

# I

## HOW SPAIN COMMENCED TO COLONIZE

---

---

*“Blind folly, ignoble selfishness, crushing tyranny, and hideous cruelty, mark every page of the history of the domination of Spain.”*

—LECKY, “Rationalism in Europe,” II., 335.

---

---

Columbus and the Slave-trade—Greed for Gold at the Spanish Court—Las Casas Tries to Protect Natives

**A**T the centre of Spain, in the high, bleak, stony plateau characteristic of the neighborhood north of Madrid, rising like a vast and monotonous mausoleum out of a dead waste of granite boulders, stands the far-famed Escorial. It embodies the spirit that gave it birth, the mind of a man half monarch, half monk; a king whose audience chamber was the cell of a recluse, whose walks abroad were limited by the walls of a cloister, to whom sunshine and the song of birds were profane, whose waking and sleeping were alike determined by monastic rules. Philip II.\* built this mighty architectural monstrosity. The old world and the new were ransacked for its adornment. Within its walls is embedded a cathedral that would be considered of commanding proportions in most cities of the world; but in this great granite wilderness it seems but the chapel in a nobleman's palace.

\* Philip II. was born 1527 and died 1598. He became king in 1556 and therefore afflicted his country for forty-two years. He outlived four wives.

## THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

---

Windows are counted by the hundreds, resounding corridors are measured by miles. In the cellars alone appears to be space enough for many royal residences. The visitor to-day sees little change after three centuries—priests are now in possession as they were from the very beginning; and, after marvelling at the amount of money and labor represented by this dreary pile, one leaves it with a sigh, for it symbolizes the pride of a priest-ridden and unproductive empire.

Amidst the great treasures of the Escorial, none is more precious than the little room in one corner of the vast building, where Philip II. received ambassadors from all the monarchs of the world, and whence he despatched viceroys, missionaries, commanders of armies, to Mexico, Manila, Cuba, or Peru. This strange little room—no larger than a bed-chamber in a modern hotel—was kept artificially darkened, that the monarch might be the less distracted by the sight of real things. While the blistering summer sun was full in the heavens, lighting up the Guadarrama Mountains, and while flocks of sheep and goats were tinkling their little bells and proclaiming at least some innocent life in this "stony-lonesome," the monarch of half the world lit his little lamp in a black alcove and read his despatches, or indicted instructions for the more rapid conversion of the heathen. Here he ruled over the lives and fortunes of half the human race; here were decided the delicate questions affecting the prosperity of colonies, questions of commerce, relations of master and servant, land legislation, navigation acts, taxation in every form, relative power of civil and military officials—questions which

## HOW SPAIN COLONIZED

---

vexed the ablest cabinets even when assisted by the greatest experts in all branches of political economy.

Philip II. shut out the light from his cell in the Escorial and consulted with minds darkened like his own. He sought guidance among his fellow-monks, and his political creed took no wider range than that of his father-confessor. Whether called upon to make war with England or increase the poll tax in Porto Rico, to encourage emigration or limit the exports from the Philippines, the voice that determined was the voice of a monk.

Spain's career as a colonial empire lasted, roughly, through four centuries. Columbus sailed from Spain in 1492 and made his first settlement in the West Indies about Christmas-time of that year. In 1493 he returned and presented Ferdinand and Isabella with a New World, which within the next generation was converted into an annex of Spain, reaching from the southern edges of the present United States to the northern portions of what are now the Argentine Republic and Chili. From the first discovery of Cuba and Porto Rico to that day in which the Spanish flag was finally driven out of American waters, the history of Spain constitutes one of the most romantic of colonial chronicles, full of interest to the general student, and of vital concern to those who have undertaken the task in which another has failed.

It is worth noting that Spain's beginning as a colonial power was coincident with the expulsion from her soil of the only people who, at that time, were competent to deal with economic problems from a purely

## THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

---

profit-making point of view. The Jews were then (1492), as they have been for generations, the money-lenders, the brokers, the commercial agents of the world—they were pre-eminently fitted to be the middlemen in transactions where absence of political and religious passion was useful. Spain, at that time, had a population of only four and one-half millions, distributed over a territory nearly equal to that of France—roughly 200,000 square miles.

At first sight it would not seem that pressure of population had anything to do with causing her to seek an expansion of territory, unless we regard as over-populated every country that is badly governed.

