

THE FIRST PRIEST OF AMERICA.

THE current of European migration across the Atlantic flowed slowly at first. Twenty years after Columbus had revealed the New World to the Old, a single small colony in tropical San Domingo was the only American soil occupied by the white man. That island had been selected for Spanish settlement by Columbus on his first voyage, and the towns of Isabella and San Domingo founded by him on his second expedition, but no rush of colonists followed for some years. The experience of the first settlers with tropical fevers, and the hardships inseparable from life in new countries, soon quenched the popular enthusiasm which had greeted the great discovery of Columbus. Of twenty-five hundred men brought out by Ovando in 1502 over a thousand died in a few months. In Granada at an earlier period a crowd of returned emigrants besieged the King's Court for months and mobbed the sons of Columbus in the streets. When Diego Columbus came to San Domingo as Governor in 1509 the whole European population of the Colony did not exceed four or five thousand, mostly men, like the population of a California or Australian mining camp in our own days. It is significant that his wife was accompanied by a large number of marriageable young ladies of high birth and small fortunes, who came to find husbands among the colonists, as English ladies afterwards were wont to do in India. As in California and Australia, too, gold mining was the chief motive which brought immigrants to San Domingo. The resemblance to an Australian population was strengthened by the fact that many of the settlers of San Domingo were convicts, who had been given liberty on condition of emigration to the new lands. The details of early Spanish colonial life preserved in contemporary writings are very numerous. Oviedo and Las Casas, both historians of mark, were among the first settlers and their works, with others, enable a modern reader to form an almost photographic picture of early Spanish colonial life. Its resemblance to that of our own California pioneers is very striking. There was the same energy and contempt of danger or hardships, the same spirit of mutual helpfulness, and free spending, the same sudden changes from poverty to wealth and wealth to poverty, and the same rough recklessness of moral conduct mixed with generosity and often with strong religious feeling.

In political matters, this first colony of Europeans in America

was organized more fully than an ordinary Spanish municipality at home. The Governor represented the King with almost royal authority, an Audiencia, or Supreme Court, administered the laws of Castille, a royal agent superintended commerce, and each town had an organization modelled on that of a Spanish city, with elected Councilors, Mayor, Sheriff and other officials. The colony practically ruled its own destinies in spite of the loyalty to the crown, which was strong in every Spanish breast at that time. The wearer of the crown, in fact, had little time to interfere, except in a few general directions, with the doings of his subjects four thousand miles away in a land and among a people so foreign to European life. The relations between the colonists and the native Indians are a striking illustration of this fact. Isabella and Ferdinand had strictly enjoined on Columbus and his successors that the natives should not be molested or enslaved. Nevertheless both vassalage and actual slavery had grown up in San Domingo within five years after its discovery. It was the worst blot on the moral character of colonial life as compared with life at home, but it was not so regarded by the colonists themselves. It is easy for a community, as for an individual, to form a false moral conscience for itself where its material interests are concerned. We have no need to look far for instances to-day. The extermination of the Tasmanians followed closely the abolition of the slave trade by the English Parliament in the present century, and the kidnapping of South Sea Islanders has been freely practised under the English flag while British war vessels were hunting slavers on the African coasts. The early Spanish settlers of the West Indies persuaded themselves that it was a duty of humanity to make the Indians work—somewhat in the spirit that suggested the "White Man's burthen" to a modern writer.

Among the twenty-five hundred settlers who came to San Domingo with the Governor Ovando in 1502 was a young man of twenty-eight years whose father had sailed with Columbus on his first voyage across the Atlantic, and who had himself seen the sailing of the famous Caravels from Palos. Bartholome Casas or Las Casas had made his studies in the University of Salamanca before seeking his fortune in America. His father had grown wealthy as a ship builder, and a brilliant career seemed to promise itself to him in San Domingo. He was a trained business man as well as a scholar, a good speaker and of a constitution which seemed to defy alike fatigue and illness. Whatever work came to his hand he threw himself into with untiring energy, and at the same time he had the art of making devoted friends among every

class of the colonists, from the Governor to the ticket of leave men. It was a surprise, then, when after eight years of active business Las Casas, at the age of thirty-six, asked for admission to the priesthood. Such vocations, indeed, appear to have been exceptionally numerous among the Spaniards of that century. Calderon, the Shakespeare of Spain, and his great rival, Lope de La Vega, both entered the Church at the age of fifty. Ignatius of Loyola had been a soldier, Francis Borgia a Viceroy of Catalonia, and Urdaneta, the founder of the Philippine Mission, a sea captain before taking Holy Orders. "Fraile que fue soldado sale mas acertado," "the old soldier makes the steadfast friar," was a common Spanish proverb and it was well borne out by the life of Bartholome Las Casas.

His wish was readily fulfilled. San Domingo had been made a diocese soon after its first settlement and the Bishop accepted the gifted candidate and ordained him with much solemnity in 1510. Las Casas was the first man to receive Holy Orders on American soil, and it was made the occasion of an enthusiastic celebration by the whole Catholic population of San Domingo. The Governor Diego Columbus attended the ceremony and the municipality of San Domingo declared a holiday and held a tournament to honor the first "New Mass" of America.

It was not to shirk labor or danger that Las Casas had become a priest, and his energies found plenty of employment in his new career. After eighteen years' experience of colonial life in San Domingo the Spanish people was about to spread over the great continent which Columbus had given to Castile and Leon. A few months before the ordination of Las Casas, Ojeda had sailed to found Darien, the first permanent settlement on the American continent. A few months later Velasquez was sent by Diego Columbus to occupy Cuba. There was some fighting with the Indians of that island at first, but it was soon ended by the swords and horses of the civilized invaders, and the exploration of the country went on rapidly. Las Casas was sent as chaplain to the little army of Velasquez in Cuba and shared in its toilsome work. In company with the captain, Naervaez, and a hundred soldiers, he made the first expedition to what is now Havana and took an active part in its foundation. He has left a lively description of this campaign in his history. He was associated in authority with Naervaez and found ample work in repressing the excesses of the soldiers and protecting the helpless natives. At an Indian town in Camaguey there was a sudden outbreak of violence. The party had marched for several hours under a broiling sun and the temp-

ers of the soldiers were in a state of nervous tension, like that among the American troops at Manila at the outbreak of hostilities with the Filipinos. When the Indian town was reached the inhabitants gathered around the strangers, and a soldier lost his head and attacked them with his sword. The excitement spread and a massacre of the Indians followed. Las Casas was in a large hut disposing the baggage and preparing for the issue of rations when the trouble began. Five Spaniards were in his company and they caught the panic and attacked the Indians in the hut. Las Casas stopped their violence and rushed out to the open, where he saw bodies lying like sheaves of corn all around. He dashed among the excited soldiers, struck the weapons from the hands of some, called the bewildered officers to their duty and finally stopped the slaughter. "What do you think these Spaniards are at," exclaimed Naervaez when Las Casas found him amid the turmoil. "I commend them and you to the devil," was the emphatic if somewhat discourteous answer. When the soldiers were at last got under control an investigation was made, but no reason could be given for the outbreak. It was simply an outburst of unreasoning alarm. Las Casas got the men into a new camp and through his Indian attendants opened communications with the fugitives who had completely deserted their town. After a few days a body of two hundred came to beg his protection, and the sight of their terror and misery made a deep impression on the sensitive heart of Las Casas. He assured them of safety and got them back to their homes, went among them, baptised the infants and did all he could to allay their fears. The expedition proceeded on to what is now the province of Havana, and Las Casas took every precaution to prevent the recurrence of massacres. The soldiers were kept strictly apart from the Indian attendants both on march and in camp and further bloodshed was prevented. In Havana Naervaez, who was nearly as reckless of native life as a modern naval officer in Samoa, seized about twenty chiefs on the charge of deserting their villages and proposed to execute them as an example of the power of civilized man. This atrocity was prevented by the energetic remonstrances of Las Casas and the Indian chiefs were restored to liberty.

