company and the royal standard were consecrated in the cathedral church of Panama; a sermon was preached before the little army by Fray Juan de Vargas, one of the Dominicans selected by the government for the Peruvian mission; and mass was performed, and the sacrament administered to every soldier previous to his engaging in the crusade against the infidel.”

The little fleet sailed from the roadstead of Panama early in January, 1531. Very few of the hundred and eighty men ever came back to Panama, but hundreds and thousands of men left Panama to follow their sea trail.

Shortly afterward, Hernando de Soto, who was later to discover the Mississippi, set out with a hundred men and some horses to support Pizarro. A year later Almagro sailed with a hundred and fifty men. And then for many months the people of Panama heard no more of Peru. They went about their petty round of slave driving and as the weeks slipped by with no news, they began again to poke fun at the crazy Padre Luque.

A little more than a year after Almagro had sailed, in 1533, the lookouts descried some ships beating up from the south. Altogether, in the three installments, eight ships had gone down the coast. There were only two coming back. One can imagine how the populace crowded down to the beach, how the professional skeptics must have said, “I told you so.” How worried the Father Luque must have been.

Hernando Pizarro was on board. He was bringing the King’s fifth of the Inca’s ransom. Señor Clemencin, of the Royal Academy of History at Madrid, made a deep study of the relative value of Spanish currency at the time of the discovery and our own money. According to his estimate, the 1,326,539 pesos of gold to which the Inca’s ransom amounted would weigh almost as much as $4,000,000 in modern gold, and have a purchasing value in those days
equal to four times as much. Besides the King's fifth, Hernando Pizarro had with him about $6,000,000 belonging to individuals.

The effect of all this wealth on Panama was tremendous. No one called Luque "loco" any more. Everyone cursed themselves that they had remained scoffing at home. Except for the strenuous efforts of the governor the colony would have been depopulated. The tide had definitely turned southward. Ship after ship carried hungry adventurers down the coast.

Hernando Pizarro proceeded to Spain. He arrived in Seville in January, 1534. His appearance created an immense sensation.

"In a short time," Prescott writes, "that cavalier saw himself at the head of one of the most numerous and well-appointed armaments, probably, that had left the shores of Spain since the great fleet of Ovando, in the time of Ferdinand and Isabella. It was scarcely more fortunate than this. Hardly had Hernando put to sea, when a violent tempest fell on the squadron, and compelled him to return to port and refit. At length he crossed the ocean, and reached the little harbor of Nombre de Dios in safety. But no preparations had been made for his coming, and, as he was detained here some time before he could pass the mountains, his company suffered greatly from scarcity of food. In their extremity the most unwholesome articles were greedily devoured, and many a cavalier spent his little savings to procure himself a miserable subsistence. Disease, as usual, trod closely in the track of famine, and numbers of the unfortunate adventurers, sinking under the unaccustomed heats of the climate, perished on the very threshold of discovery."

But the passage of Hernando Pizarro, on his way to Spain with this immense wealth, had an even greater effect on the towns of Nombre de Dios and Panama. The Isthmus had
become a thoroughfare. Not only were the riches of the Incas greater than those of Mexico, but also more enduring. Even after the country had been glutted of its ready wrought gold and silver, the slave-worked mines continued to produce rich returns. Of all this wealth crossing the Isthmus some of course stuck by the way. The rapid rush of immigrants, the growing trade, forced the development of industry. Ships had to be built, armor made and repaired, expeditions outfitted. Panama had a boom!

Civil war soon broke out in Peru. The long-standing feud between Francisco Pizarro and Almagro came to an issue. Almagro was executed on a rather slender case of treason. His followers rallied about his half-breed son Diego and they in time assassinated Francisco Pizarro. A new, and on the whole, able governor, Vasco de Castro, arrived in 1541, but he was soon succeeded by a blunderer named Vasco Nuñez Vela, who was sent out to enforce the “new laws” in defence of the natives which had been proclaimed by the throne on the instance of Las Casas.

Vasco Nuñez Vela, the governor who was sent out to administer them, was a stupid man, a martinet of violent temper. Almost as soon as he arrived in Peru, he developed a suspicious temper, throwing his predecessor de Castro into prison and very shortly murdering with his own hand a very popular and apparently upright man named Suarez de Carbajal. This and other acts of senseless tyranny soon made him insupportable and he was thrown into prison by the Audiencia, or judicial body, after an informal impeachment. The judges then pronounced Gonzalo Pizarro, a brother of Francisco, viceroy. Vasco Nuñez Vela, escaped from his captors, rallied a small army and took the field. On January 18, 1546, he was utterly defeated by Pizarro, and being taken prisoner was beheaded by a negro slave belonging to a brother of the Carbajal whom he had himself murdered.
This victory left Gonzalo Pizarro in control of the vast empire of Peru. He had a large and seasoned army, the silver mines of Potosí were bringing him in a revenue which rivaled that of any European ruler. His large navy gave him command of the sea, and his admiral, Hinojosa, occupied the Isthmus. He was indeed in a position which might well have turned the head of a man less proud and ambitious. It would have been a bold prophet who would have said that the King of Spain could send out a strong enough force to reduce him. First of all such an armament would have had to cross the Atlantic, then fight its way across the mountain breastworks of the Isthmus. Then it would have had to build a navy capable of overthrowing Hinojosa, and then at last meet the flower of Spanish knighthood and desperado-dom in the almost inaccessible Andes. Any army which could have fought its way so far in the face of the fevers would indeed have been remarkable.

However, within two years Gonzalo Pizarro was beheaded by a legitimate Spanish viceroy. The man who did it was a priest, Pedro de la Gasca. He was undoubtedly the most remarkable man who ever crossed the Isthmus.

De la Gasca was born near the end of the fifteenth century; he had been educated in the famous university of Salamanca and had become a member of the Council of the Inquisition. He was a man of humble exterior, but richly endowed with quiet, diplomatic tact, of invincible strength of will and above all, a keen judge of men. He had already distinguished himself in many delicate situations, in which he had always managed to secure exactly the outcome desired by his royal master. He was one of the ablest and most loyal agents that ever was found by an autocrat.

When, in 1545, Charles V heard of the overthrow of his governor, Vasco Nuñez Vela—the news of his defeat and death did not come to court until several months later—he
realized the impossibility of reducing Peru to obedience by an armed force and he turned to de la Gasca. Although past the prime of life, the priest accepted the commission. He, however, stipulated that he should have absolute authority to arrange things as he felt best. "For myself," he said, "I ask neither salary nor compensation of any kind. I want no pomp of state nor military force. I hope to do the work intrusted to me with my breviary and stole."

Accompanied by Alonso de Alvarado, an officer who had served under Pizarro and who knew personally most of the soldiers of Peru, de la Gasca set out from Spain on the 26th of May, 1546. About the middle of July he arrived off the coast of the Isthmus.

Hernan Mexia had been put in command of Nombre de Dios by Gonzalo Pizarro and he had explicit instructions not to allow any hostile forces from Spain to land. But he had no orders to exclude a simple priest. The politic course of this master diplomat, while on the Isthmus, is very ably described by Prescott:

"The candid and conciliatory language of the president (de la Casca) . . . made a sensible impression on Mexia. He admitted the force of Gasca's reasoning, and flattered himself that Gonzalo Pizarro would not be insensible to it. Though attached to the fortunes of that leader, he was loyal in heart, and, like most of the party, had been led by accident, rather than by design, into rebellion; and now that so good an opportunity occurred to do it with safety, he was not unwilling to retrace his steps, and secure the royal favor by thus early returning to his allegiance. This he signified to the president, assuring him of his hearty cooperation in the good work of reform.

"This was an important step for Gasca. It was yet more important for him to secure the obedience of Hinojosa, the
governor of Panama, in the harbor of which city lay Pizarro's navy, consisting of two-and-twenty vessels.

"The president first sent Mexia and Alonso de Alvarado to prepare the way for his own coming by advising Hinojosa of the purport of his mission. He soon after followed, and was received by that commander with every show of outward respect. But while the latter listened with deference to the representations of Gasca, they failed to work the change in him which they had wrought in Mexia."

"Hinojosa was not satisfied; and he immediately wrote to Pizarro, acquainting him with Gasca's arrival, and with the object of his mission. But before the departure of the ship, Gasca secured the services of a Dominican friar, who had taken his passage on board for one of the towns on the coast. This man he intrusted with manifestos, setting forth the purport of his visit, and proclaiming the abolition of the ordinances, with a free pardon to all who returned to their obedience. These papers the Dominican engaged to distribute himself, among the principal cities of the colony; and he faithfully kept his word, though as it proved at no little hazard of his life. The seeds thus scattered might, many of them, fall on barren ground. But the greater part, the president trusted, would take root in the hearts of the people; and he patiently waited for the harvest.

"Meanwhile, though he failed to remove the scruples of Hinojosa, the courteous manners of Gasca, and his mild, persuasive discourse, had a visible effect on other individuals with whom he had daily intercourse. Several of these, and among them some of the principal cavaliers in Panama, as well as in the squadron, expressed their willingness to join the royal cause, and aid the president in maintaining it. He, at length, also prevailed on the governor of Panama to furnish him with the means of entering into communication with Gonzalo Pizarro himself; and a ship
was dispatched to Lima, bearing a letter from Charles the Fifth addressed to that chief, with an epistle also from Gasca.

"The emperor's communication was couched in the most condescending and even conciliatory terms.

"Gasca's own letter was pitched in the same polite key. He remarked, however, that the exigencies which had hitherto determined Gonzalo's line of conduct existed no longer. All that had been asked was conceded. There was nothing now to contend for; and it only remained for Pizarro and his followers to show their loyalty and the sincerity of their principles by obedience to the crown. Hitherto, the president said, Pizarro had been in arms against the viceroy; and the people had supported him as against a common enemy. If he prolonged the contest, that enemy must be his sovereign. In such a struggle, the people would be sure to desert him; and Gasca conjured him, by his honor as a cavalier, and his duty as a loyal vassal, to respect the royal authority, and not rashly provoke a contest which must prove to the world that his conduct hitherto had been dictated less by patriotic motives than by selfish ambition. . . .

"Weeks and months rolled away, while the president still remained at Panama, where, indeed, as his communications were jealously cut off with Peru, he might be said to be detained as a sort of prisoner of state. Meanwhile, both he and Hinojosa were looking with anxiety for the arrival of some messenger from Pizarro, who should indicate the manner in which the president's mission was to be received by that chief. The governor of Panama was not blind to the perilous position in which he was himself placed, nor to the madness of provoking a contest with the Court of Castile. But he had a reluctance, not too often shared by the cavaliers of Peru, to abandon the fortunes of the commander who had reposed in him so great confidence. Yet he trusted that this commander would embrace the opportunity now offered,
placing himself and the country in a state of permanent security.

"He (Pizarro) learned, with no little uneasiness, from Hinojosa, of the landing of President Gasca, and the purport of his mission. But his discontent was mitigated, when he understood that the new envoy had come without military array, without any of the ostentatious trappings of office to impose on the minds of the vulgar, but alone, as it were, in the plain garb of an humble missionary. Pizarro could not discern, that under this modest exterior lay a moral power, stronger than his own steel-clad battalions, which, operating silently on public opinion, the more sure that it was silent, was even now undermining his strength, like a subterranean channel eating away the foundations of some stately edifice, that stands secure in its pride of place!

"But, although Gonzalo Pizarro could not foresee this result, he saw enough to satisfy him that it would be safest to exclude the president from Peru. The tidings of his arrival, moreover, quickened his former purpose of sending an embassy to Spain to vindicate his late proceedings, and request the royal confirmation of his authority. The person placed at the head of this mission was Lorenzo de Aldana.

