sixty-first chapter of the *Storia* of Fernando Columbus. The original Spanish MS. is lost, the text being known in an Italian translation published in Venice in 1571. Brasseur de Bourbourg published a French translation in his work on Yucatan, *Relation des Choses de Yucatan de Diego Landa*. Paris, 1864.

Iocauna and Guamaonocon. But this supreme Being was himself brought forth by a mother, who has five names, Attabeira, Mamona, Guacarapita, Iella, and Guimazoa.

Listen now to their singular beliefs relating to the origin of man. There exists in Hispaniola a district called Caunauna, where the human race took its origin in a cavern on a certain mountain. The greater number of men came forth from the larger apertures, and the lesser number from the smaller apertures of this cavern. Such are their superstitions. The rock on whose side the opening of this cavern is found is called Cauta, and the largest of the caverns is called Cazabixaba, the smaller Amaiauna. Before mankind was permitted to come forth, they ingeniously affirm that each night the mouths of the caves were confided to the custody of a man called Machochael. This Machochael, having deserted the two caves from a motive of curiosity, was surprised by the sun, whose rays he could not endure, and so was changed into stone. They relate amongst their absurdities that when men came out of their caverns in the night because they sought to sin and could not get back before the rising of the sun, which they were forbidden to see, they were transformed into myrobolane trees,<sup>1</sup> of which Hispaniola plentifully produces great numbers.

They also say that a chief called Vagoniona sent from the cavern where he kept his family shut up, a servant to go fishing. This servant, being surprised by the sun, was likewise turned in like manner into a nightingale. On every anniversary of his transformation he fills the night air with songs, bewailing his misfortunes and imploring his master Vagoniona to come to his help. Such is the explanation they give for the nightingale's song. As for Vagoniona, he dearly loved this servant, and therefore deeply lamented him; he shut up all the

<sup>1</sup> This name is comprehensive of several kinds of trees whose fruits are used in compounding astringent and slightly purgative medicines.



men in the cavern and only brought out with him the women and nursing children, whom he led to an island called Mathinino, off the coasts; there he abandoned the women and brought back the children with him. These unfortunate infants were starving, and upon reaching the river bank they cried "*Toa, Toa*" (that is like children crying, Mamma, Mamma), and immediately they were turned into frogs. It is for this reason that in the springtime the frogs make these sounds, and it is also the reason why men alone are frequently found in the caverns of Hispaniola, and not women. The natives say that Vagoniona still wanders about the island, and that by a special boon he always remains as he was. He is supposed to go to meet a beautiful woman, perceived in the depths of the sea, from whom are obtained the white shells called by the natives *cibas*, and other shells of a yellowish colour called *guianos*, of both of which they make necklaces. The caciques in our own time regard these trinkets as sacred.<sup>1</sup>

. . . . .

<sup>1</sup> The following passage does not lend itself to admissible translation. *Viros autem illos, quos sine feminis in antris relictos diximus, lotum se ad pluviarum acquarum receptacula noctu referunt exiisse; atque una noctium, animalia quædam feminas æmulantia, veluti formicarum agmina, reptare par arbores myrobolanos a longe vidisse. Ad feminea illa animalia procurrunt, capiunt: veluti anguillæ de manibus eorum labuntur. Consilium ineunt. Ex senioris consilio, scabiosos leprososque, si qui sint inter eos, conquirunt, qui manus asperas callossasque habeant ut apræhensa facilius queant ritenere. Hos homines ipsi caracaracoles appellant. Venatum proficiscuntur: ex multis quas capiebant quatuor tantum retinent; pro feminis illis uti adnuntur, carere feminea natura comperiunt. Iterum accitis senioribus, quid faciendum consulunt. Ut picus avis admittatur, qui acuto rostro intra ipsorum inguina foramen effodiat, constituerunt: ipsismet caracaracolibus hominibus callosis, feminas apertis cruribus tenentibus. Quam pulchre picus adducitur! Picus feminis sexum aperit. Hinc bellissime habuit insula, quas cupiebat feminas; hinc procreata soboles.* "I cease to marvel," continues the author, "since it is written in many volumes of veracious Greek history that the Myrmidons were generated by ants. Such are some of the many legends which pretended sages expound with calm and unmoved visage from pulpits and tribunals to a stupid gaping crowd.



Here is a more serious tradition concerning the origin of the sea.<sup>1</sup> There formerly lived in the island a powerful chief named Jaia who buried his only son in a gourd. Several months later, distracted by the loss of his son, Jaia visited the gourd. He pried it open and out of it he beheld great whales and marine monsters of gigantic size come forth. Thus he reported to some of his neighbours that the sea was contained in that gourd. Upon hearing this story, four brothers born at a birth and who had lost their mother when they were born sought to obtain possession of the gourd for the sake of the fish. But Jaia, who often visited the mortal remains of his son, arrived when the brothers held the gourd in their hands. Frightened at being thus taken in the act both of sacrilege and robbery, they dropped the gourd, which broke, and took flight. From the broken gourd the sea rushed forth; the valley was filled, the immense plain which formed the universe was flooded, and only the mountains raised their heads above the water, forming the islands, several of which still exist to-day. This, Most Illustrious Prince, is the origin of the sea, nor need you imagine that the islander who has handed down this tradition does not enjoy the greatest consideration. It is further related that the four brothers, in terror of Jaia, fled in different directions and almost died of hunger because they dared stop nowhere. Nevertheless, pressed by famine, they knocked at the door of a baker and asked him for *cazabi*, that is to say, for bread. The baker spit with such force upon the first who entered, that an enormous tumour was formed, of which he almost died. After deliberating amongst themselves, they opened the tumour, with a sharp stone, and from it came

<sup>1</sup> Diego Landa, in his *Cosas de Yucatan*, and Cogolludo (*Hist. de Yucatan*), treat this subject. Peter Martyr likewise elaborates it in his letters to Pomponius Lætus and the Cardinal de Santa Croce. *Opus Epistolarum*, ep. 177 and 180.

forth a woman who became the wife of each of the four brothers, one after another, and bore them sons and daughters.

Another story, most illustrious Prince, is still more quaint. There is a cavern called Jouanaboina, situated in the territory of a cacique called Machinnech, which is venerated with as great respect by the majority of the islanders as were formerly the caves of Corinth, of Cyrrha, and Nissa amongst the Greeks.<sup>1</sup> The walls of this cavern are decorated with different paintings; two sculptured zemes, called Binthiatelles and Marohos, stand at the entrance.

When asked why this cavern is revered, the natives gravely reply that it is because the sun and moon issued forth from it to illuminate the universe. They go on pilgrimages to that cavern just as we go to Rome, or to the Vatican, Compostela, or the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem.

Another kind of superstition is as follows. They believe the dead walk by night and feed upon *guarina*, a fruit resembling the quince, but unknown in Europe. These ghosts love to mix with the living and deceive women. They take on the form of a man, and seem to wish to enjoy a woman's favour, but when about to accomplish their purpose they vanish into thin air. If any one thinks, upon feeling something strange upon his bed, that there is a spectre lying beside him, he only needs to assure himself by touching his belly, for, according to their idea, the dead may borrow every human member except the navel. If therefore the navel is absent, they know that it is a ghost, and it is sufficient to touch it to make it immediately disappear. These ghosts frequently appear by night to the living, and very often on the

<sup>1</sup> The caverns of Hayti have been visited and described by Decourtilz, *Voyage d'un Naturaliste*. Some of them contain carvings representing serpents, frogs, deformed human figures in distorted postures, etc.

public highways; but if the traveller is not frightened, the spectre vanishes. If, on the contrary, he allows himself to be frightened, the terror inspired by the apparition is such that many of the islanders completely lose their heads and self-possession. When the Spaniards asked who ever had infected them with this mass of ridiculous beliefs, the natives replied that they received them from their ancestors, and that they have been preserved from time immemorial in poems which only the sons of chiefs are allowed to learn. These poems are learnt by heart, for they have no writing; and on feast days the sons of chiefs sing them to the people, in the form of sacred chants.<sup>1</sup> Their only musical instrument is a concave sonorous piece of wood which is beaten like a drum.

It is the augurs, called *bovites*, who encourage these superstitions. These men, who are persistent liars, act as doctors for the ignorant people, which gives them a great prestige, for it is believed that the *zemes* converse with them and reveal the future to them.

If a sick man recovers the *bovites* persuade him that he owes his restoration to the intervention of the *zemes*. When they undertake to cure a chief, the *bovites* begin by fasting and taking a purge. There is an intoxicating herb which they pound up and drink, after which they are seized with fury like the *mænads*, and declare that the *zemes* confide secrets to them. They visit the sick man, carrying in their mouth a bone, a little stone, a stick, or a piece of meat. After expelling every one save two or three persons designated by the sick person, the *bovite* begins by making wild gestures and passing his hands over the face, lips, and nose, and breathing on the forehead, temples, and neck, and drawing in the

<sup>1</sup> Commonly called in the native tongue *arreytos*. Some specimens exist. Brasseur de Bourbourg in his *Grammaire Quiché* gives the *Rabinal Achi*.

sick man's breath. Thus he pretends to seek the fever in the veins of the sufferer. Afterwards he rubs the shoulders, the hips, and the legs, and opens the hands; if the hands are clenched he pulls them wide open, exposing the palm, shaking them vigorously, after which he affirms that he has driven off the sickness and that the patient is out of danger. Finally he removes the piece of meat he was carrying in his mouth like a juggler, and begins to cry, "This is what you have eaten in excess of your wants; now you will get well because I have relieved you of that which you ate." If the doctor perceives that the patient gets worse, he ascribes this to the zemes, who, he declares, are angry because they have not had a house constructed for them, or have not been treated with proper respect, or have not received their share of the products of the field. Should the sick man die, his relatives indulge in magical incantations to make him declare whether he is the victim of fate or of the carelessness of the doctor, who failed to fast properly or gave the wrong remedy. If the man died through the fault of the doctor, the relatives take vengeance on the latter. Whenever the women succeed in obtaining the piece of meat which the bovites hold in their mouths, they wrap it with great respect in cloths and carefully preserve it, esteeming it to be a talisman of great efficacy in time of childbirth, and honouring it as though it were a zemes.

The islanders pay homage to numerous zemes, each person having his own. Some are made of wood, because it is amongst the trees and in the darkness of night they have received the message of the gods. Others, who have heard the voice amongst the rocks, make their zemes of stone; while others, who heard the revelation while they were cultivating their ages—that kind of cereal I have already mentioned,—make theirs of roots.

Perhaps they think that these last watch over their bread-making. It was thus that the ancients believed

that the dryads, hamadryads, satyrs, pans, nereids, watched over the fountains, forests, and seas, attributing to each force in nature a presiding divinity. The islanders of Hispaniola even believe that the zemes respond to their wishes when they invoke them. When the caciques wish to consult the zemes, concerning the result of a war, about the harvest, or their health, they enter the houses sacred to them and there absorb the intoxicating herb called *kohobba*, which is the same as that used by the bovites to excite their frenzy. Almost immediately they believe they see the room turn upside down, and men walking with their heads downwards. This *kohobba* powder is so strong that those who take it lose consciousness; when the stupefying action of the powder begins to wane, the arms and hands become loose and the head droops. After remaining for some time in this attitude, the cacique raises his head, as though he were awakening from sleep, and, lifting his eyes to the heavens, begins to stammer some incoherent words. His chief attendants gather round him (for none of the common people are admitted to these mysteries), raising their voices in thanksgiving that he has so quickly left the zemes and returned to them. They ask him what he has seen, and the cacique declares that he was in conversation with the zemes during the whole time, and as though he were still in a prophetic delirium, he prophesies victory or defeat, if a war is to be undertaken, or whether the crops will be abundant, or the coming of disaster, or the enjoyment of health, in a word, whatever first occurs to him.

Can you feel surprised after this, Most Illustrious Prince, at the spirit of Apollo which inspired the fury of the Sibyls? You thought that that ancient superstition had perished, but you see that such is not the case. I have treated here in a general sense all that concerns the zemes, but I think I should not omit certain particulars. The cacique Guamaretus had a zemes called Corochotus, which he had



fixed in the highest part of his house. It is said that Corochotus frequently came down, after having broken his bonds. This happened whenever he wished to make love or eat or hide himself; and sometimes he disappeared for several days, thus showing his anger at having been neglected and not sufficiently honoured by the cacique Guamaretus. One day two children, wearing crowns, were born in the house of Guamaretus; it was thought that they were the sons of the zemes Corochotus. Guamaretus was defeated by his enemies in a pitched battle; his palace and town were burnt and destroyed; and Corochotus burst his bonds and sprang out of the house, and was found a stadium distant.

Another zemes, Epileguanita, was represented in the form of a quadruped, carved out of wood. He often left the place where he was venerated and fled into the forests. And each time that his worshippers heard of his flight, they assembled and sought him everywhere with devout prayers. When found, they brought him reverently on their shoulders back to the sanctuary sacred to him. When the Christians landed in Hispaniola. Epileguanita fled and appeared no more, which was considered a sinister forecast of the misfortunes of the country. These traditions are handed down by the old men.

The islanders venerate another zemes, made of marble, which is of the feminine sex, and is accompanied by two male zemes who serve as attendants; one acting as herald to summon other zemes to the woman's assistance when she wishes to raise storms or draw down clouds and rains; the other is supposed to collect the water which flows down from the high mountains into the valleys, and upon the command of the female zemes to let it loose in the form of torrents which devastate the country whenever the islanders have failed to pay her idol the honours due to it. One more thing worthy of remembrance and I



shall have finished my book. The natives of Hispaniola were much impressed by the arrival of the Spaniards. Formerly two caciques, of whom one was the father of Guarionex, fasted for fifteen days in order to consult the zemes about the future. This fast having disposed the zemes in their favour, they answered that within a few years a race of men wearing clothes would land in the island and would overthrow their religious rites and ceremonies, massacre their children, and make them slaves. This prophecy had been taken by the younger generation to apply to the cannibals; and thus whenever it became known that the cannibals had landed anywhere, the people took flight without even attempting any resistance. But when the Spaniards landed, the islanders then referred the prophecy to them, as being the people whose coming was announced. And in this they were not wrong, for they are all under the dominion of the Christians, and those who resisted have been killed; all the zemes having been removed to Spain, to teach us the foolishness of those images and the deceits of devils, nothing remaining of them but a memory. I have brought some things to your knowledge, Most Illustrious Prince, and you will learn many others later, since you will probably leave to-morrow to accompany your great-aunt to Naples, in obedience to the orders of your uncle, King Frederick. You are ready to leave and I am weary. Therefore, fare you well, and keep the remembrance of your Martyr, whom you have constrained in the name of your uncle, Frederick, to choose these few from amongst many great things.

## BOOK X

### AND EPILOGUE TO THE DECADE

TO INIGO LOPEZ MENDOZA, COUNT OF TENDILLA, VICEROY  
OF GRANADA

I HAVE been prompted by the letters of my friends and of high personages to compose a complete chronicle of all that has happened since the first discoveries and the conquest of the ocean by Columbus, and of all that shall occur. My correspondents were lost in admiration at the thought of these discoveries of islands, inhabited by unknown peoples, living without clothes and satisfied with what nature gave them, and they were consumed by desire to be kept regularly informed. Ascanio, whose authority never allowed my pen to rest, was degraded from the high position he occupied when his brother Ludovico<sup>1</sup> was driven by

<sup>1</sup> His downfall was greeted with rejoicing throughout Italy. In Venice the joy-bells rang and the children danced and sang a *canzone* in Piazza San Marco

*Ora il Moro fa la danza*

*Viva San Marco e il re di Francia.*

Milan fell a prey to Louis XII., and all northern Italy passed under the French yoke. The Pope rewarded the bearer of the news with a present of one hundred ducats, and at once seized Cardinal Ascanio's palace with its art treasures. The Cardinal was captured near Rivolta by the Venetians, who delivered him to the French. He was kept in the citadel of Bourges until 1502, when he was released at the request of the Cardinal d'Amboise to take his place in the conclave which elected Pius III. He died in 1505; and his former enemy, Guiliano della Rovere, reigning as Pope Julius II., erected the magnificent monument to his memory which still stands in Santa Maria del Popolo.

the French from Milan. I had dedicated the first two books of this decade to him, without mentioning many other treatises I had selected from my unedited memoirs. Simultaneously with his overthrow I ceased to write, for, buffeted by the storm, he ceased to exhort me, while my fervour in making enquiries languished; but in the year 1500, when the Court was in residence at Granada, Ludovico, Cardinal of Aragon, and nephew of King Frederick, who had accompanied the Queen of Naples, sister of King Frederick, to Grenada, sent me letters addressed to me by the King himself, urging me to select the necessary documents and to continue the first two books addressed to Ascanio. The King and the Cardinal already possessed the writings I had formerly addressed to Ascanio. You are aware that I was ill at the time, yet, unwilling to refuse, I resolved to continue. Amongst the great mass of material furnished me at my request by the discoverers, I selected such deeds as were most worthy to be recorded. Since you now desire to include my complete works amongst the numerous volumes in your library, I have determined to add to those of my former writings by taking up the narrative of the principal events between the years 1500 and 1510, and, God giving me life, I shall one day treat them more fully.

To complete the decade, I had written a book which remained unfinished, treating of the superstitions of the islanders; this new book, which will be called the tenth and last, I wish to dedicate to you, without rewriting my work or sending you my draft. Therefore, if on reading the ninth book you come across promises which are not realised, do not be astonished; it is not necessary to be always consistent.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now come to our subject. During these ten years many explorers,<sup>2</sup> have visited various coasts, following

<sup>1</sup> *Non semper oportet stare pollicitis.*

<sup>2</sup> Labastidas, Pinzon, Hojeda, Vespucci, Las Casas, and others.

for the most part in the track of Columbus. They have always coasted along the shore of Paria, believing it to be part of the Indian continent. Some heading to the west, others to the east, they have discovered new countries rich in gold and spices, for most of them have brought back necklaces and perfumes obtained in exchange for our merchandise, or by violence and conquest. Despite their nakedness, it must be admitted that in some places the natives have exterminated entire groups of Spaniards, for they are ferocious and are armed with poisoned arrows and sharp lances with points hardened in the fire. Even the animals, reptiles, insects, and quadrupeds are different from ours, and exhibit innumerable and strange species. With the exception of lions, tigers, and crocodiles, they are not dangerous. I am now speaking of the forests of the district of Paria and not of the islands, where, I am told, there is not a single dangerous animal, everything in the islands speaking of great mildness, with the exception of the Caribs or cannibals, of whom I have already spoken and who have an appetite for human flesh. There are likewise different species of birds, and in many places bats<sup>1</sup> as large as pigeons flew about the Spaniards as soon as twilight fell, biting them so cruelly that the men, rendered desperate, were obliged to give way before them as though they had been harpies. One night, while sleeping on the sand, a monster issued from the sea and seized a Spaniard by the back and, notwithstanding the presence of his companions, carried him off, jumping into the sea with his victim despite the unfortunate man's shrieks.

It is the royal plan to establish fortified places and to take possession of this continent, nor are there wanting Spaniards who would not shrink from the difficulty of conquering and subjugating the territory. For this purpose they petitioned the King for his authorisation.

<sup>1</sup> Vampire bats, which haunt the Venezuelan coast in large numbers.

The journey, however, is long and the country very extensive. It is claimed that the newly discovered country, whether continent or island, is three times larger than Europe, without counting the regions to the south which were discovered by the Portuguese and which are still larger. Certainly the Spain of to-day deserves the highest praise for having revealed to the present generation these myriad regions of the Antipodes, heretofore unknown, and for having thus enlarged for writers the field of study. I am proud to have shown them the way by collecting these facts which, as you will see, are without pretension; not only because I am unable to adorn my subject more ornately, but also because I have never thought to write as a professional historian. I tell a simple story by means of letters, written freely to give pleasure to certain persons whose invitations it would have been difficult for me to refuse. Enough, however, of digressions, and let us return to Hispaniola.

The bread made by the natives is found, by those who are accustomed to our wheat bread, to be insufficiently nourishing and therefore they lose their strength. The King consequently issued a recent decree, ordering that wheat should be sown in different places and at different seasons. The harvest produced nothing but straw, similar to twigs, and with little grain; although what there is, is large and well formed. This also applies to the pastures where the grass grows as high as the crops; thus the cattle become extraordinarily fat, but their flesh loses its flavour; their muscles become flabby, and they are, so to say, watery. With pigs it is just the contrary; for they are healthy and of an agreeable flavour. This is due doubtless to certain of the island's fruits they greedily devour. Pork is about the only kind of meat bought in the markets. The pigs have rapidly increased, but they have become wild since they are no longer

kept by swineherds. There is no need to acclimatise any other species of animal or birds in Hispaniola.

Moreover, the young of all animals flourish on the abundant pasturage and become larger than their sires. They only eat grass, not barley or other grain. Enough however of Hispaniola; let us now consider the neighbouring islands.

Owing to its length, Cuba was for a long time considered to be a continent, but it has been discovered to be an island. It is not astonishing that the islanders assured the Spaniards who explored it that the land had no end, for the Cubans are poor-spirited people, satisfied with little and never leaving their territory. They took no notice of what went on amongst their neighbours, and whether there were any other regions under their skies than the one they inhabited, they did not know. Cuba extends from east to west and is much longer than Hispaniola, but from the north to the south it is, in proportion to its length, very narrow, and is almost everywhere fertile and agreeable.

There is a small island lying not far off the east coast of Hispaniola, which the Spaniards have placed under the invocation of San Juan.<sup>1</sup> This island is almost square and very rich gold mines have been found there, but as everybody is busy working the mines of Hispaniola, miners have not yet been sent to San Juan, although it is planned so to do. It is gold alone of all the products of Hispaniola to which the Spaniards give all their attention, and this is how they proceed. Each industrious Spaniard, who enjoys some credit, has assigned to him one or more caciques (that is to say chiefs) and his subjects, who, at certain seasons in the year established by agreement, is obliged to come with his people to the mine belonging to that Spaniard, where the necessary tools for extracting the gold are distributed to them. The cacique and his

<sup>1</sup> Porto Rico.



men receive a salary, and when they return to the labour of their fields, which cannot be neglected for fear of famine, one brings away a jacket, one a shirt, one a cloak, and another a hat. Such articles of apparel please them very much, and they now no longer go naked. Their labour is thus divided between the mines and their own fields as though they were slaves. Although they submit to this restraint with impatience, they do put up with it. Mercenaries of this kind are called *anaborios*. The King does not allow them to be treated as slaves, and they are granted and withdrawn as he pleases.<sup>1</sup>

When they are summoned, as soldiers or camp-followers are drafted by recruiting agents, the islanders fly to the woods and mountains if they can, and rather than submit to this labour they live on whatever wild fruit they find. They are a docile people, and have completely forgotten their old rites, complying without reasoning, and repeating the mysteries they are taught. The Spanish gentlemen of position educate sons of caciques in their own houses, and these lads easily learn the elements of instruction and good manners. When they grow up and especially if their fathers are dead, they are sent back to Hispaniola, where they rule their compatriots. As they are devout Christians, they keep both Spaniards and natives up to their duties, and cheerfully bring their subjects to the mines. There are gold mines found in two different districts, of which the first, called San Cristobal, is about thirty miles from the town of Dominica. The other, called Cibaua, is about ninety miles distant. Porto Real is situated there.

Great revenues are drawn from these countries, for gold is found both on the surface and in the rocks, either in the form of ingots or of scales which are sometimes small but generally of considerable weight. Ingots weigh 300

<sup>1</sup> The system of repartimientos. Consult the writings of Las Casason this subject.

pounds, and sometimes even more, for one has been found which weighed 310 pounds.<sup>1</sup> You have heard it said that this one was brought, just as it was found, to the King of Spain, on board the ship on which the governor Bobadilla embarked for Spain. The ship, being overloaded with men and gold, was wrecked and sunk with all it contained. More than a thousand witnesses saw and touched this ingot. When I speak of pounds I do not mean precisely a pound, but a weight equal to a golden ducat of four ounces, which is what the Spaniards call a *peso* or castellano of gold. All the gold found in the mountains of Cibaua is transported to the blockhouse of La Concepcion, where there are founderies for receiving and melting the metal. The royal fifth is first separated, after which each one receives a share according to his labour. The gold from the mines of San Cristobal goes to the founderies of Bona Ventura; the amount of gold melted in these founderies exceeds 300 pounds of metal. Any Spaniard who is convicted of having fraudulently kept back a quantity of gold not declared to the royal inspectors, suffers confiscation of all the gold in his possession. Contentions frequently occur among them, and if the magistrates of the island are unable to settle them, the cases are appealed to the Royal Council, the decisions of that tribunal being without appeal in the King's dominions of Castile.

At the present time the members composing this tribunal are all distinguished noblemen of illustrious blood, whom I will enumerate in the order in which they sit in judging a case. The first place is occupied by Antonio Rojas, Archbishop of Granada, who is your kinsman;

<sup>1</sup> Las Casas describes the finding of this nugget by an Indian girl, who accidentally turned it up while idly prodding the ground with a sharp instrument. He gives its weight as 3600 castellanos, equivalent to thirty-five pounds. The vessel which was to carry it to Spain was wrecked in a violent storm, just outside the harbour, and the famous nugget was lost. *Las Casas, his Life, his Apostolate, and his Writings*, cap. iii.

he is a veritable Cato, unable to condone his own offences or those of his relatives. His life is austere and he cultivates literature. He holds the first place in the Council, or in other words, he is the President thereof. The other members of the Council rank by seniority, according to the order in which they were appointed. All are doctors or designates or holders of some decoration. The designates are those who are called in Spanish *licenciates*. All are nominated by the King. The Dean of the Assembly is Pedro Oropesa; next to him comes Ludovico Zapato; then, in regular order, Fernando Tellez, Garcias Moxica, Lorenzo Carvajal; Toribio Santiago sits next to the last-named, and after him come Juan Lopez, Palacios Rivas, and Ludovico Polanco. Francisco Vargas, who is likewise royal treasurer, sits next, and the two last places are held by priests, Sosa and Cabrero, both doctors of Canon law. The counsellors do not judge criminal cases, but all civil suits are within their cognisance.

Let us now return to the new countries, from which we have wandered. These countries are very numerous, diversified, and fertile; neither Saturn nor Hercules nor any hero of antiquity who set out for the discovery or conquest of unknown lands, excelled the exploits of our contemporary Spaniards. Behold, how posterity will see the Christian religion extended! How far it will be possible to travel amongst mankind! Neither by word of mouth nor by my pen can I express my sentiments concerning these wondrous events, and I, therefore, leave my book without an ending, always counting upon making further researches and collecting documents for a more detailed description in my letters, when I shall be at leisure to write.

For I am not ignorant that our Admiral, Columbus,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the fourth voyage of Columbus; consult *Storia del Fernando Columbo*; Navarrete, i., 314, 329, 332; ii., 277, 296; iii., 555, 558. Also the *Lettera rarissima*, written by Columbus from Jamaica, July 7, 1503, to the Catholic sovereigns; Washington Irving, *Columbus and his Companions*.

with four ships and a crew of seventy men furnished him by the sovereigns, has explored during the year 1502 the country extending about one hundred and thirty leagues west between Cuba and the continent; an island rich in fruit trees, which is called Guanassa. The Admiral always followed the coast towards the east, hoping by this manœuvre to regain the waters of Paria, but in this he was disappointed. It is claimed that the western coasts have also been visited by Vincent Yañez, of whom I have previously written, Juan Diaz Solis de Nebrissa and sundry others, but I have no precise information on this point.<sup>1</sup> May God grant me life, that you may some day learn more upon this subject. And now you farewell.

<sup>1</sup> Consult Gaffarel, *Les Contemporains de Colomb*; Vespucci, *Quatuor Navigationes*.



## The Second Decade













Leo X.  
from an Old Copper Print.

## BOOK I

PETER MARTYR, OF MILAN, APOSTOLIC PROTONOTARY AND  
ROYAL COUNSELLOR TO THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF LEO X

MOST Holy Father,<sup>1</sup> Since the arrival at the Spanish Court of Galeazzo Butrigario of Bologna sent by Your Holiness, and Giovanni Accursi of Florence, sent by that glorious Republic, I have unceasingly frequented their company and studied to please them, because of their virtues and their wisdom. Both take pleasure in reading various authors and certain books which have fallen by chance into their hands, works treating of the vast regions hitherto unknown to the world, and of the Occidental lands lying almost at the Antipodes which the Spaniards recently discovered. Despite its unpolished style, the novelty of the narrative charmed them, and they besought me, as well on their own behalf as in the name of Your Holiness, to complete my writings by continuing the narrative of all that has since happened, and to send a copy to Your Beatitude so that you might understand to what degree, thanks to the encouragement of the Spanish sovereigns, the human race has been rendered illustrious and the Church Militant extended. For these new nations are as a *tabula rasa*; they easily accept the beliefs of our religion

<sup>1</sup> Giovanni de' Medici, elected in 1513, assumed the title of Leo X. He was keenly interested in the exploration and discoveries in America, and unceasingly urged his nuncios to keep him supplied with everything written on these subjects.



and discard their barbarous and primitive rusticity after contact with our compatriots. I have deemed it well to yield to the insistence of wise men who enjoyed the favour of Your Holiness; indeed, had I not immediately obeyed an invitation in the name of Your Beatitude, I should have committed an inextinguishable crime. I shall now summarise in a few words the discoveries by the Spaniards of unknown coasts, the authors of the chief expeditions, the places they landed, the hopes raised, and the promises held out by these new countries.

The discovery of these lands I have mentioned, by the Genoese, Christopher Columbus, was related in my *Ocean Decade*, which was printed without my permission<sup>1</sup> and circulated throughout Christendom. Columbus afterwards explored immense seas and countries to the south-west, approaching within fifteen degrees of the equinoctial line. In those parts he saw great rivers, lofty snow-capped mountains along the coasts, and also secure harbours. After his death the sovereigns took steps to assume possession of those countries and to colonise them with Christians, in order that our religion might be propagated. The royal notaries afforded every facility to every one who wished to engage in these honourable enterprises among whom two were notable: Diego Nicuesa de Baëcca, an Andalusian, and Alonzo Hojeda de Concha.

Both these men were living in Hispaniola where, as we have already said, the Spaniards had founded a town and colonies, when Alonzo Hojeda first set out, about the ides of December, with about three hundred soldiers under his command. His course was almost directly south, until he reached one of those ports previously discovered and which Columbus had named Carthagena,

<sup>1</sup> Peter Martyr's friend, Lucio Marineo Siculo, was responsible for this premature Spanish edition published in 1511. An Italian edition of the *First Decade* was printed by Albertino Vercellese at Venice in 1504.

because its island breakwater, its extent, and its coast shaped like a scythe reminded him of Carthagená. The island lying across the mouth of the port is called by the natives Codego, just as the Spaniards call the island in front of Carthagená, Scombria. The neighbouring region is called Caramairi, a country whose inhabitants, both male and female, are large and well formed, although they are naked. The men wear their hair cut short to the ears, while the women wear theirs long. Both sexes are extremely skilful bowmen.

The Spaniards discovered certain trees in the province which bear fruits that are sweet, but most dangerous, for when eaten they produce worms. Most of all is the shade of this tree noxious, for whoever sleeps for any length of time beneath its branches, awakens with a swollen head, and almost blind, though this blindness abates within a few days. The port of Carthagená lies four hundred and fifty-six miles from the port of Hispaniola called Beata, where preparations are generally made for voyages of discovery. Immediately on landing, Hojeda attacked the scattered and defenceless natives. They had been conceded to him by royal patent because they had formerly treated some Christians most cruelly and could never be prevailed upon to receive the Spaniards amicably in their country. Only a small quantity of gold, and that of poor quality, was found amongst them; they use the metal for making leaves and disks, which they hang on their breasts as ornaments. Hojeda was not satisfied with these spoils, and taking some prisoners with him as guides, he attacked a village in the interior twelve miles distant from the shore, where the fugitives from the coast-town had taken refuge. These men, though naked, were warlike; they used wooden shields, some long and others curved, also long wooden swords, bows and arrows, and lances whose points were either hardened in the fire or made of bone. Assisted by their guests, they made a

desperate attack on the Spaniards, for they were excited by the misfortunes of those who had sought refuge with them, after having lost their wives and children, whose massacre by the Spaniards they had witnessed. The Spaniards were defeated and both Hojeda's lieutenant, Juan de la Cosa,<sup>1</sup> the first discoverer of gold in the sands of Uraba, and seventy soldiers fell. The natives poisoned their arrows with the juice of a death-dealing herb. The other Spaniards headed by Hojeda turned their backs and fled to the ships, where they remained, saddened and depressed by this calamity, until the arrival of another leader, Diego de Nicuesa, in command of twelve ships. When Hojeda and Cosa sailed from Hispaniola, they had left Nicuesa in the port of Beata still busy with his preparations. His force numbered seven hundred and eighty-five soldiers, for he was an older man than Hojeda, and he had greater authority; hence a larger number of volunteers, in choosing between the two leaders, preferred to join the expedition of Nicuesa; moreover it was reported that Veragua, which had been granted to Nicuesa by the royal patent, was richer in gold than Uraba, which Alonzo de Hojeda had obtained.

As soon as Nicuesa landed, the two leaders after conferring together, decided that the first victims should be avenged, so they set out that same night to attack the murderers of Cosa and his seventy companions. It was the last watch of the night, when they surprised the natives, surrounding and setting fire to their village, which contained more than one hundred houses. The usual number of inhabitants was tripled by the refugees who had there taken shelter.

The village was destroyed, for the houses were built of wood covered with palm-leaves. Out of the great

<sup>1</sup> Such was the sad end of the pilot of Columbus. The oldest map of the New World, now preserved at Madrid, was the work of this noted cartographer.

multitude of men and women, only six infants were spared, all the others having been murdered or burnt with their effects. These children told the Spaniards that Cosa and the others had been cut into bits and devoured by their murderers. It is thought indeed that the natives of Caramairi are of the same origin as the Caribs, or cannibals, who are eaters of human flesh. Very little gold was found amongst the ashes. It is in reality the thirst for gold, not less than the covetousness of new countries, which prompted the Spaniards to court such dangers. Having thus avenged the death of Cosa and his companions, they returned to Carthagena.

Hojeda, who was the first to arrive, was likewise the first to leave, starting with his men in search of Uraba, which is under his jurisdiction. On his way thither he came upon an island called La Fuerte, which lies halfway between Uraba and the harbour of Carthagena. There he landed and found it inhabited by ferocious cannibals, of whom he captured two men and seven women, the others managing to escape. He likewise gathered one hundred and ninety drachmas of gold made into necklaces of various kinds. He finally reached the eastern extremity of Uraba. This is called Caribana, because it is from this country that the insular Caribs derive their origin, and have hence kept the name.<sup>1</sup> Hojeda's first care was to provide protection, and to this end he built a village defended by a fort. Having learned from his prisoners that there was a town twelve miles in the interior, called Tirufi, celebrated for its gold mines, he made preparations for its capture. The inhabitants of Tirufi were ready to defend their rights, and Hojeda was repulsed with loss and disgrace; these natives likewise used poisoned arrows in fighting. Driven by want, he attacked

<sup>1</sup> The place of origin of the Caribs is disputed, some authorities tracing them to Guiana, others to Venezuela, others to the Antilles, etc.

another village some days later, and was wounded by an arrow in the hip; some of his companions affirm that he was shot by a native whose wife he had taken prisoner. The husband approached and negotiated amicably with Hojeda for the ransom of his wife, promising to deliver, on a fixed day, the amount of gold demanded of him. On the day agreed upon he returned, armed with arrows and javelins but without the gold. He was accompanied by eight companions, all of whom were ready to die to avenge the injury done to the inhabitants of Carthagena and also the people of the village. This native was killed by Hojeda's soldiers, and could no longer enjoy the caresses of his beloved wife; but Hojeda, under the influence of the poison, saw his strength ebbing daily away.

At this juncture arrived the other commander, Nicuesa, to whom the province of Veragua, lying west of Uraba, had been assigned as a residence. He had sailed with his troops from the port of Carthagena the day after Hojeda's departure, with Veragua for his destination, and entered the gulf called by the natives Coiba, of whom the cacique was named Caeta. The people thereabouts speak an entirely different language from those of Carthagena and Uraba. The dialects of even neighbouring tribes are very dissimilar.<sup>1</sup> For instance, in Hispaniola, a king is called *cacique*, whereas in the province of Coiba he is called *chebi*, and elsewhere *tiba*; a noble is called in Hispaniola *tuino*, in Coiba *saccus*, and in other parts *jura*.

Nicuesa proceeded from Coiba to Uraba, the province of his ally Hojeda. Some days later, being on board one of the large merchant vessels called by the Spaniards caravels, he ordered the other ships to follow at a distance, keeping with him two vessels with double sets of oars, of the

<sup>1</sup> *La Bibliothèque Américaine* of Leclerc contains a list of the different works on American languages. Consult also Ludwig, *The Literature of American Aboriginal Languages*.



type called brigantines. I may here say that during the rest of my narrative it is my intention to give to these brigantines as well as to the other types of ships the names they bear in the vulgar tongue. I do this that I may be more 'clearly understood, regardless of the teeth of critics who rend the works of authors. Each day new wants arise, impossible to translate with the vocabulary left us by the venerable majesty of antiquity.

After Nicuesa's departure Hojeda was joined by a ship from Hispaniola with a crew of sixty men commanded by Bernardino de Calavera, who had stolen it. Neither the maritime commander,—or to speak more plainly the Admiral,—nor the authorities had consented to his departure. The provisions brought by this ship somewhat restored the strength of the Spaniards.

The complaints of the men against Hojeda increased from day to day; for they accused him of having deceived them. He alleged in his defence, that by virtue of the powers he held from the King he had directed the bachelor Enciso, who was chief justice and whom he had selected because of his great legal abilities, to follow him with a shipload of stores; and that he was much astonished that the latter had not long since arrived. He spoke the truth, for at the time of his departure, Enciso had already more than half completed his preparations. His companions, however, who considered they had been duped, did not believe in the sincerity of his affirmations about Enciso, and a number of them secretly planned to seize two brigantines belonging to Hojeda, and to return to Hispaniola. Upon discovering this plot, Hojeda decided to anticipate their plan and, leaving Francisco Pizarro, a nobleman<sup>1</sup> who commanded the forts he had built, he took some of his men and went on board the ship we have mentioned. His intention was to go to Hispan-

<sup>1</sup> Pizarro was far from being a nobleman, his mother being a peasant woman and his father the captain Gonzalo Pizarro.



iola, not only to recover from the wound in his hip, but also to learn the causes of Enciso's delay. He promised his companions to return in less than fifty days. Out of the three hundred there only remained about sixty men, for the others had either perished of hunger or had been slain by the natives. Pizarro and his men pledged themselves to remain at their posts until his return within fifty days bringing provisions and reinforcements. When the established time elapsed, finding themselves reduced by famine, they boarded the brigantines and abandoned Uraba.

During their journey to Hispaniola a tempest overtook them on the high seas, which wrecked one of the brigantines with all its crew; and the survivors relate that they distinctly saw, circling round the brigantine, a gigantic fish which smashed the rudder to pieces with a blow of its tail. Gigantic sea monsters certainly do exist in those waters. Without a rudder and buffeted by the storm, the brigantine sank not far from the coast of the island, named La Fuerte, which lies half way between Uraba and Carthagená. The remaining brigantine which outrode the storm, was repulsed from the island by the natives who rushed from every direction armed with bows and arrows.

Pursuing his course, Pizarro encountered by chance the bachelor Enciso between the bay of Carthagená and the country called Cuchibacoa, which lies at the mouth of the river the Spaniards have named Boiugatti or cat-house, because it was there they first saw a cat, and *boiu* means *house* in the language of Hispaniola.

Enciso had one vessel laden with all kinds of provisions, foodstuffs, and clothing, and he was followed by a brigantine. He it was whose ship Hojeda had awaited with impatience. He had left Hispaniola on the ides of September, and four days later had recognised the lofty mountains Columbus had first discovered in this region and which they had named La Sierra Nevada,

because of their perpetual snows. On the fifth day out he passed the Boca de la Sierpe. Men who went on board his brigantine told him that Hojeda had returned to Hispaniola, but thinking they lied, Enciso ordered them by virtue of his authority as a judge, to return to the country whence they had come. They obediently followed Enciso, but nevertheless implored him at least to grant them the favour of allowing them to return to Hispaniola or to conduct them himself to Nicuesa, promising in exchange for his good services twenty-six drachmas of gold; for though they were in want of bread, they were rich in gold. Enciso was deaf to their entreaties, and affirmed that it was impossible for him to land anywhere but at Uraba, the province of Hojeda, and it was thither, guided by them, that he directed his course.

Listen, however, to what happened to this judge, and perhaps, Most Holy Father, you will find it worth remembering. Enciso anchored off the coast of Caramairiana in the harbour of Carthagená, celebrated for the chastity and grace of its women, and the courage of both sexes of the inhabitants. As he approached to renew his supply of water and to repair the ship's boat, which had been damaged, he ordered some men to land. They were at once surrounded by a multitude of natives, all of whom were armed and who, for three days, watched their labours most attentively, fairly besieging them. During this time neither the Spaniards nor the natives engaged in hostilities, although they remained face to face during three entire days, both on their guard and watching one another. The Spaniards continued their work, the soldiers protecting the carpenters.

During this period of suspense, two Spaniards went to fill a vessel with water at the river's mouth, and, more quickly than I can write it, a native chief and ten soldiers surrounded them, pointing their arrows on them but not shooting, con-

tenting themselves with glaring at them ferociously. One of the Spaniards fled, but the other stood trembling in his tracks, and by invectives called back his companion. He spoke to the enemy in their own tongue, which he had learned from one of the captives captured elsewhere, and they, surprised at hearing their language in the mouth of a stranger, were mollified and answered with gentle words. The soldier assured them that he and his friends were merely strangers passing through, and he was astonished that they drove the ships from the coast, along which they were sailing. He accused them of inhumanity, and threatened them with dire misfortunes did they not abandon their design; for he assured them that unless they not only laid down their arms but received the Spaniards with honour, other armed strangers, more numerous than the sands, would arrive and ravage their country. Enciso was informed that two soldiers had been seized by natives, but suspecting a trap he ordered his soldiers to carry their shields to protect themselves from the poisoned arrows and, hastily forming them in order of battle, he led them towards those who held the prisoners. A sign from the soldier, begging him to stop, caused him to call a halt, and, at the same time, the other soldier whom he summoned told him that everything was going on well and that the Indians desired peace, since they had discovered that they were not the men who had sacked the village on the opposite coast, destroyed and burned another village in the interior, and carried off prisoners. This alluded to Hojeda's troops. The natives had come intending to avenge this outrage, but they had no intention of attacking innocent men, for they declared it was infamous to attack anyone who did not attack them. The natives laid down their bows and arrows, and received the Spaniards amicably, giving them salted fish and bread. They also filled their barrels with a certain brew made from native fruits and grain, which was almost as good as wine.