Four towns were laid out by Velasquez at the end of his explorations, Havana and Santiago being among the number. A large part of the Indians were given to different Spanish settlers in "encomienda," a kind of feudal system copied from European practice in the middle ages. An Indian village was assigned, during the good pleasure of the Royal Government, to a private indi-

vidual to govern, protect, and develope, and incidentally to collect rent and service from the Indians. In much the same way William the Conqueror had partitioned out the Anglo-Saxons and their lands among his Norman soldiers after the conquest of England. The system was quite distinct from personal slavery, which also existed both of Negroes and Indians at that time. The Governor granted an Indian village near the site of the actual city of Cienfuegos to Las Casas in partnership with a friend, Pedro de la Renteria. They started a plantation there like other colonists, with their Indian vassals as laborers. The duties of Las Casas as a priest among the scattered and scanty population left him a good deal of leisure, and active occupation was a necessity for his nature. The Indians in his encomienda were treated with kindness, but the scrupulous Las Casas confesses that he devoted himself too much to mere worldly business during this period.

While Las Casas was thus engaged in Cuba a movement in behalf of the Indians under Spanish rule had been begun in San Domingo. The first American convent of the Dominican order was founded in the last island a few months after the ordination of Las Casas. The community came from San Esteban in Salamanca, a house famous in Spanish colonial history, and its rule and practice were highly austere. Besides abstaining from meat the friars in San Domingo excluded the ordinary Spanish provisions, wine, oil and wheaten bread, from their refectory, and lived in the greatest poverty. There were several excellent preachers among them, and the thatched chapel of their convent attracted large audiences and fervent penitents. It is worth noting that the Prior Pedro de Cordova was also charged with the functions of Inquisitor and the first representative of the famous Spanish Inquisition in the New World. It is strange that his first work should have been the defence of the heathen Indians against his fellow Christians. The Dominicans were shocked at the treatment of the natives from their first arrival. The community consulted together and Father Montesinos, as the result, astonished the public of San Domingo by a vigorous condemnation of their treatment of the Indians. A deputation at once went to the convent and complained of the preacher, as crazy, to the Prior. They told him that if his community held the same sentiments they had better return to Spain. The Prior promised an answer on the next Sunday, when Father Montesinos again mounted the pulpit and not only repeated his former discourse but added that no Dominican priest would absolve any man who made incursions on the Indians. The colonial authorities took up the matter and sent an

agent to Spain to report the Inquisitor to the Court as a stirrer up of Sedition. Pedro de Cordova sent Father Montesinos to Spain to plead the cause of the natives and afterwards went himself on the same mission. Father Montesinos succeeded in getting an audience with the King, Ferdinand, and laid a written statement before him. Ferdinand called a Junta to examine the case, composed of some of the ministers and some theologians. The Junta decided positively that the Indians were by right freemen and should be treated as such and paid for any work done for Spaniards. A code known as the Laws of Burgos was drawn up for their protection and officially published on the 27th of December, 1512. These laws were not by any means perfect, but they were the beginning of a system of legislation which ultimately rooted out Indian slavery in Spanish America.

Las Casas, with all his sympathies for the Indians, had not at first seen the injustice of the vassalage imposed on them. He had held Indian vassals himself in San Domingo, and was once refused absolution by a priest of some order on that ground, but he considered it a mere scruple on the confessor's part. When settled in Cuba on his plantation the thought that after all the friar's doctrine might be the simple truth came strongly upon him. He had to prepare a sermon for Whitsunday in 1514 and was then alone, his friend Releria being away in Jamaica on business. Certain texts in Ecclesiasticus struck him forcibly and after some days' reflection he decided, both from considerations of abstract right and of the occurrences daily happening around him, that the whole system of vassalage and slavery of the Indians was tyranny and injustice. His mind once made up he waited on Velasquez and told him his conclusion, adding that he believed it was one which affected the salvation of Velasquez and the other colonists as well as his own. He declared that he felt bound in conscience to give up his Indian vassals, and only asked the Governor not to publish it before the return of Renteria.

He did not wait for that event, however, to make known his belief to the world. On the Feast of the Assumption he published it from the pulpit and warned his hearers of the danger to their souls if they retained the natives in slavery. Some were as much surprised as if he had told them it was sinful to work their oxen or horses, but others were sincerely affected by his discourse. The great majority treated him as a well meaning crank. Quite enough had been done for the Indians, they thought, by the Laws of Burgos. These laws, in fact, as applied by the local authorities, were scarcely of more value to the natives than the Poor Law of O'Connell's time to the rack rented Irish peasantry.

Renteria, the partner of Las Casas, was of a very different opinion when he returned. During his absence he had thought much and seriously on the miseries of the natives under their civilized masters. He had made a retreat in a Franciscan community, and the decision he had then come to in Jamaica was the same as that formed by Las Casas on his Cuban ranches. On the night of his return he astonished his partner by the announcement that he intended to go to Spain and get a royal license to establish schools for the Indian children where they might be saved from the destruction which seemed hanging over their race. Las Casas, in reply, told his own projects, which were to also go to Spain and seek efficient legal protection for the abused natives. Renteria begged him to do so, and offered his whole property to carry out the plan. The Indians were given up, the stock and farm sold and with the money Las Casas started for Spain to begin a life-long struggle for justice to the Indian race.

He found active allies in the Dominicans of San Domingo, where Pedro de Cordova had returned after the publication of the Laws of Burgos. He had got permission to found missions along the coast of South America, away from the violence of the ordinary settlers, and he brought fourteen Dominicans for that purpose from the Convent of San Esteban. The first mission was sent to the coast of Venezuela, near Trinidad, and was conducted by Father Montesino, the same who had so energetically denounced the oppressions of the San Domingo colonists. Montesinos, however, was attacked by fever at Puerto Rico and had to remain there for a time while his two companions went on. They landed near Cumana, were well received by the natives and took their abode among them. A short time afterwards a vessel touched at the coast, and kidnapped several Indians. The Dominicans were at once seized by the other natives and after some time put to death. One was a near relative of the Prior.

It was just after this martyrdom that Las Casas reached San Domingo on his way to Spain. Father DeCordova was preparing to establish another mission undaunted by his cousin's death, but he cordially approved the project of Las Casas. He warned him, however, from his own experience, to expect little from the officials then in charge of American affairs, especially Bishop Fonseca, the President of the Council of the Indies. He also sent Father Motesinos with him as one not unfamiliar with the ways of politics in Spain, of which the American priest had no experience. They sailed from San Domingo in 1515 and got safely to Seville. Father Montesino introduced Las Casas to the Archbishop of that

city, who had been a Dominican. The Archbishop gave him letters of introduction to some of the courtiers and to Ferdinand himself. The chaplain from the jungles of Cuba had to figure in the highest political circles of Europe.