"Aldana, fortified with his dispatches, sped swiftly on his voyage to Panama. Through him the governor learned the actual state of feeling in the councils of Pizarro; and he listened with regret to the envoy's conviction, that no terms would be admitted by that chief or his companions, that did not confirm him in the possession of Peru.

"Aldana was soon admitted to an audience by the president. It was attended with very different results from what had followed from the conferences with Hinojosa; for Pizarro's envoy was not armed by nature with that stubborn panoply which had hitherto made the other proof against all argument. He now learned with surprise the nature of Gasca's
powers, and the extent of the royal concessions to the insurgents. He had embarked with Gonzalo Pizarro on a desperate venture, and he found that it had proved successful. The colony had nothing more, in reason, to demand; and, though devoted in heart to his leader, he did not feel bound by any principle of honor to take part with him, solely to gratify his ambition, in a wild contest with the Crown that must end in inevitable ruin. He consequently abandoned his mission to Castile, and announced his purpose to accept the pardon proffered by the government, and support the president in settling the affairs of Peru. He subsequently wrote, it should be added, to his former commander in Lima, stating the course he had taken, and earnestly recommending the latter to follow his example.

"The influence of this precedent in so important a person as Aldana, aided, doubtless, by the conviction that no change was now to be expected in Pizarro, while delay would be fatal to himself, at length prevailed over Hinojosa's scruples, and he intimated to Gasca his willingness to place the fleet under his command. The act was performed with great pomp and ceremony. On the 19th of November, 1546, Hinojosa and his captains resigned their commissions into the hands of the president. They next took the oaths of allegiance to Castile; a free pardon for all past offences was proclaimed by the herald from the scaffold erected in the great square of the city; and the president, greeting them as true and loyal vassals of the Crown, restored their several commissions to the cavaliers. The royal standard of Spain was then unfurled on board the squadron, and proclaimed that the stronghold of Pizarro's power had passed away from him forever."

The rest was easy. The fleet sailed down to Peru. De la Gasca, by the same arguments, the same appeal to the inherent loyalty of the Spanish cavaliers, won over one of
Pizarro's allies after another. When the time was ripe and his forces strong enough he laid aside his conciliatory manner and took the field.

On the 8th of April, 1548, the Royalist and Rebel armies met at Xaquixaguana. Half of Pizarro's men threw down their arms at the last moment and went over to de la Gasca. The rest were utterly defeated. Within a few days Gonzalo Pizarro and his principal general, Carbajal, were beheaded.

Prescott sums up the character of de la Gasca in this paragraph:

"In the long procession which has passed in review before us, we have seen only the mail-clad cavalier, brandishing his bloody lance, and mounted on his war-horse, riding over the helpless natives, or battling with his own friends and brothers; fierce, arrogant, and cruel, urged on by the lust of gold, or the scarce more honorable love of a bastard glory. Mingled with these qualities, indeed, we have seen sparkles of the chivalrous and romantic temper which belongs to the heroic age of Spain. But, with some honorable exceptions, it was the scum of her chivalry that resorted to Peru, and took service under the banner of the Pizarros. At the close of this long array of iron warriors, we behold the poor and humble missionary coming into the land on an errand of mercy, and everywhere proclaiming the glad tidings of peace. The means he employs are in perfect harmony with this end. His weapons are argument and mild persuasion. It is the reason he would conquer, not the body. He wins his way by conviction, not by violence."
CHAPTER XVI

LAS CASAS

The Conquisadores, despite their romantic renown, were villainous desperadoes. Bad as was Pedrarias, and it would be hard to exaggerate his crimes, his brutalities were exceeded by his successors. The daring of these men, which was immense, was surpassed by their cruelty. Their religious devotion in no way interfered with their vices. The hardships they endured without flinching were tremendous, but their treachery was as incredible. They were engaged in a race for the Palms of Infamy and the finish was close.

The history of those days would be too depressing to study if it were not illumined by the noble life of Don Fray Bartholomé de Las Casas.

"His career affords perhaps a solitary instance of a man, who, being neither a conqueror, a discoverer nor an inventor, has, by the pure force of benevolence, become so notable a figure, that large portions of history cannot be written, or at least cannot be understood, without the narrative of his deeds. . . . In early American history Las Casas is, undoubtedly, the principal figure. . . . He was an important person in reference to all that concerned the Indies, during the reigns of Ferdinand the Catholic, of Philip the Handsome, of his son Charles the Fifth, and of Philip the Second. . . . Take away all he said, and did, and wrote, and preserved (for the early historians of the New World owe the records of many of their most notable facts to him), and the history of the conquest would lose a considerable portion of its most precious materials.

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"It may be fearlessly asserted, that Las Casas had a greater number of bitter enemies than any man who lived in his time. . . . During his lifetime there was always one person to maintain that strict justice should be done to the Indians. . . .

"In the cause of the Indians, whether he upheld it in speech, in writing, or in action, he appears never for one moment to have swerved from the exact path of equity. He has been justly called 'The Great Apostle of the Indies.'"

Las Casas was in the City of Panama in February, 1532, and probably again two years later. But even if he had never set foot on the Isthmus, he would, as Sir Arthur Helps states in the above quotation, be a necessary part of its history.

Born in Seville in 1474, he studied theology in the University of Salamanca and became a licentiate at eighteen. When he was twenty-four he accompanied Columbus on his third voyage. Two years after his return, in 1502, just before the Great Admiral set sail on his last cruise, Las Casas went out to Santo Domingo in the train of Nicolas de Ovando, who had been appointed governor to replace Bobadilla.

He was the first priest ordained in the Indies, and seems to have led a quiet and unobserved life until he was thirty-six, at which time he accompanied the expedition of Diego Velasquez which went out to conquer Cuba.

The Clerigo, as Las Casas always calls himself, developed a marked talent for conciliating the natives. One tribe after another submitted through his mediation, without recourse to arms. The common soldiers, however, viewed these humane measures with open disgust. Conquest without plunder was not to the liking of these freebooters. In the village of Caonao, where many natives had gathered to treat with Las Casas, one of the Spaniards suddenly
drew his sword and a massacre was started before the Clerigo could interfere. The sight of the dead bodies, piled "like sheaves of corn," was, Las Casas tells us, the thing which set him thinking.

The work of pacification had to be begun over again. With infinite patience the Clerigo was able to regain the confidence of the Indians. But it was of course impossible for him to protect them against the brutality of his countrymen. His work came to naught so far as the benefit of the natives was concerned. However, as it is much easier to massacre natives who have been pacified than to fight tribes who are hostile, the officials appreciated the Clerigo's activity and rewarded him with a "repartimiento" near Havana.

This institution became so large an issue in the life of Las Casas, that a few words of explanation are necessary. After the conquest of a territory the land and natives were divided by the governor among his friends by deeds of gift called "repartimientos," which said that so many Indians, under such a cacique, had been given to such a person to command (encomienda) and which always ended with the phrase, "and you are to teach them the things of our Holy Catholic Faith." Of course the hardened soldiers of the Conquest very rarely allowed this final clause to interfere with the work of gold mining. They baptized their Indians and made slaves of them. Las Casas accepted his repartimiento without question. Indeed, in the third book of his "Historia de las Indias," he confesses that he "took no more heed than the other Spaniards to bethink himself that his Indians were unbelievers, and of the duty that there was on his part to give them instruction, and to bring them to the bosom of the Church of Christ."

He was forty years old when the light came to him. In the year 1514, while preparing a sermon for the feast of
Pentecost. he came across the thirty-fourth chapter of Ecclesiasticus. He especially speaks of these verses as having opened his eyes.

"He that sacrificeth of a thing wrongfully gotten, his offering is ridiculous; and the gifts of unjust men are not accepted.

"The Most High is not pleased with the offering of the wicked: neither is he pacified for sin by the multitude of sacrifices.

"Whoso bringeth an offering of the goods of the poor doeth as one that killeth the son before his father's eyes.

"The bread of the needy is their life; he that defrauded him thereof is a man of blood.

"He that taketh away his neighbor's living slayeth him; and he that defraudeth the laborer of his hire is a blood-shredder."

A truer "conversion" has never been recorded in history. Something in those words, which he had probably read many times before, changed the worldly-minded priest into an ardent apostle. Inevitably one compares this to the conversion of Count Tolstoi. Any social organization by which some live idly from the forced work of others is in conflict with the fundamental ethics of the Bible. It was as true four centuries ago as it is to-day. Las Casas felt the system of repartimientos to be un-Christian, and, like Tolstoi, he decided to be a Christian.

First of all, it was necessary for him to surrender his own Indians. Although he knew that they would be given to someone else who would work them to death, the answer to any sermon of his would be his own repartimiento. So he gave them up.

Las Casas was not one to allow rust to accumulate on his resolution. Helps describes the beginning of his ministry as follows:
"When preaching on the day of 'The Assumption of Our Lady,' he took occasion to mention publicly the conclusion he had come to as regards his own affairs, and also to urge upon his congregation in the strongest manner his conviction of the danger to their souls if they retained their repartimientos of Indians. All were amazed; some were struck with compunction; others were as much surprised to hear it called a sin to make use of the Indians as if they had been told it was sinful to make use of the beasts of the field.

"After Las Casas had uttered many exhortations both in public and in private, and had found that they were of little avail, he meditated how to go to the fountain-head of authority, the King of Spain. The Clerigo's resources were exhausted: he had not a maravedi, or the means of getting one, except by selling a mare which was worth a hundred pesos."

The Clerigo was assisted by Pedro de Renteria, the one friend who remained true to him—in the face of his subversive attacks on private property. At Santo Domingo, Las Casas was hospitably received by Pedro de Córdova, the prelate of the Dominicans in America. This order, which we most often think of as the fanatical advocates of the Inquisition, became notable in the New World for their humane interest in the natives. Father de Córdova, knowing the ways of the world better than the Clerigo, could give him little encouragement of relief from the king, but he gave him his blessing. In September, 1515, accompanied by two Dominican brothers, Las Casas sailed for Spain.

About Christmas time the Clerigo arrived at Court and was received by the old king. His fervid earnestness made so strong an impression that he had been granted another interview. It was prevented by the death of the king. It is surprising how often Las Casas won over some powerful ally and then, just when things looked most hopeful, was defeated by death and forced to begin all over again.
He was not so successful in his effort to secure the favor of the powerful Bishop of Burgos. Of this prelate, Helps writes:

"The Bishop of Burgos was one of those ready, bold, and dexterous men, with a great reputation for fidelity, who are such favorites with princes. He went through so many stages of preferment, that it is sometimes difficult to trace him; and the student of early American history will have a bad opinion of many Spanish bishops, if he does not discover that it is Bishop Fonseca who reappears under various designations. He held successively the Archdeaconate of Seville, the Bishoprics of Badajoz, Córdova, Palencia, and Conde, the Archbishopric of Rosano (in Italy), with the Bishopric of Burgos, besides the office of Capellan mayor to Isabella, and afterwards to Ferdinand."

His interview with the bishop was stormy. Unable to move the smug courtier by his eloquence, he, as a last effort, told him how seven thousand Indian children had perished in three months.

"How does all this concern me or His Majesty, the King?" the cynical Fonseca asked.

Las Casas told him that all these infant souls would rise up against him on the Day of Judgment, and left in a rage.