After concluding a peace with the people of Caramairi who, in response to the summons of their cacique, assembled in a great crowd, Enciso left for Uraba, passing by the island La Fuerte. He had one hundred and fifty new soldiers on his ship, to replace those who were dead. He carried twelve horses and swine, both male and female, for propagating the species in that region. He was provided with fifty cannon and a good supply of lances, shields, swords, and other fighting material. Nothing, however, of all he brought saw service; for as he was about to enter the port, the captain of the ship who was acting as pilot, drove it upon a sandy reef and the unfortunate vessel was overwhelmed by the waves, and shattered. Its entire contents were lost. What a pitiful sight! Of all the provisions they only saved twelve barrels of flour, a few cheeses, and a small quantity of biscuit. All their animals were drowned, and the men, almost naked, with some of their weapons, were saved by the brigantine and the ship's boat. Thus from one misfortune to another they were reduced to extreme peril of their lives, and thought no more about gold.

Behold them, therefore, alive and safe in view of the land they had desired with their whole hearts. It was necessary, first of all, to find some means of subsistence, for men do not live on air, and as they had nothing of their own, they took what belonged to others. One happy resource lightened their misfortunes; for they found a palm grove not far from the coast, between which and the neighbouring swamps there wandered herds of wild swine. They lived, therefore, for some time on the flesh of these animals, which are said to be smaller than ours and have such a short tail it appears to have been cut off. Their feet are also different from those of our wild boars, for the hind feet have only one toe and no hoof. Their flesh is much more succulent and wholesome than that of our wild boars.

The Spaniards likewise ate fruits and roots of a variety of palms, called cabbage palms, such as are eaten in the interior of Andalusia, and of whose leaves brooms are made in Rome. Besides this they found other fruits in the country, though most of them, even the plums, were not yet ripe and were somewhat hard and red in colour. I assume that these were the variety I ate in the month of April in Alexandria, where they grew on trees, which the Jews, who are versed in the Mosaic law, claim to be the cedar of Lebanon. They are edible and sweet though not without a trace of bitterness, resembling the fruit of crab-apple trees. The natives plant this tree in their gardens in place of peach, cherry, and other similar trees, and cultivate it with the greatest care. In size, the character of its trunk and its leaves, it closely resembles the jujube tree.

When the wild boar gave out, the Spaniards were obliged to take thought for the future, so they marched their troops into the interior. The inhabitants of Caribana country are very skilful in the use of bows and arrows. The troop of Enciso consisted of a body of a hundred men.<sup>1</sup> They encountered three naked savages who, without the slightest fear, attacked them. The natives wounded four with poisoned arrows and killed some others, after which, their quivers being exhausted, they fled with the rapidity of the wind, for they are extremely agile. In their flight they hurled insults at the Spaniards, and they never shot an arrow that failed to hit its mark. Much depressed and inclined to abandon the country, the Spaniards returned to their point of departure, where they found the natives had destroyed the blockhouse built by Hojeda, and burned the village of thirty houses as soon as Francisco Pizarro and his companions, deserted by Hojeda, abandoned it.

<sup>1</sup> The text continues somewhat irrelevantly: *dico centum pedites, etsi me non lateat constare centuriam ex centum viginti octo militibus, ut decuriam ex quindecim. Licet tamen de gente nuda scribenti, nudis uti verbis interdum.*



Their exploration of the country convinced the Spaniards that the eastern part of Uraba was richer and more fertile than the western. They therefore divided their forces and, with the assistance of a brigantine, transported one half of their people thither, the other half remaining on the eastern coast. The gulf is twenty-four miles long, growing narrower as it penetrates inland. Many rivers flow into the Gulf of Uraba, one of which, called the Darien,<sup>1</sup> they say, is more fortunate than the Nile.

The Spaniards decided to settle upon its green banks where fruit trees grow. The river bed is narrow and its current sluggish. The people along the banks were much amazed to see the brigantine, so much larger than their own barques, under full sail. Getting rid of their women and non-fighting men, and donning their fighting equipment, about five hundred of them advanced against the Spaniards, taking up a position upon a lofty hillock. The Spaniards, commanded by Enciso, who was judge in the name of Hojeda, prepared for the conflict. First kneeling, general and soldiers together prayed God to give them the victory. They bound themselves by a vow to make votive offerings of gold and silver to the statue of the Blessed Virgin, known in Seville by the name of Santa Maria della Antigua, vowing to make a pilgrimage to her sanctuary, to name in her honour the village they might found, and to build a church sacred to her or to transform the house of the cacique into a church. They also took a vow not to retreat before the enemy.

At a given signal they cheerfully armed themselves; carrying their shields on their left arms, brandishing their halberds, they charged upon the enemy who, being naked, could not resist the attack for long, and consequently

<sup>1</sup> The name *Darien* applies to the eastern part of the isthmus of Panama, extending from the Gulf of San Miguel to that of Uraba. The river bearing the same name forms a large estuary in the Gulf of San Miguel.



fled, their cacique, Zemaco, at their head. Promptly taking possession of the village, our men found an abundance of native food and assuaged their immediate hunger. There was bread made of roots and bread made of grain, such as we have described in our first book; also fruits bearing no resemblance to any of ours and which they preserve, much as we do chestnuts and similar fruits.

The men of this country go naked, the women cover the middle of their body with cotton draperies from the navel downwards. Winter's rigours are unknown. The mouth of the Darien is only eight degrees distant from the equator, thus the difference in length between night and day is hardly noticeable. Although the natives are ignorant of astronomy they had remarked this fact. Moreover, it is of small importance whether these measures are or are not different from those they give, for in any case the differences are insignificant.

The next day, the Spaniards ascended the river and about a mile distant they found very dense forests and woods, in which they suspected the natives were either hiding or had their treasure concealed. They searched the thickets carefully; keeping always on their guard against a surprise they moved under cover of their shields. Nobody was found in the thickets, but there was a quantity of gold and effects, coverlets woven of silk and of cotton, such as the Italians call *bombasio* and the Spanish *algodon*; utensils, both of wood and terra-cotta, gold and copper ornaments and necklaces, amounting in all to about one hundred and two pounds. The natives procure these gold necklaces, which they themselves work with great care, in exchange for their own products, for it usually happens that a country rich in cereals is devoid of gold. On the other hand, where gold and other metals are common, the country is usually mountainous, rocky, and arid; it is by exchanging products that commercial relations are

established. The Spaniards derived satisfaction and encouragement from two sources: they had found plenty of gold, and chance had led them into an agreeable and fertile region. They immediately summoned their companions, who had been left on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Uraba, to join them. Nevertheless, some people allege that the climate is not very healthy, since the country consists of a deep valley, surrounded by mountains and swamps.

## BOOK II

YOU are aware, Most Holy Father, of where those Spaniards under the command of Hojeda had resolved to settle, having received from the Spanish sovereigns authorisation to colonise the vast regions of Uraba. Leaving for a moment these colonists, let us return to Nicuesa, who was in command of the great province of Veragua.

I have already related how he had overstepped the limits of the jurisdiction of his partner and friend Hojeda, and had sailed with one caravel and two brigantines for Veragua. The largest of these vessels had been left behind with orders to follow him, but this proved a most unfortunate inspiration, for Nicuesa lost sight of his companions in the darkness and, sailing too far, went beyond the mouths of the Veragua for which he was looking. Lopez de Olano, a Catalonian, who was in command of one of the largest of the vessels, learned from the natives while he followed in the track of Nicuesa that his commander had left the Gulf of Veragua to the east. He therefore promptly turned about and sailed to meet the commander of another brigantine which had likewise got out of its course during the night. This brigantine was commanded by Pedro de Umbria. Rejoicing at thus meeting, the two captains consulted as to what they should do, trying to imagine what course Nicuesa could have taken. On reflection they thought that he (Nicuesa), being chief commander of the expedition,

must have had different indications concerning the exact location of Veragua than they, who were simple volunteers, and only sought to rejoin their leader. They laid their course towards Veragua, and at a distance of sixteen miles found a river, discovered by Columbus and called by him Los Lagartos, because a number of these animals, called in Spanish *lagartos*, in Latin *lacertos*<sup>1</sup> were found there. These creatures are as dangerous to men and to other animals as are the crocodiles of the Nile. At that place they met their companions who had anchored their large vessels after receiving the leader's orders to proceed. Much disturbed by the possible consequences of Nicuesa's blunder, the ships' captains consulted together and decided to adopt the opinion of the captains of the brigantines which had coasted along very near to the shores of Veragua; they therefore sailed for that port. Veragua is a local name given to a river which has rich gold deposits; and from the river, the name extends to the entire region. The large vessels anchored at the mouth of the river and landed all the provisions by means of the ships' boats. Lopez de Olano was chosen governor in place of Nicuesa who was thought to be lost.

Acting upon the advice of Lopez and other officers, the ships rendered useless by age were abandoned to be destroyed by the waves; this decision was likewise adopted to encourage serious projects of colonisation by cutting off all hope of escape. With the more solid timbers and with beams cut from the trees, which in that neighbourhood sometimes attain an extraordinary height and size, the Spaniards built a new caravel to provide for unforeseen wants.

When the captain of one of the brigantines, Pedro de Umbria, reached Veragua, a catastrophe befell. Being a man of irritable disposition, he resolved to separate from his companions and seek a region where he might

<sup>1</sup> Lizards, by which are doubtless meant alligators.

establish himself independently. He selected twelve sailors and departed in the largest ship's boat belonging to one of the greater vessels. The tide rolls in on that coast with as dreadful roarings as those which are described as prevailing at Scylla in Sicily, dashing themselves against the rocks projecting into the sea, from which they are thrown back with great violence, causing an agitation which the Spaniards call *resacca*.<sup>1</sup> Umbria's boat was caught in a whirlpool like a mountain torrent which, despite his efforts, dashed him into the sea and sunk his barque before the eyes of his companions. Only one Spaniard, who was a skilful swimmer, succeeded in saving himself by clutching a rock which rose slightly above the waters, and there held out against the raging tempest. The next day when the sea had abated and the tide had left the reef dry, he rejoined his companions, and the eleven others perished. The other Spaniards did not venture to take to their barques but landed direct from the brigantines.

After a stop of a few days they ascended the river, and found some native villages, called in the language of the country *mumu*. They set to work to construct a fort on the bank, and as the country round about seemed sterile, they sowed, as in Europe, a valley of which the soil seemed apt for cultivation. While these things were happening in Veragua, one of the Spaniards, who was stationed on a high rock which served as a lookout, casting his eyes to the west, cried "A sail! a sail!" As the ship approached it was seen to be a barque under full sail. The newcomers were joyfully welcomed. The boat turned out to be a barque belonging to the caravel of Nicuesa, which could only carry five persons; but as a matter of fact there were only three men on board. These men had stolen the barque because Nicuesa had refused to believe them when they assured him that he

<sup>1</sup> Meaning the undertow of surf.

had passed beyond Veragua, leaving that place behind him to the east. Seeing that Nicuesa and his men were perishing of hunger, they resolved to try their fortunes in that barque, and to attempt to discover Veragua by themselves, and they had succeeded. They described Nicuesa as wandering aimlessly, after having lost his caravel in a storm, and that he was practically lost among salt marshes and desert coasts, being destitute of everything and reduced to a most miserable plight, since for seventy days he had eaten nothing but herbs and roots and drunk nothing but water, of which indeed he had not always enough. This all came about because, in seeking Veragua, he persisted in his course towards the west.

The country had already been reconnoitred by that great discoverer of vast regions, Christopher Columbus, who had given it the name of *Gracias à Dios*; in the native tongue it was called *Cerabaro*. The river which the Spaniards call San Mateo divides it into two portions, and it is distant about one hundred and thirty miles from western Veragua. I do not give the native names of this river or of other localities, because the explorers who have returned to Spain do not themselves know them. The report of these three sailors prompted Pedro de Olano, one of Nicuesa's two captains and his deputy judge, to send one of the brigantines piloted by the same sailors, to find and bring back Nicuesa. Upon his arrival, Nicuesa ordered Olano, who had been appointed governor pending his return, to be put into irons, and imprisoned, accusing him of treason for having usurped the authority of governor and not having concerned himself sufficiently, while enjoying the command, about the disappearance of his chief. He likewise accused him of negligence in sending so late to search for him.

In like manner Nicuesa reproached everybody in arrogant terms, and within a few days he commanded that they should make ready to depart. The colonists



begged him not to decide hastily, and to wait at least until the crops that they had sown were harvested, as the harvesting season was now at hand. Four months had now passed since they had sown. Nicuesa refused to listen to anything, declaring they must leave such an unfortunate country as quickly as possible. He therefore carried off everything that had been landed at the Gulf of Veragua, and ordered the ships to sail towards the east. After sailing sixteen miles a young Genoese, called Gregorio, recognised the vicinity of a certain harbour, to prove which he declared that they would find buried in the sand an anchor which had been abandoned there, and under a tree near to the harbour, a spring of clear water. Upon landing they found the anchor and the spring, and gave thanks for the excellent memory of Gregorio, who, alone amongst the numerous sailors who had sailed these seas together with Columbus, remembered anything about these particulars. Columbus had named this place Porto Bello.

Hunger induced them to land at several places, and everywhere their reception by the natives was hostile. The Spaniards were now reduced by famine to such a state of weakness that they could no longer fight against natives, even naked ones, who offered the least resistance. Twenty of them died from wounds of poisoned arrows. It was decided to leave one half of the company at Porto Bello, and with the other half Nicuesa continued his voyage eastwards. Twenty-eight miles from Porto Bello and near a cape which Columbus had formerly called Marmor, he decided to found a fort, but the want of food had too much reduced the strength of his men to permit this labour. Nicuesa nevertheless erected a small tower, sufficient to withstand the first attacks of the natives, which he called Nombre de Dios. From the day he had left Veragua, not only during his march across the sandy plains but also because of the famine which prevailed

while he was constructing the tower, he lost two hundred of the men who still survived. Thus it was that, little by little, his numerous company of seven hundred and eighty-five men was reduced to about one hundred.

While Nicuesa, with a handful of wretched creatures, struggled in this manner against ill fortune, rivalry for the command broke out in Uraba. A certain Vasco Nuñez Balboa<sup>1</sup> who, in the opinion of most people, was a man of action rather than of judgment, stirred up his companions against the judge Enciso, declaring that the latter possessed no royal patents giving him judicial powers. The fact of his being chosen by Hojeda to act as governor was not enough. He succeeded in impeding Enciso in his functions, and the colonists of Uraba chose some of their own men to administer the colony; but dissension was not long in dividing them, especially when their leader Hojeda did not return. They thought the latter dead, of his wound, and disputed among themselves as to whether they should not summon Nicuesa to take his place. Some influential members of the council who had been friends of Nicuesa and could not endure the insolence of Vasco Nuñez thought they ought to scour the country in search of Nicuesa; for they had heard it reported that he had abandoned Uraba on account of the barrenness of the soil. Possibly he was wandering in unknown places like Enciso and other victims of wrecks; therefore they should not rest until they had discovered whether he and his associates still lived.

Vasco Nuñez, who feared to be deposed from his command on the arrival of Nicuesa, treated those who still believed that the latter lived, as foolish. Moreover, even were the fact proven, they had no need of him, for did they not possess as good a title as Nicuesa? Opinions

<sup>1</sup> Balboa was of a noble family of Xeres de los Caballeros, and was born in 1475. He came to Hispaniola in 1500, where he suffered extreme poverty. He went on board Enciso's vessel as a stowaway.

were thus divided, when the captain of two large vessels, Roderigo de Colmenares, arrived bringing a reinforcement of sixty men, a quantity of foodstuffs, and clothing.

I must recount some particulars of the voyage of Colmenares. It was about the ides of October in the year 1510 that Colmenares sailed from Beata, the port of Hispaniola, where expeditions are usually fitted out. The nones of November he reached the coast of that immense country of Paria, between the port of Carthagea and the district of Cuchibacoa, discovered by Columbus. He suffered equally during this voyage from the attacks of the natives and from the fury of the sea. Being short of water, he stopped at the mouth of the river called by the natives Gaira, which was large enough for his ships to enter. This river has different sources on a lofty snow-covered mountain, which Roderigo's companions declared to be the highest they had ever seen. This statement must be true, since the snow lay upon a mountain which is not more than ten degrees distant from the equator. A shallop was sent ashore at the Gaira to fill the water barrels, and while the sailors were engaged in this task they saw a cacique accompanied by twenty of his people approaching. Strange to behold, he was dressed in cotton clothing, and a cloak, held in place by a band, fell from his shoulders to the elbow. He also wore another trailing tunic of feminine design. The cacique advanced and amicably advised our men not to take water at that particular place, because it was of poor quality; he showed them close at hand another river of which the waters were more wholesome. The Spaniards repaired to the river indicated by the cacique, but were prevented by the bad state of the sea from finding its bottom, for the sands fairly bubbled as it were, which indicated that the sea was full of reefs. They were obliged, therefore, to come back to the first river, where at least they could safely anchor. Here the cacique disclosed his treacherous

intentions, for while our men were engaged in filling their barrels, he fell upon them, followed by seven hundred naked men, armed in the native fashion, only he and his officers wearing clothing. He seized the barque, which he smashed to pieces, and in a twinkling the forty-seven Spaniards were pierced with arrow-wounds, before they could protect themselves with their shields. There was but one man who survived, all the rest perishing from the effects of the poison. No remedy against this kind of poison was then known, and it was only later that the islanders of Hispaniola revealed it; for there exists an herb in Hispaniola of which the juice, if administered in time, counteracts the poison of the arrows. Seven other Spaniards escaped the massacre, and took refuge in the trunk of a gigantic tree hollowed by age, where they concealed themselves till night. But they did not for that reason escape, for at nightfall the ship of Colmenares sailed away, leaving them to their fate, and it is not known what became of them.

Lest I should weary you if I related all the particulars, Most Holy Father, I omit mention of the thousand perilous adventures through which Colmenares finally reached the Gulf of Uraba. He anchored off the eastern coast, which is sterile, and from that point he rejoined his compatriots on the opposite bank several days later. The silence everywhere amazed him; for he had expected to find his comrades in those parts. Mystified by this state of things, he wondered whether the Spaniards were still alive or whether they had settled elsewhere; and he chose an excellent means for obtaining information. He loaded all his cannon and mortars to the muzzle with bullets and powder, and he ordered fires to be lighted on the tops of the hills. The cannon were all fired together, and their tremendous detonation made the very earth about the Gulf of Uraba shake. Although they were twenty-four miles distant, which is the width of the gulf,

the Spaniards heard the noise, and seeing the flames they replied by similar fires. Guided by these lights Colmenares ordered his ships to cross to the western shore. The colonists of Darien were in a miserable plight, and after the shipwreck of the judge Enciso it was only by the greatest efforts they had managed to exist. With hands raised to heaven and eyes overflowing with tears of mingled joy and sadness, they welcomed Colmenares and his companions with what enthusiasm their wretched state allowed. Food and clothing were distributed to them, since they were almost naked. It only remains, Most Holy Father, to describe the internal dissensions which broke out among the colonists of Uraba over the succession to the command, after they had lost their leaders.

### BOOK III

THE chief colonists of Uraba and all the friends of order decided to recall Nicuesa from wherever he was, and as the judge, Enciso, was opposed to this measure, they deprived him of the brigantine he had built at his own expense. Contrary to his will and against that of Vasco Nuñez, the adventurer, they decided to go in search of Nicuesa in order that he might settle the dispute about the commandership. Colmenares, whom I have mentioned above, was commanded to search along those coasts where it was thought Nicuesa wandered abandoned. It was known that the latter had left Veragua, because of the sterility of the soil. The colonists instructed Colmenares to bring Nicuesa back as soon as he could find him and to assure him they would be grateful to him if, on his arrival, he succeeded in calming the dissensions which rent the colony. Colmenares accepted this mission, for he was a personal friend of Nicuesa, and boldly announced that the provisions he had brought were intended as much for Nicuesa as for the colonists of Uraba. He, therefore, fitted out one of his ships and the brigantine, which had been taken from Enciso, loading them with a part of the provisions he had brought. He coasted carefully along the neighbouring shores, and finally came upon Nicuesa engaged in building his tower on Cape Marmor.

Nicuesa was the most wretched of men, reduced to a skeleton, covered with rags. There remained barely



sixty of the seven hundred and more companions who had started with him, and the survivors were more to be pitied than the dead. Colmenares comforted his friend Nicuesa, embracing him with tears, cheering him with words of hope for a change of fortune and speedy success. He reminded him that the best element of the colonists of Uraba wished for his return, because his authority alone could quiet the dissensions which raged. Thanking his friend, as became the situation, Nicuesa sailed with him for Uraba.

It is a common thing to observe amongst men that arrogance accompanies success. After having wept and sighed and poured out complaints for his miseries, after having overwhelmed his rescuer, Colmenares, with thanks and almost rolled at his feet, Nicuesa, when the fear of starvation was removed, began, even before he had seen the colonists of Uraba, to talk airily of his projects of reform and his intention to get possession of all the gold there was. He said that no one had the right to keep back any of the gold, without his authorisation, or that of his associate Hojeda. These imprudent words reached the ears of the colonists of Uraba, and roused against Nicuesa the indignation of the partisans of Enciso, Hojeda's deputy judge, and that of Nuñez. It therefore fell out that Nicuesa, with sixty companions, had hardly landed, so it is reported, before the colonists forced him to re-embark, overwhelming him with threats. The better intentioned of the colonists were displeased at this demonstration, but fearing a rising of the majority headed by Vasco Nuñez, they did not interfere. Nicuesa was therefore obliged to regain the brigantine, and there remained with him only seventeen of his sixty companions. It was the calends of March in the year 1511 when Nicuesa set sail, intending to return to Hispaniola and there complain of the usurpation of Vasco Nuñez and the violent treatment offered the judge, Enciso.

He sailed in an evil hour and no news was ever again

heard of that brigantine. It is believed the vessel sank, and that all the men were drowned. However that may be, Nicuesa plunged from one calamity into another, and died even more miserably than he had lived.

After the shameful expulsion of Nicuesa, the colonists consumed the provisions Colmenares had brought, and soon, driven by hunger, they were forced to plunder the neighbourhood of the colony like wolves of the forest. A troop of about one hundred and thirty men was formed under the leadership of Vasco Nuñez, who organised them like a band of brigands. Puffed up by vanity, he sent a guard in advance, and had others to accompany and follow him. He chose Colmenares<sup>1</sup> as his associate and companion. From the outset of this expedition he determined to seize everything he could find in the territory of the neighbouring caciques, and he began by marching along the shore of the district of Coiba, of which we have already spoken. Summoning the cacique of that district, Careca, of whom the Spaniards had never had reason to complain, he haughtily and threateningly ordered him to furnish provisions for his men. The cacique Careca answered that it was impossible, because he had already at different times helped the Christians and consequently his own provisions were well-nigh exhausted. Moreover, in consequence of a long-drawn-out war with a neighbouring cacique called Poncha, he was himself reduced to want. The adventurer admitted none of these reasons, and the wretched Careca saw his town sacked. He himself was put in irons and brought with his two wives, his sons and all his familia to Darien.<sup>2</sup> In the house of Careca they

<sup>1</sup> The memoir of Colmenares on this expedition is contained in Navarrete's *Coleccion de Viajes*, tom. iii., pp. 386-393. Also Balboa's letter to King Ferdinand in the same volume.

<sup>2</sup> Balboa's description of his treatment of the natives, which he penned to the King, is just the contrary. He prides himself on having won their friendship, and ascribes to their affection for him his success in discovering the treasures and secrets of the country.

found three of Nicuesa's companions, who, when his ships were at anchor, during his search for Veragua, had deserted him because they feared to be tried for certain crimes. As soon as the fleet sailed away, they took refuge with Careca who received them amicably. Eighteen months had elapsed since that time, so they were as naked as the natives, but plump as the capons women fatten in dark places, for they had lived well at the cacique's table during that period; nor did they concern themselves about *meum* and *tuum*, or as to who gave and who received, which is the cause of the crimes of violence that shorten human life.

These Spaniards nevertheless preferred to return to a life of hardship. Provisions were brought from the village of Careca to the people left behind at Darien, for the first consideration was to stave off the famine that was imminent. Whether before or afterwards I am not certain, but in any event it was shortly after the expulsion of Nicuesa that quarrels broke out between the judge, Enciso, and Vasco Nuñez, each being supported by his own partisans. Enciso was seized, thrown into prison, and all his goods sold at auction. It was alleged that he had usurped judicial functions never granted him by the King but merely by Hojeda, who was supposed to be dead, and Vasco Nuñez declared that he would not obey a man on whom the King had not conferred authority by a royal patent. He allowed himself, however, to be influenced by the entreaties of the better colonists and modified his severity, even releasing Enciso from his chains and permitting him to go on board a ship which would carry him to Hispaniola. Before the vessel sailed, some of the better people of the colony sought out Enciso and implored him to come on shore again, promising to effect a reconciliation with Vasco Nuñez and to reinstate him in his position of judge. Enciso refused and left; nor are there wanting people who whispered that God and

His Saints had themselves shaped events to punish Enciso for Nicuesa's expulsion, which he had counselled.

Be that as it may, these discoverers of new countries ruined and exhausted themselves by their own folly and civil strife, failing absolutely to rise to the greatness expected of men who accomplish such wonderful things. Meanwhile it was decided by common agreement among the colonists to send their representatives to the young Admiral,<sup>1</sup> son and heir of Columbus, the first discoverer, who was viceroy of Hispaniola, and to the other government officials of the island. These envoys were to solicit reinforcements and a code of laws for the new colonies. They were to explain the true situation, the actual poverty of the colonists, the discoveries already made, and all that might still be hoped for, if the officials would only send them supplies. Vasco Nuñez chose for this office one of his adherents, Valdivia, the same who had prosecuted the suit against Enciso. Associated with him was a Catalanian, called Zamudio. It was agreed that Valdivia should return with provisions from Hispaniola, when his mission was accomplished, and that Zamudio should proceed to Spain and see the King. Both left the same time as Enciso, but it was the latter's intention to present a memorial to the King contradicting the representations of Valdivia and Zamudio. Both these men came to see me at Court, and I will elsewhere recount what they told me.

During this time the wretched colonists of Darien liberated the cacique of Coiba, Careca, and even agreed to serve as his allies during a campaign against the cacique called Poncha, who was a neighbour of Careca on the continent. Careca agreed to supply the Spaniards with food, and to join them with his family and subjects. The only arms these natives used were bows and poisoned

<sup>1</sup> Diego, son of Christopher Columbus and his wife, Doña Moñiz de Perestrello. He was married to Doña Maria de Toledo.

arrows, as we have already described was the case amongst those in the eastern part beyond the gulf. As they have no iron, they use in hand-to-hand combat long wooden swords, which they call *machanas*. They likewise use pointed sticks hardened in the fire, bone-tipped javelins, and other projectiles. The campaign with Poncha began immediately after they had sown their fields as well as they could. Careca acted both as guide and commander of the vanguard. When his town was attacked Poncha fled, and the village and its surroundings were sacked. Thanks to the cacique's provisions, nothing was to be feared from hunger, but none of these supplies could be taken to the colonists who remained behind, for the distance between Darien and Poncha's village was more than a hundred miles, and everything had to be carried on men's backs to the nearest coast where the ships, which had been brought by the Spaniards to Careca's village, were lying. A few pounds of wrought gold, in the form of divers necklaces, were obtained; after ruining Poncha, the Spaniards returned to their ships, deciding to leave the caciques of the interior in peace and to confine their attacks to those along the coast.

Not far distant, in the same direction from Coiba, lies a country called Comogra, whose cacique is named Comogre, and against him the Spaniards delivered their next attack. His town stands at the foot of the other side of the neighbouring mountain chain, in a fertile plain some twelve leagues in extent. A relative of one of Careca's principal officers, who had quarrelled with him, had taken refuge with Comogre. This man was called Jura, and acted as intermediary between the Spaniards and Comogre, whose friendship he secured for them. Jura was very well known to the Spaniards ever since Nicuesa's expedition, and it was he who had received those three deserters from Nicuesa's company in his own house during their stay. When peace was concluded,



the Spaniards repaired to the palace of Comogre, which lies some thirty leagues distant from Darien, but not in a direct line, for the intervening mountains obliged them to make long detours. Comogre had seven sons from different women, all handsome children or young men, wearing no clothes. His palace was formed of beams cut from the trees, and securely fastened together. It was further strengthened by stone walls. The Spaniards estimated the dimensions of this palace at one hundred and fifty paces the length and eighty paces the breadth. Its ceilings were carved and the floors were artistically decorated. They noticed a storehouse filled with native provisions of the country, and a cellar stacked with earthenware barrels and wooden kegs, as in Spain, or Italy. These receptacles contained excellent wine, not of the kind made from grapes, for they have no vineyards, but such as they make from three kinds of roots and the grain they use for making bread, called, as we have said in our first book, yucca, ages, and maize; they likewise use the fruit of the palm-trees. The Germans, Flemings and English, as well as the Spanish mountaineers in the Basque provinces and the Asturias, and the Austrians, Swabians, and Swiss in the Alps make beer from barley, wheat, and fruits in the same manner. The Spaniards report that at Comogra they drank white and red wines of different flavours.

Attend now, Sovereign Pontiff, to another and horrifying sight. Upon entering the cacique's inner apartments the Spaniards found a room filled with bodies suspended in cotton ropes. They inquired the motive of this superstitious custom, and were informed that they were the bodies of the ancestors of Comogre, which were preserved with great care, according to the rank they had occupied in life; respect for the dead being part of their religion. Golden masks decorated with stones were placed upon their faces, just as ancient families rendered



homage to the *Penates*. In my first book I explained how they dry these bodies by stretching them on grid-irons with a slow fire beneath, in such a way that they are reduced to skin and bone.

The eldest of the seven sons of Comogre was a young man of extraordinary intelligence. In his opinion it was wiser to treat those Spanish vagabonds kindly, and to avoid furnishing them any pretext for the violent acts they had committed on neighbouring tribes. He therefore presented four thousand drachmas of wrought gold and seventy slaves to Vasco Nuñez and Colmenares, as they were the leaders. These natives sell and exchange whatever articles they need amongst themselves, and have no money. The Spaniards were engaged in the vestibule of Comogre, weighing his gold and another almost equal quantity they had obtained elsewhere. They wished to set aside the fifth belonging to the royal treasury; for it has been decided that the fifth part of all gold, silver, and precious stones shall be set aside for the King's agents. The remainder is divided according to agreement. Several disputes arose among the Spaniards regarding their shares. The eldest son of Comogre, the wise youth, who was present, struck the scales with his fist and scattered the gold in all directions, and calling our men's attention he spoke in choice language as follows:

"What thing then is this, Christians? Is it possible that you set a high value upon such a small quantity of gold? You nevertheless destroy the artistic beauty of these necklaces, melting them into ingots. [For the Spaniards had their smelting instruments with them.] If your thirst of gold is such that in order to satisfy it you disturb peaceable people and bring misfortune and calamity among them, if you exile yourselves from your country in search of gold, I will show you a country where it abounds and where you can satisfy the thirst that torments you. But to undertake this expedition you

will need more numerous forces, for you will have to conquer powerful rulers, who will defend their country to the death. More than all others, the King Tumanama will oppose your advance, for his is the richest kingdom of all. It lies six suns distant from ours [they count the days by suns]; moreover you will encounter Carib tribes in the mountains, fierce people who live on human flesh, are subject to no law, and have no fixed country. They conquered the mountaineers for they coveted the gold mines, and for this reason they abandoned their own country. They transform the gold they obtain by the labour of the wretched mountaineers into wrought leaves and different articles such as those you see, and by this means they obtain what they want. They have artisans and jewellers who produce these necklaces. We place no more value on rough gold than on a lump of clay, before it has been transformed by the workman's hand into a vase which pleases our taste or serves our need. These Caribs also make artistic potteries which we obtain in exchange for the products of our harvests, as for example our prisoners of war, whom they buy for food, or our stuffs and different articles of furniture. We also furnish them with the supplies they need; for they live in the mountains. Only by force of arms could this mountain district be penetrated. Once on the other side of those mountains," he said, indicating with his finger another mountain range towards the south, "another sea which has never been sailed by your little boats [meaning the caravels] is visible. The people there go naked and live as we do, but they use both sails and oars. On the other side of the watershed the whole south slope of the mountain chain is very rich in gold mines."

Such was his speech, and he added that the cacique Tumanama, and all the mountaineers living on the other slope of the mountain, used kitchen and other common utensils made of gold; "for gold," he said, "has no more

value among them than iron among you." From what he had heard from the Spaniards he knew the name of the metal used for swords and other arms. Our leaders were amazed at that naked young man's discourse which, thanks to the three deserters who had been during eighteen months at the court of Careca, they understood. They took a decision worthy of the moment and, abandoning their wrangling over the gold-weighing, they began to joke and to discuss amiably the words and information of the young cacique. They asked him amicably why he had told them that story, and what they should do in case reinforcements did arrive. The son of Comogre reflected for a moment, as does an orator preparing for a serious debate, even thinking of the bodily movements likely to convince his hearers, and then spoke again as follows, always in his own language:

"Listen to me, Christians; we people who go naked are not tormented by covetousness, but we are ambitious, and we fight one against the other for power, each seeking to conquer his neighbour. This, therefore, is the source of frequent wars and of all our misfortunes. Our ancestors have been fighting men. Our father, Comogre, likewise fought with his neighbouring caciques, and we have been both conquerors and conquered. Just as you see prisoners of war amongst us, as for instance those seventy captives I have presented to you, so likewise have our enemies captured some of our people; for such are the fortunes of war. Here is one of our servants who was once the slave of the cacique who possesses such treasures of gold, and is the ruler beyond the mountains; there this man dragged out several years of a wretched existence. Not only he, but many other prisoners as well as freemen, who have traversed that country and afterwards come amongst us, know these particulars as far back as they can remember; nevertheless to convince you of the truth of my information and to allay your suspicions, I will myself go as

your guide. You may bind me, and you may hang me to the first tree if you find I have not told you the exact truth. Summon, therefore, a thousand soldiers, well armed for fighting, in order that, by their help, and assisted by the warriors of my father Comogre armed in their style, we may shatter the power of our enemies. In this way you will obtain the gold you want, and our reward for guiding and helping you will be our deliverance from hostile attacks and from the fear under which our ancestors lived, and which destroys our enjoyment of peace."

After speaking thus the wise son of Comogre kept silence; and the love of gain and the hope of gold fairly made our men's mouths water.

## BOOK IV

THE Spaniards remained several days in that place, during which they baptised the cacique Comogre, giving him the name of Charles, after the Spanish prince, and likewise all his family with him. They then rejoined their companions at Darien, promising, however, to send the soldiers his son desired to assist him in crossing the sierra and reaching the southern ocean. Upon their arrival at their village they learned that Valdivia had returned six months after his departure but with very few stores, because his ship was a small one. He did bring, however, the promise of speedy reinforcements and provisions. The Admiral-Viceroy and the other government officials of Hispaniola admitted that they had thus far taken little thought for the colonists at Darien, because they supposed the judge, Enciso, had already sailed with a well-freighted ship. They assured the colonists that for the future they would have care for their needs. For the time being they had no vessel larger than the one they had lent to Valdivia and which sufficed to relieve their present wants.

This caravel was, in fact, a caravel in name only, and because of its form, but not in its capacity. The provisions Valdivia brought sufficed only for the needs of the moment, and within a few days after his arrival the miseries of famine once more began, chiefly because a waterspout burst from the mountain top, accompanied by terrible lightnings and thunders, and washed down

such an amount of rubbish that the harvests, planted in the month of September before the campaign against the cacique Comogre began, were either swept away or completely buried. They consisted of the grain for bread-making, which is called in Hispaniola maize, and in Uraba *hobba*. This maize is harvested twice yearly, for the cold of winter is unknown in this country, because of its proximity to the equator. Bread made of hobba or maize is preferable to wheaten bread for those who live in this region, because it is more easily digested. This is in conformity with physical laws, since, as cold diminishes, less inward heat is generated.

Their hopes of a harvest being thus defeated, and knowing that the neighbouring caciques had already been stripped of their provisions and gold, the Spaniards were forced to penetrate into the interior in search of food. At the same time they sent to inform the officials in Hispaniola of their distress, and also of Comogre's revelations to them about the southern ocean. It was desirable that the King of Spain should send a thousand soldiers with whom they might cross the mountains separating the two seas. Valdivia was sent back with these letters, and he was charged to deliver to the King's fiscal agent in Hispaniola the royal fifth due to the treasury, represented by three hundred pounds of gold, at eight ounces to the pound. This pound is called a *marc* in Spanish, and is composed of fifty gold pieces, called *castellanos*. The weight of each *castellano*, a Castilian coin, is called a *peso*, and the entire sum, therefore, amounted to fifteen thousand *castellanos*. The *castellano* is a coin somewhat inferior to one thirtieth of a pound, but its value exceeds that of a golden ducat. This coin is peculiar to Castile, and is not minted in any other province. It may be concluded, therefore, from the sum assigned for the royal fifth, that the Spaniards had taken from the caciques fifteen hundred pounds of gold, at eight ounces to the pound. They



had found this metal worked into divers shapes: necklaces collars, bracelets, small plaques to be worn on the breast, and ear or nose rings.

On the third day of the ides of January, Anno Domini 1511, Valdivia set sail on the little caravel with which he had just returned. In addition to the instructions sent by Vasco Nuñez and the gold destined for the royal fisc, which we have mentioned, his friends had confided to him their treasure for their relatives in Spain. I shall relate in proper time what happened to Valdivia, but for the present let us return to the colony at Uraba.

After Valdivia's departure the colonists, driven to desperation by hunger, resolved to explore the outline of the gulf, of which the most remote extremity is about eighty miles distant from the entrance. This extremity is called by the Spaniards *Culata*.<sup>1</sup>

Vasco Nuñez embarked with about one hundred men on board a brigantine and in some native barques dug out of tree trunks, called by the islanders of Hispaniola canoes, and by the people of Uraba, *uru*. The river flows into the gulf at that place from the east and is ten times larger than the Darien. Up this river the Spaniards sailed for a distance of thirty miles or a little more than nine leagues, and turning to the left, which is towards the south, they came upon a native village, whose cacique was called Dobaiba. In Hispaniola their kings are called caciques and in Uraba, *chebi*, with the accent on the last vowel. It was learned that Zemaco, cacique of Darien, who had been defeated by the Spaniards in open battle, had taken refuge with Dobaiba. The latter, counselled, as it was thought, by Zemaco, fled, and thus evaded the Spanish attack. The place was deserted, though a stock of bows and arrows, some pieces of furniture, nets, and several fishing boats were found there. These districts being marshy and low are unsuitable both for agriculture and plantations of trees,

<sup>1</sup> The southern end of the gulf still bears the name *Culata del golfo*.

so there are few food products, and the natives only procure these by trading what fish they have in excess of their wants with their neighbours. Nevertheless seven thousand castellanos of gold were picked up in the deserted houses, besides several canoes, about a hundred bows and parcels of arrows, all the furniture, and two native barques or uru.

In the night-time bats swarmed from the marshes formed by this river, and these animals, which are as big as pigeons, tormented the Spaniards with their painful bites. Those who have been bitten confirmed this fact, and the judge Enciso who had been expelled, when asked by me concerning the danger of such bites, told me that one night, when he slept uncovered because of the heat, he had been bitten by one of these animals on the heel, but that the wound had not been more dangerous than one made by any other non-poisonous creature. Other people claim that the bite is mortal, but may be cured by being washed immediately with sea-water; Enciso also spoke of the efficacy of this remedy. Cauterisation is also used, as it is employed for wounds caused by native poisoned arrows. Enciso had had experience in Caribana, where many of his men had been wounded. The Spaniards returned to the Gulf of Uraba only partly satisfied, for they had brought back no provisions. Such a terrible tempest overtook them in that immense gulf on their return voyage, that they were obliged to throw everything they had stolen from those wretched fishermen into the sea. Moreover the uru, that is to say, the barques, were lost and with them some of the men on board.

While Vasco Nuñez was exploring the southern extremity of the gulf, Roderigo Colmenares advanced, as had been agreed, by way of the river bed towards the mountains along the eastern coast. At a distance of about forty miles, that is to say, twelve leagues from the river's

mouth, he came upon some villages built on the river bank; the chief, that is to say, chebi, was named Turvi. Colmenares remained with that cacique, while Vasco Nuñez, who had meanwhile returned to Darien, marched to meet him. When the men of the two companies had been somewhat recuperated by the provisions which Turvi furnished, their leaders continued their march together. About forty miles distant they discovered an island in the river, which was inhabited by fishermen, and as they found wild cinnamon trees there, they named the island Cannafistula. There were some sixty villages in groups of ten houses each on this island, and the river on the right side was large enough both for the native boats and for the brigantines. This river the Spaniards named Rio Negro.

Fifteen miles from its mouth they found a village composed of five hundred scattered houses, of which the chebi or cacique was called Abenamcheios. All the houses were abandoned as soon as the Spaniards approached; and while they were pursuing the natives the latter suddenly turned, faced them, and threw themselves upon our soldiers with the desperation of men driven from their homes. They fought with wooden swords, sticks with hardened points and sharp javelins, but not with arrows; for the river population of the west side of the gulf do not use arrows in fighting. These poor creatures, being, in fact, naked, were easily cut to pieces, and in the pursuit, the cacique Abenamcheios and some of his principal chiefs were captured. A foot-soldier, who had been wounded by the cacique, cut off his arm with one blow of his sword, though this was done against the will of the commanders. The Christians numbered altogether about one hundred and fifty men, and the leaders left one half of them in this village, continuing their way with the others in nine of the barques which I have called uru.

Seventy miles distant from Rio Negro and the island of Cannafistula, the Spaniards, passing by several streams on the right and left which swelled the principal river, entered another under the guidance of a native chief who took charge of the boats. The cacique of the country along its banks was called Abibaiba.

All the region was swampy and the chief house of the cacique was built in a tree. Novel and unaccustomed dwelling place! The country, however, has such lofty trees that the natives may easily build houses among their branches. We read something of this kind in different authors who write of certain tribes who, when the waters are rising, take refuge in these lofty trees and live upon the fish caught in their branches. They place beams among the branches, joining them so firmly that they resist the strongest winds. The Spaniards believe the natives live thus in the trees because inundations are frequent, for these trees are so tall that no human arm could reach them with a stone. I no longer feel surprised at what Pliny and other writers record about trees in India which, by reason of the fertility of the soil and the abundant waters, attain such a height that no one could shoot an arrow over them. It is, moreover, commonly believed that the soil of this country and the supply of water are equal to that of any other land under the sun. The above-named trees were found by measuring to be of such a size that seven or eight men, with extended arms, could hardly reach around them. The natives have cellars underground where they keep stores of the wines we have before mentioned. Although the violence of the wind cannot blow down their houses or break the branches of the trees, they are still swayed about from side to side, and this movement would spoil the wine. Everything else they require, they keep with them in the trees, and whenever the principal chiefs or caciques breakfast or dine, the servants bring up the wine by means of ladders attached to the tree trunks, and they are just

as quick about it as our servants who, upon a level floor, serve drinks from a sideboard near the table.

Approaching the tree of Abibaiba a discussion began between him and the Spaniards; the latter offering him peace and begging him to come down. The cacique refused and begged to be allowed to live in his own fashion. Promises were succeeded by threats, and he was told that if he did not come down with all his family they would either cut down or set fire to the tree. A second time Abibaiba refused, so they attacked the tree with axes; and when the cacique saw the chips flying he changed his mind and came down, accompanied by his two sons. They proceeded to discuss about peace and gold. Abibaiba declared that he had no gold, and that as he had never needed it, he had taken no pains to get it. The Spaniards insisting, the cacique said: "If your cupidity be such, I will seek gold for you in the neighbouring mountains and when I find it I will bring it to you; for it is found in those mountains you behold." He fixed a day when he would return, but neither then nor later did he reappear.