His experience is graphically told in his own history. The administration of the Spanish Government in the sixteenth century appears in a very different light in his pages from what it does in popular history. The Court of Ferdinand had more resemblance to the Cabinet of an American President like Jackson than to the stately surroundings of royalty in our own times. Private individuals like Las Casas or Father Montesinos made their way into the King's apartments and got attention to their statements, if worth it, in a very direct way. Public affairs were referred to committees to thresh out and report upon, and the interested parties talked to ministers and dignitaries with as much freedom as ordinary citizens to-day address a Governor. The statesmen of the day had their hands full of business also. Las Casas once sat up four nights in the private room of the Chancellor of Spain examining papers which that official would not let out of his own possession, but was ready to let his visitor examine while he worked himself at other business. The King's preachers, on another occasion, walked into the Council of the Indies and warned the members of that body that they were risking the loss of their souls if they did not do justice to the Indians of America. There was no lack of freedom or energy among the men who governed Spain in these days.

Las Casas, with Archbishop Beza's letter, got an audience with Ferdinand in person and laid a statement of the wrongs of the Indians and colonial misgovernment before him about Christmas of 1515. The King heard him attentively and promised a longer hearing at a later day, but he was old and ill and never had the chance to give it. His death within a month threw back any consideration of the Indian problem for the present. Bishop Fonseca, the President of the Council of Colonial Administration, was much more of a politician than a priest and took little interest in humanitarian projects. At an interview with Las Casas, when the latter told how seven thousand Indians had perished in three months in consequence of some Spanish expedition. Fonseca rudely said: "What is that to me or the King, you queer fool?" "If it is nothing to you or to the King that all these souls should perish to whom is it then? O great and eternal God," was the answer, and with that Las Casas left, feeling convinced that the cause of right had little chance in the Council of the Indies while Bishop Fonseca ruled.

Fonseca's influence, however, was waning. On the death of Ferdinand the heir to the Crown of Castille was his grandson, afterwards the famous Charles V, but then a boy of sixteen, living in his native Flanders. Pending his coming of age a Regent, with royal powers, had to take the government of Castile. For this post Ferdinand named the Primate, Cardinal Ximenes, unquestionably the ablest public man of Europe. Ximenes was then seventy-eight; about the same age as the late Mr. Gladstone when he retired from public life. Like Gladstone, Ximenes was a scholar as well as a statesman, and like him, too, he kept the fire of youth and a marvelous capacity for work in his age. The Flemish ministers of Charles accepted his appointment, but sent an Ambassador to represent the young King in Spain. The Ambassador was the Dean of Louvain, Adrian, a Belgian by birth and afterwards Pope under the title of Adrian VI. Within a few months after the death of Ferdinand Las Casas got an introduction to Adrian, and gave him a full statement in Latin of the condition of the Indians in the colonies. The Dean, reared in the orderly life of the Belgian free cities, was astounded at the tale. When he had read it he walked directly into the apartment of Ximenes and asked him could such things occur. Ximenes had not taken much part before in the affairs of America, but when his attention was thus called to them he felt the same indignation as Dean Adrian. In spite of his years and other labors he at once took up the task of reform. Las Casas was called in within a few days, and the Cardinal, a keen judge of men, quickly decided that a sweeping change in the government of the West Indies was required by justice. To decide with Ximenes was to act. He at once named a committee of four, on whose honesty and experience he could rely, to examine thoroughly the facts of the colonial administration. Las Casas was called repeatedly before this body, at whose meetings the Regent himself was often present. Ximenes was soon convinced of the ability of the priest from the colonies and he empowered him and a member of the Council of the Indies, a skilled lawyer, to draw up a new code of Indian administration. At the request of Las Casas Father Montesinos, the fearless preacher of San Domingo, was made a third member of the committee. With all his fervid enthusiasm Las Casas was eminently practical in business and Ximenes likewise. The committee met almost every day for several hours. Las Casas, as best acquainted with the actual state of things in America, drafted the heads of the needed reforms. Father Montesinos added suggestions drawn from his own experience in the Indies and Dr. Rubio, the lawyer member, contributed others

from his knowledge of Indian administration at home, he having been a member of the Council of the Indies. When the committee had thus put the different points of the proposed legislation into practical form they were carefully examined and amended by Ximenes and Dean Adrian, his colleague. There was no lack of criticism on the part of the numerous parties about the Court interested in Indian plantations and mines. The Regent heard objections and decided promptly on their worth. He suggested that a plan of European immigration should be prepared, but he waived it for the time, not to complicate the work in hand. On the point of the right of the Indians to freedom he was thoroughly decided. Las Casas, who feared at first to assert broadly his own judgment, asked at a meeting once: "With what justice can these things be done whether the natives are freemen or not?" "Who doubts they are free? Of course they are," was the emphatic answer of the Cardinal Regent.

The work to be done and quickly was of its own nature enough to try the ablest minds. The first settlement of the West Indies had been undertaken with the best intentions for the welfare and conversion of the Indians. Isabella's instructions to Columbus strictly forbade oppression or violence, and when Indian prisoners of war were sent to Spain as slaves she condemned the act in indignant language, and ordered their immediate restoration to their country and freedom. Men of high character had been sent out as Governors and each of them, Bobadilla, Ovando, and Columbus himself had received the strictest orders to protect the natives, yet in spite of all a colonial system had grown up which was destroying them at an unparalleled rate. Of forty thousand natives of San Domingo placed under Spanish grantees in 1510 only fourteen thousand could be found four years later. The colonists themselves had become demoralized by their surroundings, and men of good character at home were committing atrocities in the West Indian islands. This experience was new to the statesmen of the sixteenth century, though it has been so often repeated in the history of European colonization since as to have become a commonplace. To give the native Americans knowledge of the Christian faith and to raise them to the level of Europeans in Christian colonization had been the object of Isabella and Columbus as it was of Las Casas. He might well ask if it were likely that where they had failed he, a simple priest, without wealth, rank or political experience, could succeed. He fully appreciated the difficulties before him, but he felt that duty called and through fifty years he continued his self-appointed task.

At the moment it looked as if it were near accomplishment. The abilities of the greatest statesmen of the age, and the virtual sovereign of Castile were devoted to finding a practical system of civilizing the Indians without oppression. In brief outline the plan adopted by Ximenes was to stop the grants of Indian districts to individual Spaniards and to organize the Indians into village communities under their own chiefs. The powers of the chiefs were to be limited. They might punish by whipping, but no higher penalty, and were only to get a larger share in the common property of the tribe as the profits of office. Each native was to have his own cabin and garden, but the bulk of the land was to be held and cultivated in common. Provision was made, however, that with the progress of civilization among the Indians, individuals might get land and cattle in direct ownership. Mining was to be carried on under Indian overseers and for the profit of the natives themselves after payment of a royalty to the government. In every village there was to be a church, a school for the children and a hospital and poor house. Indian schoolmasters were to be trained as soon as possible and meantime Europeans were to be employed and paid out of the village common fund. A Spanish administrator was to have charge of every group of three or four villages, to administer justice and promote public works, but neither the administrator nor other Spaniards, except the priests and schoolmasters, might reside permanently in the Indian villages. The enslaving or oppressing of any natives was forbidden under heavy penalties. The Spanish colonists might cultivate their own farms or work mining claims with the help of their negro slaves, but they were forbidden to employ the Indians as laborers under any pretext. An exception was made of Caribs, a particularly fierce and cannibal race. It was allowed to keep them as slaves on the ground of protection for other Indians from their attacks. Las Casas objected flatly to this enslaving of Caribs, but Ximenes did not feel warranted in following his advice in the face of the numerous representations in a contrary sense. On the other hand Ximenes objected to the importation of negroes as dangerous, while Las Casas did not agree with him. Cattle and tools were to be furnished the Indian villages by the government, the price to be repaid afterwards from the revenues of each community.