When Columbus sailed on his first voyage, Ferdinand \* and Isabella ruled a country that had emerged victorious from a long war of the white man against the Moor—the Church of Rome against the infidel. Religious fervor and the flush of victories in war, united with love of plunder in producing a public sentiment ready for adventure in any field which offered scope for the missionary, the soldier, the government official. These three were united by thirst for conquest—conquest for the Church, conquest for glory, conquest for the sake of plunder; so long as the conquest was successful, the father confessor was apt to be accommodating.

Few countries have achieved so much for glory as Spain, and still fewer have had so little substance to show for it. At the end of the fifteenth century agri-

\* Ferdinand, the "Catholic," was born in 1452 and died in 1516. He married Isabella in 1469. She died in 1504. This king established the Inquisition at Seville in 1480.

## HOW SPAIN COLONIZED

---

culture was at a very low ebb; Valencia barely raised one-third of what she required, while Catalonia and Aragon depended almost entirely on import for a supply. It is the irony of fate that while Spain gloried in having driven away the Jews and the Moors, the traveller, even of the present day, notes with surprise that it is to the magnificent labors of infidels that Christian Spain owes most of the irrigating works that sustain her present population. Carthaginians, Jews, and Moors built up the Spain of 1492. The generation of conquerors, colonizers, and explorers was the legitimate result of wars waged with fanatic recklessness, and Spain reached the zenith of her glory at the outset of a colonial career for which she was but feebly equipped. Her conquest of the Western World was achieved within the lifetime of a single man, but no sooner had her power been effectively asserted than she commenced to govern in a manner which makes us marvel, not so much at the quantity of colonies she has lost, but at the fact that there remained, in 1898, any for her to lose.

As everyone knows, the Pope, Alexander VI.,\* divided the world into two parts; the one ~~he~~ presented to Portugal, the other to Spain. This was a species of generosity excellent as between the two countries immediately concerned, but, as events proved, calculated to make trouble when English, French, and Dutch should develop a taste for far-away venture.

So, while Portuguese sailors sought the East Indies,

\* This Pope, Borgia by name, ruled the so-called Christian world from 1492 to 1503. He owed his office to bribery, burned Savonarola, introduced the censorship of books, was finally removed by poison, leaving behind several illegitimate children. This man gave the world away in 1493!

## THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

---

Columbus reached the West Indies, which at that time he believed to be a portion of China or Japan.

King Ferdinand took little interest in Columbus. It was Isabella who really discovered America, and considering, therefore, our obligations to that lady, we, as Americans, need offer no apology to those who accuse us of worshipping woman.

The pictures of Columbus which I have so far been able to see, represent him as peculiarly amiable, if not benevolent in appearance. His second expedition, however, in 1493, was fitted out by appropriating the confiscated estates of banished Jews. But this was offset by the Church's advancing him a portion of its tithes, and sending to the New World an Apostolic Vicar and eleven Benedictine friars.

Already, on his third expedition, Columbus suggested that the natives of the West Indies, the gentle Caribs, should be sold as slaves, in order to raise money for the Government, and in 1494 five hundred were brought to Spain and sold. Slave auctions of Caribbee Indians became an institution in Seville, but the money raised did not by any means make up for the chests of gold and precious stones that Columbus had led his friends at home to expect.

Cuba, Hayti, Porto Rico, Jamaica—these were sore disappointments to the first arrivals, who found huts of reeds where they had anticipated treasure houses of nabobs. It was a blow to those pioneers when they realized that colonization involved the tilling of the soil under a sun not hotter, but much more persistent, than that even of Madrid or Alicante.

The instructions to Columbus had been very ex-

## HOW SPAIN COLONIZED

---

PLICIT as to the importance of converting the natives to Christianity, and while the Church had some scruples regarding slavery when applied to those of its own faith, the Pope looked upon it as a fair punishment for those who remained heretic. Of course it would have been most inconvenient had all the natives turned Christian, for then there would have been an end to slavery. So the natives were hunted down by bloodhounds; they were addressed in Spanish, and they answered in Caribbee. The white slave-raider swore that the Carib had refused to become a Christian, while the poor Carib knew nothing of what was expected of him. In any event, the white man's word was taken, the Carib was branded, sold as a slave, and thus was laid the foundation of Spain's colonial fortune. From the very outset Columbus inaugurated the policy that every Indian owed more or less of his labor to the white man, without remuneration, and that policy was not reversed until Admiral Dewey trained his twelve-inch guns upon Manila in the summer of 1898.