The Spaniards came back, loaded with the supplies and the wines of the cacique, but without the gold they had counted upon. Nevertheless Abibaiba, his subjects, and his sons gave the same information concerning the gold mines and the Caribs who live upon human flesh, as I have mentioned, as did those at Comogra. They ascended the river another thirty miles and came to the huts of some cannibals but found them empty, for the savages, alarmed by the approach of the Spaniards, had taken refuge in the mountains, carrying everything they possessed on their backs.

## BOOK V

WHILE these things were happening on the banks of this river, an officer named Raia, whom Vasco Nuñez and Colmenares had left in charge of the camp at Rio Negro in the territory of the cacique Abenamacheios, driven either by hunger or fatality ventured to explore the neighbourhood with nine of his companions. He went to the neighbouring village belonging to the cacique Abraibes, and there Raia and two of his companions were massacred by that chief, the others succeeding in escaping. Some few days later Abraibes, sympathising with his relative and neighbour Abenamcheios, who had been driven from his house and had had his arm cut off by one of our foot-soldiers, gave the latter refuge in his house, after which he sought out Abibaiba, the cacique who lived in a tree. The latter, having been driven from his abode, also avoided attack by the Spaniards and wandered in the most inaccessible regions of the mountains and forests.

Abraibes spoke in the following words to Abibaiba: "What is this that is happening, O unfortunate Abibaiba? What race is this that allows us, unfortunates that we are, no peace? And for how long shall we endure their cruelty? Is it not better to die than to submit to such abuse as you have endured from them? And not only you, but our neighbours Abenamacheios, Zemaco, Careca, Poncha, and all the other caciques our friends? They carry off our wives and sons into captivity before our very eyes, and they



seize everything we possess as though it were their booty. Shall we endure this? Me they have not yet attacked, but the experience of others is enough for me, and I know that the hour of my ruin is not far distant. Let us then unite our forces and try to struggle against those who have maltreated Abenamacheios and driven him from his house, and when these first are killed the others will fear to attack us, or if they do so, it will be with diminished numbers, and in any case it will be more endurable for us." After exchanging their views, Abibaiba and Abraibes came to an understanding and decided upon a day for beginning their campaign. But events were not favourable to them. It so happened by chance that, on the night previous to the day fixed for the attack, thirty of the soldiers who had crossed the sierra against the cannibals were sent back to relieve the garrison left at Rio Negro, in case of attack, and also because the Spaniards were suspicious. The caciques rushed into the village at daybreak with five hundred of their warriors armed in native fashion and shouting wildly. They were ignorant of the reinforcements that had arrived during the night. The soldiers advanced to meet them, using their shields to protect themselves; and first shooting arrows and javelins and afterwards using their native swords, they fell upon their enemies. These native people, finding themselves engaged with more adversaries than they had imagined, were easily routed; the majority were killed like sheep in a panic. The chiefs escaped. All those who were captured were sent as slaves to Darien, where they were put to work in the fields.

After these events, and leaving that region pacified, the Spaniards descended the river and returned to Darien, posting a guard of thirty men, commanded by an officer, Hurtado,<sup>1</sup> to hold that province. Hurtado descended the Rio

<sup>1</sup> *Furatlado quodam decurione. Licet decurione more romano non sint addicti præcise quindecim milites quos regat, centurionique centum viginti*

Negro to rejoin his leader, Vasco Nuñez, and his companions. He was using one of those large native barques and had with him twelve companions, a captive woman, and twenty-four slaves. All at once four uru, that is to say, barques dug out of tree trunks, attacked him on the flank, and overturned his boat. The Spaniards had been tranquilly sailing along without dreaming of the possibility of an attack, and their barque being suddenly overturned all those whom the natives could catch were massacred or drowned, except two men, who grasped some floating tree trunks and, concealing themselves in the branches, let themselves drift, unseen by the enemy, and thus managed to rejoin their companions.

Warned of the danger by those two men who had escaped death, the Spaniards became suspicious of everything. They were alarmed for their safety, and remembered that they only escaped a similar calamity at Rio Negro because they had received the reinforcement of thirty men on the night before the attack. They held frequent councils of war, but in the midst of their hesitations they reached no decision. After careful investigation they finally learned that five caciques had fixed a day for the massacre of Christians. These five were: Abibaiba, who lived in the swampy forest; Zemaco, who had been driven from his home; Abraibes and Abenamacheios, the river chiefs; and Dobaiba, the cacique of the fishermen, living at the extremity of the gulf called Culata. This plan would have been carried out, and it was only by a miracle, which we are bound to examine with leniency, that chance disclosed the plot of the caciques. It is a memorable story and I will tell it in a few words.

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*octo, centuriones tamen ultro citroque centenarium numerum, et ultro citroque denu, decurionem est consilium appellare; nec enim hos servant ordines hispani ex amussim, cogimurque nomine rebus et magistratibus dare.* Thus Peter Martyr for the second time vindicates his knowledge of Roman military terms and his usage of them. His explanation is extraneous to the narrative.

This Vasco Nuñez, a man of action rather than of judgment, was an egregious ruffian, who had obtained authority in Darien by force rather than by consent of the colonists; amongst the numerous native women he had carried off, there was one of remarkable beauty. One of her brothers, who was an officer much favoured by the cacique Zemaco, often came to visit her. He likewise had been driven out of his country, but as he loved his sister warmly, he spoke to her in conversation in the following words:

“Listen to me, my dear sister, and keep to yourself what I shall tell you. The insolence of these men, who expelled us from our homes, is such that the caciques of the country are resolved no longer to submit to their tyranny. Five caciques [whom he named one after another] have combined and have collected a hundred uru. Five thousand warriors on land and water are prepared. Provisions have been collected in the province of Tichiri, for the maintenance of these warriors, and the caciques have already divided amongst themselves the heads and the property of the Spaniards.”

In revealing these things to his sister, the brother warned her to conceal herself on a certain day, otherwise she might be killed in the confusion of the fight. The conquering warrior gives no quarter to those whom he vanquishes. He concluded by telling her the day fixed for the attack. Women generally keep the fire better than they do a secret,<sup>1</sup> and so it fell out that this young woman, either because she loved Vasco Nuñez or because in her panic she forgot her relatives, her kinsmen, and neighbours as well as the caciques whom she betrayed to their death, revealed the same to her lover, omitting none of the details her brother had imprudently confided to her. Vasco Nuñez sent this Fulvia to invite her brother to return,

<sup>1</sup> Literally, *Puella vero, quia ferrum est quod feminæ observant, magis quam Catonianam gravitatem.*

and he immediately responded to his sister's invitation. He was seized and forced to confess that the cacique Zemaco, his master, had sent those four uru for the massacre of the Spaniards, and that the plot had been conceived by him. Zemaco took upon himself the task of killing Vasco Nuñez, and forty of his people whom he had sent as an act of friendship to sow and cultivate Vasco's fields, had been ordered by him to kill the leader with their agricultural tools. Vasco Nuñez habitually encouraged his labourers at their work by frequently visiting them, and the cacique's men had never ventured to execute his orders, because Vasco never went among them except on horseback, and armed. When visiting his labourers he rode a mare and always carried a spear in his hand, as men do in Spain; and it was for this reason that Zemaco, seeing his wishes frustrated, had conceived the other plot which resulted so disastrously for himself and his people.

As soon as the conspiracy was discovered, Vasco Nuñez, assembling seventy men, ordered them to follow him, without however telling any one either his destination or his intentions. He first rode to the village of Zemaco, some ten miles distant, where he learned that Zemaco had fled to Dabaiba, the cacique of the marshes of Culata. His principal lieutenant (called in their language *sacchos*, just as their caciques are called *chebi*) was seized, together with all his other servants, and carried into captivity. Several other natives of both sexes were likewise captured. Simultaneously Colmenares embarked sixty soldiers in the four uru and set out up the river to look for Zemaco. The young woman's brother served as guide. Arriving at the village of Tichiri, where the provisions for the army had been collected, Vasco Nuñez took possession of the place and captured the stores of different coloured wines, as we have already noted at Comogra, and different kinds of native stores. The *sacchos* of Tichiri, who had acted

in a manner as quartermaster of the army, was captured together with four of the principal officers, for they did not expect the arrival of the Spaniards. The sacchos was hanged on a tree that he had himself planted, and shot through with arrows in full view of the natives, and the other officers were hanged by Colmenares on scaffolds, to serve as an example to the others. This chastisement of the conspirators so terrified the entire province that there was not a person left to raise a finger against the torrent of Spanish wrath. Peace was thus established, and their caciques bending their necks beneath the yoke were not punished. The Spaniards enjoyed some days of abundance, thanks to the well-filled storehouse they had captured at Tichim.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This pitiful story of native treachery is frequently repeated, and explains the enslavement, the downfall, and in parts, the extermination of the American tribes. Everywhere they betrayed one another to the final undoing of all.

## BOOK VI

**I**N the general assembly convoked shortly afterwards, the colonists unanimously decided to send an envoy to Hispaniola to ask for reinforcements and for the appointment of a judge. The same envoy would go on to Spain where he would first explain to the Admiral and his officers and afterwards to the King, all that had happened, and would seek to persuade his Majesty to send the thousand soldiers the son of Comogre had declared would be necessary for the expedition across the mountains to the South Sea. Vasco Nuñez sought to be chosen for this mission, but his companions refused him their votes, and his adherents would not allow him to go; not only because they would have felt themselves abandoned, but because they suspected that once out of it, Vasco would not return to such a furnace of calamities, following the example of Valdivia and Zamudio, whom they had sent off in the month of January, and who, they thought, had no intention of returning. In this latter they were wrong, as we shall show in the proper place, for those men were dead.

After several ballotings without result, the colonists finally chose a certain Juan Quevedo, a serious man of mature age, who was agent of the royal treasury in Darien. They had full confidence that Quevedo would conduct this business successfully, and they counted on his return because he had brought his wife with him to the new world and was leaving her in the colony as a pledge.



As soon as Quevedo was elected, several opinions concerning an associate for him were expressed. Some people said it was risky to trust such an important affair to one man; not that they mistrusted Quevedo, but human life is uncertain, particularly if one considers that people accustomed to a climate near the equator would be exposed on returning northwards to frequent changes of climate and food. It was necessary, therefore, to provide an associate for Quevedo, so that, if one died the other might survive and if both escaped death, the King would place more confidence in their dual report. Much time was spent in debating this point, and finally they decided to choose Roderigo Colmenares, whose name I have frequently mentioned. He was a man of large experience; in his youth he had travelled by land and sea over all Europe, and he had taken part in the Italian wars against the French. What decided the colonists to choose Colmenares was the fact that, if he left, they could count on his return, because he had purchased properties in Darien and had spent large sums in planting. He hoped to sell his crops as they stood, and to obtain the gold of his companions in exchange. He therefore left the care of his estates to a citizen of Madrid, a certain Alonzo Nuñez, who was his comrade. This man was a judge, and had almost been chosen by the colonists as an envoy in place of his friend Colmenares; and indeed he would have been elected but that one of his companions explained that he had a wife at Madrid. It was feared, therefore, that the tears of his wife might prevent him from ever returning, so Colmenares, being free, was chosen as the associate of Quevedo. There being no larger ship at their disposal, both men sailed on a brigantine, the fourth day of the calends of November in the year of grace 1512.

During their voyage they were buffeted by many tempests, and were finally dashed upon the western coast of that large island which for a long time was thought to

be a continent, and which in my First Decade I explained was called Cuba. They were reduced to the most extreme want, for three months had elapsed since they left Darien. They were, therefore, forced to land to seek some assistance from the islanders, and by chance they approached on that side of the island where Valdivia had also been driven ashore by tempests. Ah! unhappy creatures! you colonists of Darien, who await the return of Valdivia to assuage your sufferings. Hardly had he landed before he and his companions were massacred by the Cubans, the caravel broken to pieces and left upon the shore. Upon beholding some planks of that caravel half buried in the sand, the envoys bewailed the death of Valdivia and his companions. They found no bodies, for these had either been thrown into the sea, or had served as food for the cannibals, for these latter frequently made raids in Cuba in order to procure human flesh. Two islanders who had been captured, related the death of Valdivia, which had been brought about by the love of gold. These islanders confessed that, having learned from the talk of one of Valdivia's companions that he had gold, they had plotted to assassinate him because they too loved gold necklaces.

Horried by this catastrophe, and feeling themselves unable to avenge their companions the Spaniards decided to fly from that barbarous land and the monstrous cruelty of those savages. They therefore continued their voyage, stunned by the massacre of their companions and suffering severely from want. After leaving the southern coast of Cuba behind them, a thousand untoward events still further delayed them. They learned that Hojeda had also landed and that he had been driven by storms upon these coasts, where he led a wretched existence. He endured a thousand annoyances and a thousand different kinds of sufferings. After having suffered the loss of his companions or witnessed them

gasping from hunger, he had been carried to Hispaniola almost alone.

He arrived there hardly alive, and died from the effects of the wound he had received from the natives of Uraba. Enciso, the judge elect, had sailed along this same coast, but with better fortune, for he had had favourable weather.

He himself told me these things at Court, and he added that the natives of Cuba had received him kindly, especially the people of a certain cacique called El Comendador [the Commander]. When this chief was about to be baptised by some Christians who were passing through, he asked them how the governor of the neighbouring island of Hispaniola was called, and he was answered that he was called El Comendador.<sup>1</sup> The governor of that island was at that period, an illustrious knight of the Order of Calatrava, and the knights of that Order take the title of Commander. The cacique promptly declared that he wished to be called El Comendador; and he it was who had given hospitality to Enciso, when he landed, and had supplied all his wants.

According to Enciso, now is the time, Most Holy Father from whom we receive our religion and our beliefs, to preach to the islanders. An unknown sailor,<sup>2</sup> who was ill, had been left by some Spaniards who were coasting the length of Cuba, with the cacique El Comendador, and this sailor was very kindly received by the cacique and his people. When he recovered his health, he frequently

<sup>1</sup> Don Nicholas de Ovando, Comendador de Lares, and later Grand Master of the Order of Calatrava.

<sup>2</sup> Las Casas tells an identical story concerning Alonso de Hojeda, who gave an image of the Blessed Virgin to a cacique of Cueyba. During the campaign which ended in the conquest of Cuba, Las Casas offered to trade a Flemish statue for the one Hojeda had left there, but the cacique refused, and taking his image, he fled into the woods, lest he should be forced to exchange. The two stories, doubtless, refer to the same incident, though it seems strange that Peter Martyr should not have identified Hojeda as the "unknown sailor." See Las Casas, *Hist. de las Indias*, tom. iv., cap. xix.: *B. Las Casas, his Life, his Apostolate, and his Writings*, cap iv.

served the cacique as lieutenant in his expeditions, for the islanders are often at war one with another; and El Comendador was always victorious. The sailor was an ignorant creature, but a man of good heart, who cultivated a peculiar devotion for the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. He even carried about him, as constantly as his clothes, a picture of the Blessed Virgin, very well painted on paper, and he declared to El Comendador that it was because of it that he was always victorious. He also persuaded the latter to abandon the zemes the people adored, because he declared that these nocturnal goblins were the enemies of souls, and he urged the cacique to choose for his patron the Virgin Mother of God, if he desired all his undertakings, both in peace and in war, to succeed. The Virgin Mother of God was never deaf to the invocation of her holy name by a pure heart. The sailor obtained a ready hearing from these naked islanders. Upon the request of the cacique he gave him the image of the Virgin, and consecrated a church and an altar to it. The zemes, whom their ancestors had worshipped were abandoned. These zemes, Most Holy Father, are the idols made out of cotton, of which I have spoken at length in the tenth book of my First Decade. Following the instructions of the sailor, the cacique El Comendador and all his people of both sexes went each day at sunset to the chapel dedicated to the Virgin. Entering, they knelt, and reverently bowing their heads and joining their hands they saluted the image by repeated invocations, *Ave Maria, Ave Maria*; for there were very few who had learnt the whole prayer.

When Enciso and his companions landed there, the Indians took them by the hands and joyfully led them to the chapel, declaring that they were going to show them something wonderful. They pointed to the holy image surrounded, as though with a garland, by dishes full of food and drink. They offered these presents to the image

just as they formerly did in their own religion to the zemes. They say that by such offerings they provide for the image in case it should be hungry, for they believe that it might suffer from hunger.

Listen now to a most curious story concerning the assistance they believe they have received from that image of the Blessed Virgin, and by my faith, Most Holy Father, one would willingly believe it to be true. According to the report of our men, the effect of the fervent piety which animates those simple souls for the Blessed Virgin Mother of God is such, that they almost constrain her to come down from heaven to help them whenever they weaken in a struggle. Has not God left pity, love, and charity amongst men, by the practice of which they may merit His grace and that of the heavenly host? The Virgin could never abandon those who with pure heart invoke her aid. Now El Comendador and all his chiefs declared to Enciso and his companions, that when the sailor had carried the holy image with him into battle in full view of both armies, the zemes of the enemy turned their heads and trembled in the presence of the image of the Virgin; for it is the custom for each army to carry its own protecting zemes into battle. Not only had they beheld the holy image but also a woman, robed in fair white draperies, who, in the heat of the battle, sustained them against their enemies. The latter also declared that there had appeared opposite to them a woman with menacing face, carrying a sceptre, who encouraged the opposing army and that this apparition made them tremble with fear.

El Comendador declared that after the sailor had been taken away by some Christians who had landed at that place, he had faithfully obeyed his instructions. He further related that a heated altercation had broken out with his neighbours, as to which of the zemes was most powerful. The controversy led to fre-



quent conflicts, in which the Blessed Virgin had never failed them, but had appeared in every battle, grasping the victory with her small hands from the most formidable of the hostile forces. The Spaniards asked what their war cry was, and they replied that, in obedience to the instructions of the sailor they only shouted, in the Spanish language, "St. Mary to the rescue!" It was the only language the sailor spoke. In the midst of these cruel wars they made the following agreement; instead of putting a fixed number of champions into the field, as was often done by the armies of other nations of antiquity, or instead of settling their disputes by arbitration, two young men of each tribe should have their hands tied behind their backs as tightly as he who bound them chose. They would then be led to a lofty place, and the zemes of the tribe whose champion most quickly undid his bonds should be acclaimed as the most powerful. The agreement was made, and the young men of both sides were thus bound. El Comendador's people tied their adversary, while their enemies tied one of his men. Three different times the trial was repeated, and each time after invoking their zemes, the young men tried to free themselves from their bonds. El Comendador's champions repeated the invocation, "St. Mary, help me, St. Mary, help me!" and immediately the Virgin, robed in white, appeared. She drove away the demon, and touching the bonds of the Christian champion with the wand she carried, not only was he at once freed, but the bonds were added to those of his opponent, so that the enemy found the young Christian not only free, but their own champion with double bonds. They were not content with this first defeat, and attributed it to some human trickery which they did not believe demonstrated the superiority of the divinity. They therefore asked that four men of venerable age and tried morality should be chosen from each tribe, and should stand on either side of each young



man, in order to verify whether or not there was any trickery. O what purity of soul and blessed simplicity, worthy of the golden age! El Comendador and his advisers yielded to this condition with a confidence equal to that with which the sufferer from an effusion of blood sought the remedy for his malady; or Peter, whose place, Most Holy Father, you occupy, marched upon the waves when he beheld our Lord. The conditions being accepted, the young men were bound and the eight judges took their places. The signal was given, and each one called upon his zemes, to come to his assistance. The two champions beheld the zemes with a long tail and an enormous mouth furnished with teeth and horns just like the images. This devil sought to untie the young man who was acting as his champion, but at the first invocation of the Comendador the Virgin appeared. The judges, with wide open eyes and attentive minds, waited to see what would happen. She touched the devil with the wand she was carrying and put him to flight, afterwards causing the bonds of her champion to transfer themselves to the body of his adversary. This miracle struck terror into the Comendador's enemies, and they recognised that the zemes of the Virgin was more powerful than their own.

The consequence of this event was, that when the news spread that Christians had landed in Cuba, the Comendador's neighbours, who were his bitter enemies, and had often made war upon him, sent to Enciso asking for priests to baptise them. Enciso immediately despatched two priests who were with him, and in one day one hundred and thirty men of the Comendador's enemies were baptised and became his firm friends and allies. We have in another place noted that chickens had greatly increased in the country, owing to the care of our compatriots. Each native who had received baptism presented the priest with a cock or a hen, but not with a capon, because they have not yet learned to castrate the

chickens and make capons of them. They also brought salted fish and cakes made of fresh flour. Six of the neophytes accompanied the priets when they returned to the coasts, carrying these presents, which procured the Spaniards a splendid Easter. They had left Darien only two days before the Sunday of St. Lazarus, and Easter overtook them when they were doubling the last promontory of Cuba. In response to the petition of the Comendador they left with him a Spaniard, who volunteered for the purpose of teaching the cacique's subjects and their neighbours the Angelic Salutation, their idea being that the more words of the prayer to the Virgin they knew, the better disposed she would be to them.

Enciso agreed, after which he resumed his course to Hispaniola, which was not far distant. From thence he betook himself to the King, who was then in residence at Valladolid, where I talked intimately with him. Enciso seriously influenced the King against the adventurer Vasco Nuñez, and secured his condemnation. I have wished, Most Holy Father, to furnish you these particulars concerning the religion of the natives. They reach me not only from Enciso, but from a number of other most trustworthy personages. I have done this, that Your Beatitude might be convinced of the docility of this race, and the ease with which they might be instructed in the ceremonies of our religion. Their conversion is not to be accomplished from one day to another, and it is only little by little that they will accept the evangelical law, of which you are the dispenser. Thus shall you see the number of the sheep composing your flock increased each day. But let us return to the story of the envoys from Darien.

## BOOK VII

THE journey from Darien to Hispaniola may be made in eight days or even less, if the wind is astern.

Because of storms the envoys occupied a hundred days in crossing. They stopped some days at Hispaniola where they transacted their business with the Admiral and the other officials, after which they embarked on the merchant vessels which lay ready freighted and plied between Hispaniola and Spain. It was not, however, till the calends of May of the year after their departure from Darien, that they arrived at the capital. Quevedo and Colmenares, the two envoys of the colonists of Darien, arrived there on the fifteenth of May, of the year 1513. Coming as they did from the Antipodes, from a country hitherto unknown and inhabited by naked people, they were received with honour by Juan de Fonseca, to whom the direction of colonial affairs had been entrusted. In recognition of his fidelity to his sovereigns, other popes have successively bestowed on him the bishoprics of Beca, afterwards Cordova, Palencia, and Rosano; and Your Holiness has just now raised him to the bishopric of Burgos. Being the first Almoner and Counsellor of the King's household, Your Holiness has in addition appointed him commissary general for the royal indulgences, and the crusade against the Moors.

Quevedo and Colmenares were presented by the Bishop of Burgos to the Catholic King, and the news they brought pleased his Majesty and all his courtiers, because of their

extreme novelty. A look at these men is enough to demonstrate the insalubrious climate and temperature of Darien, for they are as yellow as though they suffered from liver complaint, and are puffy, though they attribute their condition to the privations they have endured. I heard about all they had done from the captains Zamudio and Enciso; also through another bachelor of laws, called Baëcia, who had scoured those countries; also from the ship's captain Vincent Yañez [Pinzon], who was familiar with those coasts; from Alonzo Nuñez and from a number of subalterns who had sailed along those coasts, under the command of these captains. Not one of those who came to Court failed to afford me the pleasure, whether verbally or in writing, of reporting to me everything he had learned. True it is that I have been neglectful of many of those reports, which deserved to be kept, and have only preserved such as would, in my opinion, please the lovers of history. Amidst such a mass of material I am obliged necessarily to omit something in order that my narrative may not be too diffuse.

Let us now relate the events provoked by the arrival of the envoys. Before Quevedo and Colmenares arrived, the news had already been spread of the dramatic end of the first leaders, Hojeda, Nicuesa, and Juan de la Cosa, that illustrious navigator who had received a royal commission as pilot. It was known that the few surviving colonists at Darien were in a state of complete anarchy, taking no heed to convert the simple tribes of that region to our religion and giving no attention to acquiring information regarding those countries. It was therefore decided to send out a representative who would deprive the usurpers of the power they had seized without the King's license, and correct the first disorders. This mission was entrusted to Pedro Arias d'Avila, a citizen of Segovia, who was called in Spain by the nickname of *El Galan*, because of his prowess in the jousts. No sooner was this news

published at the Court than the envoys from Darien attempted to deprive Pedro Arias of the command. There were numerous and pressing petitions to the King to accomplish this; but the first Almoner, the Bishop of Burgos whose business it is to stop such intrigues, promptly spoke to the King when informed of this one, in the following terms:

"Pedro Arias, O Most Catholic King, is a brave man, who has often risked his life for Your Majesty, and who we know by long experience is well adapted to command troops. He signally distinguished himself in the wars against the Moors, where he comported himself as became a valiant soldier and a prudent officer. In my opinion, it would be ungracious to withdraw his appointment in response to the representations of envious persons. Let this good man, therefore, depart under fortunate auspices; let this devoted pupil of Your Majesty, who has lived from infancy in the palace, depart."

The King, acting on the advice of the Bishop of Burgos, confirmed the appointment of Pedro Arias, and even increased the powers conferred upon him. Twelve hundred soldiers were raised by the Bishop of Burgos, at the royal expense, to form the troop of Pedro Arias who, with the majority of them, left the Court at Valladolid about the calends of October, in the year 1513, for Seville, a town celebrated for its numerous population and its wool. It was at Seville that the royal agents were to equip the remainder of his soldiers and deliver to him the provisions and everything necessary for such a great enterprise. For it is there that the King has established his office charged exclusively with colonial affairs. All the merchants, coming and going, appear there to render account of the cargoes they have brought from the new countries, and of the gold they export. This office is called India House.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Domum Indicæ Contractationis vocant. Casa de Contractacion, or Casa de Indias.*

Pedro Arias found two thousand young soldiers in excess of his number awaiting him at Seville; he likewise found a goodly number of avaricious old men, the majority of whom asked merely to be allowed to follow him at their own cost, without receiving the royal pay. Rather than overcrowd his ships and to spare his supplies, he refused to take any of the latter. Care was taken that no foreigner should mingle with the Spaniards, without the King's permission, and for this reason I am extremely astonished that a certain Venetian, Aloisió Cadamosto, who has written a history of the Portuguese, should write when mentioning the actions of the Spaniards, "We have done; we have seen; we have been"; when, as a matter of fact, he has neither done nor seen any more than any other Venetian. Cadamosto borrowed and plagiarised whatever he wrote, from the first three books of my first three Decades, that is to say, those which I addressed to the Cardinals Ascanio and Arcimboldo, who were living at the time when the events I described were happening. He evidently thought that my works would never be given to the public, and it may be that he came across them in the possession of some Venetian ambassador; for the most illustrious Senate of that Republic sent eminent men to the Court of the Catholic Kings, to some of whom I willingly showed my writings. I readily consented that copies should be taken. Be that as it may, this excellent Aloisió Cadamosto has sought to claim for himself what was the work of another. He has related the great deeds of the Portuguese, but whether he witnessed them, as he pretends, or has merely profited by the labour of another, I am unable to state. *Vivat et ipse Marte suo.*

Nobody, who had not been enrolled by the royal agents, as a soldier, in the King's pay was allowed to go on board the vessels of Pedro Arias. In addition to these regulars there were some others, including one Francisco Cotta, a compatriot of mine, and thanks to a royal order



I obtained for him, he was allowed to go to the New World as a volunteer with Pedro Arias. But for this he would not have been permitted to depart. Now let the Venetian, Cadamosto, go on and write that he has seen everything, while I, who for twenty-six years have lived, not without credit, at the Court of the Catholic King, have only been able by the greatest efforts to obtain authorisation for one foreigner to sail. Some Genoese, but very few, and that at the instance of the Admiral, son of the first discoverer of those countries, succeeded in obtaining a like authorisation; but to no one else was permission granted.

Pedro Arias sailed from Seville on the Guadalquivir to the sea, in the first days of the year 1514.<sup>1</sup> His departure took place under evil auspices, for such a furious storm broke over the fleet that two vessels were shattered to pieces, and the others were obliged to lighten themselves by throwing overboard some of their stores. The crews which survived returned to the coast of Spain, where the King's agents promptly came to their assistance and they were enabled again to set forth. The pilot of the flagship appointed by the King was Giovanni Vespucci, a Florentine, nephew of Amerigo Vespucci, who had inherited his uncle's great ability in the art of navigation and taking reckonings. We recently learned from Hispaniola that the crossing had been favourable, and a merchant ship, returning from the neighbouring islands, had encountered the fleet.

As Galeazzo Butrigario and Giovanni Accursi who, to please Your Holiness, constantly urge me on, are sending a courier who will deliver my ocean Nereids, however imperfect they may be, to Your Beatitude, I shall save time by leaving out many particulars and shall only mention what, in my opinion, is worthy to be recorded and which I have not reported at the time it happened.

The wife of the captain Pedro Arias, by name Elizabeth

<sup>1</sup> The expedition sailed on April 14, 1514.

Bobadilla, is the grandniece on the father's side of the Marchioness Bobadilla de Moia, who opened the gates of Segovia to the friends of Isabella when the Portuguese were invading Castile, thus enabling them to hold out and later to take the offensive against the Portuguese; and still later to defeat them. King Henry, brother of Queen Isabella, had in fact taken possession of the treasures of that town. During her entire life, whether in time of war or in time of peace, the Marchioness de Moia displayed virile resolution, and it was due to her counsels that many great deeds were done in Castile. The wife of Pedro Arias, being niece of this marchioness, and inspired by courage equal to that of her aunt, spoke to her husband on his departure for those unknown lands, where he would encounter real perils, both on sea and on land, in the following terms:

"My dear husband, we have been united from our youth, as I think, for the purpose of living together and never being separated. Wherever destiny may lead you, be it on the tempestuous ocean or be it among the hardships that await you on land, I should be your companion. There is nothing I would more fear, nor any kind of death that might threaten me, which would not be more supportable than for me to live without you and separated by such an immense distance. I would rather die and even be eaten by fish in the sea or devoured on land by cannibals, than to consume myself in perpetual mourning and in unceasing sorrow, awaiting—not my husband—but his letters. My determination is not sudden nor unconsidered; nor is it a woman's caprice that moves me to a well-weighed and merited decision. You must choose between two alternatives. Either you will kill me or you will grant my request. The children God has given us (there were eight of them, four boys and four girls) will not stop me for one moment. We will leave them their heritage

and their marriage portions, sufficient to enable them to live in conformity with their rank, and besides these, I have no other preoccupation."

Upon hearing his wife speak such words from her virile heart, the husband knew that nothing could shake her resolution, and therefore, dared not refuse her request. She followed him as Ipsicratea, with flowing hair, followed Mithridates, for she loved her living husband as did the Carian Artemisia of Halicarnassia her dead Mausolus. We have learned that this Elizabeth Bobadilla brought up, as the proverb says, on soft feathers, has braved the dangers of the ocean with as much courage as her husband or the sailors who pass their lives at sea.

The following are some other particulars I have noted. In my First Decade I spoke, and not without some praise, of Vincent Yañez Pinzon, who had accompanied the Genoese, Christopher Columbus, the future Admiral, on his first voyage. Later, he undertook, by himself and at his own cost, another voyage, with but one ship for which he received the royal license. During the year preceding the departure of Hojeda and Nicuesa, Vincent Yañez undertook a third exploration, sailing from Hispaniola. His course was from east to west, following the southern shore of Cuba, which, owing to its length, many people at that time thought a continent; and he sailed round it. Many other persons have since reported that they have done the same.

Having demonstrated by this expedition that Cuba was indeed an island, Vincent Yañez sailed farther, and discovered other lands west of Cuba, but such as the Admiral had first touched. He kept to the left and, following the continental coasts towards the east, he crossed the gulfs of Veragua, Uraba, and Cachibacoa, touching finally with his ship at the region which, in our First Decade, we have explained was called Paria and Boca de la Sierpe. He sailed into an immense gulf noted by

Columbus as remarkable for its fresh waters, the abundance of fish, and the many islands it contained. It is situated about thirty miles east of Curiana. Midway in this course Cumana and Manacapana are passed; and it is at these places, not at Curiana, where the most pearls are found.

The kings of that country, who are called *chiaconus* just as they are called caciques in Hispaniola, sent messengers when they learned of the Spaniards' arrival, to ascertain who the unknown men might be, what they brought with them, and what they wanted. They launched upon the sea their barques dug out of tree trunks which are the same mentioned in our First Decade, and are called canoes in Hispaniola; but here the natives called them *chicos*. What most astonished them was to see the swelling sails of the ship, for they did not understand the use of sails; and if they did they would only require small ones, because of the narrowness of their barques. They approached the ship in great numbers and even ventured to shoot some arrows at the men who defended the ship's sides as though they were walls, hoping either to wound or frighten them.

The Spaniards fired their cannon, and the natives, alarmed by the detonation and by the slaughter that resulted from the well-aimed shot, took to flight in various directions. Pursuing them with a ship's boat, the Spaniards killed some and took many prisoners. The noise of the cannon and the report of what had happened so alarmed the caciques, who feared their villages would be robbed and their people massacred if the Spaniards landed to take vengeance, that they sent messengers to Vincent Yañez. As far as could be understood from their signs and gestures they sought peace; but our compatriots report that they did not understand a word of their language. The better to demonstrate their desire for peace, the natives made them beautiful presents, consisting of a quantity of gold,

equal in weight to three thousand of the kind of coins we have said are called *castellanos*, and in vulgar language pesos; also a wooden tub full of precious incense, weighing about twenty-six hundred pounds, at eight ounces to the pound. This showed the country was rich in incense, for the natives of Paria have no intercourse with those of Saba; and in fact they know nothing of any place outside their own country. In addition to the gold and the incense, they presented peacocks such as are not found elsewhere, for they differ largely from ours in the variety of their colours. The hens were alive, for they kept them to propagate the species, but the cocks, which they brought in great numbers, were dressed to be immediately eaten. They likewise offered cotton stuffs, similar to tapestries, for household decoration, very tastefully made in various colours. These stuffs were fringed with golden bells such as are called in Italy *sonaglios* and in Spain *cascabeles*. Of talking parrots, they gave as many of different colours as were wanted; these parrots are as common in Paria as pigeons or sparrows are amongst us.

All the natives wear cotton clothing, the men being covered to the knees, and the women to the calves of their legs. In time of war the men wear a carefully quilted coat of cotton, doubled in the Turkish style. I have used the word cotton for what I have otherwise called in the vulgar Italian *bombasio*. I have also used other analogous terms which certain Latinists, dwelling along the Adriatic or Ligurian coasts, may attribute to my negligence or ignorance, when my writings reach them,<sup>1</sup> as we have seen in the case of my First Decade which was printed without my authorisation. I

<sup>1</sup> Peter Martyr was not ignorant of the jibes his Latin evoked amongst the purists in Rome. The cultivated tympanum of Cardinal Bembo and other Ciceronians at the Pontifical Court received painful shocks from certain corrupt expressions in his decades. His repeated explanations of his deflections from classical nomenclature are, however, reasonable.



would have them know that I am a Lombard, not a Latin; that I was born at Milan,<sup>1</sup> a long way distant from Latium, and have lived my life still farther away, for I reside in Spain. Let those purists of Venice or Genoa who accuse me of improprieties of composition because I have written as one speaks in Spain of brigantines and caravels, of admiral and adelantado, understand, once for all, that I am not ignorant that he who holds these offices is called by the Hellenists *Archithalassus* and by the Latinists sometimes *Navarchus* and sometimes *Pontarchus*. Despite all such similar comments, and provided I may nourish the hope of not displeasing Your Holiness, I shall confine myself to narrating these great events with simplicity. Leaving these things aside, let us now return to the caciques of Paria.

Vincent Yañez discovered that the chieftains were elected for only one year. Their followers obeyed them in making war or in signing peace. Their villages are built around this immense gulf. Five of these caciques offered gifts to the Spaniards, and I have wished to record their names in memory of their hospitality: Chiaconus Chianaecho, Chiaconus Fintiguanos, Chiaconus Chamailaba, Chiaconus Polomus, Chiaconus Pot.

This gulf is called Bahia de la Natividad, because Columbus discovered it on the Feast of Christmas; but he only sailed by, without penetrating into the interior. The Spaniards simply call it Bahia. Having established friendship with these chieftains, Vincent Yañez continued his voyage<sup>2</sup> and found to the east

<sup>1</sup> Meaning, of course, in the duchy, not the city. The passage reads: *Neutro cruciare statuo ad summum; voloque sciant, me insubrem esse non Latium; et longe a Latio natum, quia Mediolani; et longissime vitam egisse, quia in Hispania.*

<sup>2</sup> Comparing this account of Pinzon's voyage with that of Vespucci, it is seen that Peter Martyr describes the itinerary reversed, making Pinzon finish where Vespucci makes him begin.



countries which had been abandoned because of frequent inundations, and a vast extent of marsh lands. He persisted in his undertaking until he reached the extreme point of the continent<sup>1</sup>; if indeed we may call points, those corners or promontories which terminate a coast. This one seems to reach out towards the Atlas, and therefore opposite that part of Africa called by the Portuguese the Cape of Good Hope, a promontory in the ocean formed by the prolongation of the Atlas Mountains. The Cape of Good Hope, however, is situated within thirty-four degrees of the antarctic pole, whereas this point in the New World lies within the seventh degree. I think it must be part of that continent which cosmographers have named the Great Atlantis, but without giving further details as to its situation or character.

And since we have now reached the shores of the first land encountered beyond the Pillars of Hercules, perhaps it may not be out of place to say something of the motives which might have provoked war between the Catholic King, Ferdinand of Spain, and Emanuel of Portugal, had they not been father-in-law and son-in-law. Note that I say *Portugal* and not *Lusitania*, contrary to the opinion of many persons who certainly are not ignorant, but are not less certainly, sadly mistaken. For if it be Lusitania which eminent geographers locate between the Douro and the Guadiana, in what part of Lusitania does Portugal lie?

<sup>1</sup> Cape Sant Augustin.

## BOOK VIII

**D**URING the reign of King John of Portugal, uncle and predecessor of King Emanuel, now happily reigning, a serious divergence existed between the Portuguese and the Spaniards concerning their discoveries. The King of Portugal claimed that he alone possessed navigation rights on the ocean, because the Portuguese had been the first since ancient times to put out on the great sea. The Castilians asserted that everything existing on the earth since God created the world is the common property of mankind, and that it is, therefore, permissible to take possession of any country not already inhabited by Christians. The discussion on this point was very involved, and it was finally decided to leave it to the arbitration of the Sovereign Pontiff. Castile was at that time governed by the great Queen Isabella, with whom was associated her husband, for Castile was her marriage portion. The Queen being cousin to King John of Portugal, an agreement between them was speedily reached. By mutual consent of both parties concerned, and by virtue of a bull, the Sovereign Pontiff, Alexander VI., under whose pontificate this discussion took place, traced from north to south a line lying one hundred leagues outside the parallel of the Cape Verde Islands.<sup>1</sup> The extreme point of the con-

<sup>1</sup> The famous bull marking the respective spheres of discovery and colonisation for Spain and Portugal was given on May 4, 1493. Its terms were revised by the two states whose claims were finally embodied in the conventions of Tordesillas, June 7, 1494, and Setubal, September 4, 1494.

continent lies on this side of that line and is called Cape San Augustin, and by the terms of the Bull the Castilians are forbidden to land on that extremity of the continent.

After collecting the gold given him by the natives of the fertile province of Chamba, Vincent Yañez returned from Cape San Augustin and directed his course towards a lofty mountain chain which he saw on the southern horizon. He had taken some prisoners in the Gulf of Paria, which, beyond contest, lies in the Spanish dominions. He conducted them to Hispaniola, where he delivered them to the young Admiral to be instructed in our language, and afterwards to serve as interpreters in the exploration of unknown countries. Pinzon betook himself to court and petitioned the King for authorisation to assume the title of Governor of the island of San Juan, which is only twenty-five leagues distant from Hispaniola. He based his claim upon the fact that he had been the first to discover the existence of gold in that island, which we have said in our First Decade was called by the Indians Borrichena.

The governor of Borrichena, a Portuguese named Christopher, son of Count Camigua, was massacred by the cannibals of the neighbouring islands, together with all the Christians except the bishop and his servants; the latter only succeeded in escaping, at the cost of abandoning the sacred vessels. In response to the King's solicitation, your Apostolic Holiness had just divided this country into five new bishoprics. The Franciscan friar, Garcias de Padilla, was made Bishop of Santo Domingo, the capital of Hispaniola; the doctor Pedro Suarez Deza was appointed to Concepcion, and for the island of San Juan, the licenciado Alonzo Mausos was named; both these latter being observants of the congregation of St. Peter. The fourth bishop was the friar Bernardo de Mesa, a noble Toledan, and an orator of the Dominican Order, who was appointed for Cuba. The fifth received

the holy oils from Your Holiness for the colony of Darien; he is a Franciscan, a brilliant orator, and is called Juan Cabedo.

An expedition will, for the following reason, shortly set out to punish the Caribs. After the first massacre, they returned several months later from the neighbouring island of Santa Cruz, murdered and ate a cacique who was our ally, with all his family, afterwards completely destroying his town. They alleged that this cacique had violated the laws of hospitality in his relations with several Caribs, who were boat-builders. These men had been left at San Juan to build more canoes, since that island grows lofty trees, better adapted for canoe building than are those of the island of Santa Cruz. The Caribs being still on the island, the Spaniards who arrived from Hispaniola encountered them by accident. When the interpreters had made known this recent crime, the Spaniards wished to exact satisfaction, but the cannibals, drawing their bows and aiming their sharpened arrows at them, gave it to be understood with menacing glances that they had better keep quiet unless they wished to provoke a disaster. Fearing the poisoned arrows and being likewise unprepared for fighting, our men made amicable signs. When they asked the Caribs why they had destroyed the village and murdered the cacique and his family, the latter replied that they had done so to avenge the murder of several workmen. They had collected the bones of the victims with the intention of carrying them to the widows and children of the workmen, so that the latter might understand that the murder of their husbands and fathers had not been left unavenged. They exhibited a pile of bones to the Spaniards who, shocked by this crime but forced to conceal their real sentiments, remained silent, not daring to reprove the Caribs. Similar stories which I suppress rather than offend the ears of Your

Holiness by such abominable narratives, are daily repeated.

But we have strayed, O Most Holy Father, rather far from the regions of Veragua and Uraba, which are the chief themes of our discourse. Shall we not first treat of the immensity and the depth of the rivers of Uraba, and of the products of the countries washed by their waters? Shall I say nothing about the extent of the continent from east to west, or of its breadth from north to south, nor of anything that is reported concerning those regions as yet unknown? Let us return, therefore, Most Holy Father, to Uraba, and begin by stating the new names which have been given to those provinces, since they have come under the authority of Christians.

## BOOK IX

THE Spaniards decided to name Veragua, *Castilla del Oro*, and Uraba, *Nueva Andalusia*. As Hispaniola had been chosen to be the capital of all the colonies of the islands, so likewise were the vast regions of Paria divided into two parts, Uraba and Veragua, where two colonies were established to serve as refuges and places of rest and reprovisionment for all those who traversed those countries.