The details of administration determined, it remained to find competent administrators. Ximenes desired Las Casas to select them, but he declined on the ground of his little acquaintance with European public life. He gave, however, a statement of the qualifications required and Ximenes read it and decided to select a gov-

erning commission from the Jeronymite Friars. They were a body in high reputation, and had no previous connection with the West Indies, hence he had reason to expect they would be competent and impartial. His action was characteristic and rapid. He wrote at once to the General of the order, stating his wishes and asking for twelve names to be submitted to himself. The General called a chapter, made the list and forwarded it by two Priors to Madrid. Ximenes came the same day to the Jeronymite Convent, in that city, with Dean Adrian and a number of courtiers. He and Adrian were received in the Sacristy of the Church by the Prior and after thanking the General for compliance he ordered Las Casas to be called in. Bishop Fonseca and the other courtiers were left outside. Ximenes handed the list of names to Las Casas and desired him to set out that evening to the residence of the General of the Jeronymites and there select three administrators from the twelve and bring the first at hand immediately to Seville, where the Regent was himself going. He added that the necessary funds were ready then. Las Casas modestly declared that he had enough for his own expenses, but Ximenes laughed and remarked: "Go away, Father, I am richer than you." Las Casas lost no time in carrying out his instructions. He made his selection and brought the three Jeronymite priors to Seville in a few days. They got full powers to govern and were instructed to begin by taking away all grants of Indians from non-residents, officials and corporate bodies. They were also to examine the conduct of the colonial officials, especially the judges, strictly, and to remove all guilty of injustice from office. A veteran lawyer of high character, Zuazo, was appointed Supreme Judge for all the West Indies, with absolute power to remove any official without appeal. The three commissioners were directed to call a convention of all the chief colonists and lay before it the new legislation and the reasons for its adoption. They were to take the opinions and advice of this body, but the final decision was left with themselves. They were also to visit the Indian villages, explain the plans of the government for their future administration and get the opinions of the leading men among them on these points. They were to use every means to gain the confidence of the natives and convince them of their own good will and ability to protect them against oppression. After these investigations they were to commence the establishment of the Indian village communities on the plan of Las Casas and Ximenes. If they found it best, for a time, to leave Indians under the authority of their actual encomenderos, they might do so, but Ximenes strictly charged that none but men of good character should be left in

possession of such grants. His own desire was that the system of encomiendas should be abolished and the Indians made absolutely free from any authority except the general government.

The energy with which Ximenes worked, even in his eightieth year, pushed this legislation into speedy action. The Jeronymite Commissioners and Las Casas, who was appointed to the new office of Protector of the Indians, sailed from Spain with full powers and reached San Domingo before the end of the year in which Ferdinand died. The Commissioners got to work at once, but their progress was somewhat slow for the zeal of Las Casas. They took away the Indian vassals from all absentee grantees, including several members of the Council of the Indies and other powerful men in Spain. They went among the natives and got a good deal of their confidence, so that gross oppression was considerably lessened. They wrote to the Governor of Darien, Pedrarias, to stop incursions on the native population and to set free the slaves made unjustly already. They were, however, slow to take away the Indian vassals of the resident officials. The colonists protested that to do so was to put a mark of disgrace on the most prominent of their number, and the Commissioners suspended action in the matter for the time. Las Casas, with his more thorough knowledge of the country, felt that vigorous and immediate action was needed to save the Indian population. While the officials in San Domingo professed obedience to the new laws, kidnapping of Indians was going on in Trinidad and other outlying points with their connivance. As "Protector of the Indians" Las Casas brought charges of specific acts of tyranny against the members of the Colonial Council. The Commissioners thought his action hasty and did not support him. Las Casas consulted with Father de Cordova, the Provincial of the Dominicans, and also with the Supreme Judge, Zuazo, both men who shared his own views, and by their advice he determined to return to Spain five months after his arrival in San Domingo. It was at the Court that the work must be done while Ximenes yet ruled. The system of grants of Indians had, he felt, to be entirely abolished and imperative laws to that effect could only be got in Spain. The Commissioners went on with the work of gathering the natives into settlements to some extent, but Las Casas sailed for Europe and got to Seville by July, 1517.

He found Ximenes dying, but still at work like a young man. The Regent was carried to his official duties muffled in furs with hot water bottles under his feet and a globe filled with water to relieve his hands from the chill of age, but he still showed his old

fearless energy in everything. He saw Las Casas, but before any new measures could be prepared the end came and the great Cardinal passed away from the work of American legislation just as the young King Charles landed in Corunna on his first visit to Spain. He brought with him the ministry which had governed his native Flanders, and a Flemish Chancellor and Chamberlain became heads of the Government of Castile and Arragon in place of the Spanish Cardinal.

The death of Ximenes was a sore blow to Las Casas. He was thoroughly familiar with the condition of the West Indies and, had he lived, the reforms required would have been secured in a few months, but America and Spain were both new to the Flemish Ministers. They did not even understand Spanish, and the young King himself was only learning the language. The old Council of the Indies and its head, Bishop Fonseca, were, not unnaturally, called back to the management of American affairs, and they were strongly opposed to the plans of Las Casas. Yet he was not daunted by the difficulties, nor did he abandon his self-imposed task of protecting the Indians. Among other papers he had brought letters from some French Franciscan missionaries in the Indies who were acquainted with Monsieur Selvage, the new Chancellor. These served as an introduction. Las Casas spoke French and Latin and he had a wonderful power of making friends at all times of his life. Within a few months he was on terms of intimacy with the Chancellor, had gained his sympathy for his own plans, and won his confidence to such a degree that all important papers and dispatches from America were submitted to Las Casas. He translated them into Latin and added his own comments for the benefit of the Chancellor. The latter brought them to the notice of the King, Charles, who though only eighteen, was beginning to take an active part in the government. Charles was greatly impressed with the story told of the New World and became interested in Las Casas. The Chancellor had caught a share in the American priest's enthusiasm and pleaded the cause of the natives constantly in his interviews with the King. There was little leisure indeed at the time for either King or Chancellor. The King's grandfather, Maximilian, was dying, and the Austrian dominions would fall to Charles at his death as well as Flanders, Naples and Spain, each with their own difficulties. With the administration of nearly half Europe on their shoulders it is remarkable that both Charles and his Ministers should have given attention to the government of the West Indian islands, which were hardly of more importance in the Empire than Alaska is to-day

in our own government. They gave it, however, and after some months the Chancellor gladdened the heart of Las Casas with the information: "The Master bids you and me find reforms for the "Indies. Get your statements ready."

Las Casas was at work immediately. He took as a basis the system being carried out by the Jeronymite Commissioners, and added provisions for abolishing all grants of personal service, and securing the Indians the same rights as the Spanish subjects of the King. The provisions for their instruction and training were even ampler. He also suggested a scheme of immigration of free European farmers and laborers, assisted by government. His memorials were read and approved by the Chancellor, who submitted them to Charles. The Council of the Indies opposed Las Casas at every step, but the Chancellor supported him, and at last a Council was called to settle the matter. With the favorable disposition of the King and Chancellor, Las Casas had full hopes that now the cause of Indian rights would be won. A terrible disappointment came. The Chancellor was taken ill a few days before the day named for the meeting and died after three days' illness. The meeting was never held. A new Council of the Indies, with Bishop Fonseca as its President, was appointed, and left full control of the colonies. A respectable but easy-going dignitary became Chancellor, and he listened patiently to the pleadings of Las Casas, but did nothing. The King had his attention fully occupied and Fonseca was left a free hand in American affairs. He used it to recall the Jeronymite Commissioners after an administration of less than two years in the West Indies. The system of Ximenes was abandoned practically and Las Casas, in his own words, "went down to the depths."