The king died in January, 1516, and Las Casas immediately went to Madrid to lay his case before the Cardinal Ximenes and the Ambassador Adrian, who had been appointed regents until Charles should reach his majority. Luckily for the Indians, the death of the old king excluded the ubiquitous Fonseca from the councils for a time, and the Clerigo was able to obtain an unprejudiced hearing from the regents. Ximenes seems to have desired to rule the colonies wisely. Shocked by the stories of the outrages committed on the Indians, which the Clerigo told, he called
a Junta, or special council, to consider the affairs of the Indies.

An incident occurred in one of these meetings which is typical of Las Casas. The cardinal, wanting to know the existing conditions, ordered a secretary to read the laws which had been drawn up by the preceding council. The clerk happened to be a retainer of Fonseca, and when he came to a section which was patently unjust, he wilfully misread it to shield his patron. Las Casas knew the law by heart and protested that the clerk was wrong. Ximenes ordered the man to reread it. He repeated his distortion. Las Casas jumped up and exclaimed, "The law says no such thing." The cardinal was vexed by the incident and told Las Casas not to interrupt. But the man was not born who could still the voice of the Clerigo when he thought he was right.

"Your Lordship, you can hang me, if the law says that!"

One of the councillors took the law and read it. Las Casas was right.

"You can imagine," he writes, "that the clerk (whose name, for his honor's sake, I will not give) wished that he had never been born." And he adds, "the Clerigo lost nothing of the regard in which the Cardinal held him nor in the credit which he put in his word."

The Junta drew up a code of laws for the Indies, practically at the dictation of Las Casas. This in itself was a remarkable result to be accomplished by an unknown colonial priest, who had no aristocratic prestige, little learning and no friends but those he could win by his own fervor. But while the framing of good laws is easy under an autocratic government, where the reformer has to convince only a small group, the enforcement of good laws is very difficult to achieve. In this case the administration was intrusted to four fathers of the Jeronimite Order, who were sent out to Santo Domingo with full powers.
This code was long and complicated; the gist of it was the abolition of slavery. It did not go as far in that direction as the Clerigo wished, but it was a long step forward. Naturally it encountered opposition. It attacked the pocket-books of many of “the best people” of the day. When the “colonial lobby” at Madrid found that they could not reach the Cardinal Ximenes, they turned their attention to the Jeronimite fathers. Las Casas boldly asserts that the “interests” succeeded in fixing them.

Certain it is that the good fathers proceeded very cautiously in the enforcement of the laws. They arrived in Santo Domingo in December, 1516. Whether or not they were actually bribed it is impossible to determine. They were men of peace. If they had been of one of the sterner and more militant orders they might have done their duty. As yet the conquests had not been broad enough to firmly establish the system of repartimientos. It might have been stamped out on the islands before it gained a foothold on the continent. But brought up in the seclusion of their cloisters, disciplined in humility, accustomed to bow down before the mighty, these fathers proved unequal to their great task. They made friends with the mammon of unrighteousness.

Las Casas, who had been given the title of “Protector of the Indians,” but no powers, arrived in Santo Domingo shortly after them. He, of course, was outraged at their ineffectiveness. In order to force them to action, he brought an impeachment against the judges of the colony, who were among the worst offenders. He called it “una terrible acusacion.” What the outcome of this proceeding was we do not know. But it forever branded Las Casas as a “disturber of the peace.” The Jeronimite fathers said he was a torch which threatened to set everything afire. He had definitely placed himself with the “muck-rakers”
and "undesirable citizens." Hopeless of accomplishing anything in Santo Domingo, he returned to Spain in May, 1517—only to find his good friend the Cardinal Ximenes at the point of death.

The government, for Charles V was still a minor, now fell into the hands of two Flemish nobles, William, Lord of Chêves and Jean Salvage, whom the Spaniards called Selvagius. These ministers, although accused of taking small interest in Spanish affairs, the poorest province of all the vast domains of the Spanish crown, gave considerable attention to colonial matters. Las Casas received a hearing. As usual, his ardent eloquence won their respect. The Chancellor, Selvagius, took up the matter with the young king and received authority to draw up more laws.

The Clerigo was a man who was always learning. He had come to realize that there was an imperative need for laborers in the colony. No laws could alter that. Either the colonies must be abandoned or laborers found for the mines, the fields and for transportation. The only way to get work out of the nomadic Indians was to enslave them. If he wished to rescue them it was necessary to find other labor.

With this idea in mind he drew up an elaborate scheme for the chancellor. The main feature was the stimulation of peasant immigration from Spain. So far the colonists were of three classes, gentlemen adventurers, mercenary soldiers and common sailors. None of them furnished a reliable labor force. Every year famine killed hundreds of peasants in Spain. It was an ambitious emigration scheme—they were to be transported free, given fields and tools; but the wealth flowing into the royal treasury from the colonies certainly warranted the expense.

But Las Casas was always unexpectedly running up against "vested interests." He looked directly to his goal of justice and was always surprised to find that "property rights" stood
above "human rights." That the whole feudal aristocracy of Spain would rise as a body in indignation against a scheme which offered their starving serfs a chance to escape from villainage never occurred to him. The peasants were eager to go. In one village of two hundred souls, Berlanga, seventy applied for permission. Many of them gave as their reason their desire to escape from the seignors and bring up their children "in a free land under royal jurisdiction." The outcry of the nobility against this incendiary priest was so great that the scheme fell through.

The Bishop Fonseca had again come into power after the death of Ximenes. He was only too glad to grasp this opportunity to thwart his old enemy, Las Casas.

Among other recommendations in the Clerigo's project to relieve the Indians was one which has been often cited against him by his enemies. He advocated the importation of negro slaves. This was certainly borrowing from Peter on behalf of Paul. It is well to remember, as mitigating circumstances, that negro slavery existed in these United States up to fifty years ago. Four centuries ago no voice had been raised against it. While Las Casas had with his own eyes seen the horrors of the enforced mine labors of the Indians, the brutality of their conquerors, their speedy death, most of the negro slaves he had seen were body or house servants. The suggestion did not originate with him. His recommendation was rather to regulate the slave-trade, than, as is often asserted, to create it.

The surprising thing is not that he proposed this measure, which does not seem to have shocked any of his contemporaries, but that he repented of it. Years afterwards he wrote: "This advice, that license should be given to bring negro slaves to these lands, the Clerigo Casas first gave, not considering the injustice with which the Portuguese take them, and make them slaves; which advice, after he had
apprehended the nature of the thing, he would not have given for all he had in the world. For he always held that they had been made slaves unjustly and tyrannically; for the same reason holds good of them as of the Indians."

Of all the proposals of his elaborate programme of reform, most of which was farsighted and wise, only the one which was utterly bad was accepted.

Absolutely defeated in all his efforts by the influence of greed, Las Casas tried to think out some remedy which, while benefiting the Indians, would at the same time be attractive to the mercenary people who possessed the powers of government. His scheme took the form of a plan of colonization. He wanted to create a lay order of Christian Knights who would be willing to settle some portion of the mainland and while primarily interested in bringing the natives to Christianity would also be able to guarantee an attractive income to the Crown. He thought it would be possible to make a missionary crusade produce dividends.

His project, noble in its conception and compounded with considerable common-sense, seems bizarre and unpractical as we read of it to-day. But it was a bizarre age. It excited a great deal of violent discussion. Among others who approved of it were the new Premier, Gattinara, an intensely practical and worldly man, and Pedro de Córdova, the Dominican prelate of Santo Domingo, than whom no more spiritually minded churchman ever came to America. However, anything suggested by Las Casas was sure to be attacked. The Clerigo seems to have ignored the ribald jokes with dignity. But in his history he tells of one criticism which seems to have wounded him deeply. The licentiate Aguirre, a man renowned for his godliness, who had always been an able supporter of Las Casas, was shocked when he heard of all these business negotiations, and said, Las Casas tells us, "that such a manner of preaching the
Gospels grieved him deeply, for it showed an interest in temporal affairs, which he had not before suspected in the Clerigo.” Helps gives an almost literal translation of the incident as recorded by Las Casas:

“Las Casas, having heard what Aguirre had said, took occasion to speak to him one day in the following terms: ‘Señor, if you were to see our Lord Jesus Christ maltreated, vituperated, and afflicted, would you not implore with all your might that those who had him in their power would give him to you, that you might serve and worship him?’ ‘Yes,’ said Aguirre. ‘Then,’ replied Las Casas, ‘if they would not give him to you, but would sell him, would you redeem him?’ ‘Without a doubt.’ ‘Well, then, Señor,’ rejoined Las Casas, ‘that is what I have done, for I have left in the Indies Jesus Christ, our Lord, suffering stripes, and afflictions, and crucifixion, not once but thousands of times, at the hands of the Spaniards, who destroy and desolate those Indian nations, taking from them the opportunity of conversion and penitence, so that they die without faith and without sacraments.’

“Then Las Casas went on to explain how he had sought to remedy these things in the way that Aguirre would most have approved. To this the answer had been, that the King would have no rents, wherefore, when he, Las Casas, saw that his opponents would sell him the gospel, he had offered those temporal inducements which Aguirre had heard of and disapproved.

“The licentiate considered this a sufficient answer, and so, I think, would any reasonable man.”

In this, as in every project of the Clerigo’s, the Bishop Fonseca was an active opponent. The plan might never have been approved of were it not that the news of many recent scandals came to court at this time. A letter came from Fray Francisco de Sant Roman, a monk in Panama,
telling of the infamous raid of Pedrarias's Alcalde Espinosa, in which 40,000 Indians had been killed.

Oviedo, the historian who had gone out to Castilla del Oro with Pedrarias, had returned to court and was protesting against the crimes of that governor. Not long afterwards, Quevedo, the Bishop of Darien, arrived with fresh charges.

Las Casas, who like his Master, had an especial talent for baiting the Pharisees, soon came to an argument with this oily prelate. Words ran high, and the Clerigo, who was by no means afraid of a bishop, brought the quarrel to a close by saying that unless Quevedo returned all the money he had wrung from his flock he had less chance of salvation than Judas Iscariot.

The king, hearing of this tilt, and dearly loving the scholastic disputations of the day, wherein the subtlest arguments joined hands with the crudest invectives, summoned them both before him to have it out. The bishop spoke first, and among other things said that five years in the colonies had convinced him that the Indians were by nature slaves.

The Clerigo's speech is too long to reproduce, and the style of oratory then in vogue is no longer fashionable. But Las Casas had that rare gift of eloquence, shared by such men as Savanarola, which can for a time lift the most worldly man to an appreciation of spiritual values. He completely won his hearers.

When he finished, a Franciscan father, who had just returned from the Indies, spoke.

"My lord," he said, "I have been certain years in the island of Hispaniola, and I was commanded with others to go and visit and take the number of Indians in the island, and we found that they were so many thousand. Afterwards, at the end of two years, a similar charge was again
given to me, and we found that there had perished so many thousands. And thus the infinity of people who were in that island has been destroyed. Now, if the blood of one person unjustly put to death was of such effect that it was not removed out of the sight of God until he had taken vengeance for it, and the blood of the others never ceases to exclaim *Vindica sanguinem nostrum, Deus noster*, what will the blood do of such innumerable people as have perished in those lands under such great tyranny and injustice? Then, by the blood of Jesus Christ and by the wounds of St. Francis, I pray and entreat Your Majesty that you would find a remedy for such wickedness and such destruction of people, as perish daily there, so that the divine justice may not pour out its severe indignation upon all of us."

It was a short speech, but so fervent and impressive that Las Casas says that it seemed to all present as if they were listening to words from the Day of Judgment.