Everything the Spaniards sowed or planted in Uraba grew marvellously well. Is this not worthy, Most Holy Father, of the highest admiration? Every kind of seed, graftings, sugar-canes, and slips of trees and plants, without speaking of the chickens and quadrupeds I have mentioned, were brought from Europe. O admirable fertility! The cucumbers and other similar vegetables sown were ready for picking in less than twenty days. Cabbages, beets, lettuces, salads, and other garden stuff were ripe within ten days; pumpkins and melons were picked twenty-eight days after the seeds were sown. The slips and sprouts, and such of our trees as we plant out in nurseries or trenches, as well as the graftings of trees similar to those in Spain, bore fruit as quickly as in Hispaniola.

The inhabitants of Darien have different kinds of fruit trees, whose varied taste and good quality answer to their needs. I would like to describe the more remarkable ones.

The *guaiana* produces a lemon-like fruit similar to those commonly called limes. Their flavour is sharp,



but they are pleasant to the taste. Nut-bearing pines are common, as are likewise various sorts of palms bearing dates larger than ours but too sour to be eaten. The cabbage palm grows everywhere, spontaneously, and is used both for food and making brooms. There is a tree called *guaranana*, larger than orange trees, and bearing a fruit about the size of a lemon; and there is another closely resembling the chestnut. The fruit of the latter is larger than a fig, and is pleasant to the taste and wholesome. The *mamei* bears a fruit about the size of an orange which is as succulent as the best melon. The *guaranala* bears a smaller fruit than the foregoing, but of an aromatic scent and exquisite taste. The *hovor*s bears a fruit resembling in its form and flavour our plum, though it is somewhat larger, and appears really to be the mirobolan, which grows so abundantly in Hispaniola that the pigs are fed on its fruit. When it is ripe it is in vain the swineherd seeks to keep his pigs, for they evade him and rush to the forest where these trees grow; and it is for this reason that wild swine are so numerous in Hispaniola. It is also claimed that the pork of Hispaniola has a superior taste and is more wholesome than ours; and, indeed, nobody is ignorant of the fact that diversity of foodstuffs produces firmer and more savoury meat.

The most invincible King Ferdinand relates that he has eaten another fruit brought from those countries. It is like a pine-nut in form and colour, covered with scales, and firmer than a melon. Its flavour excels all other fruits.<sup>1</sup> This fruit, which the King prefers to all others, does not grow upon a tree but upon a plant, similar to an artichoke or an acanthus. I myself have not tasted it, for it was the only one which had arrived unspoiled, the others having rotted during the long voyage. Spaniards who have eaten them fresh plucked where they grow,

<sup>1</sup> The pineapple.

speak with the highest appreciation of their delicate flavour. There are certain roots which the natives call potatoes and which grow spontaneously.<sup>1</sup> The first time I saw them, I took them for Milanese turnips or huge mushrooms. No matter how they are cooked, whether roasted or boiled, they are equal to any delicacy and indeed to any food. Their skin is tougher than mushrooms or turnips, and is earth-coloured, while the inside is quite white. The natives sow and cultivate them in gardens as they do the yucca, which I have mentioned in my First Decade; and they also eat them raw. When raw they taste like green chestnuts, but are a little sweeter.

Having discoursed of trees, vegetables, and fruits, let us now come to living creatures. Besides the lions and tigers<sup>2</sup> and other animals which we already know, or which have been described by illustrious writers, the native forests of these countries harbour many monsters. One animal in particular has Nature created in prodigious form. It is as large as a bull, and has a trunk like an elephant; and yet it is not an elephant. Its hide is like a bull's, and yet it is not a bull. Its hoofs resemble those of a horse, but it is not a horse. It has ears like an elephant's, though smaller and drooping, yet they are larger than those of any other animal.<sup>3</sup> There is also an animal which lives in the trees, feeds upon fruits, and carries its young in a pouch in the belly; no writer as far as I know has seen it, but I have already sufficiently described it in the Decade which has already reached Your Holiness before your elevation, as it was then stolen from me to be printed.

It now remains for me to speak of the rivers of Uraba. The Darien, which is almost too narrow for the native

<sup>1</sup> This is the first mention in literature of the potato.

<sup>2</sup> It is hardly necessary to say that there were no lions or tigers in America. Jaguars, panthers, leopards, and ocelots were the most formidable beasts of prey found in the virgin forests of the New World.

<sup>3</sup> This puzzling animal was the tapir.

canoes, flows into the Gulf of Uraba, and on its banks stands a village built by the Spaniards. Vasco Nuñez explored the extremity of the gulf and discovered a river one league broad and of the extraordinary depth of two hundred cubits, which flows into the gulf by several mouths, just as the Danube flows into the Black Sea, or the Nile waters the land of Egypt. It is called, because of its size, Rio Grande. An immense number of huge crocodiles live in the waters of this stream, which, as we know, is the case with the Nile; particularly I, who have ascended and descended that river on my embassy to the Sultan.<sup>1</sup>

I hardly know, after reading the writings of many men remarkable for their knowledge and veracity, what to think of the Nile. It is claimed that there are really two Niles, which take their rise either in the Mountains of the Sun or of the Moon, or in the rugged Sierras of Ethiopia. The waters of these streams, whatever be their source, modify the nature of the land they traverse. One of the two flows to the north and empties into the Egyptian Sea: the other empties into the southern ocean. What conclusion shall we draw? We are not puzzled by the Nile of Egypt, and the southern Nile has been discovered by the Portuguese, who, in the course of their amazing expeditions, ventured beyond the equinoctial line into the country of the negroes, and as far as Melinde. They affirm that it rises in the Mountains of the Moon, and that it is another Nile, since crocodiles are seen there, and crocodiles only live in streams belonging to the basin of the Nile. The Portuguese have named that river Senegal. It traverses the country of the negroes, and the country on its northern banks is admirable, while that on its southern banks is sandy and arid. From time to time crocodiles are seen.

What shall we now say about this third, or in fact, this

<sup>1</sup> See *De Legatione Babylonica*.

fourth Nile? These animals, covered with scales as hard as the tortoise-shell the Spaniards under Columbus found in that river, and which, as we have said, caused them to name that stream *Los Lagartos*, are certainly crocodiles. Shall we declare that these Niles rise in the Mountains of the Moon? Certainly not, Most Holy Father. Other waters than those of the Nile may produce crocodiles, and our recent explorers have supplied proof of this fact, for the rivers do not flow from the Mountains of the Moon, nor can they have the same source as the Egyptian Nile, or the Nile of Negricia or of Melinde; for they flow down from the mountains we have mentioned, rising between the north and south sea, and which separate the two oceans by a very small distance.

The swamps of Darien and the lands which are covered with water after the inundations, are full of pheasants, peacocks of sober colours, and many other birds different from ours. They are good to eat, and delight the ear of the listener with various songs; but the Spaniards are indifferent bird-hunters, and are neglectful in catching them. Innumerable varieties of parrots, all belonging to the same species, chatter in this forest; some of them are as large as capons, while others are no bigger than a sparrow. I have already enlarged sufficiently on the subject of parrots in my First Decade. When Columbus first explored these immense countries he brought back a large number of every kind, and everybody was able to inspect them. Others are still daily brought here.

There is still, Most Holy Father, a subject which is quite worthy to figure in history, but I would prefer to see it handled by a Cicero or a Livy than by myself. It affords me such astonishment that I feel more embarrassed in my description than a young chicken wrapped in tow. We have said that, according to the Indians, the land separating the north from the south sea can be traversed in six days. I am not a little puzzled both by

the number and size of the rivers described, and by the small breadth of that stretch of land; nor do I understand how such large rivers can possibly flow down from these mountains, only three days' march from the sea, and empty into the north ocean. I cannot understand it, for I presume that equally large rivers empty into the south sea. Doubtless the rivers of Uraba are not so important when compared with others, but the Spaniards declare that during the lifetime of Columbus they discovered and have since sailed upon a river the breadth of whose mouth, where it empties into the sea, is not less than one hundred miles. This river is on the borders of Paria, and descends with such force from the high mountains that it overwhelms the sea even at high tide or when it is swept by violent winds, driving back the waves before the fury and weight of its current. The waters of the sea for a large area round about are no longer salt but fresh, and pleasant to the taste. The Indians call this river Maragnon.<sup>1</sup> Other tribes give it the names Maria-tambal, Camamoros, or Paricora. In addition to the rivers I have before mentioned, the Darien, Rio Grande, Dobaiba, San Matteo, Veragua, Boiogatti, Lagartos, and Gaira, there are also others which water the country. I wonder, Most Holy Father, what must be the size of these mountain caverns so near the seacoast, and, according to the Indians, so narrow, and what sources they have to enable them to send forth such torrents of water? Several explanations suggest themselves to my mind.

The first is the size of the mountains. It is claimed that they are very great and this was the opinion of Columbus, who discovered them. He had also another theory, asserting that the terrestrial paradise was situated

<sup>1</sup> Just which river is meant is not clear. The description would seem to fit the Orinoco, but Maragnon is the native name for the Amazon. This last name is given exclusively to the upper part of the river in the Peruvian territory.

on the top of the mountains visible from Paria and Boca de la Sierpe. He ended by convincing himself that this was a fact. If these mountains are so immense, they must contain extensive and gigantic reservoirs.

If such be the case, how are these reservoirs supplied with water? Is it true, as many people think, that all fresh waters flow from the sea into the land, where they are forced by the terrible power of the waves into subterranean passages of the earth, just as we see it pour forth from those same channels to flow again into the ocean?

This may well be the explanation of the phenomenon, since, if the reports of the natives be true, nowhere else will two seas, separated by such a small extent of land, ever be found. On the one side a vast ocean extends towards the setting sun; on the other lies an ocean towards the rising sun; and the latter is just as large as the former, for it is believed that it mingles with the Indian Ocean. If this theory be true, the continent, bounded by such an extent of water, must necessarily absorb immense quantities, and after taking it up, must send it forth into the sea in the form of rivers. If we deny that the continent absorbs the excess of water from the ocean, and admit that all springs derive their supply from the rainfall which filters drop by drop into mountain reservoirs, we do so, bowing rather to the superior authority of those who hold this opinion, than because our reason grasps this theory.

I share the view that the clouds are converted into water, which is absorbed into the mountain caverns, for I have seen with my own eyes in Spain, rain falling drop by drop incessantly into caverns from whence brooks flowed down the mountainside, watering the olive orchards, vineyards and gardens of all kinds. The most illustrious Cardinal Ludovico of Aragon, who is so devotedly attached to you, and two Italian bishops,



one of Boviano, Silvio Pandono, and the other, an Archbishop whose own name and that of his diocese I am unable to recollect, will bear me witness. We were together at Granada when it was captured from the Moors, and to divert ourselves we used to go to some wooded hills, whence a murmuring rivulet flowed across the plain. While our most illustrious Ludovico went bird-hunting with his bow along its banks, the two bishops and I formed a plan to ascend the hill to discover the source of the brook, for we were not very far from the top of the mountain. Taking up our soutanes, therefore, and following the river-bed, we found a cavern incessantly supplied by dropping water. From this cavern, the water formed by these drops trickled into an artificial reservoir in the rocks at the bottom where the rivulet formed. Another such cave filled by the dew is in the celebrated town of Valladolid, where we at present reside. It stands in a vineyard not farther than a stadium from the walls of the town and belongs to a lawyer, Villena, citizen of Valladolid, and very learned in the science of law. Perhaps moisture changed into rain is collected in little caves in the rocks and sometimes forms springs, due to the infiltration of water in the hills; but I wonder how Nature can produce such quantities of water from these meagre infiltrations! In my opinion, two causes may be conceded: the first is the frequent rains; the second, the length in this region of the winter and autumn seasons. The countries in question are so near to the equinoctial line that during the entire year there is no perceptible difference in length between the days and nights; during the spring and autumn, rains are more frequent than in a severe winter or torrid summer. Another reason is: if the earth really is porous, and these pores emit vapours which form clouds charged with water, it will necessarily follow that this continent must have a greater rainfall than any other

country in the world, because it is narrow and shut in on each side by two immense neighbouring oceans. However it may be, Most Holy Father, I am quite obliged to believe the reports of the numerous persons who have visited the country, and I must record these particulars even though they appear for the most part contrary to truth. For this reason I have desired to expose my arguments, fearing that learned men, rejoicing to find occasion for attacking the writings of another, may judge me so wanting in judgment as to believe all the tales people tell me.

I have described the great estuary formed by the junction of this immense volume of fresh water with the sea, and I believe this to be the result of the union of a number of rivers coming together in the form of a lake, rather than a river, as is claimed. I also think the fresh water rushes down from very high mountains, and pours into the salt waters beneath, with such violence that the sea-water cannot penetrate unto the bay. Doubtless there will be found people who will express astonishment at my imagination, and throw ridicule on me, saying, "Why does he repeat this, as though it were a miracle? Has not Italy the Po, which illustrious writers have named the king of rivers? Are not other regions watered by great rivers, such as the Don, the Ganges, the Danube, whose waters drive back those of the sea with such force that fresh, potable water is still found forty miles from their mouths?" I would answer their objections as follows: in the Alpine chain rising behind the Po and separating Italy from France, Germany, and Austria, water never fails. The long valley of the Po also receives the waters of the Ticino and many other streams flowing towards the Adriatic; and the same may be said of the other rivers mentioned. But these rivers of the new continent, as the caciques informed the Spaniards, flow through greater and shorter channels into the ocean. Some people believe that the

continent is very narrow in this part, and that it spreads out considerably in other places. Another argument, which I hold to be a poor one, I must nevertheless mention. This continent is narrow, but its length extends for an immense distance from the east to the west. Just as is recounted of the river Alpheus of Elide, which disappears in channels under the sea to reappear in Sicily at the fountain of Arethusa, so there may exist in the mountains of this continent a vast network of subterranean passages in such wise that the waters produced by the rains we have mentioned may be collected. Those who explain phenomena by common sense, and those who enjoy criticism may choose the theory which best pleases them. For the moment there is nothing more I can add on this subject. When we shall learn more, we shall faithfully relate it. We have already dwelt sufficiently upon the width of this continent, and it is now time to consider its form and length.

## BOOK X

THIS continent extends into the sea exactly like Italy, but is dissimilar in that it is not the shape of a human leg. Moreover, why shall we compare a pigmy with a giant? That part of the continent beginning at this eastern point lying towards Atlas, which the Spaniards have explored, is at least eight times larger than Italy; and its western coast has not yet been discovered. Your Holiness may wish to know upon what my estimate of *eight times* is based. From the outset when I resolved to obey your commands and to write a report of these events, in Latin (though myself no Latin) I have adopted precautions to avoid stating anything which was not fully investigated.

I addressed myself to the Bishop of Burgos whom I have already mentioned, and to whom all navigators report. Seated in his room, we examined numerous reports of those expeditions, and we have likewise studied the terrestrial globe on which the discoveries are indicated, and also many parchments, called by the explorers navigators' charts. One of these maps had been drawn by the Portuguese, and it is claimed that Amerigo Vespucci of Florence assisted in its composition. He is very skilled in this art, and has himself gone many degrees beyond the equinoctial line, sailing in the service and at the expense of the Portuguese. According to this chart, we found the continent was larger than the caciques of Uraba told our compatriots, when guiding them over

the mountains. Columbus, during his lifetime, began another map while exploring these regions, and his brother, Bartholomew Columbus, Adelantado of Hispaniola, who has also sailed along these coasts, supported this opinion by his own judgment. From thenceforth, every Spaniard who thought he understood the science of computing measurements, has drawn his own map; the most valuable of these maps are those made by the famous Juan de la Cosa, companion of Hojeda, who was murdered, together with the ship's captain, Andre Moranes, by the natives of Caramaira, near the port of Carthagená, as we have already recounted. Both these men not only possessed great experience of these regions, where they were as well acquainted with every bit of the coast as with the rooms of their own houses, but they were likewise reputed to be experts in naval cosmography. When all these maps were spread out before us, and upon each a scale was marked in the Spanish fashion, not in miles but in leagues, we set to work to measure the coasts with a compass, in the following order:

From the cape or point<sup>1</sup> we have mentioned as being on this side of the Portuguese line drawn one hundred leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, in the countries thus far visited on both sides of that line, we measured three hundred leagues to the mouth of the Maragnon River. From the mouth of this river to Boca de la Sierpe the distance on some maps is a little less than seven hundred leagues, for all these charts do not agree, since the Spaniards sometimes reckoned by marine leagues of four thousand paces, and sometimes by land leagues of three thousand paces. From Boca de la Sierpe to Cape Cuchibacoa, near which the coast line bends to the left, we measured about three thousand leagues. From the promontory of Cuchibacoa to the region of Caramaira, where the port of Carthagená is, the distance is about one

<sup>1</sup> The most eastern cape on the Brazil coast is Cape San Rocco.

hundred and seventy leagues. From Caramaira to the island of La Fuerte it is fifty leagues, after which, to the entrance of the Gulf of Uraba where the village of Santa Maria Antigua actually stands, it is only thirty-five leagues. Between Darien in Uraba, and Veragua where Nicuesa would have settled, but that the gods decided otherwise, we measured the distance to be one hundred and thirty leagues. From Veragua to the river named by Columbus, San Matteo, on whose banks Nicuesa wasted so much time and suffered such hardships after losing his caravel, the map showed only one hundred and forty leagues, but many of the men who have returned from there say the distance is really considerably greater. Many rivers are indicated just there: for example, the Aburema, before which lies the island called the Scudo di Cateba—whose cacique was nicknamed Burnt Face: the Zobrabaõ—the Urida, and the Doraba with rich gold deposits. Many remarkable ports are also marked on that coast; among them Cesabaron and Hiebra, as they are called by the natives. Adding these figures together, Most Holy Father, you will reach a total of fifteen hundred and twenty-five leagues or five thousand seven hundred miles from the cape to the Gulf of San Matteo, which is also called the Gulf of Perdidos.

But this is not all. A certain Asturian of Oviedo, Juan de Solis,<sup>1</sup> but who declares that he was born at Nebrissa, the country of illustrious savants, asserts that he sailed westward from San Matteo a distance of many leagues. As the coast, bends towards the north, it is consequently difficult to give exact figures, but three hundred leagues may be approximately estimated. From the foregoing you may perceive, Most Holy Father, the

<sup>1</sup> This pilot and cosmographer has already been mentioned. In 1515 he was commissioned to explore the coast south of Brazil, but, as has been related, he was unfortunately killed during that expedition. To just what voyage Peter Martyr here refers is not quite clear.



length of the continent over which your authority is destined to extend. Some day we shall doubtless clearly understand its width.

Let us now discourse a little concerning the variety of polar degrees. Although this continent extends from east to west, it is nevertheless so crooked, with its point bending so much to the south, that it loses sight of the polar star, and extends seven degrees beyond the equinoctial line. This extremity of the continent is, as we have already said, within the limits of Portuguese jurisdiction. In returning from that extremity towards Paria, the north star again becomes visible; the farther the country extends towards the west, the nearer does it approach the pole. The Spaniards made different calculations up to the time when they were established at Darien, where they founded their principal colony; for they abandoned Veragua, where the north star stood eight degrees above the horizon. Beyond Veragua the coast bends in a northerly direction, to a point opposite the Pillars of Hercules; that is, if we accept for our measures certain lands discovered by the Spaniards more than three hundred and twenty-five leagues from the northern coast of Hispaniola. Amongst these countries is an island called by us Boinca, and by others Aganeo; it is celebrated for a spring whose waters restore youth to old men.<sup>1</sup> Let not Your Holiness believe this to be a hasty or foolish opinion, for the story has been most seriously told to all the court, and made such an impression that the entire populace, and even people superior by birth and influence, accepted it as a proven fact. If you ask me my opinion on this matter, I will answer that I do not believe any such power exists in creative nature, for I think that God reserves to himself this prerogative, as well as that of reading the hearts of men, or of granting wealth to those

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the fabulous waters of eternal youth in quest of which Juan Ponce de Leon set forth. The country is Florida.

who have nothing; unless, that is to say, we are prepared to believe the Colchian fable concerning the renewal of Æson and the researches of the sibyl of Erythræa.

We have now discoursed sufficiently of the length and the breadth of this continent, of its rugged mountains and watercourses, as well of its different regions.

It seems to me I should not omit mention of the misfortunes that have overtaken some of our compatriots. When I was a child, my whole being quivered and I was stirred with pity in thinking of Virgil's Alchimenides who, abandoned by Ulysses in the land of the Cyclops, sustained life during the period between the departure of Ulysses and the arrival of Æneas, upon berries and seeds. The Spaniards of Nicuesa's colony of Veragua would certainly have esteemed berries and seeds delicious eating. Is it necessary to quote as an extraordinary fact that an ass's head was bought for a high price? Why do many such things, similar to those endured during a siege, matter? When Nicuesa decided to abandon this sterile and desolate country of Veragua, he landed at Porto Bello and on the coast which has since been named Cape Marmor, hoping to there find a more fertile soil. But such a terrible famine overtook his companions that they did not shrink from eating the carcasses of mangy dogs they had brought with them for hunting and as watch-dogs. These dogs were of great use to them in fighting with the Indians. They even ate the dead bodies of massacred Indians, for in that country there are no fruit-trees nor birds as in Darien, which explains why it is destitute of inhabitants. Some of them combined to buy an emaciated, starving dog, paying its owner a number of golden pesos or castellanos. They skinned the dog and ate him, throwing his mangy hide and head into the neighbouring bushes. On the following day a Spanish foot-soldier finding the skin, which was already swarming

with worms and half putrid, carried it away with him. He cleaned off the worms and, after cooking the skin in a pot, he ate it. A number of his companions came with their bowls to share the soup made from that skin, each offering a castellano of gold for a spoonful of soup. A Castilian who caught two toads cooked them, and a man who was ill bought them for food, paying two shirts of linen and spun gold which were worth quite six castellanos. One day the dead body of an Indian who had been killed by the Spaniards was found on the plain, and although it was already putrefying, they secretly cut it into bits which they afterwards boiled or roasted, assuaging their hunger with that meat as though it were peacock. During several days a Spaniard, who had left camp at night and lost his way amongst the swamps, ate such vegetation as is found in marshes. He finally succeeded in rejoining his companions, crawling along the ground and half dead. Such are the sufferings which these wretched colonists of Veragua endured.

At the beginning there were over seven hundred, and when they joined the colonists at Darien hardly more than forty remained. Few had perished in fighting with the Indians; it was hunger that had exhausted and killed them. With their blood they paved the way for those who follow, and settle in those new countries. Compared with these people, the Spaniards under Nicuesa's leadership would seem to be bidden to nuptial festivities, for they set out by roads, which are both new and secure, towards unexplored countries where they will find inhabitants and harvests awaiting them. We are still ignorant where the captain Pedro Arias, commanding the royal fleet,<sup>1</sup> has landed; if I learn that it will afford Your

<sup>1</sup> This Decade was written towards the end of the year 1514, but although Pedro Arias had landed on June 29th, no news of his movements had yet reached Spain. The slowness and uncertainty of communication must be constantly borne in mind by readers.

Holiness pleasure, I shall faithfully report the continuation of events.

From the Court of the Catholic King, the eve of the nones of December, 1514, Anno Domini.



## The Third Decade





## BOOK I

PETER MARTYR, OF MILAN, APOSTOLIC PRONOTARY  
AND ROYAL COUNSELLOR  
TO  
THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF LEO X

I HAD closed the doors of the New World, Most Holy Father, for it seemed to me I had wandered enough in those regions, when I received fresh letters which constrained me to reopen those doors and resume my pen.

I have already related that after expelling the Captain Nicuesa and the judge Enciso from the colony of Darien, Vasco Nuñez, with the connivance of his companions, usurped the government. We have received letters<sup>1</sup> both from him and from several of his companions, written in military style, and informing us that he had crossed the mountain-chain dividing our ocean from the hitherto unknown south sea. No letter from Capri concerning Sejanus was ever written in prouder language. I shall only report the events related in that correspondence which are worthy of mention.

Not only is Vasco Nuñez reconciled to the Catholic King, who was formerly vexed with him, but he now enjoys the highest favour. For the King has loaded him and the majority of his men with privileges and honours,

<sup>1</sup> Two of Balboa's letters are published by Navarrete (tom. iii.) and may also be read in a French translation made by Gaffarel and published in his work, *Vasco Nuñez de Balboa*.

and has rewarded their daring exploits.<sup>1</sup> May Your Holiness lend an attentive ear to us and listen with serene brow and joyful heart to our narration, for it is not a few hundreds or legions that the Spanish nation has conquered and brought into subjection to your sacred throne but, thanks to their various achievements and the thousand dangers to which they expose themselves, myriads who have been subdued.

Vasco Nuñez ill endured inaction, for his is an ardent nature, impatient of repose, and perhaps he feared that another might rob him of the honour of the discovery, for it is believed that he had learned of the appointment given to Pedro Arias.<sup>2</sup> It may well be that to these two motives was added fear, knowing the King was vexed with his conduct in the past. At all events he formed the plan to undertake, with a handful of men, the conquest of the country for whose subjection the son of the cacique of Comogra declared not less than a thousand soldiers to be necessary. He summoned around him some veterans of Darien and the majority of those who had come from Hispaniola in the hope of finding gold, thus forming a small troop of a hundred and ninety men, with whom he set out on the calends of September of the past year, 1513.

Desiring to accomplish as much of the journey as possible by sea, he embarked on a brigantine and ten native barques dug out of tree trunks, and first landed in the country of his ally Careca, cacique of Coiba. Leaving his ships, he implored the divine blessing upon his undertaking and marched directly towards the mountains. He traversed the country subject to the cacique Poncha, who fled, as he had done on other occasions. Acting on the advice

<sup>1</sup> Balboa had been named Adelantado of the South Sea, and of the Panama and Coiba regions. Pedro Arias was also enjoined to counsel with him concerning all measures of importance.

<sup>2</sup> This was the case; his friend Zamudio had notified Balboa of the appointment of Pedro Arias.

of the guides furnished by Careca, Vasco sent messengers to Poncha, promising his friendship and protection against his enemies, and other advantages. The cacique, won by these promises and amiabilities and by those of the people of Careca, joined the Spaniards, and with great alacrity concluded an alliance with them. Vasco entreated him to have no further fears. They shook hands and embraced and exchanged numerous presents, Poncha giving about one hundred and ten pesos of gold valued at a castellano each; this was not a large amount, but he had been robbed the preceding year, as we have above related.

Not to be outdone, Vasco made him a present of some glass beads, strung in the form of necklaces and bracelets; also some mirrors, copper bells, and similar European trifles. The natives cherish these things highly, for whatever comes from abroad is everywhere most prized. Vasco pleased them still further by presenting them with some iron hatchets for cutting down trees. There is no instrument the natives appreciate so much, for they have no iron, nor any other metals than gold; and they have great difficulty in cutting wood for the construction of their houses or their canoes without iron. They do all their carpenter work with tools of sharp stone, which they find in the rivers.

Thenceforth Poncha became his ally, and Vasco Nuñez, having no further fear of danger from behind, led his men towards the mountain. Poncha had supplied him with guides and bearers who went on ahead and opened the trail. They passed through inaccessible defiles inhabited by ferocious beasts, and they climbed steep mountains.

Communication amongst the natives is infrequent, for naked men who have no money have very few wants. Whatever trading they do is with their neighbours, and they exchange gold for ornaments or useful articles. It follows, therefore, as practically no communication exists,

there are no roads. Their scouts are familiar with hidden trails, which they use to make ambuscades or night forays or to massacre and enslave their neighbours. Thanks to Poncha's men and the labours of the bearers, Vasco scaled rugged mountains, crossed several large rivers, either by means of improvised bridges or by throwing beams from one bank to another, and always succeeded in keeping his men in health. Rather than become wearisome and incur the reproach of prolixity, I make no mention of some of the trials and fatigues they endured, but I judge that I should not omit to report what took place between them and the caciques whom they encountered on their march.

Before reaching the summit of the mountain-chain, the Spaniards traversed the province of Quarequa, of which the ruler, who bears the same name, came to meet them; as is customary in that country, he was armed with bows and arrows, and heavy, two-handed swords of wood. They also carry sticks with burnt points, which they throw with great skill. Quarequa's reception was haughty and hostile, his disposition being to oppose the advance of such a numerous army. He asked where the Spaniards were going and what they wanted, and in reply to the interpreter's answer, he responded: "Let them retrace their steps, if they do not wish to be killed to the last man." He stepped out in front of his men, dressed, as were all his chiefs, while the rest of his people were naked. He attacked the Spaniards who did not yield; nor was the battle prolonged, for their musket-fire convinced the natives that they commanded the thunder and lightning. Unable to face the arrows of our archers, they turned and fled, and the Spaniards cut off the arm of one, the leg or hip of another, and from some their heads at one stroke, like butchers cutting up beef and mutton for market. Six hundred, including the cacique, were thus slain like brute beasts.

Vasco discovered that the village of Quarequa was stained by the foulest vice. The king's brother and a number of other courtiers were dressed as women, and according to the accounts of the neighbours shared the same passion. Vasco ordered forty of them to be torn to pieces by dogs. The Spaniards commonly used their dogs in fighting against these naked people, and the dogs threw themselves upon them as though they were wild boars or timid deer. The Spaniards found these animals as ready to share their dangers as did the people of Colophon or Castabara, who trained cohorts of dogs for war; for the dogs were always in the lead and never shirked a fight.

When the natives learned how severely Vasco had treated those shameless men, they pressed about him as though he were Hercules, and spitting upon those whom they suspected to be guilty of this vice, they begged him to exterminate them, for the contagion was confined to the courtiers and had not yet spread to the people. Raising their eyes and their hands to heaven, they gave it to be understood that God held this sin in horror, punishing it by sending lightning and thunder, and frequent inundations which destroyed the crops. It was like wise the cause of famine and sickness.

The natives worship no other god than the sun, who is the master and alone worthy of honour. Nevertheless, they accepted instruction and they will rapidly adopt our religion when zealous teachers come to instruct them. Their language contains nothing rough or difficult to understand, and all the words of their vocabulary may be translated and written in Latin letters, as we have already said was the case in Hispaniola. They are a warlike race, and have always been troublesome neighbours. The country is neither rich in gold mines, nor does it possess a fertile soil, being mountainous and arid. Because of its precipitous mountains the temperature is cold,



and the chiefs wear clothes, but the bulk of the people are content to live in a state of nature. The Spaniards found negro slaves in this province.<sup>1</sup> They only live in a region one day's march from Quarequa, and they are fierce and cruel. It is thought that negro pirates of Ethiopia established themselves after the wreck of their ships in these mountains. The natives of Quarequa carry on incessant war with these negroes. Massacre or slavery is the alternate fortune of the two peoples.

Leaving some of his companions who had fallen ill from the incessant fatigue and hardships to which they were not inured, at Quarequa, Vasco, led by native guides, marched towards the summit of the mountain-chain.<sup>2</sup>

From the village of Poncha to the spot where the southern ocean is visible is a six days' ordinary march, but he only covered the distance in twenty-five days, after many adventures and great privations. On the seventh day of the calends of October, a Quarequa guide showed him a peak from the summit of which the southern ocean is visible. Vasco looked longingly at it. He commanded a halt, and went alone to scale the peak, being the first to reach its top. Kneeling upon the ground, he raised his hands to heaven and saluted the south sea; according to his account, he gave thanks to God and to all the saints for having reserved this glory for him, an ordinary man, devoid alike of experience and authority. Concluding his prayers in military fashion, he waved his hand to some of his companions, and showed them the object of their desires. Kneeling again, he prayed the Heavenly Mediator, and especially the Virgin

<sup>1</sup> This mysterious fact has been asserted by too many authors to be refused credence. The author's explanation of the existence of these Africans in America is possibly the correct one.

<sup>2</sup> On September 26, 1513; the men who accompanied him numbered sixty-six.

Mother of God, to favour his expedition and to allow him to explore the region that stretched below him. All his companions, shouting for joy, did likewise. Prouder than Hannibal showing Italy and the Alps to his soldiers, Vasco Nuñez promised great riches to his men. "Behold the much-desired ocean! Behold! all ye men, who have shared such efforts, behold the country of which the son of Comogre and other natives told us such wonders!" As a symbol of possession he built a heap of stones in the form of an altar, and that posterity might not accuse them of falsehood, they inscribed the name of the King of Castile here and there on the tree trunks on both slopes of that summit, erecting several heaps of stones.<sup>1</sup>

Finally the Spaniards arrived at the residence of a cacique called Chiapes. This chief, fully armed and accompanied by a multitude of his people, advanced menacingly, determined not only to block their way but to prevent them crossing his frontier. Although the Christians were few they closed up their ranks and marched towards the enemy, discharging their guns and unleashing a pack of hounds against Chiapes. The sound of the cannon reverberated amongst the mountains, and the smoke from the powder seemed to dart forth flames; and when the Indians smelt the sulphur which the wind blew towards them, they fled in a panic, throwing themselves on the ground in terror, convinced that lightning had struck them. While lying on the ground or wildly scattering, the Spaniards approached them with closed ranks and in good order. In the pursuit they killed some and took the greater number prisoners. It was their original intention to treat those Indians kindly and to explore their country in an amicable manner. Vasco

<sup>1</sup> In conformity with Spanish usage, a notary, Andrés Valderrabano, drew up a statement witnessing the discovery, which was signed, first by Balboa, next by the priest, Andres de Vera, and by all the others, finishing with the notary himself.

took possession of the house of Chiapes, and seized most of those who had been captured while attempting to escape. He sent several of them to invite their cacique to return; they were told to promise him peace, friendship, and kind treatment, but if he did not come, it would mean his ruin and the destruction of his people and country.

In order to convince Chiapes of his sincerity, Vasco Nuñez sent with his messengers some of the natives of Quarequa, who were serving him as guides. These latter spoke to him in their own name and that of their cacique, and Chiapes, allowing himself to be persuaded by their arguments and the entreaties of his own subjects, confided in the promise made to him. Leaving his hiding-place, he returned to the Spaniards, where a friendly agreement was made, hand-clasps and mutual vows exchanged, the alliance being confirmed by reciprocal presents. Vasco received four hundred pesos of wrought gold from Chiapes. We have remarked that a peso was equal to rather more than thirty ducats. The cacique received a number of articles of European manufacture, and the greatest mutual satisfaction prevailed. A halt of several days was decided upon, to await the arrival of the Spaniards who had been left behind.

Dismissing the people of Quarequa with some gifts, the Spaniards, under the guidance of the people of Chiapes and accompanied by the cacique himself, made the descent from the mountain-ridge to the shores of the much-desired ocean in four days. Great was their joy; and in the presence of the natives they took possession, in the name of the King of Castile, of all that sea and the countries bordering on it.

Vasco left some of his men with Chiapes, that he might be freer to explore the country. He borrowed from the cacique nine of those barques dug out of single tree trunks, which the natives call *culches*; and accompanied by eighty of his own men and guided by Chiapes, he sailed on a

large river which led him to the territory of another cacique called Coquera. This chief, like the others, wished at first to resist and drive out the Spaniards. His attempt was vain, and he was conquered and put to flight. Acting upon the counsel of Chiapes, Coquera returned, for the envoys sent by the latter spoke to him thus: "These strangers are invincible. If you treat them kindly, they are amiable, but if you resist them, they turn hard and cruel. If you become their friend, they promise assistance, protection, and peace, as you may see from our own case and that of the neighbouring caciques; but if you refuse their friendship, then prepare for ruin and death."

Convinced by these representations, Coquera gave the Spaniards six hundred and fifty pesos of wrought gold, receiving the usual presents in exchange. It was the same treatment that had been extended to Poncha.

After concluding peace with Coquera, Vasco returned to the country of Chiapes. He reviewed his soldiers, took some rest, and then resolved to visit a large gulf in the neighbourhood. According to the report of the natives, the length of this gulf, from the place where it penetrates into the country to its most distant shores, is sixty miles. It is dotted with islands and reefs, and Vasco named it San Miguel. Taking the nine barques he had borrowed from Chiapes, in which he had already crossed the river, he embarked with eighty of his companions, all at that time in good health. Chiapes did his best to discourage this enterprise, counselling Vasco on no account to risk himself in the gulf at that period of the year, as during three months it is so tempestuous that navigation becomes impossible. He himself had seen many culches swept away by the raging waves. Vasco Nuñez, unwilling to incur delay, affirmed that God and all the heavenly host favoured his enterprise, and that he was labouring for God, and to propagate the Christian

religion, and to discover treasures to serve as the sinews of war against the enemies of the Faith. After pronouncing a brilliant discourse, he persuaded his companions to embark in the canoes of Chiapes. The latter, wishing to remove the last doubt from the mind of Vasco Nuñez, declared he was ready to accompany him anywhere, and that he would act as his guide, for he would not permit the Spaniards to leave his territory under other escort than his own.

Hardly had the Spaniards reached the open sea in their canoes than they were overtaken by such a violent tempest that they knew not whither to steer, nor where to find refuge. Trembling and frightened, they looked at one another, while Chiapes and the Indians were even more alarmed, for they knew the dangers of such navigation and had often witnessed wrecks. They survived the peril and, after fastening their canoes to rocks along the shore, they took refuge on a neighbouring island. But during the night, the tide rose and covered nearly the whole of it. At high tide the south sea rises to such an extent that many immense rocks which rise above low water are then covered by the waves. In the north sea, however, according to the unanimous testimony of those who inhabit its banks, the tide recedes hardly a cubit from the shore. The inhabitants of Hispaniola and the neighbouring islands confirm this fact.

When the coast was left dry, the Spaniards returned to their culches, but were dumfounded to find all of them damaged and filled with sand. Though dug out of tree trunks some were broken and split open, the cables that had held them having been snapped. To repair them they used moss, bark, some very tough marine plants and grasses. Looking like shipwrecked men and almost dead with hunger (for the storm had swept away almost all their stores), they set out to return. The natives say that at all times of the year the incoming and the outgoing tides fill the



islands of the gulf with a frightful roaring sound; but that this principally happens during the three months indicated by Chiapes, and which correspond to October, November, and December. It was just within the month of October and, according to the cacique, it was under that and the two following moons that the tempest prevailed.

After devoting some days to rest, Vasco Nuñez crossed the territory of another unimportant cacique and entered the country of a second, called Tumaco, whose authority extended along the gulf coast. Tumaco, following the example of his colleagues, took up arms; but his resistance was equally vain. Conquered and put to flight, all of his subjects who resisted were massacred. The others were spared, for the Spaniards preferred to have peaceful and amicable relations with those tribes.

Tumaco was wanted, and the envoys of Chiapes urged him to come back without fear, but neither promises nor threats moved him. Having inspired him with fears for his own life, extermination for his family, and ruin for his town, if he held out, the cacique decided to send his son to the Spaniards. After presenting this young man with a robe and other similar gifts, Vasco sent him back, begging him to inform his father of the resources and bravery of the strangers.

Tumaco was touched by the kindness shown to his son, and three days later he appeared; he brought no present at first, but in obedience to his orders, his attendants gave six hundred and fourteen pesos of gold and two hundred and forty selected pearls and a quantity of smaller ones. These pearls excited the unending admiration of the Spaniards, though they are not of the finest quality, because the natives cook the shells before extracting them, in order to do so more easily, and that the flesh of the oyster may be more palatable. This viand is very much esteemed and is reserved for the caciques, who prize it more than they do the pearls themselves; at least this is the report



of a certain Biscayan, Arbolazzo, one of Vasco Nuñez's companions, who was afterwards sent to our sovereign with pearl oysters. One must believe eye-witnesses.<sup>†</sup>

Observing that the Spaniards attached great value to pearls, Tumaco ordered some of his men to prepare to dive for some. They obeyed, and four days later came back bringing four pounds of pearls. This caused the liveliest satisfaction, and everybody embraced with effusion. Balboa was delighted with the presents he had received, and Tumaco was satisfied to have cemented the alliance. The mouths of the Spaniards fairly watered with satisfaction as they talked about this great wealth.

The cacique Chiapes, who had accompanied them and was present during these events, was also well satisfied, chiefly because it was under his leadership the Spaniards had undertaken such a profitable enterprise, and also because he had been enabled to show his more powerful neighbour, who perhaps was not agreeable to him, what valiant friends he possessed. He thought the Spanish alliance would be very useful to him, for all these naked savages cherish an inveterate hatred of each other and are consumed with ambition.

Vasco Nuñez flattered himself that he had learned many secrets concerning the wealth of the country from Tumaco, but declared that he would, for the moment, keep them exclusively to himself, for they were the cacique's gift to him. According to the report of the Spaniards, Tumaco and Chiapes said there was an island much larger than the others in the gulf, governed by a single cacique. Whenever the sea was calm, this cacique attacked their territories with an imposing fleet of canoes, and carried off everything he found. This island

<sup>†</sup> Arbolazzo's mission was successful in completely appeasing King Ferdinand's vexation and obtaining from him Balboa's nomination as Adelantado, and other privileges and favours for the participators in the discoveries.

is about twenty miles distant from the shore, and from the hilltops of the continent its coasts were visible. It is said that shells as big as fans are found on its shores, from which pearls, sometimes the size of a bean or an olive, are taken. Cleopatra would have been proud to own such. Although this island is near to the shore, it extends beyond the mouth of the gulf, out into the open sea. Vasco was glad to hear these particulars, and perceived the profit he might derive. In order to attach the two caciques more closely to his interest and to convert them into allies, he denounced the chieftain of the island, with direful threats. He pledged himself to land there and to conquer, exterminate, and massacre the cacique. To give effect to his words, he ordered the canoes to be prepared, but both Chiapes and Tumaco amicably urged him to postpone this enterprise until the return of fair weather, as no canoe could ride the sea at that season of the year.

This was in November when storms and hurricanes prevail. The coasts of the island are inhospitable, and among the channels separating different islands is heard the horrible roaring of the waves battling with one another. The rivers overflow their beds, and, rushing down the mountain slopes, tear up the rocks and huge trees, and pour into the sea with unparalleled uproar. Raging winds from the south and southwest prevailing at that season, accompanied by perpetual thunder and lightning, sweep over and destroy the houses. Whenever the weather was clear, the nights were cold, but during the day the heat was insufferable. Nor is this astonishing, for this region is near the equator, and the pole star is no longer visible. In that country the icy temperature during the night is due to the moon and other planets, while the sun and its satellites cause the heat during the day. Such were not the opinions of the ancients, who imagined that the equinoctial circle was devoid of inhabitants because of the perpendicular rays

of the sun. Some few authors, whose theories the Portuguese have shown by experience to be correct, dissented from this view. Each year the Portuguese arrive at the antartic antipodes, and carry on commerce with those people. I say the antipodes; yet I am not ignorant that there are learned men, most illustrious for their genius and their science, amongst whom there are some saints who deny the existence of the antipodes. No one man can know everything. The Portuguese have gone beyond the fifty-fifth degree of the other Pole, where, in sailing about the point, they could see throughout the heavenly vault certain nebulæ, similar to the Milky Way, in which rays of light shone. They say there is no notable fixed star near that Pole, similar to the one in our hemisphere, vulgarly believed to be the Pole, and which is called in Italy *tramontane*, in Spain the North Star. From the world's axis in the centre of the sign of the Scales, the sun, when it sets for us rises for them, and when it is springtime there, it is autumn with us, and summer there when we have winter. But enough of this digression, and let us resume our subject.