Still he did not give up. With a firm confidence in the justice of the cause he had taken up he continued to bring it before the Council of the Indies and his friends around the Court. The plan of sending out a peaceful colony of Spanish farmers was what he now devoted himself to. Bishop Fonseca declared it impracticable and Las Casas offered to get three thousand settlers of good character if the government would guarantee them free passage, land and a year's support after landing in San Domingo. The Bishop declared it would cost as much as to raise an army, and hot words passed in the Council between him and Las Casas. The latter secured more friends among the young French and Belgian companions of the King. One was the Master of the Household, De Laxao, a particular favorite with Charles. He and his friends took warmly to Las Casas and furnished him money to remain at Court.

His own funds, got from the sale of his farm in Cuba, were quite gone and it was only by the help of friends he was able to find food and lodging while battling alone against the forces of the Colonial office and the West Indian planters. While he was hard pushed to pay for his lodgings Father de Cordova and the other protectors of the natives thought him all powerful at Court. The Inquisitor wrote telling of various cruelties committed by the Spanish adventurers in Darien, and on what was called the Pearl Coast, now Venezuela, and asking Las Casas to get a grant of a hundred leagues of that coast as a field for exclusively mission work. No Spaniards were to be allowed to enter this territory except the Dominicans and Franciscans, who were ready to go alone among the natives to convert and civilize them. Las Casas brought this proposal before the Council, but Fonseca rejected it. "The King would be a wise man," he said, ironically, "to give away a hundred leagues of land for nothing." Las Casas argued in vain on this point.

A new Chancellor was appointed to fill the post of Salvage. This was Gattinara, one of the famous statesmen of the Sixteenth Century and prominent in the wars and treaties of Charles V. and Francis I. of France. Las Casas got introduced to him by Cardinal Adrian, of Louvain, the former colleague of Ximenes. He made an equally favorable impression on Gattinara as on his predecessor and Fonseca was forced to give way a little. Las Casas was empowered to collect emigrants willing to go to the West Indies. He travelled through Castile, collected the people in the different villages and towns and published the advantages offered. The numbers willing to go were far greater than the three thousand he had undertaken to find, but Fonseca blocked all further progress of this plan, which might have made San Domingo a European instead of a negro land. An officer placed under Las Casas by the Council left him by permission of Fonseca and gathered a couple of hundred loungers of the cities as emigrants. This ill selected crowd was shipped off by the Indian Council on the first vessel without provision for its support either on shipboard or after landing. Numbers died in consequence. Las Casas, by dint of complaints, got some supplies sent after them, but as the Council refused to provide sufficiently for the emigrants he had enrolled he refused to proceed further in the business. Such was the end of the first attempt at assisted emigration to America.

Finding it impossible to get his emigration plan carried out under the management of the government the unwearied Las Casas devised a new project, based on the suggestion already made by

Father Cordova. He applied for a grant of land on the South American continent, to be settled entirely under his own authority. He would organize a company of fifty colonists possessed of sufficient means to defray the necessary cost of ships, provisions and tools, and he would compensate them by land grants in the colony and the right of mining for gold and fishing for pearls. He demanded that the natives within his province should be granted full freedom forever, and that such of them as had already been carried as slaves to the West Indies should be placed in his charge to return to their homes. He also required twelve Franciscan and Dominican priests to be sent with him for the instruction and conversion of the Indians, and that no soldiers or adventurers should be allowed to land without his permission. The Council of the Indies had rejected Father Cordova's request for territory on the ground that no profit was to be given to the Government. Las Casas offered to raise a revenue of fifteen thousand dollars at the end of three years, to be increased to seventy-five thousand in ten and to further build three forts in that time, keep the Indians in peace and establish the rule of Spain through the province which corresponded nearly with the actual Republic of Venezuela. It was then wholly unsettled by white men, though there was a station of Spanish pearl fishers on the Island of Cubaqua, near Trinidad. For himself Las Casas asked nothing in the way of either compensation or dignity. His plan was very like that carried out by the Franciscans in California two hundred and fifty years later, or by Lagaspi in the Philippines. In both cases the result was to build up a large population of Christian natives fairly civilized and had Las Casas been fairly treated he would, in all likelihood, have done the same in Venezuela.

As it was, he met with opposition on every hand. Some of his clerical friends were shocked at the worldly details of the project which they thought hardly consistent with a true missionary spirit. The King's confessor, Father Aguirre, who had always supported Las Casas in his work, was one of these friendly critics. Las Casas answered him characteristically: "Tell me, Father," said he, "were you to see our Lord in captivity and abused would you ask his 'liberty from his captors urgently?" "Certainly," replied Father Aguirre. "Then," continued Las Casas, "if they would only release him for a price, would you pay it, if in your power?" "By all means," said Aguirre. "Well, then, that is what I am doing 'now,'" was the final argument. "I see our Lord daily maltreated 'and scourged in the persons of His Indian human creatures. I 'have asked those in power to grant them to me for the sake of

"the Holy Gospel, but they have refused unless I would pay a price in gold. So now I am raising that price for the end of freeing our Lord in his creatures." One thinks of the words of a modern writer on another old Catholic hero: "The great heart of the man so like a child's in its simplicity; so manlike in its earnest strength." Father Aguirre cordially agreed with Las Casas on his explanation, as well he might.

It was different with the opposition of the officials and money hunters around the Court. Bishop Fonseca, in contrast with most of the clergy, fought the cause of monopoly and slavery stoutly. He blocked the application of Las Casas with endless delays in the Council, with sneers at its practicability, with the arguments of men of every kind interested in keeping up the slavery of the Indians. There were hot words often between him and Las Casas both in the Council of the Indies and before the Privy Council of Charles. "A lucky man, indeed, is a Councillor of the King," broke out Fonseca once, when arraigned in plain language before a royal council, "if he has to give an account of what he does in the King's service to Casas." "And a more lucky one is Casas," was the energetic answer, "if he has to come two thousand leagues from the Indies to show the Council what infamies are being done in its name and to save the King and his councillors from eternal perdition if for this he has to face the anger and ill words of the Council." On another occasion, when the emigration from Spain was under discussion, the Bishop objected to spending money on supporting the emigrants. "It would cost the King more," he said, "than to raise an army." "It seems that your Lordship, having caused the death of so many Indians, wants to be the death of Christians as well," was the immediate retort. At a meeting of the Cabinet Las Casas boldly told the King that he was not working to please him, but to do the will of God, and that except for that he would not cross the room for the sake of the royal favor. He added that he then and there renounced and refused any personal reward from the Government, including the salary that had been assigned him as Protector of the Indies by Ximenes. Charles V. showed no irritation at this remarkable declaration, so unusual in courts or cabinets at any time.