The king was deeply touched and ordered the Council of the Indies to do all in their power to further the project of Las Casas. The necessary degrees received the royal signature on the 19th of May, 1520. Very shortly Las Casas sailed to Santo Domingo, where he hoped to recruit the knights for his crusade. But when he touched at Porto Rico, en route, he found that once more his hopes were shattered. War had broken out on the coast of Venezuela, the very territory which had been assigned to him. Arrived in Santo Domingo, his old enemies again attacked him. This time they declared that his ship was unseaworthy and kept him a practical prisoner until the slaves, which the expedition into his territory were capturing, began to appear in the market of Santo Domingo. Then, when it was too late for any chance of success for his scheme of friendly colonization, they let him go. He arrived at Cumaná at last to find the country round about devastated.
Broken in spirit, he returned to Santo Domingo and entered the Dominican Monastery in 1522. He was forty-eight years old when he became a monk. His retirement from the world seemed a surrender and there was joy in the camp of his enemies.

We know very little of his life during these years of seclusion. It is probable that he began work on his great "Historia de las Indias." Certainly he spent much time in study, for when after eight years he emerged from his retreat he was a learned man. Too learned, anyone is apt to say, who reads his writings, for they are cluttered up with endless quotations from the Classics and from the Church Fathers. But barren as this scholastic philosophy seems to us today, it was the dominant mode of thought in his age. In the famous controversies of his old age his intimate knowledge of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas was an immensely powerful weapon.

Sir Arthur Helps calls attention to one significant fact. It is the only thing we know with certainty about his years in the monastery. He was not allowed to preach. Even the Dominicans, the most fearless and the most friendly to the Indians of all the orders in America, did not dare to let this firebrand occupy their pulpit.

During these eight years great things happened outside the cloister walls. Cortes completed his conquest of Mexico. Pedrarias and his captains overran Nicaragua. Alvarado subdued Guatemala. Pizarro had embarked on his Peruvian enterprise.

After eight years of seclusion, Father Las Casas suddenly reappeared in Court. Once more on behalf of the Indians,—this time in an effort to save the Indians of Peru. But he reached Spain in 1530, just after Pizarro had sailed back to the Isthmus. He secured the passage of some protective laws and returned to Santo Domingo, where two friars
joined him in his effort to overtake Pizarro and restrain his cruelty. They went by way of Mexico to settle some disputes in the Dominican Chapter there, and then overland to Puerto Realejo on the Pacific, where they found a ship sailing for Peru.

The Clerigo gives very little information about this journey. I have been unable to find any record of the dates. But it seems to have been fruitless. Probably the Conquisadores were in the interior beyond their reach. The monks returned and stopped a few days in Panama City in February, 1532.

Las Casas and his two companions then went to Leon in Nicaragua and founded a monastery. Here he spent two years in peaceful missionary work among the natives. He again set out for Peru, but his ship was driven back by storms and he changed his plan, going again to Spain to plead his cause in Court.

Returning to his monastery in Nicaragua, he found troubles nearer at hand which needed his righting. The new governor, Rodrigo de Contreras, was beginning his murderous career. By his vehement opposition Las Casas was able to prevent a slave-stealing raid. That he had good reason to oppose the governor no one who reads his treatise, "Brevissima Relacion de la Destruyccion de las Indias," can doubt. He cites one instance when, of a body of 4,000 Indians impressed as carriers in a Nicaraguan expedition, only six of them returned alive. The slaves were chained together by means of collars about their necks. When one of them gave out and could march no farther, the slave-drivers would cut off his head and so, releasing the chain, allow the gang to go on without loss of time. "Imagine," he writes, "what the others must have felt."

The hostility of the bandit Contreras at last drove him out of Nicaragua and he went to Guatemala, where together
with three brothers, Luis Cancer, Pedro de Angulo and Rodrigo de Ladrada, their names deserve mention for they were as noble a group of missionaries as the Church has ever produced, he founded a monastery. They were fortunate in finding in the Bishop of Guatemala a man worthy to be their comrade. A man of great scholarship in the classics, he had humbled himself to master the Utlatecan language of the natives. Las Casas and his monks sat at his feet and also learned the language. "It was a delight," an old chronicler comments, "to see the bishop, as a master of declensions and conjugations in the Indian tongue, teaching the good fathers of St. Dominic." In a preface to a tract which the bishop wrote in the native tongue, he says that perhaps some people may think that it is below the dignity of a prelate to occupy himself with such matters "solely fitted for the teaching of children," but he adds, "if the matter be well considered, it will be seen that it is baser not to occupy oneself with such seeming trifles, for such teaching is the very marrow of our Holy Faith."

Some time previous to this, Las Casas had written a paper called "De unico vocationis modo." Although it was not printed, it was translated from the Latin into Spanish and had a wide circulation among the colonists. In it the Clerigo developed two propositions. The first was that men must be brought to Christ by persuasion and not by force. The second was that war against the infidel was not justified unless some specific injury had been sustained. These do not seem very radical conclusions to-day, but they made a sensation when written. It is in fact remarkable that the first proposition did not involve Las Casas with the Inquisition. The second more nearly concerned the mass of the colonists. The Indian slaves died with discouraging rapidity. The only way to keep up the labor supply was by incessant conflicts with the native tribes,
which were generally justified as wars against the unbelievers.

The Conquisadores were not only angry at these doctrines of Las Casas, they made sport of them. "Try it," they taunted. "Try with words only and without force to bring the Indians into the Church." Las Casas was only too glad to accept the challenge of these practical men who said he was a dreamer.

The nearby province of Tuzulutan was called by the Spaniards "Tierra Guerra"—The Land of War. Three different expeditions which had set out to subdue this territory had returned defeated—as the historian Remesal says, "Las manos en la cabeza"—holding their heads in their hands.

The Clerigo entered into a formal contract with the acting governor, Alonzo Maldonado—it was signed the 2nd of May, 1537—by which he undertook to proselyte this Tierra Guerra. If he succeeded in pacifying these tribes, who, as they had resisted conquest, were said by the Spaniards to be in revolt, and in persuading them to recognize the sovereignty of the King of Spain, the government pledged itself to make the territory a direct appendage of the Crown, not to give any repartimientos to private persons, and not to allow any layman to enter the district for five years.

One can "easily imagine"—to use a favorite phrase of the Clerigo—the guffaws of derisive laughter with which the soldiers heard of this compact. The four Dominican monks were to attempt the work which had defeated three armies. Well—at last they would be rid of this trouble-maker, Las Casas.

For several days the Dominicans retired to their cells for severe fasting, mortifications and prayers. And then, having consecrated themselves, they set to work. Their project seemed even more fantastic than those of the Clerigo which
had already failed. They composed a long ballad in the
Utlatecan language, which, beginning with the Hebrew story
of the Creation and Fall, contained all the Bible narratives
and the principal dogmas of the Church. Unfortunately
this remarkable literary work has been lost. While some of
the monks labored at versifying the Scheme of Salvation in
this unfamiliar tongue, others set it to music so that it
might be accompanied on the crude instruments with which
the natives were familiar. Undoubtedly they worked in
many of the accepted melodies of Spain, but they strove to
follow as nearly as possible the form of chant which the In-
dians had developed. To realize the proportions of the task
we must think of some such unfamiliar language and theory
of music as that of China or Egypt. The missionaries had
been only a few years in Guatemala; they were old men
when they came, yet so diligent had been their application
that they were able to compose poetry and music acceptable
to the natives!

Having finished this part of their undertaking, they
secured the services of four native peddlers who were in the
habit of making annual trips into the Tierra Guerra. With
infinite care the monks taught them the words and music.
They were rehearsed and rehearsed—it must be remembered
that all this was done by word of mouth, for the merchants
were illiterate—until they were letter perfect.

The most amazing thing about it all is that the work,
both the composition and teaching, was completed in three
months! By the middle of August the peddlers were ready
to start. Las Casas, who combined a knowledge of worldly
motives with his intense spirituality, had seen to it that
besides their missionary poem, they, were loaded down with
more attractive packs of goods than any native merchant
had ever carried before.

After their emissaries had departed, the four monks, by
means of relays, kept up almost continual prayer for the success of the venture. As far as the limited means of communication permitted they had notified all their brothers of their momentous undertaking. All throughout the Indies the Dominican Order was uniting in fervent prayer for its success.

And it did succeed.

They arrived safely at the village of the cacique and during the first day drove a thriving trade with their Spanish knives and hatchets and beads. At night, before the campfire, where, as is always the custom among savage people, the strangers were expected to entertain their hosts with song or story, they asked for instruments and chanted the wonderful story of the Christ. The strange music—on the whole like their own, but sometimes breaking out into an unfamiliar melody—attracted the villagers. They sat intent, until the poem was finished.

For seven days they stayed in the village and every night were invited to repeat their bizarre sermon. The cacique was deeply interested and asked many questions about the strange poem. The peddlers, being ignorant men, said they knew nothing except what they had heard: That the poem had come to them from certain Spaniards, who were different from all others—whose heads were shaven, who wore strange robes of black and white, who ate no meat, had no desire for gold and who lived a life of abstinence. Who, instead of rioting with women and wine, spent their days and nights singing praises to the God of this poem, and whose only interest was to teach their faith to all men.

The upshot of it was that the cacique sent his brother back with the peddlers to see if such strange things could be true. Above all he told his envoy to watch these padres and see if they fought for gold and silver like the other Spaniards and had slave women in their houses.
"It can easily be imagined," Las Casas writes, "with what joy the monks of St. Dominic received this savage ambassador." So favorable an impression did their piety make on him that he asked one of them to return with him to preach to his brother the cacique and the people. Father Luis Cancer was chosen for this mission.

There is no space here to trace all the steps by which these four monks, from this beginning, converted the natives of "The Land of War." Having brought peace and prosperity to Tuzulutan, they learned other native languages and gradually extended their sway to the neighboring tribes.

In this little corner of Guatemala, alone in all the vast Spanish colonies, the Indians learned to think of the word "Christian" as meaning something different from "Devil."

While Las Casas was in "The Land of War," teaching its people of the Prince of Peace and instructing them in the ways of material prosperity, unexpected aid came from the Court of Rome. Pope Paul III (Alexander Farnese) issued his Bull "Euntes docete omnes gentes," in which he said that the Indians were to be considered "as veritable men not only capable of receiving the Christian faith, but, as we have learnt, most ready to embrace it." He followed this brief by a letter to the Archbishop of Toledo, the primate of Spain, in which he wrote:

"It has come to our knowledge that our dearest son in Christ, Charles, the ever august emperor of the Romans, king of Castille and Leon, in order to repress those who, boiling over with cupidity, bear an inhuman mind against the human race, has by public edict forbidden all his subjects from making slaves of the Western and Southern Indians, or depriving them of their goods."

He closed this letter with a sentence of absolute excommunication against all who should make slaves of the Indians.
The delight of Las Casas on the receipt of these papal letters can "easily be imagined." He translated them into Spanish and saw that they were widely circulated in the colonies.

In 1539 Las Casas went to Spain to plead for the sending of more missionaries to Guatemala. He was as usual favorably received, and his requests were granted. He was detained at the Court to assist in the deliberations of the Council of the Indies. It was during this time that he wrote two of his most important treatises, "The Destruction of the Indies," and his even more important "Veynte Razones," in which he gives twenty reasons to prove that the system of repartimientos was iniquitous and un-Christian.

These pamphlets and his verbal arguments before the council resulted in the framing of "The New Laws," which, while the pretext for Gonzalo Pizarro's rebellion in Peru and of insurrections in other places, on the whole were enforceable and succeeded in preventing the absolute extermination of the Indians.