## BOOK II

**I**NFLUENCED by the advice of the caciques Chiapes and Tumaco, Vasco Nuñez decided to postpone his visit to the island until spring or summer, at which time Chiapes offered to accompany him. Meanwhile he understood the caciques had nets near the coasts where they fished for pearl oysters. The caciques have skilful divers trained from infancy to this profession, and who dive for these oysters as though in fish-ponds, but they only do so when the sea is calm and the water low, which renders diving easier. The larger the shells the more deeply are they embedded. The oysters of ordinary size, like daughters of the others, lie nearer the surface, while the little ones, like grandchildren, are still nearer. It is necessary to dive three and sometimes even four times a man's height to find the more deeply embedded shells; but to get the daughters and grandchildren it is not required to go deeper than the waist and sometimes even less. It sometimes happens, after heavy storms when the sea calms down, that a multitude of these shells, torn by the waves from their beds, are deposited on the shore, but this sort only contains very small pearls. The meat of these bivalves, like that of our oysters, is good to eat, and it is even claimed their flavour is more delicate. I suspect that hunger, which is the best sauce for every dish, has induced this opinion among our compatriots.

Are pearls, as Aristotle states, the heart of the shells,

or are they rather, as Pliny says, the product of the intestines and really the excrement of these animals? Do oysters pass their whole life attached to the same rock, or do they move through the sea in numbers, under the leadership of older ones? Does one shell produce one or many pearls? Is there but one growth, or is such growth ever repeated? Must one have a rake to detach them, or are they gathered without trouble? Are pearls in a soft or hard state when they enter the shell? These are problems which we have not yet solved, but I hope that I may some day enlighten my doubts on this subject, for our compatriots possess means for studying these questions. As soon as I am informed of the landing of the captain, Pedro Arias, I shall write and ask him to make a serious inquiry concerning these points, and to send me the precise results he obtains. I know he will do this, for he is my friend. Is it not really absurd to keep silence about a subject interesting to men and women both in ancient times and in our own, and which inflames everybody with such immoderate desires? Spain may henceforth satisfy the desires of a Cleopatra or an Æsop for pearls. No one will henceforth rage against or envy the riches of Stoides<sup>1</sup> or Ceylon, of the Indian Ocean or the Red Sea. But let us come back to our subject.

Vasco determined to have that part of the sea where Chiapes obtained his pearls explored by swimmers. Although the weather was bad and a storm threatened, the cacique, to please him, ordered thirty of his divers to repair to the oyster beds. Vasco set six of his companions to watch the divers, but without leaving the shore or exposing themselves to risk from the storm. The men set out together for the shore, which was not more than ten miles from the residence of Chiapes. Although the

<sup>1</sup> Pliny mentions this island, off the coast of Macedonia, as having pearl fisheries.

divers did not venture to the bottom of the ocean, because of the danger from the storm, nevertheless they succeeded in gathering, in a few days, six loads of pearls,<sup>1</sup> including the shells gathered near the surface or strewn by the violence of the storm on the sands. They fed greedily on the flesh of these animals. The pearls found were not larger than a lentil or a little pea, but they had a beautiful orient, for they had been taken out while the animal was still alive. Not to be accused of exaggeration concerning the size of these shells, the Spaniards sent the King some remarkable specimens, from which the meat had been removed, at the same time as the pearls. It does not seem possible that shells of such size should be found anywhere. These shells and the gold which has been found pretty much everywhere are proof that Nature conceals vast treasures in this country, though thus far the exploration covered, so to speak, the little finger of a pigmy, since all that is known is the neighbourhood of Uraba. What it will be when the whole hand of the giant is known and the Spaniards shall have penetrated into all the profound and mysterious parts of the continent, no man can say.

Happy and satisfied with these discoveries, Vasco decided to return by another route to his companions at Darien, who were gold-mining about ten miles from their village. He dismissed Chiapes, charging him to come no farther and to take good care of himself. They embraced one another, and it was with difficulty that the cacique restrained his tears while they shook hands at parting. Vasco left his sick there and, guided by the sailors of Chiapes, he set out with his able-bodied men. The little company crossed a great river which was not fordable, and entered the territory of a chief called Taocha who was very pleased upon learning of their arrival, for he

<sup>1</sup> *Sex attulerunt sarcinas brevi dierum numero.* The word *sarcinas* as an expression of measure is vague.



already knew the customs of the Spaniards. He came out to meet them, receiving them with honour, and making salutations as a proof of his affection. He presented Vasco with twenty pounds (at eight ounces to the pound) of artistically worked gold, and two hundred selected pearls; the latter were not, however, very brilliant. They shook hands and Taocha, accepting the gifts offered him, begged that the people of Chiapes should be dismissed, as he himself wished to have the pleasure of escorting his guests.

When the Spaniards left his village he not only furnished them guides, but also slaves who were prisoners of war and who took the place of beasts of burden in carrying on their shoulders provisions for the march. They had to pass through lonely forests and over steep and rocky mountains, where ferocious lions and tigers abounded. Taocha placed his favourite son in command of the slaves, whom he loaded with salt fish and bread made of yucca and maize; he commanded his son never to leave the Spaniards and not to come back without permission from Vasco. Led by this young man, they entered the territory of a chief called Pacra, who was an atrocious tyrant. Whether frightened because conscious of his crimes, or whether he felt himself powerless, Pacra fled.

During this month of November the Spaniards suffered greatly from the heat and from the torments of thirst, for very little water is found in that mountainous region. They would all have perished, had not two of them who went to search for water, carrying the pumpkins Taocha's people brought with them, found a little spring which the natives had pointed out, hidden in a remote corner of the forest. None of the latter had ventured to stray from the main body, for they were afraid of being attacked by wild beasts. They recounted that on these heights and in the neighbourhood of this spring, ferocious

beasts had carried off people in the night, and even from their cabins. They were, therefore, careful to put bolts and all kinds of bars on their doors. It may perhaps not be out of place, before going farther, to relate a particular instance. It is said that last year a tiger ravaged Darien, doing as much damage as did formerly the raging boar of Calydon or the fierce Nemæan lion. During six entire months, not a night passed without a victim, whether a mare, a colt, a dog, or a pig being taken, even in the street of the town. The flocks and the animals might be sacrificed but it was not safe for people to quit their houses, especially when it sought food for its whelps; for when they were hungry the monster attacked people it found rather than animals. Anxiety led to the invention of a means of avenging so much bloodshed. The path it took when leaving its lair at night in search of prey, was carefully studied. The natives cut the road, digging a ditch which they covered over with boughs and earth. The tiger, which was a male, was incautious, and, falling into the ditch, remained there, stuck on the sharp points fixed in the bottom. Its roarings filled the neighbourhood and the mountains echoed with piercing howls. They killed the monster stuck on the points, by throwing great stones from the banks of the ditch. With one blow of its paw it broke the javelins thrown at it into a thousand fragments, and even when dead and no longer breathing, it filled all who beheld him with terror. What would have happened had it been free and unhurt! A civilian called Juan de Ledesma, a friend of Vasco, and his companion in danger, says that he ate the flesh of that tiger; he told me that it was not inferior to beef. When one asks these people who have never seen tigers why they affirm that this beast was a tiger, they reply that it was because it was spotted, ferocious, sly, and offered other characteristics which others have attributed to tigers. Nevertheless the majority of

Spaniards affirm that they have seen spotted leopards and panthers.

After the male tiger was killed, they followed its track through the mountains, and discovered the cave where it lived with its family. The female was absent; but two little ones, still unweaned, were lying there, and these the Spaniards carried away; but changing their minds afterwards and wishing to carry them to Spain when they were a little larger, they put carefully riveted chains round their necks and took them back to the cave, in order that their mother might nurse them. Some days later they went back and found the chains still there, but the cave was empty. It is thought the mother, in a fury, tore the little ones to pieces, and took them away, in order that nobody should have them; for they could not possibly have got loose from their chains alive. The dead tiger's skin was stuffed with dried herbs and straw, and sent to Hispaniola to be presented to the Admiral and other officials, from whom the colonists of those two new countries obtain laws and assistance.

This story was told me by those who had suffered from the ravages of that tiger,<sup>1</sup> and had touched its skin; let us accept what they give us.

Let us now return to Pacra, from whom we have somewhat wandered. After having entered the *boios* (that is to say, the house) abandoned by the *cacique*, Vasco sought to induce him to return by means of envoys who made known the conditions already proposed to other *caciques*; but for a long time Pacra refused. Vasco then tried threats, and the *cacique* finally decided to come in, accompanied by three others. Vasco writes that he was deformed, and so dirty and hideous that nothing more abominable could be imagined. Nature confined herself to giving him a human form, but he is a

<sup>1</sup> As has been observed, there were no tigers in America. The animal described may have been a jaguar.

brute beast, savage and monstrous. His morals were on a par with his bearing and physiognomy. He had carried off the daughters of four neighbouring caciques to satisfy his brutal passions. The neighbouring chiefs, regarding Vasco as a supreme judge or a Hercules, a redresser of injuries, complained of the debaucheries and the crimes of Pacra, begging that he should be punished by death. Vasco had this filthy beast and the other three caciques, who obeyed him and shared his passions, torn to pieces by dogs of war, and the fragments of their bodies were afterwards burnt. Astonishing things are said about these dogs the Spaniards take into battle. These animals throw themselves with fury on the armed natives pointed out to them, as if they were timid deer or fierce boars; and it often happens that there is no need of swords or javelins to rout the enemy. A command is given to these dogs who form the vanguard, and the natives at the mere sight of these formidable Molossians<sup>1</sup> and the unaccustomed sound of their baying, break their ranks and flee as though horrified and stupefied by some unheard-of prodigy. This does not occur in fighting against the natives of Caramaira or the Caribs, who are braver and understand more about war. They shoot their poisoned arrows with the rapidity of lightning, and kill the dogs in great numbers; but the natives of these mountains do not use arrows in warfare; they only use machanes,<sup>2</sup> that is to say, large wooden swords, and lances with burnt points.

While Pacra was still alive they asked him where his people obtained gold, but neither by persuasion nor threats nor tortures could they drag this secret from him. When

<sup>1</sup> *Torvo molossorum adspectu*. Referring to the dogs of Epirus, called by the Romans, Molossi.

<sup>2</sup> The *maquahuitle* of the Mexicans; a flat wooden club, in which blades of *iztli*, or flint, were set on the opposite edges; it was their most formidable weapon in hand-to-hand encounters.

asked how he had procured what he had possessed,—for he had offered a present of thirty pounds of gold out of his treasury—he answered that those of his subjects who, either in the time of his parents or in his own, had mined that gold in the mountain were dead, and that since his youth he had not troubled to look for gold. Nothing more could be obtained from him on this subject.

The rigorous treatment of Pacra secured Vasco the friendship of the neighbouring caciques, and when he sent for the sick, whom he had left behind to join him, a cacique, called Bononiamá, whose country the route directly traversed, received them kindly and gave them twenty pounds of wrought gold and an abundance of provisions. Nor would he leave them until he had accompanied them from his residence to that of Pacra, as though they had been confided to his fidelity. He spoke thus to Vasco: “Here are your companions in arms, Most Illustrious Warrior; just as they came to me, so do I bring them to you. It would have pleased me had they been in better health, but you and your companions are the servants of him who strikes the guilty with thunder and lightning, and who of his bounty, thanks to the kindly climate, gives us yucca and maize.” While speaking these words he raised his eyes to Heaven and gave it to be understood that he referred to the sun. “In destroying our proud and violent enemies you have given peace to us and to all our people. You overcome monsters. We believe that you and your equally brave companions have been sent from Heaven, and under the protection of your machanes we may henceforth live without fear. Our gratitude to him who brings us these blessings and happiness shall be eternal.” Such, or something like this, was the speech of Bononiamá, as translated by the interpreters. Vasco thanked him for having escorted our men and received them kindly, and sent him away loaded with precious gifts.

Vasco writes that the cacique Bononiama has disclosed to him many secrets concerning the wealth of the region, which he reserves for later, as he does not wish to speak of them in his letter. What he means by such exaggeration and reticence I do not understand. He seems to promise a great deal, and I think his promises warrant hope of great riches; moreover, the Spaniards have never entered a native house without finding either cuirasses and breast ornaments of gold, or necklaces and bracelets of the same metal. If anyone wishing to collect iron should march with a troop of determined men through Italy or Spain, what iron articles would they find in the houses? In one a cooking stove, in another a boiler, elsewhere a tripod standing before the fire, and spits for cooking. He would everywhere find iron utensils, and could procure a large quantity of the metal. From which he would conclude that iron abounded in the country. Now the natives of the New World set no more value on gold than we do on iron ore. All these particulars, Most Holy Father, have been furnished me either by the letters of Vasco Nuñez and his companions in arms, or by verbal report. Their search for gold mines has produced no serious result, for out of ninety men he took with him to Darien, he has never had more than seventy or at most eighty under his immediate orders; the others having been left behind in the dwellings of the caciques.

Those who succumbed most easily to sickness were the men just arrived from Hispaniola; they could not put up with such hardships, nor content their stomachs, accustomed to better food, with the native bread, wild herbs without salt, and river water that was not always even wholesome. The veterans of Darien were more inured to all these ills, and better able to resist extreme hunger. Thus Vasco gaily boasts that he has kept a longer and more rigorous Lent than Your Holiness, following the decrees of your predecessors, for it has



lasted uninterruptedly for four years; during which time he and his men have lived upon the products of the earth, the fruits of trees, and even of them there was not always enough. Rarely did they eat fish and still more rarely meat, and their wretchedness reached such a point that they were obliged to eat sick dogs, nauseous toads, and other similar food, esteeming themselves fortunate when they found even such. I have already described all these miseries. I call "veterans of Darien" the first comers who established themselves in this country under the leadership of Nicuesa and Hojeda, of whom there remains but a small number. But let this now suffice, and let us bring back Vasco and the veterans from their expedition across the great mountain-chain.

### BOOK III

**D**URING the thirty days he stopped in Pacra's village, Vasco strove to conciliate the natives and to provide for the wants of his companions. From there, guided by subjects of Taocha, he marched along the banks of the Comogra River, which gives its name both to the country and to the cacique. The mountains thereabouts are so steep and rocky, that nothing suitable for human food grows, save a few wild plants and roots and fruits of trees, fit to nourish animals. Two friendly and allied caciques inhabit this unfortunate region. Vasco hastened to leave behind a country so little favoured by man and by Nature, and, pressed by hunger, he first dismissed the people of Taocha, and took as guides the two impoverished caciques, one of whom was named Cotochus and the other Ciuriza. He marched three days among wild forests, over unscaled mountains and through swamps, where muddy pitfalls gave way beneath the feet and swallowed the incautious traveller. He passed by places which beneficent Nature might have created for man's wants, but there were no roads made; for communication amongst natives is rare, their only object being to murder or to enslave one another in their warlike incursions. Otherwise each tribe keeps within its own boundaries.

Upon arriving at the territory of a chief called Buchebuea, they found the place empty and silent, as the chief and all his people had fled into the woods. Vasco sent

messengers to call him back, notifying them not to use threats, but, on the contrary, to promise protection. Buchebuea replied that he had not fled because he feared harsh treatment, but rather because he was ashamed and sorry he could not receive our compatriots with the honour they deserved, and was unable even to furnish them provisions. As a token of submission and friendship he willingly sent several golden vases, and asked pardon. It was thought this unfortunate cacique wished it to be understood that he had been robbed and cruelly treated by some neighbouring enemy, so the Spaniards left his territory, with mouths gaping from hunger, and thinner than when they entered it.

During the march, some naked people appeared on the flank of the column. They made signs from a hill-top and Vasco ordered a halt to wait for them. Interpreters who accompanied the Spaniards asked them what they wanted, to which they replied "Our cacique, Chioriso, salutes you. He knows you are brave men who redress wrongs and punish the wicked, and though he only knows you by reputation he respects and honours you. Nothing would have pleased him better than to have you as his guests at his residence. He would have been proud to receive such guests, but since he has not yet had this good fortune and you have passed him by, he sends you as a pledge of affection these small pieces of gold." With courteous smiles they presented to Vasco thirty *patenas* of pure gold, saying they would give him still more if he would come to visit them. The Spaniards give the name *patena* to those balls of metal worn on the neck, and also to the sacred utensil with which the chalice is covered when carried to the altar. Whether in this instance plates for the table or balls are meant, I am absolutely ignorant; I suppose, however, that they are plates, since they weighed fourteen pounds, at eight ounces to the pound.

These natives then explained that there was in the neighbourhood a very rich cacique, who was their enemy, and who yearly attacked them. If the Spaniards would make war upon him, his downfall would enrich them and would deliver friendly natives from incessant anxiety. Nothing would be easier, they said through their interpreters, than for you to help us, and we will act as your guides. Vasco encouraged their hopes and sent them away satisfied. In exchange for their presents he gave them some iron hatchets, which they prize more than heaps of gold. For as they have no money—that source of all evils—they do not need gold. The owner of one single hatchet feels himself richer than Crassus.<sup>1</sup> These natives believe that hatchets may serve a thousand purposes of daily life, while gold is only sought to satisfy vain desires, without which one would be better off. Neither do they know our refinements of taste, which demand that sideboards shall be loaded with a variety of gold and silver vases. These natives have neither tables, tablecloths, or napkins; the caciques may sometimes decorate their tables with little golden vases, but their subjects use the right hand to eat a piece of maize bread and the left to eat a piece of grilled fish or fruit, and thus satisfy their hunger. Very rarely they eat sugar-cane. If they have to wipe their hands after eating a certain dish, they use, instead of napkins, the soles of their feet, or their hips, or sometimes their testicles. The same fashion prevails in Hispaniola. It is true that they often dive into the rivers, and thus wash the whole of their bodies.

Loaded with gold, but suffering intensely and so hungry they were scarcely able to travel, the Spaniards continued their march and reached the territory of a chief called Pochorroso, where during thirty days they stuffed themselves with maize bread, which is similar to Milanese

<sup>1</sup> Possibly a mis-copy of Cræsus.

bread. Pochorroso had fled, but, attracted by coaxing and presents, he returned, and gifts were exchanged. Vasco gave Pochorroso the usual acceptable articles, and the cacique gave Vasco fifteen pounds of melted gold and some slaves. When they were about to depart, it transpired that it would be necessary to cross the territory of a chief called Tumanama, the same formerly described by the son of Comogre as the most powerful and formidable of those chiefs. Most of Comogre's servants had been this man's slaves captured in war. As is the case everywhere, these people gauged the power of Tumanama by their own standard, ignorant of the fact that these caciques, if brought face to face with our soldiers commanded by a brave and fortunate leader, were no more to be feared than gnats attacking an elephant. When the Spaniards came to know Tumanama they quickly discovered that he did not rule on both sides of the mountain, nor was he as rich in gold as the young Comogre pretended. Nevertheless they took the trouble to conquer him. Pochorroso, being the enemy of Tumanama, readily offered Vasco his advice.

Leaving his sick in charge of the cacique, and summoning sixty companions, all strong and brave men, Vasco explained his purpose to them, saying: "The cacique Tumanama has often boasted that he was the enemy of Vasco and his companions. We are obliged to cross his country, and it is my opinion we should attack him while he is not on his guard." Vasco's companions approved this plan, urging him to put it into execution and offering to follow him. They decided to make two marches without stopping, so as to prevent Tumanama from calling together his warriors; and this plan was carried out as soon as decided.

It was the first watch of the night when the Spaniards and the warriors of Pochorroso invaded Tumanama's town, taking him completely by surprise, for he ex-

pected nothing. There were with him two men, his favourites, and eighty women, who had been carried off from different caciques by violence and outrage. His subjects and allied caciques were scattered in villages of the neighbourhood, for they dwell in houses widely separated from one another, instead of near together. This custom is due to the frequent whirlwinds to which they are exposed by reason of sudden changes of temperature and the influence of the stars which conflict when the days and nights are equal in duration. We have already said that these people live near the equator. Their houses are built of wood, roofed and surrounded with straw, or stalks of maize or the tough grass indigenous to the country. There was another house in Tumanama's village, and both were two hundred and twenty paces long and fifty broad. These houses were constructed to shelter the soldiers when Tumanama made war.

The cacique was taken prisoner and with him his entire Sardanapalian court. As soon as he was found, the men of Pochorrosó and the neighbouring caciques overwhelmed him with insults, for Tumanama was no less detested by the neighbouring caciques than that Pacra whom we have mentioned in describing the expedition to the south sea. Vasco concealed his real intentions towards the prisoner, but though he adopted a menacing attitude, he really intended him no harm. "You shall pay the penalty of your crimes, tyrant," said he; "you have often boasted before your people that if the Christians came here you would seize them by the hair and drown them in the neighbouring river. But it is you, miserable creature, that shall be thrown into the river and drowned." At the same time he ordered the prisoner to be seized, but he had given his men to understand that he pardoned the cacique.

Tumanama threw himself at the feet of Vasco and begged pardon. He swore that he had said nothing of



the kind, and that if anybody had, it must have been his caciques when they were drunk; for none of these chiefs understand moderation, and he accused them of using insolent language.

Their wines are not made from grapes, as I have already told Your Holiness, when I began to cultivate this little field, but they are intoxicating. Tumanama complained, weeping, that his neighbours had invented these falsehoods to destroy him, for they were jealous of him because he was more powerful than they. He promised in return for his pardon a large quantity of gold, and clasping his hands upon his breast, he said that he always both loved and feared the Spaniards, because he had learned their machanes—that is to say, their swords—were sharper than his and cut deeper wherever they struck. Looking Vasco straight in the eyes, he said: "Who then, other than a fool, would venture to raise his hand against the sword of a man like you, who can split a man open from head to navel at one stroke, and does not hesitate to do it? Let not yourself be persuaded, O bravest of living men, that such speech against you has ever proceeded from my mouth." These and many other words did he speak, feeling already the rope of death around his neck. Vasco, affecting to be touched by these prayers and tears, answered with calmness that he pardoned him and gave him his liberty. Thirty pounds (at eight ounces to the pound) of pure gold in the form of women's necklaces were at once brought from the two houses, and three days later the caciques subject to Tumanama sent sixty pounds more of gold, which was the amount of the fine imposed for their temerity. When asked whence he procured this gold, Tumanama replied that it came from very distant mines. He gave it to be understood that it had been presented to his ancestors on the Comogra River which flows into the south sea; but the people of Pochoroso and his enemies said that he lied, and that his own

territory produced plenty of gold. Tumanama persisted, however, that he knew of no gold mines in his domain. He added that it was true enough that here and there some small grains of gold had been found, but nobody had even troubled to pick them up, since to do so would require tedious labour.

During this discussion Vasco was joined on the eighth day of the calends of January and the last day of the year 1513, by the men he had left behind with Pochorroso. The slaves whom the southern caciques had lent them, carried their gold-mining tools.

The day of the Nativity of Our Lord was given to rest, but the following day, the Feast of the Protomartyr St. Stephen, Vasco led some miners to a hill near Tumanama's residence because he thought from the colour of the earth that it contained gold. A hole a palm and a half in size was made, and from the earth sifted a few grains of gold, not larger than a lentil, were obtained.

Vasco had this fact recorded by a notary and witnesses, in order to establish the authenticity of this discovery, as he called it, of a *toman* of gold. In the language of bankers, a *toman* contains twelve grains. Vasco consequently deduced, as the neighbouring caciques alleged, that the country was rich, but he could never prevail upon Tumanama to admit it. Some said that Tumanama was indifferent to such unimportant fragments of gold, others claimed that he persisted in denying the wealth of his country for fear the Spaniards, to satisfy their desire for gold, might take possession of the whole of it. The cacique saw only too well into the future; for the Spaniards have decided, if the King consents, to establish new towns in his country and that of Pochorroso; these towns will serve as refuges and storehouses for travellers going to the South Sea, and moreover both countries are favourable for growing all kinds of fruits and crops.

Vasco decided to leave this country, and to blaze for himself, a new trail through a land of which the earth tints and the shells seemed to him to indicate the presence of gold. He ordered a little digging below the surface of the earth to be done, and found a peso, weighing a little more than a grain. I have already said in my First Decade, addressed to Your Holiness, that a peso was worth a castellano of gold. Enchanted with this result, he overwhelmed Tumanama with flattering promises to prevent the cacique from interfering with any of the Spaniards' allies in that neighbourhood. He also besought him to collect a quantity of gold. It is alleged that he had carried off all the cacique's women, and had practically stripped him to check his insolence. Tumanama also confided his son to Vasco in order that the boy might learn our language in living with the Spaniards, and become acquainted with our habits and be converted to our religion. It may be that the boy's education may some day be of use to his father, and secure him our favour.

The immense fatigues, the long watches, and the privations Vasco had endured ended by provoking a violent fever, so that on leaving this country he had to be carried on the shoulders of slaves. All the others who were seriously ill, were likewise carried in hammocks, that is to say, in cotton nets. Others, who still had some strength, despite their weak legs, were supported under the armpits and carried by the natives. They finally arrived in the country of our friend Comogre, of whom I have lengthily spoken above. The old man was dead and had been succeeded by that son whose wisdom we have praised. This young man had been baptised, and was called Carlos. The palace of this Comogre stands at the foot of a cultivated hill, rising in a fertile plain that tends for a breadth of twelve leagues towards the south. This plain is called by the natives *savana*. Beyond the limits

of the plain rise the very lofty mountains that serve as a divide between the two oceans. Upon their slopes rises the Comogre River which, after watering this plain, runs through a mountainous country, gathering to itself tributaries from all the valleys and finally emptying into the South Sea. It is distant about seventy leagues to the west of Darien.

Uttering cries of joy, Carlos hastened to meet the Spaniards, refreshing them with food and agreeable drinks, and lavishing generous hospitality upon them. Presents were exchanged, the cacique giving Vasco twenty pounds of worked gold, at eight ounces to the pound, and Vasco satisfying him with equally acceptable presents, such as hatchets, and some carpenters' tools. He likewise gave Carlos a robe and one of his own shirts, because of the extremity to which he was reduced. These gifts elevated Carlos to the rank of a hero among his neighbours. Vasco finally left Comogra and all its people after admonishing them that, if they wished to live in peace, they must never rebel against the rule of the Spanish King. He also urged them to use their best endeavours to collect gold for the *Tiba*, that is to say, the King. He added that in this way they would secure for themselves and their descendants protection against the attacks of their enemies, and would receive an abundance of our merchandise.

When everything had been satisfactorily arranged, Vasco continued his march towards the country of Poncha, where he met four young men sent from Darien to inform him that well-laden ships had just arrived from Hispaniola; he had promised that, in returning from the South Sea, he would march by some way through that country. Taking with him twenty of his strongest companions he started by forced marches for Darien, leaving behind the others who were to join him. Vasco has written that

he reached Darien the fourteenth day of the calends of February in the year 1514, but his letter<sup>1</sup> is dated Darien, the fourth day of the nones of March, as he was unable to send it sooner no ship being ready to sail. He says that he has sent two ships to pick up the people he left behind, and he boasts of having won a number of battles without receiving a wound or losing one of his men in action.

There is hardly a page of this long letter which is not inscribed with some act of thanksgiving for the great dangers and many hardships he escaped. He never undertook anything or started on his march without first invoking the heavenly powers, and principally the Virgin Mother of God. Our Vasco Balboa is seen to have changed from a ferocious Goliath into an Elias. He was an Antæus; he has been transformed into Hercules the conqueror of monsters. From being foolhardy, he has become obedient and entirely worthy of royal honours and favour. Such are the events made known to us by letters from him and the colonists of Darien, and by verbal reports of people who have returned from those regions.

Perhaps you may desire, Most Holy Father, to know what my sentiments are respecting these events. My opinion is a simple one. It is evident from the military style in which Vasco and his men report their deeds that their statements must be true. Spain need no longer plough up the ground to the depth of the infernal regions or open great roads or pierce mountains at the cost of labour and the risk of a thousand dangers, in order to draw wealth from the earth. She will find riches on the surface, in shallow diggings; she will find them in the sun-dried banks of rivers; it will suffice to merely sift the earth. Pearls will be gathered with little effort. Cosmographers unanimously recognise that venerable antiquity

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately neither this letter or any copy of it is known to exist.

received no such benefit from nature, because never before did man, starting from the known world, penetrate to those unknown regions. It is true the natives are contented with a little or nothing, and are not hospitable; moreover, we have more than sufficiently demonstrated that they receive ungraciously strangers who come amongst them, and only consent to negotiate with them, after they have been conquered. Most ferocious are those new anthropophagi, who live on human flesh, Caribs or cannibals as they are called. These cunning man-hunters think of nothing else than this occupation, and all the time not given to cultivating the fields they employ in wars and man-hunts. Licking their lips in anticipation of their desired prey, these men lie in wait for our compatriots, as the latter would for wild boar or deer they sought to trap. If they feel themselves unequal to a battle, they retreat and disappear with the speed of the wind. If an encounter takes place on the water, men and women swim with as great a facility as though they lived in that element and found their sustenance under the waves.

It is not therefore astonishing that these immense tracts of country should be abandoned and unknown, but the Christian religion, of which you are the head, will embrace its vast extent. As I have said in the beginning, Your Holiness will call to yourself these myriads of people, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings. Let us now return to Veragua, the place discovered by Columbus, explored under the auspices of Diego Nicuesa, and now abandoned; and may all the other barbarous and savage provinces of this vast continent be brought little by little into the pale of Christian civilisation and the knowledge of the true religion.



## BOOK IV

I HAD resolved, Most Holy Father, to stop here but I am consumed, as it were, with an internal fire which constrains me to continue my report. As I have already said, Veragua was discovered by Columbus. I should feel that I had robbed him or committed an inexpressible crime against him were I to pass over the ills he endured, the vexations and dangers to which he was exposed during these voyages. It was in the year of salvation 1502 on the sixth day of the ides of May that Columbus sailed from Cadiz with a squadron of four vessels of from fifty to sixty tons burthen, manned by one hundred and seventy men.<sup>1</sup> Five days of favourable weather brought him to the Canaries; seventeen days' sailing brought him to the island of Domingo, the home of the Caribs, and from thence he reached Hispaniola in five days more, so that the entire crossing from Spain to Hispaniola occupied twenty-six days, thanks to favourable winds and currents, which set from the east towards the west. According to the mariners' report the distance is twelve hundred leagues.

He stopped in Hispaniola for some time, either of his own accord or with the Viceroy's<sup>2</sup> assent. Pushing straight to the west, he left the islands of Cuba and Jamaica towards his right on the north, and discovered to the south of Jamaica an island called by its inhabitants Guanassa.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This was the fourth voyage of Columbus.

<sup>2</sup> This direct violation of his orders was due to his wish to trade one of his vessels, which was a slow sailer, for a quicker craft.

<sup>3</sup> Guanaya or Bouacia, lying off the coast of Honduras.

This island is incredibly fertile and luxuriant. While coasting along its shores, the Admiral met two of those barques dug out of tree trunks of which I have spoken. They were drawn by naked slaves with ropes round their necks. The chieftain of the island, who, together with his wife and children, were all naked, travelled in these barques. When the Spaniards went on shore the slaves, in obedience to their master's orders, made them understand by haughty gestures that they would have to obey the chief, and when they refused, menaces and threats were employed. Their simplicity is such that they felt neither fear nor admiration on beholding our ships and the number and strength of our men. They seemed to think the Spaniards would feel the same respect towards their chief as they did. Our people perceived that they had to do with merchants returning from another country, for they hold markets. The merchandise consisted of bells, razors, knives, and hatchets made of a yellow and translucent stone; they are fastened in handles of hard and polished wood. There were also household utensils for the kitchen, and pottery of artistic shapes, some made of wood and some made of that same clear stone; and chiefly draperies and different articles of spun cotton in brilliant colours. The Spaniards captured the chief, his family and everything he possessed; but the Admiral soon afterwards ordered him to be set at liberty and the greater part of their property restored, hoping thus to win their friendship.

Having procured some information concerning the country towards the west, Columbus proceeded in that direction and, a little more than ten miles farther, he discovered a vast country which the natives call Quiriquetana, but which he called Ciamba. There he caused the Holy Sacrifice to be celebrated upon the shore. The natives were numerous and wore no clothing. Gentle and simple, they approached our people fearlessly and

admiringly, bringing them their own bread and fresh water. After presenting their gifts they turned upon their heels bowing their heads respectfully. In exchange for their presents, the Admiral gave them some European gifts, such as strings of beads, mirrors, needles, pins, and other objects unknown to them.

This vast region is divided into two parts, one called Taïa and the other called Maïa.<sup>1</sup> The whole country is fertile, well shaded, and enjoys delightful temperature. In fertility of soil it yields to none, and the climate is temperate. It possesses both mountains and extensive plains, and everywhere grass and trees grow. Spring and autumn seem perpetual, for the trees keep their leaves during the whole year, and bear fruit. Groves of oak and pine are numerous, and there are seven varieties of palms of which some bear dates, while others are without fruit. Vines loaded with ripe grapes grow spontaneously amid the trees, but they are wild vines and there is such an abundance of useful and appetising fruits that nobody bothers to cultivate vineyards. The natives manufacture their *machanes*, that is to say swords, and the darts they throw, out of a certain kind of palm-wood. Much cotton is found in this country as well as *mirobolanes*, of various kinds, such as doctors call *emblicos*<sup>2</sup> and *chebules*; maize, yucca, ages, and potatoes, all grow in this country as they do everywhere on the continent. The animals are lions, tigers, stags, deer, and other similar beasts. The natives fatten those birds we have mentioned, as resembling peahens in colour, size, and taste.

The natives of both sexes are said to be tall and well proportioned. They wear waist-cloths and bandolets of spun

<sup>1</sup> This is the first mention of the word *Maya*. The traders whom Columbus met were doubtless Mayas, coming from some of the great fairs or markets. For the second time, he brushed past the civilisation of Yucatan and Mexico, leaving to later comers the glory of their discovery.

<sup>2</sup> *Myrobolanos etiam diversarum specierum, emblicos puta et chebulos medicorum appellatione.*

cotton in divers colours, and they ornament themselves by staining their bodies with black and red colours, extracted from the juice of certain fruits cultivated for that purpose in their gardens, just as did the Agathyrsi. Some of them stain the entire body, others only a part. Ordinarily they draw upon their skin designs of flowers, roses, and intertwined nets, according to each one's fancy. Their language bears no resemblance to that of the neighbouring islanders. Torrential streams run in a westerly direction. Columbus resolved to explore this country towards the west, for he remembered Paria, Boca de la Sierpe, and other countries already discovered to the east, believing they must be joined to the land where he was; and in this he was not deceived.

On the thirteenth day of the calends of September the Admiral left Quiriquetana. After sailing thirty leagues, he came to a river, in the estuary of which he took fresh water. The coast was clear of rocks and reefs, and everywhere there was good anchorage. He writes, however, that the ocean current was so strong against him that in forty days' sailing it was with the greatest difficulty he covered seventy leagues, and then only by tacking. From time to time, when he sought towards nightfall to forestall the danger of being wrecked in the darkness on that unknown coast, and tried to draw near to land, he was beaten back. He reports that within a distance of eight leagues he discovered three rivers of clear water, upon whose banks grew canes as thick round as a man's leg. The waters of these streams are full of fish and immense turtles, and everywhere were to be seen multitudes of crocodiles, drinking in the sun with huge yawning mouths. There were plenty of other animals of which the Admiral does not give the names. The aspect of this country presents great variety, being in some places rocky and broken up into sharp promontories and jagged rocks, while in others the fertility of the soil is unexcelled by that of any known

land. From one shore to another the names of the chiefs and principal inhabitants differ; in one place they are called *caciques*, as we have already said; in another *quebi*, farther on *tiba*. The principal natives are sometimes called *sacchus* and sometimes *jura*. A man who has distinguished himself in conflict with an enemy and whose face is scarred, is regarded as a hero and is called *cupra*. The people are called *chyvis*, and a man is *home*. When they wish to say, "That's for you, my man," the phrase is, "*Hoppa home*."

Another great river navigable for large ships was discovered, in the mouth of which lie four small islands, thickly grown with flowers and trees. Columbus called them Quatro Tempore. Thirteen leagues farther on, always sailing eastwards against adverse currents, he discovered twelve small islands; and as these produced a kind of fruit resembling our limes, he called them Limonares. Twelve leagues farther, always in the same direction, he discovered a large harbour extending three leagues into the interior of the country, and into which flows an important river. It was at this spot that Nicuesa was afterwards lost when searching for Veragua, as we have already related; and for this reason later explorers have named it Rio de los Perdidos. Continuing his course against the ocean current, the Admiral discovered a number of mountains, valleys, rivers, and harbours; the atmosphere was laden with balmy odours.

Columbus writes that not one of his men fell ill till he reached a place the natives call Quicuri,<sup>1</sup> which is a point or cape where the port of Cariai lies. The Admiral called it Mirobolan because trees of that name grew there spontaneously. At the port of Cariai about two hundred natives appeared, each armed with three or four spears; but mild-mannered and hospitable. As they did not know to what strange race the Spaniards belonged,

<sup>1</sup> Quiribiri. Columbus arrived there on September 25th.

they prepared to receive them and asked for a parley. Amicable signs were exchanged and they swam out to our people, proposing to trade and enter into commercial relations. In order to gain their confidence, the Admiral ordered some European articles to be distributed gratuitously amongst them. These they refused to accept, by signs, for nothing they said was intelligible. They suspected the Spaniards of setting a trap for them in offering these presents, and refused to accept their gifts. They left everything that was given them on the shore.<sup>1</sup> Such are the courtesy and generosity of these people of Cariai, that they would rather give than receive.

They sent two young girls, virgins of remarkable beauty, to our men, and gave it to be understood that they might take them away. These young girls, like all the other women, wore waist-cloths made of bandolets of cotton, which is the costume of the women of Cariai. The men on the contrary go naked. The women cut their hair, or let it grow behind and shave the forehead; then they gather it up in bands of white stuff and twist it round the head, just as do our girls. The Admiral had them clothed and gave them presents, and a bonnet of red wool stuff for their father; after which he sent them away. Later all these things were found upon the shore, because he had refused their presents. Two men, however, left voluntarily with Columbus, in order to learn our language and to teach it to their own people.

The tides are not very perceptible on that coast. This was discovered by observing the trees growing not far from the shore and on the river banks. Everybody who has visited these regions agrees on this point. The ebb and flow are scarcely perceptible, and only affect a part

<sup>1</sup> Suspicion and mistrust were mutual, for Columbus thought the natives were practising magic when they cast perfumes before them, as they cautiously advanced towards him; he afterwards described them as powerful magicians.



of the shores of the continent, and likewise of all the islands. Columbus relates that trees grow in the sea within sight of land, drooping their branches towards the water once they have grown above the surface. Sprouts, like graftings of vines, take root and planted in the earth they, in their turn, become trees of the same evergreen species. Pliny has spoken of such trees in the second book of his natural history, but those he mentions grew in an arid soil and not in the sea.

The same animals we have above described exist in Cariai. There is, however, one of a totally different kind, which resembles a large monkey, but is provided with a much larger and stronger tail. Hanging by this tail, it swings to and fro three or four times, and then jumps from tree to tree as though it were flying.<sup>1</sup> One of our archers shot one with his arrow, and the wounded monkey dropped onto the ground and fiercely attacked the man who had wounded it. The latter defended himself with his sword and cut off the monkey's arm, and despite its desperate efforts, captured it. When brought in contact with men, on board the ship, it gradually became tame. While it was kept chained, other hunters brought from the swamps a wild boar which they had pursued through the forests, desiring to eat some fresh meat. The men showed this enraged wild boar to the monkey, and both animals bristled with fury. The monkey, beside itself with rage, sprang upon the boar, winding its tail about him, and with the one arm its conqueror had left him, seized the boar by the throat and strangled it. Such are the ferocious animals and others similar, which inhabit this country. The natives of Cariai preserve the bodies of their chiefs and their relatives, drying them upon hurdles and then packing them in leaves; but the common people bury their dead in the forest.

<sup>1</sup> Possibly the *simia seniculus*.

Leaving Cariai and sailing a distance of twenty leagues the Spaniards discovered a gulf of such size that they thought that it must have a circumference of twelve leagues. Four small fertile islands, separated from one another by narrow straits, lie across the opening of this gulf, making it a safe harbour.

We have elsewhere called the port, situated at the extreme point, by its native name of Cerabaroa; but it is only the right coast upon entering the gulf bears that name, the left coast being called Aburema. Numerous and fertile islands dot the gulf, and the bottom affords excellent anchorage. The clearness of the water makes it easily discernible, and fish are very abundant. The country round about is equal in fertility to the very best. The Spaniards captured two natives who wore gold necklaces, which they called guanines. These collars are delicately wrought in the form of eagles, lions, or other similar animals, but it was observed that the metal was not very pure. The two natives, brought from Cariai, explained that both the regions of Cerabaroa and Aburema were rich in gold, and that all the gold their countrymen required for ornaments was obtained from thence by trading. They added that, in six villages of Cerabaroa, situated a short distance in the interior of the country, gold was found; for from the earliest times they had traded with those tribes. The names of those five villages are Chirara, Puren, Chitaza, Jurech, and Atamea.

All the men of the province of Cerabaroa go entirely naked, but they paint their bodies in different ways, and they love to wear garlands of flowers on their heads, and bands made from the claws of lions and tigers. The women wear narrow waist-cloths of cotton.

Leaving this harbour and following along the same coast, a distance of eighteen leagues, the Spaniards came upon a band of three hundred naked men, upon the bank of the river they had just discovered. These men uttered

threatening shouts and, filling their mouths with water and the herbs of the coast, spat at them. Throwing their javelins, brandishing their lances and machanes, which we have already said were wooden swords, they strove to repel our men from the coast. They were painted in different fashions; some of them painted the whole body except the face, others only a part. They gave it to be understood that they wished neither peace nor trading relations with the Spaniards. The Admiral ordered several cannon-shots to be fired, but so as to kill nobody, for he always showed himself disposed to use peaceable measures with these new people. Frightened by the noise, the natives fell on the ground imploring peace, and in this wise trading relations were established. In exchange for their gold and guanines they received glass beads and other similar trifles. These natives have drums and sea-shell trumpets, which they use to excite their courage when going into battle.

The following rivers are found along this part of the coast: the Acateba, the Quareba, the Zobroba, the Aiaguitin, the Wrida, the Duribba, and the Veragua. Gold is found everywhere. Instead of cloaks, the natives wear large leaves on their heads as a protection against the heat or the rain.

The Admiral afterwards coasted along the shores of Ebetere and Embigar. Two rivers, Zahoran and Cubigar, remarkable for their volume and the quantity of fish they contain, water these coasts.

Beyond a distance of fifty leagues, gold is no longer found. Only three leagues away stands a rock which, as we have already stated in our description of Nicuesa's unfortunate voyage, the Spaniards called Penon and which the natives call Vibba.

In the same neighbourhood and about two leagues distant is the bay Columbus discovered and named Porto Bello. The country, which has gold and is called

by the natives Xaguaguara is very populous but the inhabitants are naked. The cacique of Xaguaguara paints himself black, and his subjects are painted red. The cacique and seven of his principal followers wore leaves of gold in their noses, hanging down to their lips, and in their opinion no more beautiful ornament exists. The men cover their sexual organs with a sea-shell, and the women wear a band of cotton stuff.

There is a fruit growing in their gardens which resembles a pine-nut;<sup>1</sup> we have elsewhere said that it grows upon a plant, resembling an artichoke, and that the fruit, which is not unworthy of a king's table, is perishable; I have spoken elsewhere at length concerning these. The natives call the plant bearing this fruit *hibuero*. From time to time crocodiles are found which, when they dive or scramble away, leave behind them an odour more delicate than musk or castor. The natives who live along the banks of the Nile relate the same fact concerning the female of the crocodile, whose belly exhales the perfumes of Araby.