Fonseca tried red tape when beaten in argument. He brought forward a higher offer from another party for the province asked by Las Casas. He quibbled over its description and altered its boundaries. Time and again he postponed meetings of the Council and tried to wear out his persistent opponent with the "laws' delays." After nearly two years had thus been consumed the

Council of the Indies got up a list of objections, thirty in number, to the proposed grant. Most of them were frivolous, some skillfully framed from the notes of the colonial authorities. One was, that Las Casas being a priest, was not a full subject of the Spanish Crown. It is amusing to find the theory of Mr. Gladstone's "Vaticanism" thus used by a Spanish Bishop to prevent the emancipation of heathens in the Sixteenth Century. Another was that he might sell out to the Venetians or Genoese and make off with the wealth of the country if he got the grant. The Council added that they had many other objections to make which could only be told privately to the King himself. Chancellor Gattinara told Las Casas of these charges and that he must answer them. Las Casas was ready, but the Council kept them back, under different pretexts, for months. Finally they were handed to the Chancellor, who showed them to Las Casas and asked him to reply. The papers he could not let out of his hands, and for four nights, as Las Casas tells, he visited Gattinara in his apartments and read over and replied to the official documents. The Chancellor and he worked together till eleven, when a collation was brought in and Las Casas then went to his inn to sleep. When both sides were ready the two papers were submitted to Charles, who ordered the grant of Venezuela to be made to Las Casas. The Council still opposed and a Council was held in the presence of Charles, now elected Emperor of Germany, as well as Monarch of Spain, to give a final decision. After a session of several days, in which the Colonial officials, the newly returned Bishop of Darien, the Admiral Diego Columbus and Las Casas were all heard at length, the plans of Las Casas were fully approved. The grant was signed by the Emperor the day before he left the Spanish Capital for Germany, where he was crowned Emperor.

Las Casas was left to begin his colony with what resources he could raise on his own account. He borrowed from friends, bought a vessel, collected a number of prospective settlers and sailed a few months after the signing of his grant. But if he had conquered the obstacles before him in Spain, new and more dangerous ones awaited him in America. The Dominicans and Franciscans had established missions near Cumana the year before and were living unprotected among the Indians. They had succeeded in learning the language and gaining the confidence of the tribes around them when a Spanish vessel from Cubagua made a raid to seize Indian laborers for the pearl fisheries. The Indians broke out, destroyed the two convents, killed the two Dominicans and a Franciscan and then attacked Cubagua and drove out the Spanish

settlers. When Las Casas and his colonists reached Puerto Rico he received news of this outbreak in the land where he was about to try his plan of peaceful colonization. An expedition was on its way to Venezuela to avenge the hostilities of the natives and make as many slaves as possible among them. Las Casas protested against the further progress of the expedition and showed the grant made to himself, but to no purpose. He then had to leave his colonists in Puerto Rico while he went to San Domingo to demand the suspension of hostilities from the governing body there. The Audience did not openly refuse; they delayed sending the necessary orders and they further declared the vessel belonging to Las Casas unseaworthy and so prevented him going on to Venezuela. Finally they proposed to give him two vessels and put the soldiers then on the continent under his authority on his giving them a share in the profits to be drawn from the trading concession within his province. He had to agree, very reluctantly, but when he got to Puerto Rico he found his colonists all scattered. They had been talked over by the planters, who regarded Las Casas and Indian Emancipation with about the same feelings as the Irish rack renting landlords regarded O'Connell and Repeal. The expedition sent to Venezuela did its part to make his peaceful colonization project impossible. The soldiers ravaged the country and sent six hundred Indian prisoners as slaves to San Domingo in defiance of the royal orders. When finally Las Casas reached Cumana he had only forty or fifty hired men to aid in the settlement of a territory as large as Germany and France combined. The Franciscans had restored their convent, but it was the only settlement on the main land. The pearl fishers of Cubagua did everything to add to the already enormous difficulties of the task of Christianizing the Indians. They brought liquor to the Indians and kidnapped them for work in the island. Las Casas went to Cubagua, showed the Royal Order and demanded that these incursions should be stopped, but the officials paid no heed to him. He decided to go to San Domingo for redress, and sailed in a merchant vessel, which was wrecked on the way and it was only after a journey of many days through the swamps that he reached the Capital. Meantime a tribe of Indians attacked his new settlement, killed his manager and one of the Franciscans, and destroyed the whole of the stores provided with so much labor. When Las Casas reached San Domingo it was only to find his colonists there before him and all hope of peaceful intercourse with the natives destroyed for the time.

The blow was terrible even to his indomitable nature. He knew

that his own purpose was right, but he doubted whether God willed its success or whether he was the instrument chosen to carry it out. He took up his quarters in the Dominican Convent, where he was sure of sympathy, though his former ally, Father De Cordova, had passed to his reward while Las Casas was away. A young priest of remarkable character, Father Betanzos, afterwards the Provincial of Mexico and one of the most notable men of that country, had lately come to San Domingo. He urged Las Casas to enter the Dominican Order, and after long reflection he took the solemn vows of obedience and absolute poverty. After prominence in Courts and favor won with the greatest men of the world, with the Emperor Charles V. and the then Pope Adrian he found no more suitable course than to place himself under absolute obedience to the will of a community as strict in its mode of life as La Trappe. The austerities of the Spanish Dominicans were at least as great as those of De Rance in later years. Not only was abstinence from meat perpetual, but also from oil, wine and wheaten bread in the community of San Domingo. Las Casas was nearly fifty when he entered it and many years later, when a Bishop in Central America, he continued to observe all the austerities of the Rule.

For five years he remained almost unnoticed in his convent after the terribly energetic work of former days. He was forbidden to preach by the Audience of the island, but he was not idle. In 1527 he commenced his "History of the Indies," one of the chief sources of information regarding the settlement of this continent. The Dominican authorities continued their efforts to obtain just treatment for the Indians in the meanwhile, and after some years they called Las Casas to Spain and sent him again to the Court of Charles V. on his old mission. Pizarro was then conquering Peru and Las Casas obtained a decree forbidding the enslavement of the natives. He was sent out shortly afterwards to Peru to notify Pizarro and Almagro of this law. On the way he passed through Mexico and took part in a Chapter of the Dominicans there to settle some disputes over the jurisdiction of the Superior in San Domingo. From Mexico, with two companions, he traveled on foot to Realejo, in Nicaragua, found a ship there and sailed to Peru. Having warned the Spanish officials there of the decrees against Indian slavery he returned to Nicaragua, where he founded a convent and devoted himself to missionary work among both Indians and Spaniards for the next four years. He was sent again to Peru during that time, but driven back by storms, and he was called to San Domingo, where he found a congenial work. A

Christian chief had revolted against the oppression of his Spanish feudal lord and kept up a war in the mountains for fourteen years. Las Casas visited him and negotiated terms of peace by which the remnant of the natives of the island were secured their freedom and a large reservation. This task ended, Las Casas returned to his convent in Leon, but not for long. A new Governor, Contreras, was named for Nicaragua in 1534, and shortly after his arrival he planned an expedition against the tribes along the San Juan to establish Spanish dominion there. Las Casas regarded such attacks as simple murder by whatever name they might be gilded. He denounced the proposed campaign so forcibly that many of the soldiers refused to take part in it, and it had to be dropped. On the question of the rights of uncivilized man Las Casas wrote a remarkable work in Latin at this time, "De Unico Modo Conversionis," "The Only Way to Convert." In it he lays down emphatically that unbelievers can only be made Christians by persuasion, not by force, and secondly, that Christians have no right to make war on unbelievers unless in self defence. This was translated into Spanish and widely circulated through the colonies in 1534. The same year, in England, Cardinal Fisher and Sir Thomas More were sent to the block for declining to acknowledge the religious supremacy of Henry VIII. The contrast is worth noting.