"The New Laws," writes Helps, "had been a signal triumph for Las Casas. Without him, without his untiring energy and singular influence over those whom he came near, these laws would not have been enacted. The mere bodily fatigue which he endured was such as hardly any man of his time, not a conqueror, had encountered. He had crossed the ocean twelve times. Four times he had made his way into Germany, to see the emperor. Had a record been kept of his wanderings, such as that which exists of the journeys of Charles the Fifth, it would have shown that Las Casas had led a much more active life than even that energetic monarch. Moreover, the journeyings of Las Casas were often made with all the inconvenience of poverty."
In recognition of his untiring public service, the emperor offered him the bishopric of Cusco, in Peru. For many reasons, principally a distaste for lofty positions, the Clerigo refused this, the richest see in America. But after much urging he accepted the episcopal office in the newly conquered province of Chiapa, a district near the scene of his successful labors in the Tierra Guerra of Guatemala. He was consecrated in Seville and on the 4th of July, 1544, he sailed, with forty-five Dominican monks, to proselyte his frontier diocese.

He was exceedingly ill-received when he stopped in Santo Domingo. Unquestionably he was the best hated man in the New World. Imagine Wendell Phillips in Richmond, just after Appomattox Court House. For Las Casas had won his long fight against greed. The maltreatment of the Indians of course continued, but it was no longer legal. The Bishop of Chiapa was now seventy years old. He had commenced his mission at forty. The thirty years of devoted agitation had resulted in the pope’s bull which pronounced slavery un-Christian and the New Laws which made it illegal. All his long journey to Ciudad Real, the capital of Chiapa, was a Via Crucis. In some places he was stoned.

"The hatred to Las Casas," writes Sir Arthur Helps, "throughout the New World, amounted to a passion. Letters were written to the residents in Chiapa, expressing pity for them as having met the greatest misfortune that could occur to them, in being placed under such a bishop. They did not name him, but spoke of him as ‘That Devil who has come to you for a bishop.’ The following is an extract from one of these letters. ‘We say here, that very great must be the sins of your country, when God chastises it with such a scourge as sending that Antichrist for a bishop.’"
Arrived at his new post the godly bishop had the audacity to take the pope’s bull literally. He refused absolution to all Spaniards who held slaves. The officials not enforcing the laws to suit him, he journeyed to Honduras to lay the case before the Audiencia. Unable to get redress he threatened to excommunicate the judges if they refused to do their duty. He tells how one of them whose conscience troubled him mightily lost his temper and heaped abuse on his court. “You are a scoundrel,” he shouted, “an evil man, a bad monk, a worse bishop—a shameless scoundrel—you ought to be flogged.” Las Casas replied, “The Lord will punish me for my sins, which are many.”

By his fearless persistence he at last forced the Audiencia to send an officer to Chiapa to enforce the laws. When the inhabitants of Ciudad Real heard of the bishop’s triumph they determined to resist his entry into the city.

Las Casas writes that although he came “unguarded and on foot, with only a stick in his hand, and a breviary in his girdle,” they strapped on their armor and loaded their arquebuses.

On the way he stopped at a Dominican monastery. The monks urged him to turn back, saying that the infuriated populace would surely kill him. But he insisted on going on.

“For,” he said “if I do not go to Ciudad Real, I banish myself from my church; and it will be said of me, with much reason, ‘The wicked fleeth; and no man pursueth.’ . . . If I do not endeavour to enter my church, of whom shall I have to complain to the king, or to the pope, as having thrust me out of it? Are my adversaries so bitter against me that the first word will be a deadly thrust through my heart, without giving me the chance of soothing them? In conclusion, reverend fathers, I am resolved, trusting in the mercy of God and in your holy prayers, to set out for my
diocese. To tarry here, or to go e. ewhere, has all the in-conveniences which have just been stated."

He indeed had a stormy reception. But his simple manner prevailed over the mob. When one of them reviled him, he said, "I will not answer you—for your insults are addressed, not to me, but to God." By his fearless non-resistance he won the ascendancy over his flock and after a few hours of turbulence they came to him on their knees, asking for pardon.

The Peruvian Rebellion had forced the emperor to reduce the rigor of the "New Laws." All Spaniards who held repartimientos were to be allowed to keep them during their lives, but no new grants were to be made. This let-up was undoubtedly a severe disappointment to Las Casas. But although he seemed to have been defeated, his work bore, in reality, marvellous fruit. Although temporarily revived, the brutal system had received its death blow. In 1547, he resigned from his bishopric and returned to Spain where he felt that he could have greater influence in Indian affairs.

About this time a learned doctor of laws, Juan Ginés Sepúlveda, wrote a treatise, "De Justis Belli Causis." It was an elaborate argument in favor of Indian slavery. Las Casas at once commenced a polemical discussion with him. In 1550, when he was seventy-six years old, he met Sepúlveda in an open debate before the emperor. For five consecutive days he read an argument which was afterwards printed under the title "Historia Apoligética." A referee condensed this long treatise into twelve propositions, to which Sepúlveda returned twelve counter-propositions. Las Casas was allowed to present twelve answers. One selection from his argument will do as a sample of the whole disputation.

To Sepúlveda's proposition in favor of the right of conquest, Las Casas replied:

"The doctor founds these rights upon our superiority in
arms, and upon our having more bodily strength than the Indians. This is simply to place our kings in the position of tyrants. The right of those kings rests upon their extension of the Gospel in the New World, and their good government of the Indian nations. These duties they would be bound to fulfil even at their own expense; much more so considering the treasures they have received from the Indies. To deny this doctrine is to flatter and deceive our monarchs, and to put their salvation in peril. The doctor perverts the natural order of things, making the means the end, and what is accessory the principal. The accessory is temporal advantage: the principal, the preaching of the true faith. He who is ignorant of this, small is his knowledge; and he who denies it, is no more of a Christian than Mahomet was."

The result of the controversy was a Scotch verdict; the learned jury concurred in the opinions of Sepulveda, but the king and his councillors, convinced by the eloquent logic of Las Casas, prohibited the circulation of the doctor's book in the colonies. In a private letter Sepulveda wrote of his aged opponent as "most subtle, most vigilant, and most fluent, compared with whom Ulysses of Homer was a tongue-tied stutterer."

The reclining years of the Apostle to the Indians were spent in writing. Besides many controversial treatises, he produced a monumental history of the Discovery and Conquest. When ninety years old he published a treatise on Peru—one of the most forceful things which ever came from his pen. This was apparently his last literary work. But two years later, hearing from the Dominican Fathers in Guatemala of some abuses in the administration of justice, he left his monastery in Valladolid and travelled to Madrid. So ably did he present the matter to the king that the necessary reforms were granted.
Almost immediately after this last pilgrimage in behalf of his beloved Indians, while still in Madrid, he fell sick and in July, 1566, died at the age of ninety-two.

Sir Arthur Helps, the eminent historian of the Conquest and a biographer of Las Casas, sums up his character in these paragraphs:

"The life of Las Casas appears to me one of the most interesting, indeed I may say the most interesting, of all those that I have ever studied; and I think it is more than the natural prejudice of a writer for his hero, that inclines me to look upon him as one of the most remarkable personages that has ever appeared in history. It is well known that he has ever been put in the foremost rank of philanthropists; but he had other qualifications which were also extraordinary. He was not a mere philanthropist, possessed only with one idea. He had one of those large minds which take an interest in everything. As an historian, a man of letters, a colonist, a missionary, a theologian, an active ruler in the Church, a man of business, and an observer of natural history and science, he holds a very high position amongst the notable men of his own age. The ways, the customs, the religion, the policy, the laws, of the new people whom he saw, the new animals, the new trees, the new herbs, were all observed and chronicled by him.

"In an age eminently superstitious, he was entirely devoid of superstition. At a period when the most extravagant ideas as to the divine rights of kings prevailed, he took occasion to remind kings themselves to their faces, that they are only permitted to govern for the good of the people.

"At a period when brute force was universally appealed to in all matters, but more especially in those that pertained to religion, he contended before juntas and royal councils that missionary enterprise is a thing that should stand independent of all military support; that a missionary should
go forth with his life in his hand, relying only on the protection that God will vouchsafe him, and depending neither upon civil nor military assistance. In fact, his works should, even in the present day, form the best manual extant for missionaries.

"He lived in most stirring times; he was associated with the greatest personages of his day; and he had the privilege of taking part in the discovery and colonization of a new world.

"Eloquent, devoted, charitable, fervent, sometimes too fervent, yet very skilful in managing men, he will doubtless remind the reader of his prototype, Saint Paul; and it was very fitting that he should have been called, as he was, the 'Apostle of the Indies.'

"Notwithstanding our experience, largely confirmed by history, of the ingenuity often manifested in neglecting to confer honour upon those who most deserve it, one cannot help wondering that the Romish Church never thought of enrolling Las Casas as a saint, amongst such fellow-labourers as Saint Charles of Borromeo, or Saint Francis of Assisi."
CHAPTER XVII

THE DAYS OF THE GREAT TRADE

One of the most interesting phases in the history of the Isthmus is the sudden development of an immense trade. For about a century the rough trail from Panama City across to the Atlantic towns of Nombre de Dios and Puerto Bello was the richest trade route in the world.

Even after the wrought gold had been stripped from the temples and palaces of the Incas, the rich silver mines of Potosí continued to produce great wealth. Dye woods from the west coast of Central America furnished also a valuable merchandise. There were pearls from the islands and many kinds of precious stones from the Andes. In exchange for this home-going wealth many commodities had to be brought out for the colonists. The commerce of Panama even crossed the Pacific. In the third volume of the "Hakluyt Voyages" is given a letter from a merchant which is dated from Panama, August 28th, 1590:

"Here I haue remained these 20 dayes, till the shippes goe for the Philipinas. My meaning is to carie my commodities thither: for it is constantly reported, that for every hundred ducats a man shall get 600 ducats cleererly. We must stay here till it be Christmass. For in August, September, October and November is it winter here and extreme foule weather upon this coast of Peru, and not nauigable to goe to the Philipinas, nor any place else in the South sea. So that at Christmasse the shipes begin to set on their voyage for those places."

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This letter indicates a considerable traffic with the Spice Islands and the Orient via Panama. In the same year more than ninety ships from Spain called at the Atlantic ports, an average of almost two ships a week. Even to-day that would indicate a large commerce.

But Spain held her colonial business in the tightest kind of a monopoly. No outsiders were to be allowed to share in it. Mr. Haring, in his "The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII Century," which, in spite of its thrilling title, is a doctor's thesis, gives much interesting information about this colonial development.

"The first means adopted by the northern maritime nations to appropriate to themselves a share of the riches of the New World was open warfare and attack upon the Spanish vessels returning from the distant El Dorado. The success of the Norman and English corsairs, for it was the French, not the English, who started the game, gradually forced upon the Spaniards, as a means of protection, the establishment of great merchant fleets sailing periodically at long intervals and accompanied by powerful convoys. During the first half of the sixteenth century any ship which had fulfilled the conditions required for engaging in American commerce was allowed to depart alone and at any time of the year. From about 1526, however, merchant vessels were ordered to sail together, and by a cédula of July, 1561, the system of fleets was made permanent and obligatory. This decree prohibited any ship from sailing alone to America from Cádiz or San Lucar on pain of forfeiture of ship and cargo. Two fleets were organized each year, one for Terra Firma going to Cartagena and Porto Bello, the other designed for the port of San Juan d'Uloa (Vera Cruz) in New Spain. The latter, called the Flota, was commanded by an "almirante," and sailed for Mexico in the early summer so as to avoid the hurricane season and the "nothters" of the
Mexican Gulf. The former, usually called the galeones (anglice "galleons"), was commanded by a "general," and sailed from Spain earlier in the year, between January and March. If it departed in March, it usually wintered in Havana, and returned with the Flota in the following spring. Sometimes the two fleets sailed together and separated at Guadalupe, Deseada or another of the Leeward Islands.