And yet the early regulations sounded moderate enough—they were at least sanctioned by the Christian Church of the day. Every native over fourteen years old was required to deliver quarterly either so much gold or so much cotton, according to the neighborhood, and in return he received a copper medal by way of receipt. Of course, if he could not show this evidence of labor performed, he was punished in any way that his white master thought most profitable.

In 1497 Columbus found so much difficulty in at-

## THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

---

tracting free men to the New World that a law was passed, at his request, by which he was able to recruit his colony from the prisons. So in that year Columbus had to sail back to the New World with two hundred criminals as his only recruits.

The history of Columbus is familiar to us all, and we need here only note that after eight years of labor as a discoverer, explorer, colonist, and conqueror, he was, in 1500, taken back to Spain as a prisoner. He was stripped of his honors, his petitions were unanswered. He died of a broken heart in Valladolid in 1506, surviving Queen Isabella by two years.

The house in which he died, No. 7 Calle de Colon, is so well preserved that it seems to be modern, and of course it is a shrine to which the American traveller to-day makes reverent pilgrimage.

The men who made Spain great in those days excited envy amongst their contemporaries; but few form an exception to the general rule that success is more difficult to bear than misfortune. Commencing with Columbus, who was sent home from the New World in chains, there are very few whose closing years can excite in us other feelings than pity. Balboa, who discovered the Pacific, lost his head at the age of forty-two. Cortés was disgraced and imprisoned, and the conquest of Mexico did not save him from dying a disappointed man. De Soto, who discovered the Mississippi, was carried away by swamp fever in 1541, and in the same year Pizarro was killed by his own people. It is difficult to name one of the great Spanish conquerors whose life was not embittered to him by the suspicion and jealousy of those



## HOW SPAIN COLONIZED

---

whom he was serving in Madrid, or by the treachery of his fellow-adventurers. The worst that befell the British conquerors in India was mild, indeed, compared with the average treatment meted out to the noblest sons of Spain in the days when her court was most completely influenced by the Christian Church. Clive and Warren Hastings in their darkest hours would have hesitated to change places with Cortés or Columbus.

### SLAVERY

Ferdinand was a pious and humane man so long as his piety did not conflict with his pocket. By a quaint course of reasoning he was made to see that while it was wicked to enslave Indians who recognized him as their king, it was quite correct to make slaves of Africans to whom he had granted no royal privilege. In 1501 negro slavery first made its appearance in America, and from that time on it has divided the sentiment of priest and layman alike in every part of the world where one man has been privileged to exploit the labor of another.

The Church thundered against slavery in the abstract, but amongst Blacks or Caribs they found plausible pretexts for an institution which has since been defended by the united Protestant clergy of many English and American states, to say nothing of Puritan pastors in the land of Paul Kruger. As early as 1495 we read in the Papal Bull this message to missionaries:

“ You shall persuade the people who inhabit these islands and continents to accept the Christian faith.

## THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

---

“ We impress upon you . . . according to your promise . . . to select honourable men, and send them to these continents and islands—men who fear God—who are instructed, clever, and suitable for the purpose of teaching the Catholic doctrine to the inhabitants, and to bring them up in good habits.”

In her last will, Isabella enjoined humane treatment for the Indians, while, at the same time, urging their conversion to Christianity.

But those who most generously pleaded for kind treatment were inclined to extenuate slavery, on the ground that it is better for a heathen to be the slave of a Christian than to run loose without hope of salvation. In 1509, three years after the death of his father, the eldest son of Columbus was sent to America and inaugurated such a slave-hunting as scandalized even the colonial monks of the day. Under him Indian and African slavery flourished. In order to get a pretext for raiding the Indians, he would issue a proclamation calling upon a whole tribe to become Christian, and then, without waiting to inquire whether that particular tribe understood its language or purport, he would send a detachment of soldiers to make war upon them and bring back the prisoners in chains.

We must be careful, in studying the history of four centuries ago, to make due allowance for difference in custom, and to judge men by standards of their own time and state of society. Let us inquire, therefore, to what extent the treatment of the natives in the West Indies was sustained by the sentiment either of the Spanish people or the Church which controlled the Court.

## HOW SPAIN COLONIZED

---

In 1510 some fourteen Dominican monks came to San Domingo and at once commenced to preach in public against the cruelties practised toward the natives. It is to their credit that they were the first religious order that openly protested against slavery in the New World. The new Governor, Columbus, cared as little for the letter of his instructions as did King Ferdinand. That Christian monarch had urged the Governor to send him money: "Get money—by merciful means if possible—but get it!"