From this point the Admiral put his fleet about, and returned over his course, for he could no longer battle against the contrary currents.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, his ships were rotting from day to day, their hulks being eaten into by the sharp points of worms engendered by the sun from the waters of these regions situated near the equator. The Venetians call these worms *bissa*, and quantities of them come into life in both the ports of Alexandria, in Egypt. These worms, which are a cubit long and sometimes more, and never thicker than your little finger, undermine the solidity of ships which lie too long at anchor. The Spanish sailors call this pest *broma*. It

<sup>1</sup> The pineapple.

<sup>2</sup> Columbus describes the storms which prevailed during that entire month of December as the most formidable he had ever experienced; on the thirteenth his vessels had the narrowest possible escape from a waterspout.

was therefore because he feared the *bromas* and was wearied out with struggling against the currents that the Admiral allowed his ships to be carried by the ocean towards the west. Two leagues distant from Veragua he sailed up the river Hiebra, since it was navigable for the largest vessels. Though it is less important, yet the Veragua gives its name to the country, since the ruler of that region, which is watered by both rivers, has his residence on the bank of the Veragua.

Let us now relate the good and ill fortune they there encountered. Columbus established himself on the banks of the Hiebra, sending his brother Bartholomew Columbus, Adelantado of Hispaniola, in command of sixty-eight men in ships' boats to Veragua. The cacique of the country came down the river with a fleet of canoes to meet the Adelantado. This man was naked and unarmed, and was accompanied by a numerous following. Hardly had a few words been exchanged when the followers of the cacique, fearing that he might weary himself or forget his royal dignity by standing while he talked, carried a stone from the neighbouring bank, and after washing and polishing it with care, respectfully tendered it to their chief to serve as a chair. When seated, the cacique seemed to convey by signs to the Spaniards that he permitted them to sail on the rivers of his territory.

The sixth of the ides of February the Adelantado marched along the banks of the river Veragua, leaving his boats behind. He came to the Duraba, a stream richer in gold than the Hiebra or the Veragua; moreover, in all these regions gold is found amongst the roots of the trees, along the banks and amongst the rocks and stones left by the torrents. Wherever they dug a palm deep, gold was found mingled with the earth turned out. This decided the attempt to found a colony, but the natives opposed this project, for they foresaw their own prompt destruction. They armed themselves, and,



uttering horrible cries, they attacked our men who were engaged in building cabins. This first attack was, with difficulty, repelled. The natives threw darts from a distance and then, gradually drawing nearer, they used their wooden swords and machanes, in a furious assault. So greatly enraged were they that, astonishing as it may seem, they were not frightened either by bows, arquebuses, or the noise of the cannon fired from the ships. Once they drew off, but soon returned to the charge in greater numbers and more furiously than before. They preferred to die rather than see their land occupied by the Spaniards whom they were perfectly willing to receive as guests, but whom they rejected as inhabitants. The more the Spaniards defended themselves, the more did the multitude of their assailants increase, directing their attack sometimes on the front, sometimes on the flank, without cessation both day and night. Fortunately the fleet at anchorage assured the Spaniards a secure retreat and, deciding to abandon the attempt to colonise there, they returned on board.

Their return to Jamaica, which is the island lying south and near to Cuba and Hispaniola was accomplished with great difficulty, for their ships had been so eaten by bromas, —to use a Spanish word—that they were like sieves and almost went to pieces during the voyage. The men saved themselves by working incessantly, bailing out the water that rushed in through great fissures in the ship's side and finally, exhausted by fatigue, they succeeded in reaching Jamaica. Their ships sank; and leaving them there stranded, they passed six months in the power of the barbarians, a more wretched existence than that of Alcimenides as described by Virgil. They were forced to live on what the earth produced or what it pleased the natives to give them. The mortal enmities existing amongst the savage caciques were of some service to the Spaniards; for to secure their alliance the caciques distributed bread to the starving



whenever they were about to undertake a campaign. O how sad and wretched it is, Most Holy Father, to eat the bread of charity! Your Holiness may well understand, especially when man is deprived of wine, meat, different kinds of cheeses, and of everything to which from their infancy the stomachs of Europeans are accustomed.

Under the stress of necessity the Admiral resolved to tempt fortune. Desiring to know what destiny God reserved for him, he took counsel with his intendant, Diego Mendez,<sup>1</sup> and two islanders of Jamaica who were familiar with those waters. Mendez started in a canoe, although the sea was already ruffled. From reef to reef and from rock to rock, his narrow skiff tossed by the waves, Diego nevertheless succeeded in reaching the extreme point of Hispaniola which is some forty leagues distant from Jamaica. The two natives returned joyously, anticipating the reward promised them by Columbus. Mendez made his way on foot to Santo Domingo, the capital of the island, where he rented two boats and set out to rejoin his commander. All the Spaniards returned together to Hispaniola, but in a state of extreme weakness and exhaustion from their privations. I do not know what has since happened to them.<sup>2</sup> Let us now resume our narrative.

According to his letters and the reports of his companions, all the regions explored by Columbus are well wooded at all seasons of the year, shaded by leafy green trees. Moreover, what is more important, they are healthy. Not a man of his crew was ever ill or exposed to the

<sup>1</sup> The events of this fourth voyage are related in the interesting *Relacion hecha por Diego Mendez de algunos acontecimientos del ultimo viaje del Almirante Don Christobal Colon*. King Ferdinand afterwards granted Mendez a *canoe* in his armorial bearings, in memory of the services he had rendered.

<sup>2</sup> Columbus reached Santo Domingo on August 18th, and there rested until September 12th, when he embarked for Spain landing at San Lucar on November 7.

rigours of cold nor the heats of summer throughout the whole extent of fifty leagues between the great harbour of Cerabaro and the Hiebra and Veragua rivers.

All the inhabitants of Cerabaro and the neighbourhood of Hiebra and Veragua only seek gold at certain fixed periods. They are just as competent as our miners who work the silver and iron mines. From long experience, from the aspect of the torrent whose waters they divert, from the colour of the earth and various other signs, they know where the richest gold deposits are; they believe in a tradition of their ancestors which teaches that there is a divinity in gold, and they take care only to look for this metal after purifying themselves. They abstain from carnal and other pleasures, also eating and drinking in great moderation, during the time they seek gold. They think that men live and die just like animals, and have, therefore, no religion. Nevertheless they venerate the sun, and salute the sunrise with respect.

Let us now speak of the mountains and the general aspect of the continent.

Lofty mountains<sup>1</sup> which end in a ridge extending from east to west are seen in the distance towards the south from all along the coast. We believe this range separates the two seas of which we have already spoken at length, and that it forms a barrier dividing their waters just as Italy separates the Tyrrhenian from the Adriatic Sea. From wherever they sail, between Cape San Augustins, belonging to the Portuguese and facing the Atlas, as far as Uraba and the port of Cerabaro and the other western lands recently discovered, the navigators behold during their entire voyage, whether near at hand or in the distance mountain ranges; sometimes their slopes are gentle, sometimes lofty, rough, and rocky, or perhaps clothed with woods and shrubbery. This is likewise the case in the Taurus, and on the slopes of our Apennines, as well

<sup>1</sup> The Cordilleras on the Isthmus of Panama.

as on other similar ranges. As is the case elsewhere, beautiful valleys separate the mountain peaks. The peaks of the range marking the frontier of Veragua are believed to rise above the clouds, for they are very rarely visible because of the almost continuous density of mists and clouds.

The Admiral, who first explored this region, believes these peaks rise to a height of forty miles, and he says that at the base of the mountains there is a road leading to the South Sea. He compares its position with that of Venice in relation to Genoa, or Janua, as the inhabitants who boast that Janus was their founder, call their city. The Admiral believes that this continent extends to the west and that the greater part of its lands lies in that direction. In like manner we observe that the leg forming Italy branches out beyond the Alps into the countries of the Gauls, the Germans, the Pannonians, and ultimately those of the Sarmats and the Scythians extending to the Riphe Mountains and the glacial sea, not to mention Thrace, all Greece, and the countries ending towards the south at Cape Malea and the Hellespont, and north at the Euxine and the Palus Maeotidis. The Admiral believes that on the left and west, this continent joins on to the India of the Ganges, and that towards the right it extends northwards to the glacial sea and the north pole, lying beyond the lands of the Hyperboreans; the two seas, that is to say the southern and the northern ocean, would thus join one another at the angles of this continent. I do not believe all its coasts are washed by the ocean, as is our Europe which the Hellespont, the Tanais, the glacial ocean, the Spanish sea and the Atlantic completely surround. In my opinion the strong ocean currents running towards the west prevent these two seas from being connected, and I suppose, as I have said above, that it does join on to northern lands.

We have spoken enough about longitude, Most Holy Father; let us see what are the theories concerning latitude.

We have already stated that the distance separating the South Sea from the Atlantic Ocean is a very small one; for this fact was demonstrated during the expedition of Vasco Nuñez and his companions. Just as our Alps in Europe, narrow in some places and broaden out over a greater extent in others, so by an analogous arrangement of nature this new continent lengthens in some places, extending to a great distance, and in others it narrows by gulfs which, from the opposite seas, encroach on the land between them. For example: at both Uraba and Veragua the distance between the two oceans is trifling, while in the region of the Maragnon River, on the contrary, it is vastly extended. That is, if the Maragnon is indeed a river and not a sea. I incline nevertheless to the first hypothesis, because its waters are fresh. The immense torrents necessary to feed such a stream could certainly not exist in a small space. The same applies in the case of the river Dobaiba,<sup>1</sup> which flows into the sea at the gulf of Uraba, by an estuary three miles wide and forty-five fathoms deep; it must be supposed that there is a large country amongst the mountains of Dobaiba from which this river flows. It is claimed that it is formed by four streams descending from these mountains, and the Spaniards have named it San Juan. Where it falls into the gulf, it has seven mouths, like the Nile. In this same Uraba region the continent diminishes in size in an astonishing manner, and it is said that in places its width is not more than fifteen leagues. The country is impassable because of its swamps and quagmires which the Spaniards call *tremelaes* or *trampales*, or by other names *cenegales*, *sumineros*, and *zahoudaderos*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Dobaiba may be either the Magdalena or the Atrato.

<sup>2</sup> All words meaning practically the same thing, viz., bog, quagmire, swamp, quicksand, etc., some of them evidently obsolete, as they are not found in modern Spanish dictionaries.

Before going farther it may not be useless to explain the derivation of the name of these mountains. According to native tradition there formerly lived a woman of great intelligence and extraordinary prudence, called Dobaiba. Even during her lifetime she was highly respected, and after her death the natives of the country venerated her; and it is her name the country bears. She it is who sends thunder and lightning, who destroys the crops when she is vexed, for they childishly believe, that Dobaiba becomes angry when they fail to offer sacrifices in her honour. There are deceivers who, under the pretence of religion, inculcate this belief among the natives, hoping thereby to increase the number of gifts offered by the latter to the goddess, and thus augment their own profits. This is enough on this subject.

It is related that in the swamps of this narrow part of the continent numerous crocodiles, dragons, bats, and gnats exist, all of the most formidable description. In seeking to reach the southern sea, it is necessary to go through the mountains, and to avoid the neighbourhood of these swamps. Some people claim that a single valley separates in two ranges the mountains facing the southern sea, and that in this valley rises the river which the Spaniards have named *Rio de los Perdidos*, in memory of the catastrophe of Nicuesa and his companions. It is not far distant from Cerabaro; but as its waters are fresh, I believe the people who sustain this theory are telling fables.

Let us close this chapter with one last topic. To the right and left of Darien flow about a score of gold-producing rivers. We here repeat what has been told to us, and about which everybody agrees. When asked why they did not bring more considerable quantities of gold from that country, the Spaniards answer that miners are required, and that the explorers of the new countries are not men inured to fatigue. This explains why much

less gold is obtained than the wealth of the soil affords. It would even seem that precious stones are found there. Without repeating what I have said concerning Cariiai and the neighbourhood of Santa Marta, here is another proof. A certain Andreas Morales, a pilot of these seas, who was a friend and companion of Juan de la Cosa during his lifetime, possessed a diamond which a young native of Paria in Cumana had discovered. It was of the greatest rarity and is described as being as long as two middle finger joints. It was as thick as the first thumb joint, was pointed at both ends, and had eight well-cut facets. When struck upon an anvil, it wore the files and hammers, itself remaining intact. This young man of Cumana wore it hanging round his neck, and he sold it to Andreas Morales for five green glass beads because their colour pleased him. The Spaniards also found topazes on the beach, but as they only think of gold, they turn their backs on these precious stones; for only gold attracts them, only gold do they seek. Thus the majority of Spaniards despise people who wear rings and precious stones, regarding it as almost a contemptible thing to decorate one's self with precious stones. Our people above all hold this opinion. Sometimes the nobles, for a wedding ceremony or a royal festival, like to display jewels in their golden necklaces, or to embroider their costumes with pearls mixed with diamonds; but on all other occasions they abstain, for it is considered effeminate to decorate one's self in this wise, just as it would be to be perfumed with the odours of Araby. Any one they meet smelling of musk or castor, they suspect of being given to guilty passions.

Fruit plucked from a tree argues that the tree bears fruit; a fish taken from a river warrants the affirmation that fish live in the river. In like manner a bit of gold or a single precious stone justifies the belief that the earth where they are found, produces gold and precious stones.



This must certainly be admitted. We have already related what the companions of Pedro Arias and some officials discovered at the port of Santa Marta in the Cariai region when they penetrated there with the whole fleet. Every day the harvest increases, and overtops that of the last. The exploits of Saturn and Hercules and other heroes, glorified by antiquity, are reduced to nothing. If the incessant efforts of the Spaniards result in new discoveries, we shall give our attention to them. May Your Holiness fare well, and let me know your opinion upon these aggrandisements of your Apostolic Chair, and thus encourage me in my future labours.

## BOOK V

EVERY creature in this sublunary world, Most Holy Father, that gives birth to something, either immediately afterwards closes the womb or rests for a period. The new continent, however, is not governed by this rule, for each day it creates without ceasing and brings forth new products, which continue to furnish men gifted with power and an enthusiasm for novelties, sufficient material to satisfy their curiosity.

Your Holiness may ask, "Why this preamble?" The reason is that I had scarcely finished composing and dictating the story of the adventures of Vasco Nuñez and his companions during their exploration of the South Sea, and had hardly despatched that narration to Your Holiness by Giovanni Ruffo di Forli, Archbishop of Cosenza and Galeazzo Butrigario, Apostolic nuncios and stimulators of my somnolent spirits, than new letters<sup>1</sup> arrived from Pedro Arias whose departure last year as commander of a fleet bound for the new continent we have already announced. The General duly arrived with his soldiers and his ships. These letters are signed by Juan Cabedo whom Your Holiness, upon the solicitation of the Catholic King, appointed Bishop of the province of Darien, and his signature is accompanied by those of the principal officials sent to administer the government, viz.: Alonzo de Ponte, Diego Marques, and Juan de Tavira. May Your Holiness, therefore, deign to accept the narrative of this voyage.

<sup>1</sup> If still in existence these letters have yet to be found.

On the eve of the ides of April, 1514, Pedro Arias gave the signal to start and sailed from the port of San Lucar de Barrameda, a fortified place at the mouth of the Bœtis, called by the Spaniards the Guadalquivir. From the mouth of the Bœtis, to the seven Canary Islands the distance is about four hundred miles. Some people think these islands correspond to the Fortunate Isles, but others hold a contrary opinion. These islands are named as follows: Lancelota and Fortaventura are the first sighted, after which the Grand Canary, followed by Teneriffe: Gomera lies a short distance to the north of Teneriffe and the islands of Palma and Ferro seem to form a rear-guard. After a voyage of eight days, Pedro Arias landed at Gomera. His fleet consisted of seventeen vessels, carrying fifteen hundred men, to which number he had been restricted; for he left behind him more than two thousand discontented and disconsolate men, who begged to be allowed to embark at their own expense; such was their avidity for gold and such their desire to behold the new continent.

Pedro Arias stopped sixteen days at Gomera, to take on a supply of wood and water, and to repair his ships damaged by a storm, especially the flag-ship, which had lost her rudder. The archipelago of the Canaries is indeed a most convenient port for navigators. The expedition left the Canaries the nones of May, and saw no land until the third day of the nones of June, when the ships approached the island of the man-eating cannibals which has been named Domingo. On this island, which is about eight hundred leagues from Gomera, Pedro Arias remained four days and replenished his supply of water and wood. Not a man or a trace of a human being was discovered. Along the coast were many crabs and huge lizards. The course afterwards passed by the islands of Madanino and Guadeloupe and Maria Galante, of which I have spoken at length in my

First Decade. Pedro Arias also sailed over vast stretches of water full of grass<sup>1</sup>; neither the Admiral, Columbus, who first discovered these lands and crossed this sea of grass, nor the Spaniards accompanying Pedro Arias are able to explain the cause of this growth. Some people think the sea is muddy thereabouts and the grasses, growing on the bottom, reach to the surface; similar phenomena being observed in lakes and large rivers of running waters. Others do not think that the grasses grow in that sea, but are torn up by storms from the numerous reefs and afterwards float about; but it is impossible to prove anything because it is not known yet whether they fasten themselves to the prows of the ships they follow or whether they float after being pulled up. I am inclined to believe they grow in those waters, otherwise the ships would collect them in their course,—just as brooms gather up all the rubbish in the house,—which would thus delay their progress.

The fourth day of the ides of March snow-covered mountains were observed. The sea runs strongly to the west and its current is as rapid as a mountain torrent. Nevertheless the Spaniards did not lay their course directly towards the west, but deviated slightly to the south. I hope to be able to demonstrate this by one of the tables of the new cosmography which it is my intention to write, if God gives me life. The Gaira River, celebrated for the massacre of the Spaniards during the voyage of Roderigo Colmenares, which I have elsewhere related, rises in these mountains. Many other rivers water this coast. The province of Caramaira has two

<sup>1</sup> The *Mare Sargassum* of the ancients: also called *Fucus Natans*, and by the Spaniards *Mar de Sargasso*. A curious marine meadow nearly seven times larger than France, in extent, lying between 19° and 34° north latitude. There is a lesser *Fucus* bank between the Bahamas and the Bermudas. Consult Aristotle, *Meteor.* ii., 1, 14; *De mirabilibus auscultationibus*, p. 100; Theophrastus, *Historia Plantarum*, iv., 7; Arienus, *Ora Maritima*, v., 408; Humboldt, *Cosmos*, tom. ii.; Gaffarel, *La Mer des Sargasses*; Leps, *Bulletin de la Soc. Geog.*, Sept., 1865.

celebrated harbours, the first being Carthagena and the second Santa Marta, these being their Spanish names. A small province of the latter is called by the natives Saturma. The harbour of Santa Marta is very near the snow-covered mountains; in fact it lies at their foot. The port of Carthagena is fifty leagues from there, to the west. Wonderful things are written about the port of Santa Marta, and all who come back tell such. Among the latter is Vespucci,<sup>1</sup> nephew of Amerigo Vespucci of Florence who, at his death, bequeathed his knowledge of navigation and cosmography to his nephew. This young man has, in fact, been sent by the King as pilot to the flagship and commissioned to take the astronomical observations. The steering has been entrusted to the principal pilot, Juan Serrano, a Castilian, who had often sailed in those parts. I have often invited this young Vespucci to my table, not only because he possesses real talent, but also because he has taken notes of all he observed during his voyage.<sup>2</sup>

According to the letters of Pedro Arias, and to the narrations of Vespucci, what happened is as follows: It is believed that the natives belong to the same race as the Caribs or Cannibals, for they are just as overbearing and cruel. They seek to repulse from their shores all Spaniards who approach for they consider them as enemies and are determined to prevent their landing, despite their attempts. These naked barbarians are so determined and courageous, that they ventured to attack the entire squadron and tried to

<sup>1</sup> He was appointed cartographer of the *Casa de Contractacion* at Seville, in 1512. Henry Harisse makes frequent mention of the Vespucci in his work on the Cabots.

<sup>2</sup> One of many instances of Peter Martyr's hospitality to men of parts and activity, from whose conversation and narrations he set himself to glean the material for his writings. His information was first-hand, and was frequently poured out to him over his hospitable board, under which the home-coming adventurers were glad to stretch their legs, while their genial host stimulated their memories and loosed their tongues with the generous wines of his adopted country.

drive it from their coasts. They threw themselves into the sea, like madmen, showing not the slightest fear of the number and size of our vessels. They attacked the Spaniards with all sorts of darts; protected by the sides of the ships and by their shields, the latter resisted, though two of them were mortally wounded. It was then decided to fire cannon, and frightened by the noise and the effect of the projectiles, the natives fled, believing the Spaniards commanded the thunder; for they are frequently exposed to storms owing to the character of their country and the neighbourhood of lofty mountains. Although the enemy were conquered and dispersed, the Spaniards hesitated whether to go on shore or to remain on board their ships. A consultation was held in which different opinions were expressed. Fear counselled them to stop where they were, but human respect urged them to land. They feared the poisoned arrows which the natives shot with such sure aim, but on the other hand it seemed shameful, unworthy, and infamous to sail by with such a large fleet and so many soldiers without landing. Human respect carried the day, and after landing by means of light barques, they pursued the scattered natives.

According to the report of Pedro Arias and the narrative of Vespucci, the harbour is three leagues in circumference. It is a safe one, and its waters are so clear that at a depth of twenty cubits, the stones on its bottom may be counted. Streams empty into the harbour but they are not navigable for large ships, only for native canoes. There is an extraordinary abundance of both fresh- and salt-water fish, of great variety and good flavour. Many native fishing boats were found in this harbour, and also a quantity of nets ingeniously made from stout grasses worn by friction and interwoven with spun cotton cords. The natives of Caramaira, Cariai, and Saturma are all skilful fishermen, and it is by selling their fish to the inland



tribes that they procure the products they need and desire.

When the barbarians withdrew from the coast, the Spaniards entered their boios, that is to say their houses. The natives frequently attacked our men with fury, seeking to kill them all with flights of poisoned arrows. When they realised that their houses were to be invaded and robbed, and particularly when they witnessed their women and the majority of their children carried into captivity, their fury increased. The furniture found in these houses was discovered to be made of large reeds gathered along the shore, or of various grasses resembling cords. Woven mats of various colours, and cotton hangings, upon which lions, eagles, tigers, and other figures were executed with great care and taste, were found. The doors of the houses and of the rooms inside were hung with snail-shells strung upon fine cord, which the wind easily shook, producing a noise of rattling shells which delighted them.

From various sources astonishing tales of the natives have been told me. Amongst others, Gonzales Fernando Oviedo,<sup>1</sup> who is a royal official with the title of inspector, boasts that he has travelled extensively in the interior of the country. He found a piece of sapphire larger than a goose's egg, and upon the hills he explored with about twenty men, he claims that he has seen a large quantity of emerald matrix, chalcedon, jasper, and great lumps of mountain amber.

Attached to the tapestries woven with gold which the Caribs left behind them in their houses when they fled, were precious stones: Oviedo and his companions affirm that they saw them. The country also has forests of scarlet wood and rich gold deposits. Everywhere along the coast and on the banks of the rivers exist marcasites<sup>2</sup> which indicate the presence of gold. Oviedo

<sup>1</sup> *Sommario dell'Indie Occidenti*, cap. lxxxii., in Ramusio.

<sup>2</sup> A variety of iron pyrites.

further states that in a region called Zenu, lying ninety miles east of Darien, a kind of business is carried on for which there are found in the native houses huge jars and baskets, cleverly made of reeds adapted to that purpose. These receptacles are filled with dried and salted grasshoppers, crabs, crayfish, and locusts, which destroy the harvests. When asked the purpose of these provisions, the natives replied they were destined to be sold to the people inland, and in exchange for these precious insects and dried fish they procure the foreign products they require. The natives live in scattered fashion, their houses not being built together. This land, inhabited by the people of Caramaira, is an Elysian country, well cultivated, fertile, exposed neither to the rigours of winter nor the great heats of summer. Day and night are of about equal length.

After driving off the barbarians, the Spaniards entered a valley two leagues in breadth and three long, which extended to the grassy and wooded slopes of the mountains. Two other valleys, each watered by a river, also open to the right and left at the foot of these mountains. One is the Gaira, and the other has not yet received a name. There are, in these valleys, cultivated gardens, and fields watered by ingeniously planned ditches. Our Milanese and Tuscans cultivate and water their fields in precisely the same manner.

The ordinary food of these natives is the same as the others—agoes, yucca, maize, potatoes, fruits, and fish. They rarely eat human flesh, for they do not often capture strangers. Sometimes they arm themselves and go hunting in neighbouring regions, but they do not eat one another. There is, however, one fact sad to hear. These filthy eaters of men are reported to have killed myriads of their kind to satisfy their passion. Our compatriots have discovered a thousand islands as fair as Paradise, a thousand Elysian regions, which these

brigands have depopulated. Charming and blessed as they are, they are nevertheless deserted. From this sole instance Your Holiness may judge of the perversity of this brutal race. We have already said that the island of San Juan lies near to Hispaniola and is called by the natives Burichena. Now it is related that within our own time more than five thousand islanders have been carried off from Burichena for food, and were eaten by the inhabitants of these neighbouring islands which are now called Santa Cruz, Hayhay, Guadaloupe, and Queraqueira. But enough has been said about the appetites of these filthy creatures.

Let us now speak a little of the roots destined to become the food of Christians and take the place of wheaten bread, radishes, and our other vegetables. We have already said several times that the yucca was a root from which the natives make a bread they like both in the islands and on the continent; but we have not yet spoken of its culture, its growth, or of its several varieties. When planting yucca, they dig a hole knee-deep in the ground, and pile the earth in heaps nine feet square, in each one of which they plant a dozen yucca roots about six feet long, in such wise that all the ends come together in the centre of the mound. From their joining and even from their extremities, young roots fine as a hair sprout and, increasing little by little, attain, when they are full grown, the thickness and length of a man's arm, and often of his leg. The mounds of earth are thus converted little by little into a network of roots. According to their description, the yucca requires at least half a year to reach maturity, and the natives also say that if it is left longer in the ground, for instance for two years, it improves and produces a superior quality of bread. When cut, the women break and mash it on stones prepared for the purpose, just as amongst us cheese is pressed; or they pack it into a bag made of grass or reeds from the riverside,

afterwards placing a heavy stone on the bag and hanging it up for a whole day to let the juice run off. This juice, as we have already said in speaking of the islanders, is dangerous; but if cooked, it becomes wholesome, as is the case with the whey of our milk. Let us observe, however, that this juice is not fatal to the natives of the continent.

There are several varieties of yucca, one of which being dearer and more agreeable, is reserved for making the bread of the caciques. Other varieties are set aside for the nobles, and certain others for the common people. When the juice has all run off, the pulp is spread out and cooked on slabs of earthenware made for the purpose, just as our people do cheese. This sort of bread is the most used and is called *cazabi*. It is said there are also several kinds of agoes and potatoes, and the natives use these more as vegetables than for breadmaking, just as we do radishes, turnips, mushrooms, and other similar foods. Most of all do the natives like potatoes, which indeed are preferable to mushrooms, because of their flavour and softness, particularly when of a superior quality. We have now spoken enough of roots, so let us come to another kind of bread. The natives have another kind of grain similar to millet, save that the kernels are larger. When there is a shortage of yucca, they grind it into flour by mashing it between stones; the bread made from this is coarser. This grain is sown three times a year, since the fertility of the soil corresponds to the evenness of the seasons. I have already spoken of this in preceding places. When the Spaniards first arrived, all these roots and grains and maize, as well as various other kinds of fruit trees were cultivated.

In Caramaira and Saturma there are such broad, straight roads that one might think they had been drawn with a lead pencil. Among this people are found cups with handles, jugs, jars, long platters, and plates of

earthenware, as well as amphoras of different colours for keeping water fresh.

When ordered to tender obedience to the King of Castile and to embrace our religion, or get out, the Indians replied with flights of poisoned arrows. The Spaniards captured some of them, whom they immediately set at liberty after giving them some clothing. Some others they took on board the ships and displayed our grandeur before them, so that they might tell their compatriots; after which they released them, hoping thus to win their friendship. Gold has been proven to exist in all the rivers. Here and there in the native houses fresh meat of deer and wild boar was found; a food which they eat with great pleasure. These natives also keep numbers of birds which they rear either for food or for their pleasure. The climate is healthy; I may cite as a proof the fact that the Spaniards slept at night on the river banks and in the open air, without anybody suffering from headache or pains.

The Spaniards likewise found huge balls of spun cotton and bunches of divers coloured feathers from which headdresses, similar to those of our cuirassiers, or mantles of state are made. These are elegancies among the natives. There was also a large number of bows and arrows.

Sometimes the bodies of their ancestors are burned and the bones buried, and sometimes they are preserved entire in their boios, that is to say houses, and treated with great respect; or again, they may be ornamented with gold and precious stones. It was noted that the breast ornaments, which they call *guanines* were made of copper rather than gold, and it was surmised that they dealt with tricky strangers who sold them these guanines, palming off upon them vile metal for gold. Neither did the Spaniards discover the trick till they melted these supposed valuables.

Some architects who had wandered a short distance from the coast came upon some fragments of white marble, and they think that strangers must at some time have landed there and quarried this marble from the mountains, leaving these fragments scattered about the plain. It was at this place that the Spaniards learned that the river Maragnon flows from the snow-covered mountains, its volume being increased by numerous streams flowing into it. Its great size is due to the fact that its course is long, and that it only reaches the sea after having traversed well-watered regions.

The signal for departure was finally given. Nine hundred men who had been landed, assembled shouting joyfully, marching in order, loaded with plunder, and quite showy with crowns, mantles, feathers, and native military ornaments. The anchor was hoisted on the sixteenth day of the calends of July. The ships, damaged in frequent gales, had been repaired, the flag-ship having especially suffered the loss of her rudder, as we have already mentioned. The fleet put out to sea in the direction of Carthagera, and in obedience to the King's instructions ravaged some islands inhabited by ferocious cannibals which lay in the course. The strong currents deceived Juan Serrano, chief pilot of the flag-ship, and his colleagues, though they boasted that they were well acquainted with the nature of these currents. In one night, and contrary to the general expectation, they made forty leagues.



## BOOK VI

THE time has come, Most Holy Father, to philosophise a little, leaving cosmography to seek the causes of Nature's secrets. The ocean currents in those regions run towards the west, as torrents rushing down a mountain side. Upon this point the testimony is unanimous. Thus I find myself uncertain when asked where these waters go which flow in a circular and continuous movement from east to west, never to return to their starting-place; and how it happens that the west is not consequently overwhelmed by these waters, nor the east emptied. If it be true that these waters are drawn towards the centre of the earth, as is the case with all heavy objects, and that this centre, as some people affirm, is at the equinoctial line, what can be the central reservoir capable of holding such a mass of waters? And what will be the circumference filled with water, which will yet be discovered? The explorers of these coasts offer no convincing explanation. There are other authors who think that a large strait exists at the extremity of the gulf formed by this vast continent and which, we have already said, is eight times larger than the ocean. This strait may lie to the west of Cuba, and would conduct these raging waters to the west, from whence they would again return to our east. Some learned men think the gulf formed by this vast continent is an enclosed sea, whose coasts bend in a northerly direction behind Cuba, in such wise that the continent would extend

unbrokenly to the northern lands beneath the polar circle bathed by the glacial sea. The waters, driven back by the extent of land, are drawn into a circle, as may be seen in rivers whose opposite banks provoke whirlpools; but this theory does not accord with the facts. The explorers of the northern passages, who always sailed westwards, affirm that the waters are always drawn in that direction, not however with violence, but by a long and uninterrupted movement.

Amongst the explorers of the glacial region a certain Sebastiano Cabotto, of Venetian origin, but brought by his parents in his infancy to England, is cited. It commonly happens that Venetians visit every part of the universe, for purposes of commerce. Cabotto equipped two vessels in England, at his own cost, and first sailed with three hundred men towards the north, to such a distance that he found numerous masses of floating ice in the middle of the month of July. Daylight lasted nearly twenty-four hours, and as the ice had melted, the land was free. According to his story he was obliged to tack and take the direction of west-by-south. The coast bent to about the degree of the strait of Gibraltar. Cabotto did not sail westward until he had arrived abreast of Cuba, which lay on his left. In following this coast-line which he called *Bacallaos*,<sup>1</sup> he says that he recognised the same maritime currents flowing to the west that the Castilians noted when they sailed in southern regions belonging to them. It is not merely probable, therefore, but becomes even necessary to conclude that between these two hitherto unknown continents there extend large openings through which the water flows from east to west. I think these waters flow all round the world in a circle, obediently to the

<sup>1</sup> The word *Bacallaos* is thought to be of Basque origin. This designation for codfish is extremely ancient, and the land thus named appears on the earliest maps of America.

Divine Law, and that they are not spewed forth and afterwards absorbed by some panting Demogorgon. This theory would, up to a certain point, furnish an explanation of the ebb and flow.

Cabotto calls these lands Terra de Bacallaos, because the neighbouring waters swarm with fish similar to tunnies, which the natives call by this name. These fish are so numerous that sometimes they interfere with the progress of ships. The natives of these regions wear furs, and appear to be intelligent. Cabotto reports that there are many bears in the country, which live on fish. These animals plunge into the midst of thick schools of fish, and seizing one fast in their claws they drag it ashore to be devoured. They are not dangerous to men. He claims to have seen the natives in many places in possession of copper. Cabotto frequents my house, and I have him sometimes at my table.<sup>1</sup> He was called from England by our Catholic King after the death of Henry, King of that country, and he lives at court with us. He is waiting, from day to day, to be furnished with ships with which he will be able to discover this mystery of nature. I think he will leave on this expedition towards the month of March of next year, 1516. If God gives me life, Your Holiness shall hear from me what happens to him. There are not wanting people in Spain who affirm that Cabotto is not the first discoverer of Terra de Bacallaos; they only concede him the merit of having pushed out a little farther to the west.<sup>2</sup> But this is enough about the strait and Cabotto.

<sup>1</sup> Again we see Peter Martyr's system of collecting information illustrated. Cabot's discoveries on this voyage are indicated on Juan de la Cosa's map, of 1500. Henry VII. gave little support, and Cabot, therefore, withdrew from England. In 1516 he was given an appointment by King Ferdinand, with 50,000 maravedis yearly and an estate in Andalusia.

<sup>2</sup> The Bacallaos coast was discovered by the Scandinavians in the tenth century, and was known to the Venetians in the fourteenth. Basque, Breton, and Norman fishermen visited it in the following century.

Let us now return to the Spaniards. Pedro Arias and his men passed the length of the harbour of Carthagená and the islands inhabited by Caribs, named San Bernardo's Islands. They left the entire country of Caramaira behind them, without approaching it. They were driven by a tempest upon an island which we have already mentioned as Fuerte, and which is about fifty leagues distant from the entrance of the gulf of Urabá. In this island they found, standing in the houses of the islanders, a number of baskets made out of marine plants and filled with salt. This island is indeed celebrated for its salines and the natives procure whatever they need by the sale of salt.

An enormous pelican, larger than a vulture and remarkable for the dimensions of its throat, fell upon the flagship. It is the same bird, which, according to the testimony of several writers, formerly lived domesticated in the marshes of Ravenna. I do not know if this is still the case. This pelican let itself be easily caught, after which they took it from one vessel to another: it soon died. A flock of twenty such birds were seen on the coast in the distance.

The flag-ship was larger than the other vessels, but as she had been damaged and was no longer serviceable, she was left behind; she will rejoin the fleet when the sea is calmer. The eleventh day of the calends of July the fleet reached Darien, the flag-ship arriving four days later, but without cargo. The colonists of Darien under the leadership of Vasco Nuñez Balboa, of whom we have elsewhere written at length, came down to meet the new arrivals singing the psalm *Te Deum Laudamus*. Each of them offered voluntary hospitality in his house, built after the plan of native cabins.

This country may very properly be called a province, because it has been conquered and all of its chiefs dethroned. The Spaniards refreshed themselves with native fruits and bread made either of roots or of maize. The fleet

brought other provisions, for example salt-meats, salt-fish, and barrels of wheat flour.

Behold the royal fleet at anchor in these strange countries and behold the Spaniards established, not only in the Tropic of Cancer, but almost on the equator,—contrary to the opinion of many scientists,—ready to settle and to found colonies.

The day after landing, four hundred and fifty colonists of Darien were invited to a meeting. Both in public and in private, by groups or singly, they were questioned concerning the report of Vasco, Admiral of the South Sea, or, as this officer is termed in Spanish, the Adelantado. The truth of all he had reported to the King concerning this South Sea was admitted. According to the opinion of Vasco himself, the first thing to be done was to build forts in the territories of Comogre, Pochorrosa, and Tumanama, which would later form centres of colonisation. A *hidalgo* of Cordova, Captain Juan Ayora, was chosen to carry out this plan, for which purpose he was given four hundred men, four caravels, and a small boat. Ayora first landed in the port of Comogra, described in letters that have been received, as distant about twenty-five leagues from Darien. From that point he despatched one hundred and fifty of his men by a more direct road than the one indicated, in the direction of the South Sea. It was said that the distance between the port of Comogra and the gulf of St. Miguel was only twenty-six leagues. The other company of two hundred and fifty men would remain at Comogra to render assistance to those coming and going. The hundred and fifty men chosen to march to the South Sea took with them interpreters, some of whom were Spaniards who had learned the language spoken in the region of the South Sea, from slaves captured by Vasco when he explored the country; while others were slaves who already understood the Spanish tongue. The harbour of Pochorrosa is

seven leagues distant from that of Comogra. Ayora, the lieutenant of Pedro Arias, was to leave fifty men and the small boat, which would serve as a courier, at Pochoroso, so that these boats might serve to carry news to the lieutenant and to the colonists of Darien, just as relays are arranged on land. It was also intended to form a station in the territory of Tumanama, of which the capital is twenty leagues distant from that of Pochorrosa.

Out of the hundred and fifty men assigned to Ayora, fifty were chosen among the older colonists of Darien, they being persons of large experience who would take charge of the newcomers and serve them as guides.

When these measures were adopted, it was determined to report to the King, and at the same time to announce to him as a positive fact that there existed in the neighbourhood a cacique called Dobaiba, whose territory had rich gold deposits, which had till then been respected because he was very powerful. His country extended along the great river which we have elsewhere mentioned. According to common report, all the countries under his authority were rich in gold. Fifty leagues divided Darien from the residence of Dobaiba. The natives affirmed that gold would be found immediately the frontier was crossed. We have elsewhere related that only three leagues from Darien the Spaniards already possessed quite important gold mines, which are being worked. Moreover, in many places gold is found by breaking the soil, but it is believed to be more abundant in the territories of Dobaiba. In the First Decade I addressed to Your Holiness, I had mentioned this Dobaiba, but the Spaniards were mistaken concerning him, for they thought they had met fishermen of Dobaiba and believed that Dobaiba was the swampy region where they had encountered these men. Pedro Arias, therefore, decided to lead a selected troop into that country. These men were to



be chosen out of the entire company and should be in the flower of their age, abundantly furnished with darts and arms of every sort. They were to march against the cacique, and if he refused their alliance, they were to attack and overthrow him. Moreover, the Spaniards never weary of repeating, as a proof of the wealth they dream of, that by just scratching the earth almost anywhere, grains of gold are found. I only repeat here what they have written.

The colonists likewise counselled the King to establish a colony at the port of Santa Marta in the district called by the natives Saturma. This would serve as a place of refuge for people arriving from the island of Domingo. From Domingo to this port of Saturma the journey could be made in about four or five days, and from Santa Marta to Darien in three days. This holds good for the voyage thither, but the return is much more difficult because of the current we have mentioned, and which is so strong that the return voyage seems like climbing steep mountains. Ships returning from Cuba or Hispaniola to Spain do not encounter the full force of this current; although they have to struggle against a turbulent ocean, still the breadth of the open sea is such that the waters have free course. Along the coasts of Paria, on the contrary, the waters are cramped by the continental littoral and the shores of the numerous islands. The same happens in the strait of Sicily where a current exists which Your Holiness well knows, formed by the rocks of Charybdis and Scylla, at a place where the Ionian, Libyan, and Tyrrhenian seas come together within a narrow space.

In writing of the island of Guanassa and the provinces called Iaia, Maia, and Cerabarono, Columbus, who first noted the fact, said that while following these coasts and endeavouring to keep to the east, his ships encountered such resistance that at times he could not take soundings,

the adverse current dragging the lead before it touched bottom. Even with the wind on his stern, he could sometimes make no more than one mile in a day. This it is that obliges sailors returning to Spain to first make for the upper part of Hispaniola or Cuba, and then strike out northwards on the high sea in order to profit by the north winds, for they would make no headway sailing in a direct line. But we have several times spoken sufficiently about ocean currents. It is now the moment to report what is written concerning Darien and the colony founded on its banks which the colonists have named Santa Maria Antigua.

The site is badly chosen, unhealthy, and more pestiferous than Sardinia. All the colonists look pale, like men sick of the jaundice. It is not exclusively the climate of the country which is responsible, for in many other places situated in the same latitude the climate is wholesome and agreeable; clear springs of water break from the earth and swift rivers flow between banks that are not swampy. The natives, however, make a point of living amongst the hills, instead of in the valleys. The colony founded on the shores of Darien is situated in a deep valley, completely surrounded by lofty hills, in such wise that the direct rays of the sun beat upon it at midday, while as the sun goes down its rays are reflected from the mountains, in front, behind, and all around, rendering the place insupportable. The rays of the sun are most fierce when they are reflected, rather than direct, nor are they themselves pernicious, as may be observed among the snows on high mountains. Your Holiness is not ignorant of this. For this reason the rays of the sun shining upon the mountains reach down, gradually falling to their base, just as a large round stone thrown from their summit would do. The valleys consequently receive, not only the direct rays, but also those reflected from the hills and mountains. If, therefore, the site of Darien is

unhealthy, it is not the fault of the country but of the site itself chosen by the colony. The unwholesomeness of the place is further increased by the malodorous swamp surrounding it. To say the frank truth, the town is nothing but a swamp. When the slaves sprinkle the floor of the houses, toads spring into existence from the drops of water that fall from their hands, just as in other places I have seen drops of water changed into fleas. Wherever a hole one palm deep is dug, water bursts forth; but it is filthy and contaminated because of the river which flows through a deep valley over a stagnant bed to the sea. The Spaniards, therefore, considered changing the site. Necessity had first of all obliged them to stop there, for the first arrivals were so reduced by famine that they did not even think of moving it. Nevertheless they are tormented in this unfortunate place by the rays of the sun; the waters are impure and are pestiferous, the vapours malarious, and consequently everybody is ill. There is not even the advantage of a good harbour to offset these inconveniences, for the distance from the village to the entrance of the gulf is three leagues, and the road leading thither is difficult and even painful when it is a question of bringing provisions from the sea.