"The galleons generally consisted of from five to eight war-vessels carrying from forty to fifty guns, together with several smaller, faster boats called 'patchers,' and a fleet of merchantmen varying in number in different years. In the time of Philip II often as many as forty ships supplied Cartagena and Porto Bello, but in succeeding reigns, although the population of the Indies was rapidly increasing, American commerce fell off so sadly that eight or ten were sufficient for the trade of South and Central America. The general of the galleons, on his departure, received from the Council of the Indies three sealed packets. The first, opened at the Canaries, contained the name of the island in the West Indies at which the fleet was first to call. The second was unsealed after the galleons arrived at Cartagena, and contained instructions for the fleet to return in the same year or to winter in America. In the third, left unopened until the fleet emerged from the Bahama Channel on the homeward voyage, were orders for the route to the Azores and the islands they should touch in passing, usually Corvo and Flores or Santa Maria.

"The fleet reached Cartagena ordinarily about two months after its departure from Cadiz. On its arrival, the general forwarded the news to Porto Bello, together with the packets destined for the viceroy at Lima. From Porto Bello a courier hastened across the Isthmus to the President of Panama, who spread the advice amongst the merchants in his jurisdiction, and, at the same time, sent a dispatch boat
to Payta, in Peru. The general of the galleons, meanwhile, was also sending a courier overland to Lima, and another to Santa Fe, the capital of the interior province of New Grenada, whence runners carried to Popayan, Antioquia, Margarita, and adjacent provinces, the news of his arrival. The galleons were instructed to remain at Cartagena only a month, but bribes from the merchants generally made it their interest to linger for fifty or sixty days. To Cartagena came the gold and emeralds of New Grenada, the pearls of Margarita and Rancherias, and the indigo, tobacco, cocoa and other products of the Venezuelan coast. The merchants of Guatemala, likewise, shipped their commodities to Cartagena by way of Lake Nicaragua and San Juan river, for they feared to send goods across the Gulf of Honduras to Havana, because of the French and English buccaneers hanging about Cape San Antonio. Meanwhile the viceroy at Lima, on receipt of his letters, ordered the Armada of the South Sea to prepare to sail, and sent word south to Chili and throughout the province of Peru from Las Charces to Quito, to forward the King's revenues for shipment to Panama. Within less than a fortnight all was in readiness. The Armada, carrying a considerable treasure, sailed from Callao and, touching at Payta, was joined by the Navio del Oro (golden ship), which carried the gold from the province of Quito and adjacent districts. While the galleons were approaching Porto Bello the South Sea fleet arrived before Panama, and the merchants of Chili and Peru began to transfer their merchandise on mules across the high back of the Isthmus.

"Then began the famous fair of Porto Bello. The town, whose permanent population was very small and composed mostly of negroes and mulattoes, was suddenly called upon to accommodate an enormous crowd of merchants, soldiers and seamen. Food and shelter were to be had only at
extraordinary prices. Merchants gave as much as 1,000 crowns for a moderate-sized shop in which to sell their commodities. Owing to overcrowding, bad sanitation, and an extremely unhealthy climate, the place became an open grave, ready to swallow all who resorted there. In 1637, during the fifteen days that the galleons remained at Porto Bello, 500 men died of sickness. Meanwhile, day by day, the mule-trains from Panama were winding their way into the town. While the treasure of the King of Spain was being transferred to the galleons in the harbor, the merchants were making their trade. There was little liberty, however, in commercial transactions, for the prices were fixed and published beforehand, and when negotiations began exchange was purely mechanical. The fair, which was supposed to be open for forty days, was in later times generally completed in ten or twelve. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the volume of business transacted was estimated to amount to thirty or forty million pounds sterling."

Fortunately we have a good description of the Isthmus during the days of its commercial prosperity from the pen of an Englishman. The Spanish government carried its policy of excluding foreigners from the Indies to such an extent that almost no one but Spaniards saw the colonial cities except by stealth or as conquerors. But in the quaint old volume "The English-American, his Travail by Sea and Land, or a new Survey of the West Indies . . . As also of his strange and wonderful Conversion and Calling from those remote Parts to his Native Country—By the true and painful Endeavours of Thomas Gage, now Preacher of the Word of God at Acris in the County of Kent"—we get a most interesting inside view. Thomas Gage had a rare opportunity to visit the colonies and he had an equally rare gift of description.
Born in England, he had been taken to the Continent at an early age and was raised in the Catholic faith. He entered the priesthood and in that capacity went to the Indies. Passing through Mexico, he at last settled in Guatemala.

François Coreal, who visited the colonies as a smuggler and has left a very vivacious account of his adventures, wrote:

"J' avouie qu'il y a des Missionaires de bonne foi, qui ont a coeur la gloire de Dieu & le salut des âmes des Idolâtres. Ceux-la sont en petit nombre. Tous les autres cherchent dans les conversions l'augmentation de leurs revenus & leurs profit temporal."

Thomas Gage was of the "petit nombre" "de bonne foi." With true missionary zeal he had followed in the footsteps of Las Casas and mastered the native dialects. He seems to have known very little about Protestantism, but there alone in the Central American jungle he had a little Reformation all by himself. Full of doubts about some of the dogmas he was expected to teach, he resolved to go to Rome, and, at the fountain head of his religion, find the truth.

But he had become so valuable to his superiors as an interpreter that they would not grant him permission to leave. For some months—with great travail of soul—he remained at his post. Then he ran away. He made his way on foot to the Pacific coast, after almost incredible adventures; he got on shipboard in the Golfo de Salina, "hoping to have been at Panama within five or six days. But as often before we had been crossed, so likewise in this short passage wee were striving with the Wind, Sea and Corrientes, as they are called (which are swift streams as of a River) foure full weeks."

From Panama he crossed to Puerto Bello, and finally got ship for Europe. He left the Catholic Church and settled
in England. He dedicated his book, which was published in 1648, to "His Excellency S' Thomas Fairfax, Knight, Lord Fairfax of Cameron, Captain-General of the Parliament's Army; and of all their Forces in England and the Dominion of Wales."

It is a remarkable book, the most interesting description of the Indies I have found. Side by side he records shrewd, almost scientific, observations of nature and the customs of the Indians and gives vivid narrative of his manifold adventures and hair-breadth escapes. Interwoven through it are theological discussions, and fascinating discourses they are; for they are illumined by the soul-tragedy of this honest, simple man, struggling desperately towards what he thought to be salvation.

But the book interests us especially here, as it contains the one reliable account which was written in our own language of Panama and Puerto Bello in the Days of the Great Trade. I have taken a few liberties with the arrangement of his text to avoid tedious repetitions:

"Castella del Oro is situated in the very Isthmus, and is not very populous by reason of the unhealthfulness of the aire, and noisome savour of the standing pooles. The chief places belonging to the Spaniards, are first Theonimay or Nombre de Dios on the East, the second which is six leagues from Nombre de Dios is Portobel, now chiefly inhabited by Spaniards and Mulattoes and Black-mores, and Nombre de Dios almost forsaken by reason of its unhealthfulness. . . .\n
As I have before observed, the aire being here very unhealthy, the King of Spain in the yeare 1584 commanded that the houses . . . be pulled downe and to be rebuild in a more healthy and convenient place: which was performed in . . . Portobel. . . .

"The ships which were wont to anchor in Nombre de Dios, and there take in the King's treasure which is yeerly brought
from Peru to Panama, and from thence to the North Sea, now harbour themselves in Portobel; which signifieth . . . a faire and goodly Haven, for so indeed it is, and well fortified at the entrance with three Castles which can reach and command one another . . .

"The third and chiefe place belonging to the Spaniards in Castilla del Oro is Panama . . . upon the South Sea."

After describing his life in the Guatemalan monastery, his escape to the Golfo de Salima, and the "foure full weeks" of desperate storms at sea he tells how at last they cast anchor off the old town of Panama.

"I, being now well strengthened made no stay in that frigot . . . but went to land, and betook myself to the Cloister of the Dominicans, where I stayed almost fifteen daies, viewing and reviewing the City; which is governed like Guatemala by a President and six Judges, and a Court of Chancery, and is a Bishops sea. It hath more strength towards the South Sea, than any other Port which on that side I hath seen, and some Ordinances planted for defence of it; but the houses are of the least strength of any place that I had entred in; for lime and stone is hard to come by, and therefore for that reason, and for the great heat there, most of the houses are built of timber and bords; the President's house, nay the best Church walls are but bords, which serve for stone and bricke, and for tiles to cover the roof. The heat is so extraordinary that a linnen cut doublet, with some light stuffe or taffetie breeches is the common cloathing of the inhabitants. Fish, fruit and herbage for sallets is more plentifull there than flesh; the coole water of the Coco is the womens best drinke, though Chocolate also and much wine from Peru be very aboundning. The Spaniards are in this city much given to sinne, loosenesse and venery . . . It is held to be one of the richest places in all America, having by land and by the river Chiagre (Chagres) commerce with
the North Sea, and by the South, trading with all Peru, East Indies, Mexico and Honduras. Thither is brought the chief treasure of Peru in two or three great ships, which lie at anchor at Puerto Perico some three leagues from the City... It consisteth of some five thousand inhabitants, and maintaineth at least eight Cloisters of Nuns and Friars. I feared much the heats, and therefore made as much haste out of it as I could."

It was in 1637 that Gage made this visit to Panama. An earlier description of the city was translated into English and published by Hakluyt:

"Relation of the ports, harbors, forts, and cities in the West Indies which have been surveied, edified, finished, made and mended, with those which have been builded, in a certaine survey by the king of Spaine, his direction and commandment: Written by Baptista Antonio, surveyor in those parts for the said King. Anno 1587."

After Sir Francis Drake's raids, this man Baptista Antonio was sent out to advise the King about fortifying his colonial possessions. The following passages are from his report:

"Panama is the principall citie of this Dioces: it lieth 18. leagues from Nombre de Dios on the South sea, and standeth in 9. degrees. There are 3. Monasteries in this said city of fryers, the one is of Dominicks, the other is of Augustines, and the third is of S. Francis fryers: also there is a College of Jesuists, and the royall audience or chancery is kept in this citie.

"This citie is situated hard by the sea side on a sandy bay: the one side of this citie is environed with the sea, and on the other side it is enclosed with the arme of the sea which runneth up into the land 1000. yards.

"This citie hath three hundred and fiftie houses, all built of timber, and there are sixe hundred dwellers and eight hundred soouldiers with the townesmen, and foure hundred
Negros of Guyney, and some of them are freemen: and there
is another towne which is called Santa Cruz la Real of
Negros-Simerons, and most of them are impoyded in your
majesties service, and they are 100. in number, and this
towne is a league from this citie upon a great rivers side,
which is a league from the sea right over against the harbour
of Periocos. But there is no trust nor confidence in any of
these Negros, and therefore we must take heed and beware
of them, for they are our mortall enemies.