Contreras, however, was not an English statesman and the liberty of Las Casas was not interfered with. However, the relations between him and the Governor became so strained that Las Casas removed his community to Guatemala the following year. In the latter country he got an opportunity to put his theory into practice. A tribe of natives had been attacked by the Spanish troops unsuccessfully and Las Casas offered to convert and civilize this warlike tribe on the condition that no one but his own religious brethren should be allowed to enter their territory, and that if converted the Government should guarantee them perpetual liberty and possession of their lands subject only to the general laws of Spain. His offer was accepted formally. He set about his task with every precaution which over thirty years' of acquaintance with the natives suggested. He learned their language, composed a statement of the principal Catholic doctrines in it and spread it among the warriors by means of Indian Christians. The chief invited a visit from the Spanish priests, and professed himself a Christian after some time. The majority of the unconquered Indians of the district which was known as the "Land of the War," followed his example. Las Casas got his converts, who were wandering savages, to collect into settlements which he organized on

the plan that he had suggested to Ximenes twenty years before for the natives of the West Indies. There it had never been carried out, owing to the death of the great Cardinal. In Guatemala at last Las Casas had a free field to carry it out practically, and he showed that it was thoroughly practical. The Indians of Vera Paz have continued a free Catholic population to our own day.

For the accomplishment of this remarkable work the indefatigable Las Casas had less than two years' time. He was called to Mexico on business of his order, and from Mexico to Europe to secure Franciscan and Dominican missionaries to carry on the work of conversion. In Spain he was kept five years. The Emperor desired his advice on American affairs and he was kept busy with the work of his own order! He found time to write his most remarkable or rather most widely known work, "The Destruction of "the Indies," within a year of his return. In it he summed up with burning earnestness the misdeeds of the European settlers against the native races. The atrocities he chronicled have, indeed, been repeated in almost every other new colony, but they were none the less abhorrent to Las Casas and the statesmen of Spain. It is strange that this work was widely reproduced by the English and Dutch enemies of later Spanish Governments as a proof of the cruelty of the Spanish character. The fact that those cruelties were repressed by the conscience of the Spanish rulers in a way unknown in other lands was ignored. The destruction of the Indians was stopped in Spanish-America, while it continued to the end in the Northern Continent, but neither Holland nor England had a Las Casas to speak for the wronged natives.

Charles V. sympathized fully in the work of Indian Emancipation. He confirmed by public edict the agreement for the perpetual freedom of the Guatemalan converts, and sent titles and presents to their chiefs somewhat to the disgust of the settlers there. Paul III. issued a remarkable brief in 1537 declaring the natives of America capable of receiving all the privileges of Christians and forbidding any Catholic to either enslave or plunder them under pain of excommunication *latae sententiae*. The Spanish Government called a special Assembly in 1542 to provide suitable legislation for the colonies, which now included Peru and Mexico, instead of being confined to a few islands as at the death of Ximenes. A body of laws known as the "New Laws" was enacted and received the signature of Charles in 1542. Las Casas had sixteen measures before this body and had a great, possibly the greatest share, in shaping its decisions. The new legislation consisted of forty clauses. One was as follows:

"We order and command that henceforth, for no cause or pretext, whatever, whether war, rebellion, ransom, or any other reason, can an Indian be made a slave."

Other clauses provided that all grants of Indian villages made to the Spanish conquerors on the basis of serfdom, not slavery, should end with the lives of the original grantors and that, meanwhile, no personal service should be allowed on that ground. The grantees might only collect a reasonable rent from the Indian tenants. This measure was similar in character to the Emancipation of the Russian serfs by the late Czar Alexander.

It provoked the most violent opposition through Spanish-America. The brother of Pizarro broke into rebellion in Peru, defeated and killed the viceroy and tried to set up an independent Kingdom in South America. Something similar was threatened in Mexico and three years later Charles V. had to suspend the execution of this part of the "New Laws" through simple inability to enforce it. It was two centuries before the last vestiges of serfdom or peonage were obliterated by Charles III., of Spain, but personal slavery among the Indians at least was abolished by the efforts of Las Casas. At this very time the Parliament of England, under the Protestant rule of Henry, was enacting that any English workman found begging, for want of work, should be made a slave for life to any informant. The contrast speaks sufficiently for the views on human liberty of Catholic Spain and Protestant England.

An unexpected burthen was laid on Las Casas as soon as the New Laws were passed. He was nominated Bishop of Cuzco, in Peru, and though he declined that dignity he was finally obliged by the entreaties of the Dominican Superiors to accept the diocese of Chiapa, in Central America. Again, this time in his seventieth year, he crossed the Atlantic in 1544. Forty Dominican missionaries accompanied him to extend the work he had begun of conversion and civilization. The Episcopal dignity made no change in the austerity, which had marked his life as a Dominican. He wore the plainest dress, touched no meat, had no personal furniture except the plainest kind, plate being rigorously excluded from his table. A library was his chief possession, but unfortunately it was lost by shipwreck on the voyage to Guatemala.

His reception in his diocese is graphically told by Remesal, the historian of Guatemala and almost a contemporary. The wealthy colonists regarded Las Casas as the main agent in the hated Emancipation laws. They called him a half trained student; made abusive verses on him, and had their children sing them around

his house, and even fired guns at his windows to scare him. To his demand for the liberation of the slaves, colonists and officials turned a deaf ear. He had to go to Guatemala and appeal to the Judges of the Audience there for the enforcement of the laws. The president of that body roundly abused the fearless bishop and told him he was a scoundrel without shame, a bad man, bad friar, bad bishop, and one that ought to be hanged. "I deserve all your Lordship says," was the half sarcastic answer of Las Casas, who, however, still insisted that a judge should be sent to Chiapa to enforce the law. The Audience was cowed by his courage and promised to send one.

The citizens of Ciudad Real, his see, determined to prevent the Bishop's return by force when they learned of this last measure. Their proceedings, as told by Father Remesel, have a modern Hibernian flavor. When they heard the judge was coming to take their Indians from them the prominent citizens held a meeting and resolved that they had no assurance that Las Casas was really their bishop, as he had never shown them his Bulls. It was further resolved that if he were their bishop he should act like other bishops and if not they would not pay him any temporalities. The final resolution was that they would not let him enter the city unless he would let them be absolved like Christians (Las Casas had forbidden his priests to admit slaveholders to the sacraments) and not try to take away their slaves or fix their rents. A party of Indians were ordered to watch the roads and keep him out meanwhile.

The Bishop was making his way from Guatemala on foot, accompanied by a Dominican, Father Vicente, and a couple of Spaniards, besides a negro servant. The latter was known as little Johnny, Juanillo, because he was very tall and his duty, like St. Patrick's "strong man" of old, was to carry the Bishop across the deep fords on his way. In this fashion he reached a monastery some miles from Ciudad Real, where he heard news of the proceedings. The monks begged him not to go on as he might be killed. The Bishop would not stop. "If I don't go to Ciudad Real," he said, "I banish myself from my Church. Men's minds change every hour, and is it possible that God will be so hard with the men of Ciudad Real as to let them commit such a crime as murdering me. In fine Reverend Fathers, I am going to my diocese trusting in the mercy of God and the help of your prayers." With that he gathered up his cassock and took the road again though it was late in the evening.