But let us pass to other details. Hardly had the Spaniards landed when divers adventures overtook them. An excellent doctor of Seville, whom the authority of the bishop<sup>1</sup> and likewise his desire to obtain gold prevented from peacefully ending his days in his native country, was surprised by a thunderbolt when sleeping quietly with his wife. The house with all its furniture was burnt and the bewildered doctor and his wife barely escaped, almost naked and half roasted. Once when a dog eight months old was wandering on the shore, a big crocodile snapped him up, like a hawk seizing a chicken as its prey; he swallowed this miserable dog under the

<sup>1</sup> Referring doubtless to Juan de Fonseca bishop of Burgos.

very eyes of all the Spaniards, while the unfortunate animal yelped to his master for help. During the night the men were tortured by bats, which bit them; and if one of these animals bit a man while he was asleep, he lost his blood, and was in danger of losing his life. It is even claimed that some people did die on account of these wounds. If these bats find a cock or a hen at night in the open air, they strike them on their combs and kill them. The country is infested by crocodiles, lions, and tigers, but measures have already been taken to kill a large number of them. It is reported that the skins of lions and tigers killed by the natives are found in their cabins. Horses, pigs, and oxen grow rapidly, and become larger than their sires. This development is due to the fertility of the soil. The reports concerning the size of trees, different products of the earth, vegetables, and plants we have acclimatised, the deer, savage quadrupeds, and the different varieties of fish and birds, are in accordance with my previous descriptions.

The cacique Careta, ruler of Coiba, was the Spaniards' guest for three days. He admired the musical instruments, the trappings of the horses, and all the things he had never known. He was dismissed with handsome presents. Careta informed the Spaniards that there grew in his province a tree, of which the wood was suitable for the construction of ships, since it was never attacked by marine worms. It is known that the ships suffered greatly from these pests in the ports of the New World. This particular wood is so bitter that the worms do not even attempt to gnaw into it. There is another tree peculiar to this country whose leaves produce swellings if they touch the naked skin, and unless sea-water or the saliva of a man who is fasting be not at once applied, these blisters produce painful death. This tree also grows in Hispaniola. It is claimed that to smell its wood is fatal, and it cannot be transported anywhere without risk of death. When

the islanders of Hispaniola sought in vain to shake off the yoke of servitude, either by open resistance or secret plots, they tried to smother the Spaniards in their sleep by the smoke of this wood. Astonished at seeing the wood scattered about them, the Spaniards forced the wretched natives to confess their plot and punished the authors of it. The natives likewise are acquainted with a plant whose smell fortifies them, and serves as a remedy against the odour of this tree, making it possible for them to handle the wood. These particulars are futile, and this enough on this subject.

The Spaniards hoped to find still greater riches in the islands of the South Sea. When the courier who brought this news started, Pedro Arias was preparing an expedition<sup>1</sup> to an island lying in the midst of the gulf the Spaniards have named San Miguel, and which Vasco did not touch, owing to a rough sea. I have already spoken at length of it in describing the expedition of Vasco to the South Sea. We daily expect to hear of fresh exploits exceeding the former ones, for a number of other provinces have been conquered, and we sincerely hope that they will not prove useless nor devoid of claims to our admiration.

Juan Diaz Solis de Nebrissa, whom we have already mentioned, has been sent to double Cape San Augustin, which belongs to the Portuguese, and lies seven degrees below the equinoctial line. He should go towards the south, below Paria, Cumana, Coquibacoa, and the harbours of Carthagená, and Santa Marta, in order that our knowledge of the continent may be more precise and extensive. Another commander, Juan Pons, has been sent with three ships to ravage the islands of the Caribs and reduce to slavery these filthy islanders, who feed on men. The other islands in the neighbourhood, which are inhabited by mild-mannered people, will thus be delivered from this

<sup>1</sup> This expedition under the command of Gaspar Morales was unsuccessful.

pest and may be explored, and the character of their products discovered.

Other explorers have been sent out in different directions: Gaspar de Badajoz, towards the west; Francisco Bezarra and Vallejo, the first by the extremity of the gulf and the other along the western shore of its entrance, will seek to lay bare the secrets of that country where formerly Hojeda sought, under such unhappy circumstances, to settle. They will build there a fort and a town. Gaspar de Badajoz, with eighty well-armed men, was the first to leave Darien; Ludovico Mercado followed him with fifty others; Bezarra had eighty men under his orders, and Vallejo seventy. Whether they will succeed or will fall into dangerous places, only the providence of the Great Architect knows. We men are forced to await the occurrence of events before we can know them. Let us go on to another subject.



## BOOK VII

PEDRO ARIAS, the governor of what is supposed to be a continent, had hardly left Spain and landed at Darien, with the larger number of his men, than I received news of the arrival at Court of Andreas Morales. This man, who is a ship's pilot, familiar with these coasts, came on business. Morales had carefully and attentively explored the land supposed to be a continent, as well as the neighbouring islands and the interior of Hispaniola. He was commissioned by the brother of Nicholas Ovando, Grand Commander of the Order of Alcantara and governor of the island, to explore Hispaniola. He was chosen because of his superior knowledge and also because he was better equipped than others to fulfil that mission. He has moreover compiled itineraries and maps, in which everybody who understands the question has confidence. Morales came to see me, as all those who come back from the ocean habitually do. Let us now examine the heretofore unknown particulars I have learned from him and from several others. A detailed description of Hispaniola may serve as an introduction to this narrative, for is not Hispaniola the capital and the market where the most precious gifts of the ocean accumulate?

Round about the island lie a thousand and more Nereid nymphs, fair, graceful, and elegant, serving as its ornaments like to another Tethys, their queen and their mother. By Nereids I mean to say the islands scattered round about Hispaniola, concerning which we shall give some brief

information. Afterwards will come the island of pearls which our compatriots call Rico, and which lies in the gulf of San Miguel in the South Sea. It has already been explored and marvellous things found; and yet more wonderful are promised for the future, for its brilliant pearls are worthy to figure in the necklaces, bracelets, and crown of a Cleopatra. It will not be out of place at the close of this narrative to say something of the shells which produce these pearls. Let us now come to this elysian Hispaniola, and begin by explaining its name; after which we will describe its conformation, its harbours, climate, and conclude by the divisions of its territory.

We have spoken in our First Decade of the island of Mataninó, a word pronounced with the accent on the last syllable. Not to return too often to the same subject, Your Holiness will note the accent marking all these native words is placed where it should fall. It is claimed that the first inhabitants of Hispaniola were islanders of Mataninó, who had been driven from that country by hostile factions and had arrived there in their canoes dug out of a single tree-trunk, by which I mean to say their barques. Thus did Dardanus arrive from Corythus and Teucer from Crete, in Asia, in the region later called the Trojade. Thus did the Tyrians and the Sidonians, under the leadership of the fabulous Dido, reach the coasts of Africa. The people of Mataninó, expelled from their homes, established themselves in that part of the island of Hispaniola called Cahonao, upon the banks of a river called Bahaboni. In like manner we read in Roman history that the Trojan Æneas, after he arrived in Italy, established himself on the banks of the Latin Tiber. There lies across the mouth of the river Bahaboni an island where, according to tradition, these immigrants built their first house, calling it Camoteia. This place was consecrated and henceforth regarded with great

veneration. Until the arrival of the Spaniards the natives rendered it the homage of their continual gifts; the same as we do Jerusalem, the cradle of our religion; or the Turks, Mecca, or the ancient inhabitants of the Fortunate Isles venerated the summit of a high rock on the Grand Canary. Many of these latter, singing joyous canticles, threw themselves down from the summit of this rock, for their false priests had persuaded them that the souls of those who threw themselves from the rock for the love of Tirana, were blessed, and destined to an eternity of delight. The conquerors of the Fortunate Isles have found that practice still in use in our own time, for the remembrance of these sacrifices is preserved in the common language, and the rock itself keeps its name. I have, moreover, recently learned that there still exists in those islands since their colonisation by the Frenchman Bethencourt under the authorisation of the King of Castile, a group of Bethencourt's people, who still use the French language and customs. Nevertheless, his heirs, as I have above stated, sold the island to the Castilians, but the colonists who came with Bethencourt built houses in the archipelago and prosperously maintained their families. They still live there mixed with Spaniards and consider themselves fortunate to be no longer exposed to the rigours of the French climate.

Let us now return to the people at Mataninó. Hispaniola was first called by its early inhabitants Quizqueia, and afterwards Haiti. These names were not chosen at random, but were derived from natural features, for Quizqueia in their language means "something large" or larger than anything, and is a synonym for universality, the whole; something in the sense that  $\pi\alpha\nu$  was used among the Greeks. The islanders really believed that the island, being so great, comprised the entire universe, and that the sun warmed no other land than theirs and the neighbouring islands. Thus they decided to call it

Quizqueia. The name Haiti<sup>1</sup> in their language means *altitude*, and because it describes a part, was given to the entire island. The country rises in many places into lofty mountain-ranges, is covered with dense forests, or broken into profound valleys which, because of the height of the mountains, are gloomy; everywhere else it is very agreeable.

Permit at this point, Most Holy Father, a digression. Your Beatitude will no doubt ask with astonishment how it comes that such uncivilised men, destitute of any knowledge of letters, have preserved for such a long time the tradition of their origin. This has been possible because from the earliest times, and chiefly in the houses of the caciques; the *bovites*, that is to say the wise men, have trained the sons of the caciques, teaching them their past history by heart. In imparting their teaching they carefully distinguish two classes of studies; the first is of a general interest, having to do with the succession of events; the second is of a particular interest, treating of the notable deeds accomplished in time of peace or time of war by their fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and all their ancestors. Each one of these exploits is commemorated in poems written in their language. These poems are called *arreytos*. As with us the guitar player, so with them the drummers accompany these *arreytos* and lead singing choirs. Their drums are called *maguay*. Some of the *arreytos* are love songs, others are elegies, and others are war songs; and each is sung to an appropriate air. They also love to dance, but they are more agile than we are; first, because nothing pleases them better than dancing and, secondly, because they are naked, and untrammelled by clothing. Some of the *arrey-*

<sup>1</sup> Meaning in the Caribs' language *mountainous*. Columbus, as we have mentioned, named the island Hispaniola, and it is so called in early American history; but since 1803, the native name of Haiti or Hayti has been applied both to the entire island, and to one of the two states into which it is divided, the other state being called Santo Domingo.

tos composed by their ancestors predicted our arrival, and these poems resembling elegies lament their ruin. "Magnacochios [clothed men] shall disembark in the island, armed with swords and with one stroke cut a man in two, and our descendants shall bend beneath their yoke."

I really am not very much astonished that their ancestors predicted the slavery of their descendants, if everything told concerning their familiar relations with devils is true. I discussed this subject at length in the ninth book of my First Decade, when treating of the zemes, that is to say the idols they worship. Since their zemes have been taken away the natives admit they no longer see spectres; and our compatriots believe this is due to the sign of the cross, with which they are all armed when washed in the waters of baptism.

All the islanders attach great importance to know the frontiers and limits of the different tribes. It is generally the *mitaines*, that is to say nobles, as they are called, who attend to this duty, and they are very skilful in measuring their properties and estates. The people have no other occupation than sowing and harvesting. They are skilful fishermen, and every day during the whole year they dive into the streams, passing as much time in the water as on land. They are not neglectful, however, of hunting. They have, as we have already said, *utias*, which resemble small rabbits, and *iguana* serpents, which I described in my First Decade. These latter resemble crocodiles and are eight feet long, living on land and having a good flavour. Innumerable birds are found in all the islands: pigeons, ducks, geese, and herons. The parrots are as plentiful there as sparrows amongst us. Each cacique assigns different occupations to his different subjects, some being sent hunting, others to fish, others to cultivate the fields. But let us return to the names.

We have already said that Quizqueia and Haiti are the ancient names of the island. Some natives also call the

island Cipangu, from the name of a mountain range rich in gold. In like manner our poets have called Italy *Latium*, after one of its provinces, and our ancestors also called Italy *Ausonia* and *Hesperia*, just as these islanders have given the names Quizqueia, Haiti, and Cipangu to their country. In the beginning the Spaniards called the island Isabella after the Queen Isabella, taking this name from the first colony they founded there. I have already spoken sufficiently of this in my First Decade. They afterwards called it Hispaniola, a diminutive of Hispania. This is enough concerning names; let us now pass to the confirmation of the island.

The first explorers of the island have described it to me as resembling in form a chestnut leaf, split by a gulf on the western side opposite the island of Cuba; but the captain, Andreas Morales, now gives me another and somewhat different description. He represents the island as being cut into, at the eastern and western extremities, by large gulfs,<sup>1</sup> having far extending points of land. He indicates large and secure harbours in the gulf facing eastwards. I will see to it that some day a copy of this map of Hispaniola be sent to Your Holiness, for Morales has drawn it in the same form as those of Spain and Italy, which Your Holiness has often examined, showing their mountains, valleys, rivers, towns, and colonies. Let us boldly compare Hispaniola to Italy, formerly the mistress of the universe. In point of size Hispaniola is a trifle smaller than Italy. According to the statements of recent explorers, it extends five hundred and forty miles from east to west. As we have already noticed in our First Decade, the Admiral had exaggerated its length. In certain places the width of Hispaniola extends to three hundred miles. It is narrower at the point where the land is prolonged in promontories, but it is much more favoured than Italy for, throughout the

<sup>1</sup> On the east is the gulf or bay of Samana, on the west that of Gonaires.



greatest part of its extent, it enjoys such an agreeable climate that neither the rigours of cold nor excessive heats are known.<sup>1</sup> The two solstices are about equal to the equinoxes. There is only one hour of difference between day and night, according as one lives on the southern or the northern coast of the island.

In several parts of the island, however, cold does prevail; Your Holiness will understand that this is due to the position of the mountain ranges, as I shall later demonstrate. The cold, however, is never sufficiently severe to inconvenience the islanders with snow. Perpetual spring and perpetual autumn prevail in this fortunate island. During the entire year the trees are covered with leaves, and the prairies with grass. Everything in Hispaniola grows in an extraordinary fashion. I have already related elsewhere that the vegetables, such as cabbages, lettuces, salads, radishes, and other similar plants, ripen within sixteen days, while pumpkins, melons, cucumbers, etc., require but thirty days. We have also stated that animals brought from Spain, such as oxen, attain a greater size. When describing the growth of these animals, it is claimed that the oxen resemble elephants and the pigs, mules; but this is an exaggeration. Pork has an agreeable taste and is wholesome, because the pigs feed upon mirobolanes and other island fruits, which grow wild in the forests, just as in Europe they eat beech nuts, ilex berries, and acorns. Grape-vines also grow in an extraordinary fashion, despite the absence of all attention. If any one chooses to sow wheat in a mountain region exposed to the cold, it flourishes wonderfully, but less so in the plain, because the soil is too fertile. To one unheard-of-thing people have certified upon oath; that the ears are as thick round

<sup>1</sup> The superficial area of Haiti is 77,255 square kilometres. The climatic conditions no longer correspond to Peter Martyr's descriptions, as there are four seasons, recognised, two rainy and two dry. In the upland, the temperature is invigorating and wholesome.

as a man's arm and one palm in length, and that some of them contain as many as a thousand grains of wheat. The best bread found in the island is that made from the yucca, and is called cazabi. It is most digestible, and the yucca is cultivated and harvested in the greatest abundance and with great facility. Whatever free time afterwards remains, is employed in seeking gold.

The quadrupeds are so numerous that already the exportation to Spain of horses and other animals and of hides has begun; thus the daughter gives assistance in many things to the mother. I have already elsewhere given particulars concerning red wood, mastic, perfumes, green colouring material, cotton, amber, and many other products of this island. What greater happiness could one wish in this world than to live in a country where such wonders are to be seen and enjoyed? Is there a more agreeable existence than that one leads in a country where one is not forced to shut himself in narrow rooms to escape cold that chills or heat that suffocates? A land where it is not necessary to load the body with heavy clothing in winter, or to toast one's legs at a continual fire, a practice which ages people in the twinkling of the eye, exhausts their force, and provokes a thousand different maladies. The air of Hispaniola is stated to be salubrious, and the rivers which flow over beds of gold, wholesome. There are indeed no rivers nor mountains nor very few valleys where gold is not found. Let us close now with a brief description of the interior of this fortunate island.

Hispaniola possesses four rivers, each flowing from mountain sources and dividing the island into four almost equal parts. One of these streams, the Iunna, flows east. Another, the Attibunicus, west; the third, the Naiba, south, and the fourth, the Iaccha, north. We have already related that Morales proposes a new division, by which the island would be divided into five

districts. We shall give to each of these little states its ancient name and shall enumerate whatever is worthy of note in each of them.

The most eastern district of the island belongs to the province of Caizcimu, and is thus called because *cimu* means in their language the *front* or beginning of anything. Next come the provinces of Huhabo and Cahibo; the fourth is Bainoa, and the extreme western part belongs to the province of Guaccaiarima; but that of Bainoa is larger than the three preceding ones. Caizcimu extends from the point of the island as far as the river Hozama, which flows by Santo Domingo, the capital. Its northern border is marked by precipitous mountains,<sup>1</sup> which on account of their steepness especially bear the name of Haiti. The province of Huhabo lies between the mountains of Haiti and the Iacaga River. The third province Cahibo, includes all the country lying between the Cubaho and the Dahazio rivers as far as the mouth of Iaccha, one of the rivers dividing the islands into four equal parts. This province extends to the Cibao Mountains, where much gold is found. In these mountains rises the River Demahus. The province also extends to the sources of the Naiba River, the third of the four streams and the one which flows south, towards the other bank of the Santo Domingo River.

Bainoa begins at the frontier of Cahibo, and extends as far as the island of Cahini, almost touching the north coast of Hispaniola at the place where the colony was once founded. The remainder of the island along the west coast forms the province of Guaccaiarima, thus called because it is the extremity of the island. The word *Iarima* means a flea. Guaccaiarima means, therefore, the flea of the island; *Gua* being the article in their language. There are very few of their names, particularly

<sup>1</sup> Now called Sierra de Monte Cristo, of which the loftiest peak, Toma Diego Campo, is 1220 metres high.

those of kings which do not begin with this article *gua*., such as Guarionex and Guaccanarillus; and the same applies to many names of places.

The districts or cantons of Caizcimu are Higüey, Guanama, Reyre, Xagua, Aramana, Arabo, Hazoa, Macorix, Caicoa, Guiagua, Baguanimabo, and the rugged mountains of Haiti. Let us remark in this connection that there are no aspirates pronounced in Hispaniola, as amongst the Latin peoples. In the first place, in all their words the aspirate produces the effect of a consonant, and is more prolonged than the consonant *f*, amongst us. Nor is it pronounced by pressing the under lip against the upper teeth. On the contrary the mouth is opened wide, *ha, he, hi, ho, hu*. I know that the Jews and the Arabs pronounce their aspirates in the same way, and the Spaniards do likewise with words they have taken from the Arabs who were for a long time their masters. These words are sufficiently numerous; *almohada* = a pillow; *almohaza* = a horse-comb, and other similar words, which are pronounced by holding the breath. I insist upon this point because it often happens among the Latins that an aspirate changes the significance of a word; thus *hora* means a division of the day, *ora* which is the plural of *os*, the mouth, and *ora* meaning region, as in the phrase *Trojae qui primus ab oris*. The sense changes according to the accent: *occīdo* and *occĭdo*. It is consequently necessary to heed the accents and not neglect the aspirate in speaking the language of these simple people. I have spoken above about the accent and the article *gua*.

The cantons of the province of Hubabo are Xamana, Canabaco, Cubao, and others whose names I do not know. The cantons of Magua and Cacacubana belong to the province of Cahibo. The natives in this province speak an entirely different language from that spoken by the other islanders; they are called Macoryzes. In the canton of Cubana another language resembling

none of the others is spoken; it is likewise used in the canton of Baiohaigua. The other cantons of Cahibo are Dahaboon, Cybaho, Manabaho, Cotoy, the last being situated in the centre of the island and traversed by the Nizaus River, and finally the mountains Mahaitin, Hazua, and Neibaymao.

Bainoa, the fourth province has the following dependent cantons: Maguana, Iagohaiucho, Bauruco, Dabaigua, and Attibuni which takes this name from the river; Caunoa, Buiaz, Dahibonici, Maiaguarite, Atiec, Maccazina, Guahabba, Anninici, Marien, Guarricco, Amaquei, Xaragua, Yaguana, Azzuei, Iacchi, Honorucco, Diago, Camaie, Neibaimao. In the last province, Guaccaiarima, lie the cantons of Navicarao, Guabaqua, Taquenazabo, Nimaca, Little Bainoa, Cahaymi, Ianaizi, Manabaxao, Zavana, Habacoa, and Ayqueroa.

Let us now give some particulars concerning the cantons themselves: the first gulf<sup>1</sup> found in the province of Caizcimu cuts into a rock where it has worn an immense cave situated at the foot of a lofty mountain about two stadia from the sea. Its vast arched entrance resembles the gates of a great temple. In obedience to an order from the government, Morales tried to enter this cavern with the ships. Several streams come together there through unknown channels, as in a drain. It used to be a mystery what became of a number of rivers ninety miles long, which suddenly disappeared under the earth never to be seen again. It is thought they are in some fashion swallowed up in the depths of the rocky mountain, continuing their underground course till they reach this cavern. Having succeeded in entering the cave, Morales was very nearly drowned. He reports that inside there are whirlpools and currents in incessant conflict, upon which his barque was tossed to and fro like a ball, amidst the horrible roar of the whirlpools

<sup>1</sup> The gulf of Samana; its extent is 1300 square kilometres.

and currents around him. He regretted having come, but could find no way to get out. He and his companions drifted about in the obscurity, not only because of the darkness prevailing in the cavern, which extends into the depths of the mountains, but also because of the perpetual mist rising from the constantly agitated waters, and resolving itself into damp vapours. Morales compared the noise of these waters to that of the falls of the Nile where it pours forth from the mountains of Ethiopia. Both he and his companions were so deafened they could not hear one another speak. He finally succeeded in finding the exit, and emerged from the cavern, trembling, feeling that he had left the infernal regions and returned to the upper world.<sup>1</sup>

About sixty miles from Santo Domingo the capital, the horizon is shut in by lofty mountains, upon whose summit lies an inaccessible lake, to which no road leads. None of the colonists have visited it because of the steepness of the mountain. In obedience to the governor's orders Morales, taking a neighbouring cacique for his guide, ascended the mountain and found the lake. He reports that it was very cold there and, as a proof of the low temperature, he brought back some ferns and brambles, plants which do not grow in warm countries. The mountains are called Ymizui Hybahaino. The waters of the lake, which is three miles in circumference, are full of various kinds of fish. It is fed by several streams, and has no outlet, for it is surrounded on all sides by lofty peaks.

Let us now say a few words about another, Caspian or Hyrcanian sea (by which I mean a sea surrounded by land), and other fresh-water lakes.

<sup>1</sup> *Evasit tandem pavidus de antro, veluti de Tartaro, putans rediisse ad superos.*



## BOOK VIII

THE province of Bainoa, which is three times the size of the three provinces of Caizcimu, Huhabo, and Caihabon, embraces the valley of Caionani, in the midst of which there is a salt lake<sup>1</sup> of bitter, distasteful water, similar to what we read of the Caspian Sea. I will therefore call it Caspian, although it is not in Hyrcania. There are depths in this lake from which the salty waters pour forth and are absorbed in the mountains. These caverns are supposed to be so vast and so deep that even the largest sea-fish pass through them into the lake.

Amongst these fish is the shark, which cuts a man in two with one bite and swallows him. These sharks come up from the sea by the Hozama River which flows past the capital of the island. They devour numbers of natives, since nothing will prevent the latter from bathing and washing themselves in the river. Many streams flow into the lake; the Guaninicabon, which flows from the north, is salt; the Haccoce flows from the south, the Guan-nabi from the east, and the Ocooa from the west. These are the most important of the rivers and are always full. Besides them, a score of smaller ones also fall into this Caspian Sea. Not more than a stadium distant and on its northern shore are about two hundred springs, arranged in the form of a circle, from which fresh, potable water gushes forth, forming an impassable stream, which mingles with the others in the lake.

<sup>1</sup> The lagune of Enriquillo on the plains of Neyba.

The cacique of that country finding his wife at prayer one day in a chapel built by the Christians in his territory, wished to have intercourse with her; but the wife, alleging the holiness of the spot refused, speaking as follows, *Tei toca, tei toca*, which means "Be quiet"; *Techeta cynato guamechyna* which signifies "God would be displeased." The cacique was very much vexed by this *Techeta cynato guamechyna*, and with a menacing gesture of his arm said, *Guayva*, which means "Get out," *Cynato machabucha guamechyna*, meaning, "What matters to me the anger of your God?" With which he overpowered his wife, but was struck dumb on the spot and half lost the use of his arm. Impressed by this miracle and overcome with repentance, he lived the rest of his life as a religious, and would not allow the chapel to be swept or decorated by other hands than his own. This miracle made a great impression upon many of the natives and upon all the Christians, and the chapel was frequented and respected by them. As for the cacique, he submissively endured without complaint the punishment for his insult. But let us return to the Caspian Sea.

This salt lake is swept by hurricanes and storms, so that the fishermen's boats are often in danger and frequently sink with all on board. Nor has any drowned body ever been found floating upon the waters or thrown upon the shore, as happens with those engulfed by the sea. These storms provide generous banquets for the sharks. The natives call this Caspian Sea, Haguygabon. In the midst of it lies a sterile island called Guarizacca, which serves as a refuge for fishermen. The lake is thirty miles long and twelve or, perhaps, even fifteen broad.

Another lake lies in the same plain and quite near to the former, of which the waters are bitter-sweet,<sup>1</sup> that is to say they are not pleasant to drink, but may be drunk in case of absolute necessity. It is twenty-five miles

<sup>1</sup> *Lago de Fondo . . . aquarum salsodulcium. . . .*

long by nine or ten broad, and is fed by a number of rivers. It has no outlet, and the water from the sea also reaches it, though in a small quantity; this accounts for its brackish waters. The third fresh-water lake, called Painagua, exists in the same province. It lies not very far to the west of the Caspian Sea. North of this same Caspian lies a fourth lake, of small importance, since it measures but four miles in length and a little more than one in width; it is called Guacca, and its waters are potable. South of the Caspian a fifth lake, called Babbareo is found; it is almost circular and about three miles in length. Its waters are fresh like those of the other two. As it has no outlet and its waters are not sucked down into caverns, it overflows its banks when swollen by torrents. Lake Babbareo lies in the Zamana district of the province of Bainoa. There is still another lake called Guanyban, near by and south-west of the Caspian; it is ten miles long and nearly round. Throughout the island are numerous other small lakes, which we do not mention for fear of being tiresome by too much insistence on the same subject. Nevertheless there is one more particular concerning the lakes and this is the last: All of them are full of fish, and support many birds. They are situated in an immense valley which extends from east to west for a distance of one hundred and twenty miles and a breadth, at the narrowest point of eighteen and at the broadest, of twenty-five miles. As one looks west the mountain chain of Duiguni borders this valley on the left, and on the right rises the range of Caigun, which gives its name to the valley at its base. Upon the northern slope begins another valley larger than the former, for it extends a distance of two hundred miles and a breadth of thirty miles at the broadest, and twenty miles at the narrowest part. This valley is called Maguana and sometimes Iguanu or Hathathiei. Since we have mentioned this part of the valley called Atici,

we must make a digression to introduce a miraculous sea fish.

A certain cacique of the region, Caramatexius by name, was very fond of fishing. Upon one occasion a young fish of the gigantic species called by the natives *manati* was caught in his nets. I think this species of monster is unknown in our seas. It is shaped like a turtle and has four feet, but is covered with scales instead of shell. Its skin is so tough that it fears nothing from arrows, for it is protected by a thousand points. This amphibious creature has a smooth back, a head resembling that of a bull, and is tame rather than fierce. Like the elephant or the dolphin, it likes the companionship of men and is very intelligent. The cacique fed this young fish for several days with yucca bread, millet, and the roots the natives eat. While it was still young, he put it in a lake near to his house, as in a fish-pond. This lake, which had been called Guaurabo, was henceforth called Manati. For twenty-five years this fish lived at liberty in the waters of the lake, and grew to an extraordinary size. All that has been told about the lake of Baïæ or the dolphins of Arion is not to be compared with the stories of this fish. They gave it the name of Matu, meaning generous or noble, and whenever one of the king's attendants, specially known by him, called from the bank Matu, Matu, the fish, remembering favours received, raised its head and came towards the shore to eat from the man's hand. Anyone who wished to cross the lake merely made a sign and the fish advanced to receive him on its back. One day it carried ten men altogether on its back, transporting them safely, while they sang and played musical instruments. If it perceived a Christian when it raised its head it dived under water and refused to obey. This was because it had once been beaten by a peevish young Christian, who threw a sharp dart at this amiable and domesticated fish. The dart did it no

harm because of the thickness of its skin, which is all rough and covered with points, but the fish never forgot the attack, and from that day forth every time it heard its name called, it first looked carefully about to see if it beheld anybody dressed like the Christians. It loved to play upon the bank with the servants of the cacique, and especially with the young son who was in the habit of feeding it. It was more amusing than a monkey. This manati was for long a joy to the whole island, and many natives and Christians daily visited this animal.

It is said that the flesh of manatis is of good flavour, and they are found in great numbers in the waters of the island. The manati Matu finally disappeared. It was carried out to sea by the Attibunico, one of the four rivers which divide the island into equal parts, during an inundation accompanied by horrible typhoons which the islanders call hurricanes. The Attibunico overflowed its banks and inundated the entire valley, mingling its waters with those of all the lakes. The good, clever, sociable Matu, following the tide of the torrent, rejoined its former mother and the waters of its birth; it has never since been seen. But enough of this digression.

Let us now describe this valley. The valley of Atici is bordered by the Cibao and Cayguana Mountains, which enclose it in a southerly direction to the sea. Beyond the mountains of Cibao towards the north there opens another valley called the Guarionexius, because it has always belonged, from father to son and by hereditary right, to the caciques called Guarionexius. I have already spoken at length about this cacique in my first writings on Hispaniola and in my First Decade. This valley is one hundred and ninety miles long from east to west, and between thirty and fifty miles broad at its widest part. It begins at the district of Canabocoa, crosses the provinces of Huhabo and Cahibo, and ends in the province of Bainoa

and in the district of Mariena. Along its borders extend the mountains of Cibao, Cahanao, Cazacubana. There is not a province or a district in it which is not noteworthy for the majesty of its mountains, the fertility of its valleys, the forests upon its hills, or the number of rivers watering it. Upon the slopes of all the mountains and hills, and in the river beds, gold in abundance is found; and in the latter, fish of delicious flavour; only one is to be excepted, which from its source in the mountains to the sea is perpetually salt. This river is called Bahaun, and flows through Maguana, a district of the province of Bainoa. It is thought that this river passes through chalk and saline strata, of which there are many in the island, and of which I shall later speak more fully.

We have noted that Hispaniola may be divided into four or five parts, by rivers or by provinces. Still another division may be made; the entire island might be divided by the four mountain chains which cut it in two from east to west. Everywhere there is wealth, and gold is everywhere found. From the caverns and gorges of these mountains pour forth all the streams which traverse the island. There are frightful caves, dark valleys, and arid rocks, but no dangerous animal has ever been found; neither lion, nor bear, nor fierce tiger, nor crafty fox, nor savage wolf. Everything thereabouts speaks of happiness and will do so still more, Most Holy Father, when all these thousands of people shall be gathered among the sheep of your flock, and those devil images, the zemes, shall have been banished.

You must not be vexed, Most Holy Father, if from time to time in the course of my narrative I repeat certain particulars, or allow myself some digressions. I feel myself carried away by a sort of joyous mental excitement, a kind of Delphic or Sibylline breath, when I read of these things; and I am, as it were, forced to repeat the same fact, especially when I realise to what an extent the propagation



of our religion is involved. Yet amidst all these marvels and fertility, there is one point which causes me small satisfaction; these simple, naked natives were little accustomed to labour, and the immense fatigues they now suffer, labouring in the mines, is killing them in great numbers and reducing the others to such a state of despair that many kill themselves, or refuse to procreate their kind. It is alleged that the pregnant women take drugs to produce abortion, knowing that the children they bear will become the slaves of the Christians. Although a royal decree has declared all the islanders to be free, they are forced to work more than is fit for free men. The number of these unfortunate people diminishes in an extraordinary fashion. Many people claim that they formerly numbered more than twelve millions; how many there are to-day I will not venture to say, so much am I horrified.<sup>1</sup> Let us finish with this sad subject and return to the charms of this admirable Hispaniola.

In the mountains of Cibao, which are situated in about the centre of the island, and in the province of Cahibo where we have said the most gold was found, there lies a district called Cotohi. It is amongst the clouds, completely enclosed by mountain chains, and its inhabitants are numerous. It consists of a large plateau twenty-five miles in length and fifteen in breadth; and this plateau

<sup>1</sup> The *Brevissima Relacion de la Destruccion de las Indias*, of Fray B. de las Casas, contains the most crushing indictment of Spanish colonial government ever penned. When every allowance has been made for the apostolic, or even the fanatical zeal, with which Las Casas defended his protégés and denounced their tormentors, the case against the Spanish colonists remains one of the blackest known to history. Just what the native population of Haiti and Cuba originally numbered is hardly ascertainable; twelve millions is doubtless an excessive estimate; but within twenty-five years of the discovery of America, the islanders were reduced to 14,000. Between 1507 and 1513 their numbers fell from 14,000 to 4000, and by 1750 not one remained. Consult Fabié, *Vida y Escritos de Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas* (Madrid, 1879); MacNutt, *Bartholomew de las Casas, his Life, his Apostolate, and his Writings*, New York, 1910.

lies so high above the other mountains that the peaks surrounding it appear to give birth to the lesser mountains. Four seasons may be counted on this plateau: spring, summer, autumn, and winter; and the plants there wither, the trees lose their leaves and the fields dry up. This does not happen in the rest of the island, which only knows spring-time and autumn. Ferns, grass, and berry bushes grow there, furnishing undeniable proof of the cold temperature. Nevertheless the country is agreeable and the cold is not severe, for the natives do not suffer from it, nor are there snow storms. As a proof of the fertility of the soil it is alleged that the stalks of the ferns are thicker than javelins. The neighbouring mountain-sides contain rich gold deposits but these mines will not be exploited because of the cold, which would make it necessary to give clothing even to those miners who are accustomed to that labour.

The natives are satisfied with very little; they are delicate and could not endure winter, for they live in the open air. Two rivers traverse this region, flowing from the high mountains which border it. The first, called Comoiaixa, flows towards the west and loses its name where it empties into the Naiba. The second, called the Tirechetus, flows east and empties into the Iunna.

When I passed the island of Crete on my journey to the Sultan,<sup>1</sup> the Venetians told me that there was a similar region on the summit of Mount Ida; this region, more than the rest of the island, produces a better wheat crop. Protected by the impassable roads which led to these heights, the Cretans revolted, and for a long time maintained an armed independence against the Senate of Venice. Finally, when weary of fighting, they decided to submit, and the Senate decreed their country should remain a desert. All avenues leading to it were guarded so that no one could go there without its consent.

<sup>1</sup> *De Legatione Babylonica.*

It was in that same year, 1502, that the Venetians again permitted this district to be cultivated, but by labourers incapable of using arms.

There is a district in Hispaniola called Cotoy, lying between the provinces of Huhabo and Cahibo. It is a sterile country having mountains, valleys, and plains, and is sparsely inhabited. Gold is found there in quantities, but instead of being in the form of ingots or grains, it is in solid masses of pure metal, deposited in beds of soft stone in the crevices of the rocks. The veins are discovered by breaking the rocks, and one such may be compared to a living tree, as from its root or starting-point it sends forth branches through the soft pores and open passages, right up to the summit of the mountains, never stopping till it reaches the surface of the earth. Bathed in the splendour of the atmosphere it brings forth its fruit, consisting of grains and nuggets. These grains and nuggets are afterwards washed away by the heavy rains and swept down the mountain, like all heavy bodies, to be disseminated throughout the entire island. It is thought the metal is not produced at the place where it is found, especially if that be in the open or in the river beds. The root of the golden tree seems always to reach down towards the centre of the earth, growing always larger; for the deeper one digs in the bowels of the mountain the larger are the grains of gold unearthed. The branches of the golden tree are in some places as slender as a thread, while others are as thick as a finger, according to the dimensions of the crevices. It sometimes happens that pockets full of gold are found; these being the crevices through which the branches of the golden tree pass. When these pockets are filled with the output from the trunk, the branch pushes on in search of another outlet towards the earth's surface. It is often stopped by the solid rock, but in other fissures it seems, in a manner, to be fed from the vitality of the roots.

You will ask me, Most Holy Father, what quantity of gold is produced in this island. Each year Hispaniola alone sends between four and five hundred thousand gold ducats to Spain. This is known from the fact that the royal fifth produces eighty, ninety, or a hundred thousand castellanos of gold, and sometimes even more. I shall explain later on what may be expected from Cuba and the island of San Juan, which are equally rich in gold. But we have spoken enough about gold; let us now pass on to salt, with which whatever we buy with gold is seasoned.

In a district of the province of Bainoa in the mountains of Daiagon, lying twelve miles from the salt lake of the Caspian, are mines of rock salt, whiter and more brilliant than crystal, and similar to the salts which so enrich the province of Laletania, otherwise called Catalonia, belonging to the Duke of Cardona, who is the chief noble of that region. People, in a position to compare the two, consider the salts of Bainoa the richer. It seems that it is necessary to use iron tools for mining the salt in Catalonia. It also crumbles very easily as I know by experience, nor is it harder than spongy stone. The salt of Bainoa is as hard as marble. In the province of Caizcimu and throughout the territories of Iguanama, Caiacoa, and Quatiaqua springs of exceptional character are found. At the surface their waters are fresh, a little deeper down they are salty and at the bottom they are heavily charged with salt. It is thought that the salt sea-water partially feeds them, and that the fresh waters on the surface flow from the mountains through subterranean passages. The salt-waters, therefore, remain at the bottom while the others rise to the surface, and the former are not sufficiently strong to entirely corrupt the latter. The waters of the middle strata are formed by a mixture of the two others, and share the characteristics of both.

By placing one's ear to the ground near the opening of one

of these springs it is easily perceived that the earth is hollow underneath, for one may hear the steps of a horseman a distance of three miles and a man on foot a distance of one mile. It is said there is a district of *savana* in the most westerly province of Guaccaiarima, inhabited by people who only live in caverns and eat nothing but the products of the forest. They have never been civilised nor had any intercourse with any other races of men. They live, so it is said, as people did in the golden age, without fixed homes or crops or culture; neither do they have a definite language. They are seen from time to time, but it has never been possible to capture one, for if, whenever they come, they see anybody other than natives approaching them, they escape with the celerity of a deer. They are said to be quicker than French dogs.

Give ear, Most Holy Father, to a very amusing exploit of one of these savages. The Spaniards own cultivated fields along the edge of the woods and thick forests, which some of them went to visit, as though on a pleasure trip, in the month of September, 1514. All at once one of these dumb men suddenly emerged from the woods and smilingly picked up from the very midst of the Christians a young boy, son of the owner of the field, whose wife was a native. The savage fled, making signs that the people should follow him, so several Spaniards and a number of naked natives ran after the robber, without, however, being able to catch him. As soon as the facetious savage perceived the Spaniards had given up the pursuit, he left the child at a crossroads where the swineherds pass driving herds to pasture. One of these swineherds recognised the child and taking it in his arms brought it back to the father, who had been in despair, thinking this savage belonged to the Carib race, and mourning the child as dead.

Pitch, of a quality much harder and more bitter than that



obtained from trees, is found on the reefs of Hispaniola. It consequently serves better to protect ships against the gnawings of the worms called bromas, of which I have elsewhere spoken at length. There are likewise two pitch-producing trees; one is the pine, and the other is called *copeo*. I shall say nothing about pines, for they grow everywhere; but let us speak a little about the copeo tree, and give a few details about the pitch and the fruit it produces. The pitch is obtained in the same manner as from pine-trees, though it is described as being gathered drop by drop from the burning wood. As for the fruit, it is as small as a plum and quite good to eat; but it is the foliage of the trees which possesses a very special quality. It is believed that this tree is the one whose leaves were used by the Chaldeans, the first inventors of writing, to convey their ideas to the absent before paper was invented. The leaf is as large as a palm and almost round. Using a needle or pin, or a sharp iron or wooden point, characters are traced upon it as easily as upon paper.

It is laughable to consider what the Spaniards have told the natives concerning these leaves. These good people believe the leaves speak in obedience to the command of the Spaniards. An islander had been sent by a Spaniard of Santo Domingo, the capital of Hispaniola, to one of his friends living in the interior of the colony. The messenger likewise carried some roasted utias which, as we have said, are rabbits. On the way, whether from hunger or greediness, he ate three; these animals not being larger than rats. The friend wrote upon one of these leaves what he had received. "Well, my man," the master then said, "you are a fine lad in whom to put confidence! So you have been so greedy as to eat the utias I gave you?" Trembling and amazed the native confessed his fault, but asked his master how he had discovered it. The Spaniard replied: "The leaf which you yourself have brought me has told me everything. More-



over, you reached my friend's house at such an hour and you left it at such another." In this way our people amuse themselves by mystifying these poor islanders, who think they are gods, with power to make the very leaves reveal what they believe to be secret. Thus the news spread through the island that the leaves speak in response to a sign from the Spaniards; and this obliges the islanders to be very careful of whatever is confided to them. Both sides of these leaves may be used for writing, just as is the case with our paper. Such a leaf is thicker than a piece of paper folded in two, and is extraordinarily tough; so much so that when it is freshly plucked, the letters stand out white upon a green ground, but when it dries it becomes white and hard like a piece of wood, and then these characters change to yellow; but they remain indelible until it is burnt, never disappearing, even when the leaf is wet.

There is another tree called the *hagua*, whose fruit when green exudes a juice which dyes so fast everything it touches a greenish black, that no washing can destroy this colour within twenty days. When the fruit ripens the juice no longer has this quality; it becomes edible and has a pleasant taste. There is an herb also, whose smoke produces death, like the wood which we have mentioned. Some caciques had decided to kill the Spaniards; but not daring to attack them openly, they planned to place numerous bunches of this herb in their houses and set fire to them, so that the Spaniards, who came to extinguish the flames, would breathe in the smoke with the germs of a fatal malady. This plot, however, was circumvented and the instigators of the crime were punished.

Since Your Holiness has deigned to write that you are interested in everything related concerning the new continent, let us now insert, irrespective of method, a number of facts. We have sufficiently explained how

maize, agoes, yucca, potatoes, and other edible roots are sown, cultivated, and used. But we have not yet related how the Indians learned the properties of these plants; and it is that which we shall now explain.

## BOOK IX

IT is said that the early inhabitants of the islands subsisted for a long time upon roots and palms and magueys. The maguey<sup>1</sup> is a plant belonging to the class vulgarly called evergreen.

The roots of *guiega* are round like those of our mushrooms, and somewhat larger. The islanders also eat *guaieros*, which resemble our parsnips; *cibaïos*, which are like nuts; *cibaïoés* and *macoanes*, both similar to the onion, and many other roots. It is related that some years later, a bovine, *i.e.*, a learned old man, having remarked a shrub similar to fennel growing upon a bank, transplanted it and developed therefrom a garden plant. The earliest islanders, who ate raw yucca, died early; but as the taste is exquisite, they resolved to try using it in different ways; boiled or roasted this plant is less dangerous. It finally came to be understood that the juice was poisonous; extracting this juice, they made from the cooked flour *cazabi*, a bread better suited to human stomachs than wheat bread, because it is more easily digested. The same was the case with other food stuffs and maize, which they chose amongst the natural products. Thus it was that Ceres discovered barley and other cereals amongst the seeds, mixed with slime, brought down by the high Nile from the mountains of Ethiopia and deposited on the plain when the waters receded, and propagated their culture.