"Upon the East side of this citie there are your majesties
royall houses builded upon a rocke joyning hard to the Sea
side, and they doe as well leane towards the sea as the land.
The royall audience or chancerie is kept here in these houses,
and likewise the prison. And in this place all your majesties
treasure is kept. There dwelleth in these houses your
majesties Treasurer, the Lord President, and 3. Judges, and
master Atturney. All these doe dwell in these houses, and
the rest of your majesties officers: which are sise houses
beside those of the Lord President, the which are all dwelling
houses, and all adjoyning together one by another along upon
the rockes. And they are builded all of timber and boursdes,
as the other houses are. So where the prison standeth and
the great hall, these two places may bee very well fortified,
because they serve so fitly for the purpose, by reason
they are builded towards the sea.

"And forasmuch as the most part of these people are
marchants, they will not fight, but onely keepe their owne
persons in safetie, and save their goods; as it hath bene sene
heretofore in other places of these Indies.

"So if it will please your majesty to cause these houses
to bee strongly fortified, considering it standeth in a very
good place if any sudden alarms shouled happens, then the
citizens with their goods may get themselves to this place,
and so escape the terrour of the enemy: and so this will be a
good securitie for all the treasure which doth come from Peru.

"Here in this harbor are always 10 to 12 barks of 60 or 50 tunnes apiece, which do belong to this harbor."

It will be seen by a comparison of the two quotations how rapidly the city had grown from 1,900, including the "sime-rons," to 5,000 in fifty years. Apparently Gage is in error in saying that even the best church was built of wood, for the Cathedral of St. Anastasius must have been well under way, if not already completed, when he wrote.

Esquemelin, in describing the city as it was in 1671, writes:

"There belonged to this city (which is also the head of a bishopric) eight monasteries, whereof seven were for men and one for women; two stately churches and one hospital. The churches and monasteries were all richly adorned with altar-pieces and paintings, huge quantity of gold and silver, with other precious things; . . . Besides which ornaments, here were to be seen two thousand houses of magnificent and prodigious building, being all of the greatest part inhabited by merchants of that country, who are vastly rich. For the rest of the inhabitants of lesser quality and tradesmen, this city contained five thousand houses more. Here were also great numbers of stables, which served for the horses and mules, that carry all the plate, belonging as well unto the King of Spain as to private men, towards the coast of the North Sea. The neighbouring fields belonging to this city are all cultivated and fertile plantations, and pleasant gardens, which afford delicious prospects unto the inhabitants the whole year long."

These are the three best accounts of the old city of Panama by people whom we know to be giving first-hand accounts.

There is some doubt as to whether François Coreal saw the city before Morgan's Raid. But having first come to the Indies in 1666, five years before the destruction of the place,
he must at least have received his information from people who had been there. He writes:

"This city had seven or eight thousand houses, most of which were of wood and thatch. The streets were quite beautiful, large and regular. The great merchants occupied the most beautiful houses of the city and nothing was lacking in the magnificence of these gentlemen. There were eight convents, a beautiful Cathedral Church and a Hospital maintained by nuns. The Bishop was, as is still the case, suffragant to the Archbishop of Lima and Primate of Tierra Firme. The fields there were well cultivated. The suburbs of the city were decorated by beautiful gardens and farms. . . . As all the commerce of Chili and Peru has its terminal port at Panama, the stores of the city are always filled and the harbor is never without some ships."

One must make certain allowances for the imagination of these early chroniclers. With equal seriousness they often tell of Griffins and Sea Monsters. But on the whole they were amazingly accurate in their descriptions of what they actually saw.

Mr. Charles Francis Adams recently read a paper before the Massachusetts Historical Society (Proceedings for May, 1911) in which he attempts to demolish the "Myth" of the grandeur of old Panama City. He quotes several rather exuberant descriptions of the place from modern writers and picks them to pieces. For example, gives the following from a recent book by Mr. Forbes-Lindsay:

"In its palmy days Old Panama was the seat of wealth and splendor such as could be found nowhere else in the world than the capitals of the Orient. At the court of the Governor gathered noblemen and ladies of gentle birth. There were upwards of seven thousand houses in the place, many of them being spacious and splendidly furnished mansions. The monasteries, convents and other ecclesiastical edifices were
numerous, and contained vast amounts of treasure in their vaults. There were fine public buildings devoted to various purposes, among them pretentious stables in which were housed the 'King's horses.'" 

And makes this comment on it: 

"But, as a matter of fact, a remark might here not improperly be interjected to the effect that the horses in question were in reality mules, and the stables—Latin-American shacks!"

He gives in extenso the report of Baptista Antonio, from which I have quoted, which, by the way, was written nearly a century before the burning of the city. On the basis of this account and his personal visits to the ruins, he concludes: 

"In the first place, the topography of the site and surroundings is as Antonio described it four centuries ago; but the foundations and ruins still remaining of the structures—fortifications, ways, bridges and edifices—are at variance with the statement that that town, as such, was ever of considerable size. Limited to an area of at most two hundred and fifty to three hundred acres, the ruins now remaining and the scattered fragments of tile show conclusively that Panama Viejo never could have contained within its limits either the buildings and dwellings, or the avenues, streets and ways described. Both the public edifices and the private houses were limited in size—of modest dimensions, as we would phrase it—and, apparently, packed closely together. In place of the fifty thousand sometimes credited to them, they never, on any reasonable estimate, could have sufficed to accommodate a population in excess of seven thousand. Ten thousand would be a maximum. The foundations of 'the royal houses builded upon a rock' are still there; so also those of the 'audience or chancerie,' as likewise the prison; all 'adjoining together one by another along upon the rocks.' But those foundations afford proof
positive of the dimensions of the superstructures. By their proximity to each other, also, they show that there never could have been any 'broad streets' or wide thoroughfares in the town or approaching it; and the bridge, of which we are informed that 'two or three piers' only remain, never had but a single span, both short and narrow, thrown across a contemptible mud-creek, almost devoid of water in the dry season or at low tide; and that single span—a very picturesque one, by the way—is still there. That a great store of wealth for those days annually passed through Old Panama, there can be no question. The place, was, however, merely a channel; and, after a fairly close inspection, I do not hesitate to repeat that the stories of its art, its population and its treasures—generally of its size and splendor—constitute about as baseless an historic fabric as the legions that fought at Marathon or the myriads that followed Xerxes. Old Panama, as seen through the imagination of modern investigators, bears, I believe, just as much resemblance to the sixteenth century reality as Francis Drake's Golden Hind would bear to a present-day Atlantic liner, say the Lusitania."

No one can doubt the justice of much of this. But after all Mr. Adams is attacking a straw man of his own creation. No one who has written of "broad streets" in the old metropolis meant to compare them to the Champs Elysées. Nor is it contended that the houses were of magnificent proportion in comparison with St. Peter's.

I am, however, inclined to question his conclusion when he so positively limits the extent of the city. The site to-day is overgrown with a dense tangle of tropical vegetation. It would take amazing activity, and a host of machetemen to reach—in two short visits—definite conclusions on this point. Within less than a century after its abandonment, François Coreal visited the site of Nombre de Dios, and "de son ancienne magnificence" he writes he could find
nothing but its name. More than twice that time has passed since Panama Viejo was deserted. Only the ruins of some of the stone structures are visible above the ground. Excavations into the sub-soil might possibly—if they were extensive enough—definitely determine the limits of the old town. And until archaeologists have seriously investigated the matter we can not put much weight on the opinions of chance travellers as to how far a city of frame houses, which decay so rapidly in the Tropics, extended.

Judged by the New York or London of to-day old Panama was an insignificant place. But there were very few cities of Europe which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had streets so broad and regular. There was certainly none in the New World which could compare with it for commerce or wealth. It is easier to believe that the court of the Governor was a magnificent medieval pageant of high colors, fine Oriental silks and barbaric jewelry than to conceive of the place through which so much wealth passed as a contemptible group of hovels. Although, in our own day, the best houses of the Klondike towns were frame shacks, the courtesans wore gowns from Paris. And the ruined, but stately tower of the Cathedral of St. Anastasius shows beyond dispute that the metropolis of the Americas had reached a stage of civilization far in advance of an Alaskan mining camp.

After all, grandeur is a relative term, and no one who speaks of the sordid Italian rascallion as “The Magnificent Borgia” can deny the same adjective to the “muy leal y muy noble Ciudad de Panama.”

Gage says, when he had decided to leave Panama: “I had my choice of company by land and water to Portobel. But considering the hardnesse of the mountaineies by land, I resolved to goe by the river Chiagre; and so at midnight I set out from Panama to Venta de Cruzes, which is ten or
twelve leagues from it. The way is thither very plaine for
the most part, and pleasant in the morning and evening.

"Before ten of the clock, we got to Venta de Cruzes, where
lived none but Mulatto's and Black-mores, who belong unto
the flat-boates that carry the merchandize to Portobel.
There I had very good entertainment by the people, who
desired me to preach unto them the next Sabbath day and
gave me twenty Crownes for my Sermon, and Procession.
After five days of my abode there, the boats set out, which
were much stopped in their passage downe the river: for in
some places we found the water very low, so that the boats ran
upon the gravell; from whence with poles and the strength of
the Black-mores they were to be lifted off againe . . . Had
not it pleased God to send us after the first week plentifull
raine, which made the water to run downe from the mountains
and fill the river (which otherwise of itself is very shallow) we
might have had a tedious and long passage; but after twelve
days we got to sea, and at the point landed at the Castle
to refresh ourselves for halfe a day. . . ." After telling
of the dilapidated condition of the Castle San Lorenzo at
the mouth of the Chagres, "which in my time wanted great
reparations, and was ready to fall downe to the ground," he
continues, "The Govenour of the Castle was a notable
wine-bibber, who plyed us with that liquor the time that we
stayed there, and wanting a Chaplain for himselfe, and
Souldiers, would faine have had me stay with him; but greater
matters called me further, and so I tooke my leave of him,
who gave us some dainties of fresh meat, fish and conserves
and so dismissed us. We got out to the open sea, discovering
first the Escuedo de Veragua, and keeping somewhat close
unto the land, we went on rowing towards Portobel, till the
evening which was Saturday night; then we cast anchor
behind a little Island, resolving in the morning to enter in
Portobel. The Black-mores all that night kept watch for
fear of Hollenders, whom they said did often lie in wait thereabouts for the boats of Chiagrè; but we passed the night safely and next morning got to Portobelo, whose haven we observed to be very strong with two Castles at the mouth and constant watch within them, and another called St. Miguel further in the Port.