Columbus knew that anything would be forgiven provided gold was procured; but that nothing could atone for an empty chest.

So slave-raiding went on—even to the neighboring Bahamas. There the unsuspecting natives were coaxed aboard ship by promises of presents, and, when once aboard, were seized, manacled, and carried away to slavery.

Before the Spaniards had been eighteen years in the West Indies, colonial public sentiment had become "educated" on the subject of slavery as completely as it ever became in after years either in South Carolina or South Africa. Every colonist understood that under slavery his plantation would pay, and that without it he would be a loser. Every priest realized that under slavery his parishioners could afford handsome tithes, but that under free labor they would all be poor together. The Crown officials saw in slavery a means of getting rich tribute to the mother country, and also an easy way of keeping in order a population that might otherwise be making mischief.

Is it strange, therefore, that in the midst of such a

## THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

---

community, the governor, the priest, the soldier, and the colonist united in drawing the conclusion that God intended the Indian to be the white man's slave?

Now there is nothing new in this growth of public sentiment in favor of slavery. Wherever a large portion of the community have found it to their interest to keep slaves, there have never been wanting ministers of the Gospel ready to prove from the pulpit that slavery was a divine institution.

It took courage of no common order for a priest to preach, in 1510, "abolition" sermons in the midst of a slave colony like San Domingo.

As might have been anticipated, the colonists were highly indignant; they posted a Franciscan monk off to Spain to make representations against the meddling Dominican. But the Dominican was also good at diplomacy, and sailed for Spain in the same ship.

At first Ferdinand would not see the "abolition" monk. He wanted money, and was much vexed that this Dominican interfered between him and his profits. But the Dominican procured strong clerical backing, and finally was admitted to an audience. He unfolded such a tale of cruelty that even Ferdinand for a moment forgot his share in the iniquitous traffic and listened sympathetically to the friar's tale—how, for instance, a Spaniard had tossed a two-year-old Indian baby into the water out of wantonness, and watched it drown as though it had been a useless kitten, and no punishment inflicted upon the white master!

Ferdinand did what all weak rulers do—he shifted the responsibility from his own shoulders to those of others; in other words, he appointed a committee to

## HOW SPAIN COLONIZED

---

inquire—a species of whitewashing commission, which has since become fashionable in high political circles.

This commission was made up of priests and courtiers who brought in the sort of reform that Ferdinand desired. They denounced slavery in the abstract—advocated humane measures in the abstract—did everything that was Christian in the abstract—but in the concrete, left everything as it was. The Indians must be converted, and those who refused should be made slaves!

And our knowledge of human nature assures us that this loophole was sufficient for the slave-owning planters of the West Indies.

In 1512 this new law was passed. It altered nothing, but it enabled Ferdinand to confess with more ease, because the theological junta had assured him that now his conscience was clear on the subject of slavery.

The good Dominican friar enjoyed an academic sort of triumph—what the artistic world calls a *succès d'estime*—a triumph in name, but not in fact. It was even reported that his impassioned eloquence had converted the hostile Franciscan into becoming an abolitionist. At any rate, whatever might have been the effect of the Dominican's efforts on the minds of the people in Spain, they had scant effect in the colonies.

The statistics of the day represented Hispaniola (San Domingo) as containing a large population in 1492. In 1508 the number had sunk from the neighborhood of a million to 70,000; in 1510, to 40,000; in 1514, to 13,000—practical extermination!

## THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

---

Another friend of the Indians rose up in the person of the great Dominican, Las Casas, the son of one who had sailed with Columbus to the New World. In 1502 he came to Hispaniola as a priest, and soon became a slave-driving planter like the rest. But his conscience pricked him one day and he liberated his slaves and devoted himself from that time on to philanthropy. He worked during his whole life and died at the age of ninety-two respected by all who knew of him and his work; but, so far as the natives themselves were concerned, his influence was very little.

After much difficulty he secured an audience of Ferdinand in 1515—thanks to the intercession of the father-confessor; but, though he pleaded eloquently, Ferdinand did as little in this case as in that of the other Dominican. Las Casas was referred to the head of the Colonial Department, a Bishop of the Church, and to him he related how 7,000 Indian children had died in three months! The Bishop's answer was, merely:

“What business is that of mine—or the King?”

Then Las Casas burst forth:

“Is it then no business of your Grace or the King that all these souls are lost? Great and everlasting God! Whose business is it then?” Ferdinand died in the following year and, no doubt, met in Heaven some of the souls for whom he had had little time to trouble himself here below. Ferdinand was like many another weak mortal; he would have been honest had he been rich enough to afford such luxury.