He travelled all night and caught the Indian sentinels asleep.

They naturally did not share in their master's feelings and when awakened they begged his blessing and excused their work. The Bishop was only afraid they might be made to suffer for not stopping him, so with his own hands, aided by Father Vicente, he tied them in a rope and marched them behind himself as prisoners. He reached Ciudad Real at dawn and went straight to the Church, where he called the town councillors to meet him. They came with the whole white population in very bad humor. There had been a smart shock of earthquake during the night and some declared it was a sign of the ruin that was coming on them with the Bishop's arrival. They got to the Church, however, but when the Bishop came out of the sacristy no one saluted him and a notary got up and read the resolutions lately adopted. The Bishop answered with firmness but gently and with his usual eloquence, and was making some impression when a town councillor interrupted him with a saucy speech, declaring it a piece of presumption for the Bishop, whom he described as a private individual, to call them instead of going to the Town Hall. "Look you here, sir," said Las Casas with energy, "when I want anything from your property I will go to your houses to ask it, but when I have to talk to you of the services due to God and the concerns of your souls it is my duty to call you to where I may be, and it is yours to come there fast lest worse happen you." The councillor was silenced and Las Casas stood up to leave when he was asked to name confessors. "With all my heart," said the Bishop, and he gave out four names of priests, all of whom he could rely on in the matter of slaveholding. Father Vicente did not know this and thought Las Casas was giving way, so he caught his vestment and begged him rather to die than do such a thing. This led to a general disturbance among the audience. Two monks of the Order of Mercy came in and brought Las Casas away to their convent for much needed rest. He had travelled all night without food and was getting a breakfast of bread when a mob came around the convent and some forced their way into the cell where he was eating. They had just found their Indians tied up as prisoners and came to urge this new grievance. The Bishop took all responsibility on himself, when another aggrieved citizen burst out with: "O the ways of some people. He is the protector of the Indians, and look how he binds them, and still he will go and write against us to Spain." Another gave him the vilest language he could command, which Las Casas took with dignified coolness. In the meantime the crowd outside the building fell foul of "Little Johnny" and one of them knocked him down with a pike. Two

energetic young lay brothers now took a hand and drove the angry citizens out of the premises. All this was before nine in the tropical morning, but by midday a change had come over the public mind either from the Bishop's eloquence or the weight of the lay brothers' hands. The Alcaldes came in a body to apologize and the populace at large accompanied them to beg pardon. They went further and carried him off to one of the principal houses, regaled him there in the evening and next day held a tournament in honor of his return. His words about the changeableness of men's minds were certainly verified.

This sudden popularity was not, however, of long duration. When the judge arrived shortly afterwards from Guatemala he told Las Casas respectfully that the unpopularity of the New Laws was enhanced by the fact that he was regarded as their chief author. He begged him to leave his diocese for a while on that account during the prevailing excitement and urged him to go to the Synod then convened at Mexico. Las Casas yielded, went on to Mexico, where his arrival nearly caused a tumult and attended the Synod there. It laid down some very emphatic principles on the question of Indian slavery. One was that unbelievers of every class had, in spite of their unbelief, absolute right over their persons and property, and could not be deprived of this right by Christians without grievous sin. Another was that the Spanish sovereigns had been granted jurisdiction in America by the Holy See solely in order that the Indians might be made Christians by lawful means, not to increase the power or revenues of Spain. A third point was that this grant of supreme national authority did not authorize the taking from the Indian Chiefs of any class their properties or the authority which they possessed already. These principles are in striking contrast to the Acts of Edward the Sixth's English Parliament, at the same time touching the rights of Catholics who refused to accept the Royal Supremacy as the rule of belief.

From Mexico Las Casas returned to Spain, where he resigned his bishopric. His episcopal career was only four years' active duration.

Having resigned his diocese Las Casas took up his residence in the Dominican Convent at Valladolid, but not to rest there in quiet. He was officially recognized as "Protector of the Indians" and no important measure of colonial administration escaped his energetic attention. When Philip II. succeeded his father on the Spanish throne a measure of vital importance to the native race was proposed by an agent of the American grantholders. These

grants, as has been already told, were revoked by Charles V. in 1542, but the revocation had been suspended in consequence of the rebellions in Peru. The policy of the Government was to abolish the whole system as soon as possible and the wealthy proprietors were anxious to have the grants made perpetual. For this they offered a sum of many millions, apparently about three years' revenue of Spain, to Philip, who at the time was confronted with an empty treasury and a formidable war with France. The temptation to establish a system of Russian serfdom in America was very great and Las Casas used all his energies to prevent it. Philip was in England at the time and Las Casas wrote directly to his confessor there asking that his letter should be laid before the King himself. It was a document such as very few rulers ever have addressed to them, and a strange contrast to the servile addresses of the English Parliament to its sovereigns at the same time. Las Casas told Philip that it would be in the highest degree rash for him to make any decision on American policy in England, where he had no means of learning the truth about the Spanish colonies from reliable sources. "What right," he asks, "have our Kings to wring taxes from the toil of the Indians to pay their debts?" "What an atrocity to seek to forward the interests of the King in defiance of God's law." A few sentences in the same letter are remarkable as showing how strict a rule Las Casas applied to his own actions. "A few days since," he wrote, "a member of the Council, hearing this proposition, threatened me with God's justice and charged me with not half doing my duty if I did not go and protest effectually against those tyrants even if I had to beg my way to England with a stick in my hand and a beggar's sack on my back. What would he have said had he seen all I have during the last sixty years?" This was strong language for a bishop of over four score years to use of himself and it may serve to explain the severity of his denunciations in his "Destruction of the Indies."

Philip received this bold letter well and wrote in reply asking further information. Charles V., who had retired to a monastery, shared the opinion of Las Casas and his last interference in political affairs was to warn his son against sacrificing the liberty of his subjects. The proposal of the colonial magnates was definitely rejected despite the deficit in the treasury. Spanish honor, after all, has not been an empty word.

The other tasks of Las Casas during the last years of his life are too numerous to tell here. He published his famous "Destruction of the Indies" in 1550 and dedicated it to Philip himself in

spite of the freedom with which it treated royal and feudal rights. Like the present Sovereign Pontiff, Las Casas retained his capacity for work, especially literary work, to the age of over ninety. He wrote the last chapters of his great History of the Indies in 1561 at eighty-seven, and three years later he published a monograph on Peru which shows all the energy and indefatigable investigation of his works written forty years earlier. His correspondence with every part of Spanish-America was enormous all through this time. Bishops and missionaries wrote to him from Peru, from Mexico, from Central America, the West Indies, Florida and other regions telling the wants of their people or the wrongdoing of officials. The redressing of these wrongs received his active care to the last and his death came in the discharge of a task for that Guatemala where he had established personally the first converted Indian province. The Supreme Court of Central America had been suppressed for motives of economy and the Bishop informed Las Casas that in consequence the poor, especially the Indians, found it impossible to get legal redress for the wrongs inflicted by the wealthy. Las Casas at ninety-two journeyed to Madrid, laid the case before the Ministry and pleaded it so effectually that the Court was restored. On his return to his convent he contracted a burning fever and passed away among his Dominican brethren in 1564.

There were many notable men among the first conquerors and settlers of America, but none more remarkable in every way than America's first Catholic priest, Bartolome de Las Casas.

BRYAN J. CLINCH.

San Francisco.