"When I came into the Haven I was sorry to see that as yet the Galeons were not come from Spaine, knowing that the longer I stayed in that place, greater would be my charges. Yet I comforted myselfe that the time of year was come, and that they could not long delay their coming. My first thoughts were of taking up a lodging, which at that time were plenteous and cheape, nay some were offered me for nothing with this caveat, that when the Galeons did come, I must either leave them, or pay a dear rate for them. A kind Gentleman, who was the Kings Treasurer, falling in discourse with me promised to help me, that I might be cheaply lodged even when the ships came, and lodgings were at the highest rate. He, interposing his authority, went with me to seeke one, which at the time of the fleets being there, might continue to be mine. It was no bigger than would containe a bed, a table, a stoole or two, with roome enough beside to open and shut the doore, and they demanded of me for it during the aforesaid time of the fleet, sixcore Crownes, which commonly is a fortnight. For the Towne being little, and the Souldiers, that come with the Galeons for their defence at least four or five thousand; besides merchants from Peru, from Spain and many other places to buy and sell, is cause that every roome, though never so small, be dear; and sometimes all the lodgings in the Towne are few enough for so many people, which at that time doe meet at Portobel. I knew a Merchant who gave a thousand Crownes for a shop of reasonable bignesse, to sell his wares and commodities that yeer I was there, for
fifteen daies only, which the Fleet continued to be in that Haven. I thought it much for me to give the sixcore Crownes which were demanded of me for a room, which was but as a mouse hole, and began to be troubled, and told the Kings Treasurer that I had been lately robbed at sea, and was not able to give so much, and bee besides at charges for my diet, which I feared would prove as much more. But not a farthing would be abated of what was asked; where upon the good Treasurer, pitying me, offered to the man of the house to pay him threescore Crowns of it, if so be that I was able to pay the rest, which I must doe, or else lie without in the street. Yet till the Fleet did come I would not enter into this deare hole, but accepted of another faire lodging which was offered me for nothing. Whilst I thus expected the Fleets coming, some money and offerings I got for Masses, and for two Sermons which I preached at fifteen Crownes a peece. I visited the Castles, which indeed seemed unto me to be very strong; but what most I wondered at was to see the requa’s of Mules which came thither from Panama, laden with wedges of silver; in one day I told two hundred mules laden with nothing else, which were unladen in the publicke Market-place, so that there the heapes of silver wedges lay like heaps of stones in the street, without any feare or suspition of being lost. Within ten daies the fleet came, consisting of eight Galeons and ten Merchant ships, which forced me to run to my hole. It was a wonder then to see the multitude of people in those streets which the weeke before had been empty.

"Then began the price of all things to rise, a fowl to be worth twelve Rialls, which in the mainland within I had often bought for one; a pound of beefe then was worth two Rialls, whereas I had in other places thirteen pounds for half a Riall, and so of all other food and provisions, which was so excessively dear, that I knew not how to live but by fish and
Tortoises, which were very many, and though somewhat deare, yet were the cheapest meat I could eate."

Once more the testimony of François Coreal concurs with that of the English writer.

"At the time of the arrival of the Galleons," he writes, "provisions rise to an extraordinary price, and lodgings are so dear during the twenty or twenty-five days when they load and unload the merchandise that the citizens who rent apartments make as much or more profit than those who come to trade."

"It was worth seeing," Gage continues, "how Merchants sold their commodities, not by the Ell or yard, but by piece and weight, not paying in coined pieces of money, but in wedges, which were weighed and taken for commodities. This lasted but fifteen dayes, whilst the Galleons were lading with wedges of silver and nothing else; so that for those fifteen daies I dare boldly say and avouch that in the world there is no greater Fair than that of Portobel, between the Spanish Merchants and those of Peru, Panama, and other places there about."

Here Gage breaks off his narrative for a long theological discourse. One might say that having given a description of the physical aspects of Puerto Bello, he adds a picture of the psychology of the town in his times.

The point, about which most of his own religious doubts centered, was the doctrine of Transubstantiation. This dogma of the church had long troubled him and it was especially on this matter that he hoped to find light in Rome, in the hope of which he had risked the anger of his superiors and a so dangerous journey.

During the course of a mass which he celebrated during these fifteen days an incident occurred which he discusses at length and which was the cause of his conversion to Protestantism. Just before the climax of the mystery, the priest
steps back from the altar and repeats a prayer of self-consecration called the "Memento." At this point in the ritual, Gage heard a slight noise on the altar and opening his eyes he saw a mouse running away with the consecrated wafer.

Gage tells us that for a moment he was immensely frightened for his own safety. As an Englishman he was tolerated on account of his calling, but there were many Spaniards in those superstitious days who firmly believed that England was an annex of Hell and that all men of that race were lineal descendants of the Father of Lies. To make known what had happened would surely cause a great sensation, and very likely the fanatical mob might hold him responsible for the incident which all would regard as an appalling sacrilege. On the other hand, the one sin which the Inquisition held to be the most heinous was any tampering with the sacraments. In such matters they were frigid formalists and no excuse counterbalanced the slightest violation of the letter of the ritual. If Gage had gone on with the ceremony and anyone had seen the accident, he would run a very good chance of the stake. He decided that the populace was less to be feared than the Inquisition. He stopped the mass and calling for aid gave chase to the mouse. The frightened animal dropped the "hostie" and escaped. The sacred wafer was found on the floor of the chancel.

As Gage had foreseen there was a great hue and cry. There were fasts and special services to propitiate the wrath, which every one felt the Most High must feel at this sacrilege. However Gage escaped with his life and had time to think the thing out. He concluded: "Now here I knew that this Mouse had fed upon some substance, or else how could the markes of the teeth so plainely appear? But no Papist will bee willing to answer that it fed upon the substance of Christs Body, ergo, by good consequence it followes that it fed upon the substance of bread: and so Transubstantiation
NATIVE VILLAGE ON THE SITE OF THE OLD TOWN OF SAN LORENZO.
here in my judgment was confuted by a Mouse; which mean and base creature God chose to convince mee of my former errours, and made mee now resolve upon what many yeeres before I had doubted, that certainly the point of Transubstantiation taught by the Church of Rome is most damnable and erroneous."

While Gage's logic will not be very convincing to the modern mind, it gives us an interesting insight into how the men of his day thought. He changed his religious faith because a miracle did not happen. A skeptic of our day might be converted if he saw lightning come down from Heaven and blast such an impious mouse. Gage's mind worked in a manner exactly opposite. His whole philosophy was changed, and his book shows that he thought earnestly, because the "Natural Order" was not interfered with as he thought he had a right to expect.

Having described his conversion, he returns to the narrative:

"Don Carlos de Ybarra, who was the Admirall of that Fleet, made great haste to bee gone; which made the Merchants buy and sell apace, and lade the ships with silver wedges; whereof I was glad, for the more they laded, the lesse I unladed my purse with buying deare provisions, and sooner I hoped to be out of that unhealthy place, which itselfe is very hot, and subject to breed Feavers, nay death, if the feet bee not preserved from wetting when it raineth; but especially when the Fleet is there, it is an open grave ready to swallow in part of that numerous people, which at that time resort unto it, as was seene the yeare that I was there, when about five hundred of the Soldiers, Merchants, and Mariners, what with Feavers, what with Flux caused by too much eating of fruit and drinking of water, what with other disorders lost their lives, finding it to bee to them not Porto bello, but Porto malo."
CHAPTER XVIII

PRIVATEERS AND PIRATES

The effort of the Spanish government to exclude all foreigners from any share in this fat traffic was, of course, foredoomed to failure. In fact, the rigor with which they enforced the prohibitions against interlopers was the immediate cause of great loss.

Early in the latter half of the sixteenth century an English trading vessel approached the harbor of Vera Cruz in Mexico. They sent a request to the governor for permission to enter and sell their cargo. That worthy gentleman, believing that if he refused to admit them, they would surely smuggle their goods ashore, invited them to drop anchor, and, having them under the guns of his fort, confiscated their ship and merchandise and for a while held the crew in prison.

One of the English sailors—the son of a Protestant minister and the oldest of twelve brothers—was Francis Drake. He finally made his way back to Europe and spent considerable time in trying to get some restitution from the Spanish government. Failing in this, he decided to collect what was due him—and all possible interest—and at the same time revenge himself for his foul treatment, by force.

He made two piratical trips to the Indies in a small, fast vessel, the Swan. His prizes were insignificant. He made so little noise on these cruises that it is hard to find any record of them. But his main object was to secure information.

In 1570 he secured recognition in the English Court and
Queen Elizabeth granted him "Letters of Marque" to cruise against the Spaniards. It is possible that he may have had similar commissions for his earlier cruises—the point is uncertain—but from now on he was a reputable "privateer" and not a "pirate." It is a distinction with no difference except of social position. A "privateer" could be a national hero, while a "pirate" could be the hero only of "the lower classes." The former had the entree to Court, the latter had to be contented with the adulation of cheap ale-houses.

What England thought of Drake is shown by a little volume published in 1653 entitled "Sir Francis Drake Revived, Who is or may be a Pattern to stirre up all Heroicke and active Spirits of these Times, to benefit their Country and eternize their Names by like Noble Attepts. . . . Calling upon this Dull and Effeminate Age to follow his Noble Steps for Gold and Silver."

Backed by his new commission he fitted out a more formidable expedition. A small one, indeed, for the work in hand, but well planned. In the spring of 1572, he was ready to sail, having his old ship, The Swan, and a new one, The Pascha.

"Having in both of them," writes the author of the book already referred to, "of men and boyes seventy-three, all voluntarily assembled, of which the eldest was fifty, all the rest under thirty. . . ." The ships were "both richly furnished, with victuals and apparell for a whole yeer; and no lesse heedfully provided of all manner of Munition, Artillery, Artificers, stuffe and tooles, that were requisite for such a Man of war in such an attempt, but especially having three dainty Pinnases, made in Plimouth, taken asunder all in peices and stowed aboard, to be set up as occasion served."

They sailed without mishap to an uninhabited harbor on the coast of the Isthmus about half way between Nombre
de Dios and Cartagena, which they reached on the 12th of July. Drake had visited the place on one of his former cruises in the Swan and had chosen it for a base of operations. But on landing they found a sheet of lead nailed to a tree "greater than any four men, joyning hands, could fathom about." On this piece of lead was scratched this message:

"Captain Drake, if you fortune to come to this Port, make hast away: For the Spanyards, which you had with you here the last year, have bewrayed this place, and taken away all that you left here. I departed from hence this present 7. of July, 1572.

"Your very loving friend
- "John Garret."

This warning caused Drake to hunt out some other secluded cove—the coast abounds in them—and there he took out his "three dainty Pinnases" and had them "set up" by his artificers.

Very little time was lost before he was under way for his famous attempt on Nombre de Dios. It must be remembered that this was the first enterprise of its kind. The English had not yet become accustomed to attacking fortified Spanish towns with a handful of men. These young men—all "under thirty," however stout their hearts, must have felt it an exceedingly desperate venture.

During the night the three Pinnases—most of the crew hiding in the bottom—slipped into the harbor. One of their number who could speak Spanish answered the hail from the fort saying that they were from Cartagena. And so, getting safely past the cannon, they attacked the town. A small number of them stayed to guard the boats and the main body quickly mastered the place. There was very little fighting. The only resistance was in the Plaza where, our
author writes, "the Souldiers and such as were joyned with them presented us with a jolly hot volley of shot." But the first charge dispersed this force.

It is hard from the chronicles to determine who were more afraid, the townspeople or the invaders. The English apparently could not believe that they had taken the city so easily. As they met no large portion of the garrison, they supposed that they were lying somewhere in ambush. A rumor started that an attack was being made on the boats and that their retreat was cut off. Only with great effort could Drake prevent a stampede. He alone kept his head and, having gone to so much trouble, he was not going to be frightened into dropping his booty. Sending some of his men to support the guard on the water front, and posting sentries in various places, he led the main body of his men to the king's treasure house, which they broke open and there "we saw a huge heape of silver, . . . being a pile of bars of silver, of (as neere as we could guesse) seventy foot in length, of ten foot in breadth, and twelve foot in height, piled up against the wall, each barre was between thirty-five and forty pound in weight."

But at this juncture, Drake, who had been wounded in that "jolly hot volley of shot," fainted from loss of blood. Panic at once fell on the privateers and, carrying their unconscious leader to the boats, they made off. Their retreat was so hurried, in fact, that they forgot some of the sentries, who had to swim out to their boats. The Spanish garrison, instead of having rallied to attack them, had not yet stopped running.

What Drake said to his men when he recovered consciousness and found that they had let this rich booty slip through his fingers is not recorded.

They returned to the secret harbor where they had left their ships, and very shortly set out again, this time for