<sup>1</sup> . . . *magueiorum quæ est herba, sedo sive aizoo, quam vulgus sempervivam appellat, similis.* (Jovis-barba, joubarbe, etc.)

For having thus indicated the seeds to be cultivated, the ancients rendered her divine honours. There are numerous varieties of agoes, distinguishable by their leaves and flowers. One of these species is called guanax; both inside and out, it is of a whitish colour. The guaragua is violet inside and white outside; another species of agoes is zazaveios, red outside and white inside. Quinetes are white inside and red outside. The turma is purplish, the hobos yellowish and the atibunieix has a violet skin and a white pulp. The aniguamar is likewise violet outside and white inside and the guaccaracca is just the reverse; white outside and violet inside. There are many other varieties, upon which we have not yet received any report.

I am aware that in enumerating these species I shall provoke envious people, who will laugh when my writings reach them, at my sending such minute particulars to Your Holiness, who is charged with such weighty interests and on whose shoulders rests the burden of the whole Christian world. I would like to know from these envious, whether Pliny and the other sages famous for their science sought, in communicating similar details to the powerful men of their day, to be useful only to the princes with whom they corresponded. They mingled together obscure reports and positive knowledge, great things and small, generalities and details; to the end that posterity might, equally with the princes, learn everything together, and also in the hope that those who crave details and are interested in novelties, might be able to distinguish between different countries and regions, the earth's products, national customs, and the nature of things. Let therefore the envious laugh at the pains I have taken; for my part, I shall laugh, not at their ignorance, envy, and laziness, but at their deplorable cleverness, pitying their passions and recommending them to the serpents from which envy draws its venom.

If I may believe what has been reported to me from Your Holiness by Galeazzo Butrigario and Giovanni Ruffo, Archbishop of Cosenza, who are the nunzios of your apostolic chair, I am certain that these details will please you. They are the latest trappings with which I have dressed, without seeking to decorate them, admirable things; indications merely and not descriptions; but you will not reject them. It will repay me to have burned the midnight oil in your interest, that the recollection of these discoveries may not be lost. Each takes the money that suits his purse. When a sheep or a pig is cut up, nothing of it remains by evening; for one man has taken the shoulder, another the rump, another the neck, and there are even some who like the tripes and the feet. But enough of this digression on the subject of envious men and their fury; let us rather describe how the caciques congratulate their fellows when a son is born; and how they shape the beginning of their existence to its end, and why every one of them is pleased to bear several names.

When a child is born, all the caciques and neighbours assemble and enter the mother's chamber. The first to arrive salutes the child and gives it a name, and those who follow do likewise; "Hail, brilliant lamp," says one; "Hail, thou shining one," says another; or perhaps "Conqueror of enemies," "Valiant hero," "More resplendent than gold," and so on. In this wise the Romans bore the titles of their parents and ancestors: Adiabenicus, Particus, Armenicus, Dacicus, Germanicus. The islanders do the same, in adopting the names given them by the caciques. Take, for instance, Beuchios Anacauchoa, the ruler of Xaragua, of whom and his sister, the prudent Anacaona, I have already spoken at length in my First Decade. Beuchios Anacauchoa was also called *Tareigua Hobin*, which means "prince resplendent as copper." So likewise *Starei*, which means

“shining”; *Huibo*, meaning “haughtiness”; *Duyheiniquem*, meaning a “rich river.” Whenever Beuchios Anacauchoa publishes an order, or makes his wishes known by heralds’ proclamation, he takes great care to have all these names and forty more recited. If, through carelessness or neglect, a single one were omitted, the cacique would feel himself grievously outraged; and his colleagues share this view.

Let us now examine their peculiar practices when drawing up their last wills. The caciques choose as heir to their properties, the eldest son of their sister, if such a one exists; and if the eldest sister has no son, the child of the second or third sister is chosen. The reason is, that this child is bound to be of their blood. They do not consider the children of their wives as legitimate. When there are no children of their sisters, they choose amongst those of their brothers, and failing these, they fall back upon their own. If they themselves have no children, they will their estates to whomsoever in the island is considered most powerful, that their subjects may be protected by him against their hereditary enemies. They have as many wives as they choose, and after the cacique dies the most beloved of his wives is buried with him. Anacaona, sister of Beuchios Anacauchoa, King of Xaragua, who was reputed to be talented in the composition of areytos, that is to say poems, caused to be buried alive with her brother the most beautiful of his wives or concubines, Guanahattabenecheuà; and she would have buried others but for the intercession of a certain sandal-shod Franciscan friar, who happened to be present. Throughout the whole island there was not to be found another woman so beautiful as Guanahattabenecheuà. They buried with her her favourite necklaces and ornaments, and in each tomb a bottle of water and a morsel of cazabi bread were deposited.

There is very little rain either in Xaragua, the kingdom of Beuchios Anacauchoa, or in the Hazua district of the



country called Caihibi; also in the valley of the salt- and fresh-water lakes and in Yacciu, a district or canton of the province of Bainoa. In all these countries are ancient ditches, by means of which the islanders irrigate their fields as intelligently as did the inhabitants of New Carthage, called Spartana, or those of the kingdom of Murcia, where it rarely rains. The Maguana divides the provinces of Bainoa from that of Caihibi, while the Savana divides it from Guaccaiarima. In the deeper valleys there is a heavier rainfall than the natives require, and the neighbourhood of Santo Domingo is likewise better watered than is necessary, but everywhere else the rainfall is moderate. The same variations of temperature prevail in Hispaniola as in other countries.

I have enumerated in my First Decade the colonies established in Hispaniola by the Spaniards, and since that time they have founded the small towns of Porto de la Plata, Porto Real, Lares, Villanova, Assua, and Salvatiera. Let us now describe these of the innumerable neighbouring islands which are known and which we have already compared to the Nereids, daughters of Tethys, and their mother's ornament. I shall begin with the nearest one, which is remarkable because of another fountain of Arethusa, but which serves no purpose. Six miles distant from the coast of the mother island lies an isle which the Spaniards, ignoring its former name, call Dos Arboles [Two Trees], because only two trees grow there. It is near them that a spring, whose waters flow by secret channels under the sea from Hispaniola, gushes forth, just as Alpheus left Eridus to reappear in Sicily at the fountain of Arethusa. This fact is established by the finding of leaves of the *hobis*, mirobolane, and many other trees growing in Hispaniola, which are carried thither by the stream of this fountain, for no such trees are found on the smaller island. This fountain takes its rise in the Yiamiroa River, which flows from the Guaccaiarima

district near the Savana country. The isle is not more than one mile in circumference, and is used as a fish market.

Towards the east, our Tethys is protected in a manner by the island of San Juan,<sup>1</sup> which I have elsewhere described. San Juan has rich gold deposits, and its soil is almost as fertile as that of its mother, Hispaniola. Colonists have already been taken there, and are engaged in gold-seeking. On the north-west Tethys is shielded by the great island of Cuba, which for a long time was regarded as a continent because of its length. It is much longer than Hispaniola, and is divided in the middle from east to west by the Tropic of Cancer. Hispaniola and the other islands lying to the south of Cuba occupy almost the whole intervening space between the Tropic of Cancer and the equator. This is the zone which many of the ancients believed to be depopulated because of the fierce heat of the sun: in which opinion they were mistaken. It is claimed that mines, richer than those of Hispaniola, have been found in Cuba and at the present writing it is asserted that gold to the value of one hundred and eighty thousand castellanos has been obtained there and converted into ingots; certainly a positive proof of opulence.

Jamaica lies still farther to the south and is a prosperous, fertile island, of exceptional fecundity, in which, however, there does not exist a single mountain. It is adapted to every kind of cultivation. Its inhabitants are formidable because of their warlike temperament. It is impossible to establish authority within the brief period since its occupation. Columbus, the first discoverer, formerly compared Jamaica to Sicily in point of size, but as a matter of fact it is somewhat smaller, though not much. This is the opinion of those who have carefully explored it. All these people agree as to its inviting character. It is believed that neither gold nor precious

<sup>1</sup> Porto Rico.

stones will be found there; but in the beginning the same opinion was held of Cuba.

The island of Guadaloupe, formerly called by the natives Caraqueira, lies south of Hispaniola, four degrees nearer to the equator. It is thirty-five miles in circumference and its coast line is broken by two gulfs, which almost divide it into two different islands, as is the case with Great Britain and Caledonia, now called Scotland. It has numerous ports. A kind of gum called by the apothecaries *animen album*, whose fumes cure headaches, is gathered there. The fruit of this tree is one palm long and looks like a carrot. When opened it is found to contain a sweetish flour, and the islanders preserve these fruits just as our peasants lay by a store of chestnuts and other similar things for the winter. The tree itself might be a fig-tree. The edible pineapple and other foods which I have carefully studied above also grow in Guadaloupe, and it is even supposed that it was the inhabitants of this island who originally carried the seeds of all these delicious fruits to the other islands.

In conducting their man-hunts, the Caribs have scoured all the neighbouring countries; and whatever they found that was likely to be useful to them, they brought back for cultivation. These islanders are inhospitable and suspicious, and their conquest can only be accomplished by using force. Both sexes use poisoned arrows and are very good shots; so that, whenever the men leave the island on an expedition, the women defend themselves with masculine courage against any assailants. It is no doubt this fact that has given rise to the exploded belief that there are islands in this ocean peopled entirely by women. The Admiral Columbus induced me to believe this tale and I repeated it in my First Decade.

In the island of Guadaloupe there are mountains and fertile plains; it is watered by beautiful streams. Honey is found in the trees and crevices of the rocks, and, as is

the case at Palma, one of the Fortunate Isles, honey is gathered amongst briar and bramble bushes.

The island recently named La Deseada lies eighteen miles distant from the former island, and is twenty miles in circumference.

There is another charming island lying ten miles to the south of Guadaloupe, which is called Galante; its surface is level and it is thirty miles in circumference. Its name was suggested by its beauty, for, in the Spanish, dandies are called *galanes*.<sup>1</sup>

Nine miles to the east of Guadaloupe lie six other islands called Todos Santos and Barbadas. These are only barren reefs, but mariners are obliged to know them. Thirty-five miles north of Guadaloupe looms the island called Montserrat, which is forty miles in circumference, and is dominated by a very lofty mountain. An island called Antigua, thirty miles distant from Guadaloupe, has a circumference of about forty miles.

The Admiral Diego Columbus, son of the discoverer, told me that when obliged to go to court he left his wife in Hispaniola, and that she had written him that an island with rich gold deposits had been discovered in the midst of the archipelago of the Caribs, but that it had not yet been visited. Off the left coast of Hispaniola there lies to the south and near to the port of Beata an island called Alta Vela. Most astonishing things are told concerning sea monsters found there, especially about the turtles, which are, so it is said, larger than a large breast shield. When the breeding time arrives they come out of the sea, and dig a deep hole in the sand, in which they deposit three or four hundred eggs. When all their eggs are laid, they cover up the hole with a quantity of earth sufficient to hide them, and go back to their feeding grounds in the sea, without paying further heed to their progeny. When the day, fixed by nature, for the birth of these

<sup>1</sup> The island was, in reality, named after one of the ships of Columbus.

animals arrives, a swarm of turtles comes into the world, without the assistance of their progenitors, and only aided by the sun's rays. It looks like an ant-hill. The eggs are almost as large as those of a goose, and the flavour of turtle meat is compared to veal.

There is a large number of other islands, but they are as yet unknown, and moreover it is not required to sift all this meal so carefully through the sieve. It is sufficient to know that we have in our control immense countries where, in the course of centuries, our compatriots, our language, our morals, and our religion will flourish. It was not from one day to another that the Teucrians peopled Asia, the Tyrians Libya, or the Greeks and Phœnicians Spain.

I do not mention the islands which protect the north of Hispaniola; they have extensive fisheries and might be cultivated, but the Spaniards avoid them because they are poor. And now adieu, ancient Tethys:

Jam valeant annosa Tethys, nymphæque madentes,  
Ipsius comites; veniat coronata superbe  
Australis pelagi cultrix, re ac nomine dives.<sup>1</sup>

In the volume of letters I sent Your Holiness last year, by one of my servants, and which Your Holiness has read in its entirety before the Cardinals of the Apostolic See and your beloved sister, I related that on the same day the Church celebrates the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, the leader of the men who had crossed the lofty mountain chain, had been told that an island remarkable for the size of its pearls lay within sight of the coast and that its king was rich and powerful

<sup>1</sup> The following English translation for these lines has been suggested:

Farewell, old Tethys, ocean goddess old;  
Farewell thy company, the Nereid band;  
And come thou, rich in name and pearls and gold  
Crowned royally, Queen of the Southern strand.

and often made war against the caciques whose states lay on the coast, especially Chiapes and Tumaco. We have written that the Spaniards did not attack the island because of the great storms which render that South Sea dangerous, during three months of the year. This island has now been conquered and we have tamed its proud cacique. May Your Holiness deign to accept him and all his rich principalities, since he has now received the waters of baptism. It will not be out of place to remember under whose orders and by whom this conquest was effected. May Your Holiness attend with serene brow and benignant ear to the account of this enterprise.



## BOOK X

AS soon as he landed, the governor, Pedro Arias, confided to a certain Gaspar Morales an expedition to Isla Rica.<sup>1</sup> Morales first passed by the country of Chiapes, called Chiapeios, and of Tumaco, those two caciques along the South Sea who were friends of Vasco. He and his men were received magnificently as friends, and a fleet was equipped for attacking the island. This island is called Rica and not Margarita, although many pearls are found there; for the name Margarita was first bestowed upon another island near Paria and the region called Boca de la Sierpe, where many pearls had likewise been found. Morales landed upon the island with only sixty men, the dimensions of his boats, called culches, not permitting him to take a larger number. The proud and formidable king of the island, whose name I have not learned, advanced to meet them, escorted by a large number of warriors, and proffering menaces. Guazzaciara is their war-cry; when they utter this cry, they let fly their javelins; they do not use bows. Guazzaciara means a battle; so they engaged in four guazzaciaras, in which the Spaniards, aided by their allies of Chiapes and Tumaco, who were

<sup>1</sup>The description at this point is inaccurate and misleading. The pearl islands number in all one hundred and eighty-three, forming an archipelago. There are thirty-nine islands of considerable size, of which the principal ones are San José, San Miguel, and Isla del Rey; the others are small, some being no more than reefs, or isolated rocks rising above the surface of the sea.

that chieftain's enemies, were victorious. Their attack was in the nature of a surprise. The cacique wished to assemble a larger army, but was dissuaded by his neighbours along the coast from continuing the struggle. Some by their example, and others by threatening him with the ruin of a flourishing country, demonstrated that the friendship of the Spaniards would bring glory and profit to himself and his friends. They reminded him of the misfortunes which had the preceding year befallen Poncha, Pochorroso, Quarequa, Chiapes, Tumaco, and others who attempted to resist. The cacique gave up fighting and came to meet the Spaniards, whom he conducted to his palace, which was a veritable royal residence marvellously decorated. Upon their arrival at his house he presented them with a very well-wrought basket filled with pearls of ten pounds weight, at eight ounces to the pound.

The cacique was overjoyed when they presented him with their usual trifles, such as glass beads, mirrors, copper bells, and perhaps some iron hatchets, for the natives prize these things more than heaps of gold. In fact, they even make fun of the Spaniards for exchanging such important and useful articles for such a little gold. Hatchets can be put to a thousand uses among them, while gold is merely a not indispensable luxury. Pleased and enchanted by his bargains, the cacique, took the captain and his officers by the hand and led them to the top of one of the towers of his house from whence the view embraced an immense horizon towards the sea. Looking about him, he said: "Behold the infinite ocean which has no end towards the rising sun." He pointed to the east, and afterwards turning to the south and the west he gave them to understand that the continent, on which the vast mountain ranges were perceptible in the distance, was very large. Glancing about nearer to them, he said: "These islands lying to the left and right along the two coasts of our residence belong to us. They are all rich;

they are all happy, if you call lands happy which abound in gold and pearls. In this particular place there is not much gold, but the shores of all these islands are strewn with pearls, and I will give you as many as you want if you will be my friends. I prefer your manufactures to my pearls, and I wish to possess them. Therefore do not imagine that I desire to break off relations with you."

Such were the words, amongst many others similar, they exchanged. When the Spaniards planned to leave, the cacique promised to send each year as a present to the great king of Castile a hundred pounds of pearls, at eight ounces to the pound. He made this promise voluntarily, attaching little importance to it, and in no way considering himself their tributary.

There are so many rabbits and deer in that island that, without leaving their houses, the Spaniards could kill as many as they chose with their arrows. Their life there was luxurious, and nothing was wanting. The royal residence lies only six degrees from the equator. Yucca, maize bread, and wine made from grains and fruits, are the same as at Comogra or amongst the other continental and insular tribes.

The cacique, Most Holy Father, was baptised with all his people who are become as sheep under their shepherd to increase your flock. Pedro Arias, the governor, wished to bestow his name upon them. The friendship established increased, and the cacique, to assist the Spaniards to regain the continent more easily, lent them his fishermen's culches, that is to say barques dug out of tree-trunks in the native fashion. He also accompanied them to the shore.

After setting aside the fifth for the royal officials, the Spaniards divided amongst themselves the pearls they had secured. They say they are extremely valuable. Here is a proof of the great value of the pearls from that island. Many of them are white and have a beautiful

orient, and are as large or even larger than a nut. What has quickened my recollection is the remembrance of a pearl which the Sovereign Pontiff, Paul, predecessor of Your Holiness, bought from a Venetian merchant through the intermediary of my relative Bartolomeo the Milanese, for forty-four thousand ducats. Now amongst the pearls brought from the island there is one equal in size to an ordinary nut. It was sold at auction and bought at Darien for twelve thousand castellanos of gold, ending in the hands of the governor, Pedro Arias. This precious pearl now belongs to his wife, of whom we have already spoken at the time of his departure. We may assume, therefore, that this pearl was the most precious of all, since it was valued so highly amongst that mass of pearls which were bought, not singly, but by the ounce. It is probable that the Venetian merchant had not paid such a price in the East for the pearl of Pope Paul; but he lived at a time when such objects were greedily sought and a lover of pearls was waiting to swallow it.

Let us now say something of the shells in which pearls grow. Your Beatitude is not ignorant of the fact that Aristotle, and Pliny who followed the former in his theories, were not of the same opinion concerning the growth of pearls. They held but one point in common, and upon all others they differed. Neither would admit that pearl oysters moved after they were once formed. They declare that there exist at the bottom of the sea, meadows, as it were, upon which an aromatic plant resembling thyme grows; they affirm they had seen these fields. In such places these animals resembling oysters are born and grow, engendering about them numerous progeny. They are not satisfied to have one, three, four, or even more pearls, for as many as a hundred and twenty pearls have been found in one shell on the fisheries of that island; and the captain, Gaspar Morales, and his companions carefully counted them. While the Spaniards were there, the

cacique had his divers bring up pearls. The matrix of these pearl oysters may be compared to the organ in which hens form their numerous eggs. The pearls are produced in the following manner: as soon as they are ripe and leave the womb of their mother, they are found detached from the lips of the matrix. They follow one by one each in turn detaching itself, after a brief interval. In the beginning the pearls are enclosed, as it were, in the belly of the oyster, where they grow just as a child while in the womb of its mother lives on the substance of her body. Later on they leave the maternal asylum, where they were hidden. The pearl oysters found—as I myself have seen from time to time—upon the beach and imbedded in the sand on different Atlantic coasts, have been cast up from the depths of the sea by storms, and do not come there of themselves. Why brilliant morning dew gives a white tint to pearls; why bad weather causes them to turn yellow; why they like a clear sky, and remain immovable when it thunders, are questions which cannot be examined with precision by those ignorant natives. It is not a subject that can be treated by limited minds. It is further said that the largest pearl oysters remain at the bottom, the commoner ones in the half-depths, and the little ones near the surface; but the reasons given to sustain this theory are poor ones. The immovable mollusc does not reason about the choice of its home. Everything depends on the determination, the ability, and the breath of the divers. The large pearl oysters do not move about; they are created and find their sustenance in the deepest places, for the number of divers who venture to penetrate to the bottom of the sea to collect them is few. They are afraid of polyps, which are greedy for oyster meat and are always grouped about the places where they are. They are likewise afraid of other sea-monsters, and most of all they fear to suffocate if they stay too long under water. The pearl oysters in

the profoundest depths of the sea consequently have time to grow, and the larger and older the shell becomes, the larger the pearls they harbour, though in number they are few. Those born at the bottom of the sea are believed to become food for the fish; when first gathered they are soft, and the shape of the ear is different from the larger ones. It is alleged that no pearl adheres to the shell as it grows old, but there grows in the shell itself a sort of round and brilliant lump which acquires lustre by filing. This, however, is not valuable, and takes its nature rather from the shell than from the pearl. The Spaniards call the tympanum *pati*.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes pearl oysters have been found growing in small colonies upon rocks, but they are not prized. It is credible that the oysters of India, Arabia, the Red Sea, and Ceylon exist in the manner described by celebrated authors, nor should the explanations given by such eminent writers be entirely rejected; I speak of those who have been for a long time in contradiction with one another.

We have already spoken enough about these sea-animals and their eggs, which luxury-loving people stupidly prefer to the eggs of chickens or ducks. Let us add some further details outside our subject.

We have above described the entrance to the Gulf of Uraba, and said the different countries washed by its waters were strangely different from one another. I have nothing new to relate of the western shore, where the Spaniards established their colony on the banks of the Darien River.

What I have recently learnt about the eastern shore is as follows: the entire country lying to the east between the promontory and shore which extend into the sea and receive the force of the waves, as far as Boca de la Sierpe and Paria, is called by the general name of Caribana.

<sup>1</sup> *Pati appellat Hispanus tympanum*; a sentence for which the translator has found no satisfactory meaning.



Caribs are found everywhere, and are called from the name of their country,<sup>1</sup> but it is well to indicate from whence the Caribs take their origin, and how, after leaving their country, they have spread everywhere like a deadly contagion. Nine miles from the first coast encountered coming from seawards where, as we have said, Hojeda settled, stands in the province of Caribana a village called Futeraca; three miles farther on is the village of Uraba, which gives its name to the gulf and was formerly the capital of the kingdom. Six miles farther on is the village of Feti, and at the ninth and twelfth miles respectively stand the villages of Zeremoe and Sorachi, all thickly populated. All the natives in these parts indulged in man-hunts, and when there are no enemies to fight they practise their cruelties on one another. From this place the infection has spread to the unfortunate inhabitants of the islands and continent.

There is another fact I think I should not omit. A learned lawyer called Corales, who is a judge at Darien, reported that he encountered a fugitive from the interior provinces of the west, who sought refuge with the cacique. This man, seeing the judge reading, started with surprise, and asked through interpreters who knew the cacique's language, "You also have books? You also understand the signs by which you communicate with the absent?" He asked at the same time to look at the open book, hoping to see the same characters used among his people; but he saw the letters were not the same. He said that in his country the towns were walled and the citizens wore clothing and were governed by laws. I have not learned the nature of their religion, but it is known from examining this fugitive, and from his speech, that they are circum-

<sup>1</sup> There are more theories than one concerning the origin of the Caribs and their name. Among other writers who have treated this subject may be cited Reville, in an article published in the *Nouvelle Revue*, 1884, and Rochefort in his *Histoire naturelle et morale des isles Antilles*.

cised.<sup>1</sup> What, Most Holy Father, do you think of this? What augury do you, to whose domination time will submit all peoples, draw for the future?

Let us add to these immense considerations some matters of less importance. I think that I should not omit mentioning the voyage of Juan Solis,<sup>2</sup> who sailed from the ocean port of Lepe, near Cadiz, with three ships, the fourth day of the ides of September, 1515, to explore the southern coasts of what was supposed to be a continent. Nor do I wish to omit mention of Juan Ponce,<sup>3</sup> commissioned to conquer the Caribs, anthropophagi who feed on human flesh; or of Juan Ayora de Badajoz, or Francisco Bezerra, and of Valleco, already mentioned by me. Solis was not successful in his mission. He set out to double the cape or promontory of San Augustin and to follow the coast of the supposed continent as far as the equator. We have already indicated that this cape lies in the seventh degree of the antarctic pole. Solis continued six hundred leagues farther on, and observed that the cape San Augustin extended so far beyond the equator to the south that it reached beyond the thirtieth degree of the Southern Hemisphere. He therefore sailed for a long distance beyond the Boca de la Sierpe and Spanish Paria, which face the north and the pole star. In these parts are found some of those abominable anthropophagi, Caribs, whom I have mentioned before. With fox-like astuteness these Caribs feigned amicable signs, but

<sup>1</sup> . . . *recutiti tamen dispræputiatique, ab exemplo et sermone fugitivi confererunt*. The man may have been a Peruvian or of the civilised plateau people of Cundinamarca. Wiener, in his interesting work, *Perou et Bolivie*, studies the Peruvian system of writing.

<sup>2</sup> Juan Diaz de Solis, a native of Sebixa, sailed with Vincente Yañez Pinzon in 1508, when the mouths of the Amazon were discovered. In 1512, the King appointed him and Giovanni Vespucci his cartographers.

<sup>3</sup> Governor in 1508 of Porto Rico and later, in 1512, the discoverer of Florida, of which country he was appointed Adelantado by King Ferdinand. He died in Cuba in 1521, from the effects of a wound received during his expedition to Florida in that year.

meanwhile prepared their stomachs for a succulent repast; and from their first glimpse of the strangers their mouths watered like tavern trenchermen. The unfortunate Solis landed with as many of his companions as he could crowd into the largest of the barques, and was treacherously set upon by a multitude of natives who killed him and his men with clubs in the presence of the remainder of his crew.<sup>1</sup> Not a soul escaped; and after having killed and cut them in pieces on the shore, the natives prepared to eat them in full view of the Spaniards, who from their ships witnessed this horrible sight. Frightened by these atrocities, the men did not venture to land and execute vengeance for the murder of their leader and companions. They loaded their ships with red wood, which the Italians call *verzino* and the Spaniards *brazil-wood*, and which is suitable for dyeing wool; after which they returned home. I have learned these particulars by correspondence, and I here repeat them. I shall further relate what the other explorers accomplished.

Juan Ponce likewise endured a severe check from the cannibals on the island of Guadaloupe, which is the most important of all the Carib islands. When these people beheld the Spanish ships, they concealed themselves in a place from which they could spy upon all the movements of the people who might land. Ponce had sent some women ashore to wash some shirts and linen, and also some foot-soldiers to obtain fresh water, for he had not seen land after leaving the island of Ferro in the Canaries until he reached Guadaloupe, a distance of four thousand two hundred miles. There is no island in the ocean throughout the entire distance. The cannibals suddenly attacked and captured the women, dispersing the men, a small number of whom managed to escape. Ponce did not venture to attack the Caribs, fearing the poisoned arrows which these barbarous man-eaters use with fatal effect.

<sup>1</sup> The scene of this massacre was between Maldonado and Montevideo.

This excellent Ponce who, as long as he was in a place of safety, had boasted that he would exterminate the Caribs, was constrained to leave his washerwomen and retreat before the islanders. What he has since done, and what discoveries he may have made, I have not yet learned. Thus Solis lost his life, and Ponce his honour, in carrying out their expeditions.

Another who failed miserably in his undertaking the same year is Juan Ayora de Cordova, a nobleman sent out as judge, as we have elsewhere said, and who was keener about accumulating a fortune than he was about administering his office, and deserving praise. Under some pretext or other he robbed several caciques and extorted gold from them, in defiance of all justice. It is related that he treated them so cruelly that, from being friends, they became implacable enemies, and driven to extremities they massacred the Spaniards, sometimes openly and sometimes by setting traps for them. In places where formerly trade relations were normal and the caciques friendly, it became necessary to fight. When, so it is said, he had amassed a large amount of gold by such means, Ayora fled on board a ship he suddenly procured, and it is not known at this present writing where he landed. There are not wanting people who believe that the governor himself, Pedro Arias, closed his eyes to this secret flight; for Juan Ayora is a brother of Gonzales Ayora, the royal historiographer, who is a learned man, an excellent captain, and so intimate with the governor that he and Pedro Arias may be cited amongst the rare pairs of friends known to us. I am in very close relations with both of them, and may they both pardon me; but amidst all the troubles in the colonies, nothing has displeased me so much as the cupidity of this Juan Ayora, which troubled the public peace of the colonies and alienated the caciques.

Let us now come to the tragic adventures of Gonzales

de Badajoz and his companions. In the beginning fortune smiled upon them, but sufficiently sad changes very quickly followed. Gonzales left Darien with forty soldiers in the month of March of the preceding year, 1515, and marched straight to the west, stopping nowhere until he reached the region the Spaniards have named Gracias á Dios, as we have above stated. This place is about a hundred and eighty miles, or sixty leagues from Darien. They passed several days there doing nothing, because the commander was unable either by invitations, bribes, or threats to induce the cacique to approach him, although he desired very much to accomplish this. While camping here he was joined by fifteen adventurers from Darien, under the leadership of Luis Mercado who had left that colony in May, wishing to join Gonzales in exploring the interior. As soon as the two groups met, they decided to cross the southern mountain chain and take possession of the South Sea already discovered. The most extraordinary thing of all is, that on a continent of such length and breadth, the distance to the South Sea was not more than fifty-one miles, or seventeen leagues. In Spain people never count by miles; the land league equals three miles, and the marine league four miles. When they reached the summit of the mountain chain, which is the watershed, they found there a cacique called Javana. Both the country and its ruler bear the name of Coiba, as we have already stated is the case, at Careta. As the country of Javana is the richest of all in gold, it is called Coiba Rica. And in fact, wherever one digs, whether on dry land or in the riverbeds, the sand is found to contain gold. The cacique Javana fled when the Spaniards approached, nor was it possible to overtake him. They then set to work to ravage the neighbourhood of his town, but found very little gold, for the cacique had taken with him in his flight everything he possessed. They found, however, some



slaves who were branded in a painful fashion. The natives cut lines in the faces of the slaves, using a sharp point either of gold or of a thorn; they then fill the wounds with a kind of powder dampened with black or red juice, which forms an indelible dye and never disappears. The Spaniards took these slaves with them. It seems that this juice is corrosive and produces such terrible pain that the slaves are unable to eat on account of their sufferings. Both the kings who originally captured these slaves in war, and also the Spaniards, put them to work hunting gold or tilling the fields.

Leaving the town of Javana, the Spaniards followed the watershed for ten miles, and entered the territory of another chief, whom they called the "Old Man," because they were heedless of his name and took notice only of his age. Everywhere in the country of this cacique, both in the riverbeds and in the soil, gold was found. Streams were abundant and the country was everywhere rich and fertile. Leaving that place, the Spaniards marched for five days through a desert country which they thought had been devastated by war, for though the greater part of it was fertile, it was neither inhabited nor cultivated. On the fifth day they perceived in the distance two heavily laden natives approaching them. Marching upon them, they captured the men, and found that they were carrying sacks of maize on their shoulders. From the answers of these men they gathered that there were two caciques in these regions, one on the coast, called Periqueta, another in the interior, called Totonogo; the latter being blind. These two men were fishermen who had been sent by their cacique Totonogo, to Periqueta, with a burden of fish, which they had traded for bread.<sup>1</sup> Trade is thereabouts carried on by exchange in kind, and not by means

<sup>1</sup> There has evidently at some time been an error of transcription; the cacique Totonogo, who is first mentioned as ruling along the sea-coast, is now described as sending fish to his neighbour Periqueta.



of gold, which claims so many victims. Led by these two natives, the Spaniards reached the country of Totonogo, the cacique whose country extends along the west side of the gulf of San Miguel on the south sea. This chieftain gave them six thousand castellanos of gold, partly in ingots and partly worked; amongst the former was one which weighed two castellanos, proving that gold exists in abundance in this region.

Following along the western coast, the Spaniards visited the cacique Taracuru, from whom they obtained eight thousand pesos; a peso, as we have already said, corresponding to an unminted castellano. They next marched into the country of his brother Pananome, who fled and was seen no more. His subjects declared the country to be rich in gold. The Spaniards destroyed his residence. Six leagues farther on they came to the country of another cacique called Tabor, and then to that of another called Cheru. The latter received the Spaniards amicably, and offered them four thousand pesos. He possesses valuable salt deposits, and the country is rich in gold. Twelve miles farther they came to another cacique called Anata, from whom they obtained twelve thousand pesos, which the cacique had captured from neighbouring chieftains whom he had conquered. This gold was even scorched, because it had been carried out of the burning houses of his enemies. These caciques rob and massacre one another, and destroy their villages, during their atrocious wars. They give no quarter, and the victors make a clean sweep of everything.<sup>1</sup>

In this wise the excellent Gonzales de Badajoz and his

<sup>1</sup> This was everywhere the case on the mainland; while it does not excuse the cruelties inflicted by the Spaniards upon the native populations in their rapacious struggle for wealth, it may temper the indiscriminating sympathy of the emotional to reflect that oppression, torture, extortion, and slavery, not to mention human sacrifices and cannibalism were practised among them with a hideous ingenuity upon which no refinement introduced by the Spaniards could improve.

companions wandered, without any fixed plan, until they came to the territory of Anata; and during their journey they had collected piles of gold, girdles, women's breast ornaments, earrings, headdresses, necklaces, and bracelets, to the value of eighty thousand castellanos more. This they had acquired, either by trading their merchandise or by pillage and violence; for the majority of the caciques had opposed their passage and had sought to resist them. They had in addition forty slaves, whom they used as beasts of burden to carry their provisions and baggage, and also to care for the sick.

The Spaniards traversed the country of a cacique, Scoria, and arrived at the residence of another called Pariza. They did not expect to be attacked, but the cacique closed about them with a great number of armed men, surprising them at a moment when they were off their guard and scattered. They had no time to seize their weapons; seventy of them were wounded or killed, and the rest fled, abandoning their gold and all their slaves. Very few of them ever came back to Darien.

The opinion of all the sages upon the vicissitudes of fortune and the inconstancy of human affairs would prove unfounded if this expedition had terminated profitably and happily; but the ordering of events is inevitable, and those who tear up the roots, sometimes find sweet liquorice and sometimes bitter cockle. Woe, however, to Pariza! for he shall not long rest quietly. This great crime will soon be avenged. The governor was preparing to lead a campaign against him in person at the head of three hundred and fifty men when he fell ill. The learned jurisconsult, Gaspar Espinosa, royal judge at Darien, took his place and acted as his lieutenant; at the same time the Spaniards sent to the island called Rica to collect the tribute of pearls imposed upon its cacique. We shall in due course learn what happened.

Other leaders marched against the dwellers on the other

side of the gulf; one of whom, Francisco Bezerra, crossed the head of the gulf and the mouth of the Dabaiba River. His band consisted of two officers and a hundred and fifty well-armed soldiers. His plan was to attack the Caribs in the country of Caribana itself. He first marched against the village of Turufy, of which I have spoken when describing the arrival of Hojeda. He was provided with engines of war, three cannon firing lead bullets larger than an egg, forty archers, and twenty-five musketeers. It was planned to fire upon the Caribs from a distance because they fight with poisoned arrows. It is not yet known where Bezerra landed nor what he did; but it was feared at Darien when the vessels were leaving for Spain, that his expedition had turned out badly.

Another captain, called Vallejo, carried on operations along the lower part of the gulf, crossing over by another route than that taken by Bezerra; thus one of them menaced Caribana from the front and the other from behind. Vallejo has come back, but out of seventy men he took with him, forty-eight wounded were left in the power of the Caribs. This is the story told by those who reached Darien, and I repeat it.

On the eve of the ides of October of this year, 1516, Roderigo Colmenares, whom I have above mentioned, and a certain Francisco de la Puente belonging to the troop commanded by Gonzales de Badajoz came to see me. The latter was amongst those who escaped the massacre executed by the cacique Pariza. Colmenares himself left Darien for Spain after the vanquished arrived. Both of them report, one from hearsay and the other from observation, that a number of islands lie in the South Sea to the west of the gulf of San Miguel and the Isla Rica and that on these islands trees, bearing the same fruits as in the country of Calicut, grow and are cultivated. It is from the countries of Calicut, Cochin, and Camemor that the Portuguese procure spices. Thus it is thought

that not far from the colony of San Miguel begins the country where spices grow. Many of those who have explored these regions only await the authorisation to sail from that coast of the South Sea; and they offer to build ships at their own cost, if they only be commissioned to seek for the spice lands. These men think that ships should be built in the gulf of San Miguel itself, and that the idea of following the coast in the direction of Cape San Augustin should be abandoned, as that route would be too long, too difficult, and too dangerous. Moreover it would take them beyond the fortieth degree of the southern hemisphere.

This same Francisco, who shared the labours and the perils of Gonzales says, that in exploring those countries he saw veritable herds of deer and wild boar, of which he captured many in the native fashion by digging ditches across the trails followed by these animals and covering them over with branches; this is the native method of trapping these wild quadrupeds. In catching birds they use doves just as we do. They tie a tame dove in the trees, and the birds of each species which flock about it are then shot with arrows. Another way is by spreading a net in an open space, sprinkling food round about it, and placing the tame dove in the middle. The same system is used with parrots and other birds. The parrots are so stupid that, while one chatters on a tree in whose branches the bird-catcher is concealed, the others flock thither, and allow themselves to be easily caught. They are not frightened when they see the bird-catcher, but sit looking until the noose is thrown round their necks. Even when they see one of their companions captured and thrown into the hunter's bag, they do not fly away.

There is another system of bird-hunting which is quite original and diverting to relate. We have already stated that there exist in the islands, and especially at Hispaniola,

stagnant lakes and ponds upon whose waters flutters a whole world of aquatic birds, because those waters are covered with grasses, and little fish and a thousand varieties of frogs, worms, and insects live in that liquid mud. The work of corruption and generation ordained by the secret decree of providence is promoted in these depths by the heat of the sun. Different species of birds swarm in these waters: ducks, geese, swans, divers, gulls, sea-mews, and countless similar.

We have elsewhere related that the natives cultivate a tree in their gardens, whose fruit resembles a large gourd. The natives throw a large quantity of these gourds into the ponds, after having carefully stopped up the holes by which water is introduced into them, to prevent their sinking. These gourds, floating about on the water, inspire the birds with confidence; the hunter then covers his head with a sort of cask made of a gourd, one in which there are little holes for his eyes, like in a mask. He wades into the water up to his chin, for from their infancy they are all accustomed to swim, and do not fear to remain a long time in the water. As the birds find the gourd which conceals the hunter similar to all the others floating about, the man is able to approach the flock. Imitating with his head the movements of the floating gourd, he follows the little waves produced by the wind, and gradually approaches the birds. Stretching out his right hand he seizes a bird by the foot, and without being seen, quickly jerks it under the water and thrusts it into a bag he carries. The other birds imagining their companion has dived in search of food, as they all do, fearlessly continue their movements, and in their turns become victims of the hunter.

I interrupted my narrative with this description of bird-hunting and other sport, in order that these harmless tales might divert you from the horror you must have



felt in reading the story of so many crimes. I should still like to speak to you concerning a new theory of the current which drives the waters of the gulf of Paria towards the west; and also of the system of gold-mining in Darien. These are particulars which have just recently been furnished me. After this dual report, which will be in no sense tragic, I shall take leave of Your Holiness.

The Captain Andreas Morales and Oviedo, whom I have above mentioned, came to visit me at Madrid, or to be more accurate, at Mantua Carpetana; and in my presence they had a discussion on the subject of this current. They agree that the Spanish possessions extend without interruption towards the northern lands behind Cuba and the other islands, and to the north-west of Hispaniola and Cuba; but they do not hold the same opinion concerning the current. Andreas claims that the force of these waters is broken by the great body of land believed to be a continent, and which, as we have said, bends towards the north, in such wise that, breaking against these obstacles, the waters turn in a circle and are driven towards the northern coasts of Cuba and the other lands lying outside the Tropic of Cancer. Thus, these waters, which flow from narrow straits are absorbed, as it were, in the immensity of the ocean, and their force is diminished as they spread through immense spaces where they ultimately disappear. I might compare this current to the eddies of water in a mill-race. Water flowing, no matter how rapidly, through a narrow canal, and afterwards falling into a lake, at once spreads out; the volume is broken, and although an instant before it flowed riotously, and seemed capable of sweeping away every obstacle, it is calmed. Even the direction of the current is no longer perceptible. I once questioned Admiral Diego Columbus, son and heir of the discoverer, who had crossed these seas, coming and going, four times. When



asked his opinion, he answered: "It is difficult to return as one went; but upon sailing northwards on the open ocean to return to Spain, the movement in the waters driving towards the east is very perceptible. I think this is probably due to the ordinary influence of ebb and flow, and should not be attributed to those eddyings of the waters. The continent is open, and there must exist between the two bodies a strait through which these turbulent waters escape to the west. In obedience to a decree of Heaven, they circulate throughout the entire universe."

Oviedo agrees with Andreas in thinking that the continent is closed, but he does not believe that this western mass of the continent breaks the current, driving it into the vast ocean. He likewise affirms that he has carefully noted that the current running westwards, takes its rise in the open sea; when following along the coast in small ships, it is the current running eastwards that is struck, so that one may be transported in two opposite directions at the same spot. This is a phenomenon which may frequently be observed in rivers, where the conformation of the banks gives rise to whirlpools. If straws or bits of wood are thrown into the river at such a place, those which fall into the middle are carried away by the current; on the contrary, those which drop into some bend along the shore or by a slanting bank, go up the current until they again drift into the middle of the river.

Such are their opinions, and I repeat them, although they are in contradiction. We shall form no well-grounded opinion until the true cause of this phenomenon has been verified. Meanwhile it is only possible to set forth these different theories, until the day fixed and the astronomical moment for the discovery of this secret of Nature shall arrive. But enough concerning these pelagic currents.

Some few more words about gold mines at Darien, and we shall have accomplished our task.

We have said that nine miles from Darien begin the hills and plains containing gold deposits, either in the earth or in the bed or the banks of the rivers. Any one who has been bitten by the gold fever usually sets out as follows: the directors assign him a parcel of ground twelve paces square, which he may choose as he pleases, on condition that it is not land that has already been occupied or abandoned by his companions. When he has made his choice, he settles on that spot with his slaves, as though within a temple, whose limits the Augurs have traced with their sacred staves. The Christians use native labour both in the mines and in agriculture. This plot of land may be held as long as the occupant wishes; and in case no gold, or very little, should be found there, a request for a fresh square of like dimensions is presented, and the parcel of abandoned land reverts to the common demesne. This is the order followed by the colonists of Darien who are engaged in gold-seeking. I think it is the same for the others, but I have not questioned all of them. Sometimes such a parcel of twelve paces square has netted its possessor the sum of eighty castellanos. Such is the life people lead to satisfy the sacred hunger for gold;<sup>1</sup> but the richer one becomes by such work, the more does one desire to possess. The more wood is thrown on the fire, the more it crackles and spreads. The sufferer from dropsy, who thinks to appease his thirst by drinking, only excites it the more. I have suppressed many details to which I may later return if I learn that they afford pleasure to Your Holiness, charged with the weight of religious questions and sitting at the summit of the honours to which men may aspire. It is in no sense for my personal pleasure that I have collected these facts, for only the desire to

<sup>1</sup> *Sic vivitur in sacra fame auri explenda.*

please Your Beatitude has induced me to undertake this labour.

May Providence, which watches over this world, grant to Your Holiness many happy years.

END OF VOL. I.













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