## HOW SPAIN COLONIZED

---

In 1516, the great Charles V.,\* at the age of sixteen, became King of Spain, and soon thereafter (1520) Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. During his minority the Government was in the hands of Cardinal Ximenes, a name associated with much refined cruelty perpetrated under the cloak of the Inquisition. His palace is to-day the home of the British Ambassador in Madrid. A subterranean passage leads beneath the street from this house to what was the torture chamber. The house of the Cardinal remains to-day almost as it was at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The rooms are mostly little cells for monks, with doors in which a little hole is cut, that those outside may occasionally peer through to see what the brother friar is doing.

Ximenes had large views for a man of his time and supported Las Casas. This was not so much because this Grand Inquisitor could not stand human suffering, but as a statesman he looked with alarm upon the gradual depopulation of his master's colonies. He legislated regarding Caribbee Indians as a forester would regarding those who destroyed wantonly a valuable grove of trees.

But Charles V. needed money quite as much as did Ferdinand—perhaps more. Even as mere King of Spain Charles had none too much, but his vanity and colonial possessions had impelled him to seek an imperial throne in Europe as well as in America; and the expenditure connected with this new dignity—heavy

\* Charles V. was born in 1500 in Flanders, and died in 1558; though two years before, he abdicated and retired to the monastery of Juste. This is the man who presided at the trial of Martin Luther at Worms, in 1521.

## THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

---

enough to a rich country—was almost crushing to one as poor as Spain. It was from the New World that Charles sought the money to sustain his new honors; and with pressing creditors at his gates, he could not afford to examine too minutely the means by which he was enabled to make his reign brilliant. His father-confessor soothed him by saying that the important thing was the object on which the gold was spent, rather than the means employed in securing it. And, therefore, we note throughout these years constant efforts by noble men like Las Casas, and an equally constant abstract interest in humanity expressed by the Crown; humane laws passed, but never enforced. The natives are always to be treated gently, but always to do what the white man wishes!

Las Casas was named Protector of the Indians. He might as well have been named protector of the polar bears!

A Franciscan monk who accompanied Pedraria's expedition to Darien, in 1514, wrote that the whole country was pillaged and laid waste; that no cruelty or treachery was omitted in order to procure gold or slaves; that in one raid alone, 40,000 Indians were destroyed. Pedraria also bore instructions to be gentle with the native!

The manner in which Cuba was originally conquered and colonized is a fitting pendant to her condition under Weyler in 1898. In 1511 the Chartered Company of Seville—a trade monopoly for the American colonies—decided to conquer Cuba, using Hispaniola (San Domingo) as a base. So it sent off to that island three hundred volunteers, who had no other ob-



## HOW SPAIN COLONIZED

---

ject than plunder. They landed and commenced to call upon the natives to recognize the Christian religion and submit. The Cuban natives were, however, less inclined to submit than those of San Domingo—no doubt, news of Spanish rule in San Domingo had preceded this missionary enterprise. But the natives were finally beaten, and their chief taken prisoner. He was brought before the Spanish conqueror and ordered to turn Christian before he should be put to death. The chief wanted to know what good it would do him to turn Christian at such a late hour in the day.

He was told that by turning Christian he would secure access to Heaven.

“Should I meet any Spaniards in Heaven?” asked the Cuban.

“Certainly,” answered the priest.

“Then I’d rather go somewhere else!” said the simple savage.

Cuba was not colonized until nineteen years after the date of Columbus’s first voyage, but from the outset it became a place of prime commercial, strategic, and agricultural importance, in spite of the fact that it did not attract so much attention as those colonies in which precious metals were abundant.

Already, in 1518, there were eight white settlements on the island, and in the following year the colony felt strong enough to fit out an expedition (of Cortés) to the mainland. The first Cuban Governor, Velasquez, inaugurated his rule on the plan which subsequently prevailed with baneful monotony throughout Spanish America. The land was divided up among the white settlers, without asking permission of the

## THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

---

Indians. The Crown, of course, reserved all rights not distinctly parted with. Then the natives were made to work for the whites. If they declined, they were hunted down and enslaved, on the plea that they were obstinate heathen. But the Cuban Indians made much trouble, and the colony finally concluded that in the long run it was cheaper to get negroes from Africa, than to have the expense of constantly fighting among the natives. So, from 1522 on, extermination commenced. It was a job soon done. The black man took the place of the copper-colored one—that was all!