

**LIFE AND VOYAGES**  
**OF**  
**CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.**

PRINTED BY JULES DIDOT, SENIOR,  
PRINTER TO HIS MAJESTY, RUE DU PONT-DE-LODI, N° 6.

A  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
LIFE AND VOYAGES  
OF  
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BY  
WASHINGTON IRVING.

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Venient annis  
Secula seris, quibus Oceanus  
Vincula rerum laxet, et ingens  
Pateat tellus, Typhisque novos  
Detegat Orbes, nec sit terris  
Ultima Thule.

SENECA: *Medea.*

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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THE  
LIFE AND VOYAGES  
OF  
COLUMBUS.

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BOOK XII.

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CHAPTER I.

CONFUSION IN HISPANIOLA. PROCEEDINGS OF  
THE REBELS AT XARAGUA.

[August 30, 1498.]

COLUMBUS arrived at St Domingo, wearied by a long and arduous voyage and worn down by infirmities; both mind and body craved repose, but from the time he first entered into public life, he was doomed never again to taste the sweets of tranquillity. The island of Hispaniola, the favourite scene of his hopes,

was destined to involve him in perpetual troubles, to fetter his fortunes, impede his enterprises, and embitter the conclusion of his life. What a scene of poverty and suffering had this opulent and lovely island been rendered by the bad passions of a few despicable men! The wars with the natives and the seditions among the colonists had put a stop to the labours of the mines, and all hopes of wealth were at an end. The horrors of famine had succeeded to those of war. The cultivation of the earth had been generally neglected; several of the provinces had been desolated during the late troubles; a great part of the Indians had fled to the mountains, and those who remained had lost all heart to labour, seeing that the produce of their toils was liable to be wrested from them by ruthless strangers. It is true, the Vega was once more at peace, but it was a desolate tranquillity. That beautiful region, which but four years before the Spaniards had found so populous and happy, which seemed to inclose in its luxuriant bosom all the sweets of nature, and to exclude all the cares and sorrows of

the world, was now a vast scene of wretchedness and repining. Many of those Indian towns, where the Spaniards had been detained by genial hospitality, and almost worshipped as beneficent deities, were now silent and deserted. Some of their late inhabitants were lurking among rocks and caverns; some were reduced to slavery; many had perished with hunger, and many had fallen by the sword. It seems almost incredible, that so small a number of men, restrained too by well-meaning governors, could in so short a space of time have produced such wide-spreading miseries. But the principles of evil have a fatal activity. With every exertion, the best of men can do but a moderate amount of good; but it seems in the power of the most contemptible individual to do incalculable mischief.

The evil passions of the white men, which had inflicted such calamities upon this innocent people, had ensured likewise a merited return of suffering to themselves. In no part was this more truly exemplified than among the inhabitants of Isabella, the most idle, factious, and dissolute of the island. The public

works were unfinished; the gardens and fields they had begun to cultivate lay neglected: they had driven the natives from their vicinity by extortion and cruelty, and had rendered the country around them a solitary wilderness. Too idle to labour, and destitute of any resources with which to occupy their indolence, they quarrelled among themselves, mutinied against their rulers, and wasted their time in alternate riot and despondency. Many of the soldiery quartered about the island, had suffered from ill health during the late troubles, being shut up in Indian villages where they could take no exercise, and obliged to subsist on food to which they could not accustom themselves. Those who had been actively employed, had been worn down by hard service, long marches, and scanty food. Many of them were broken in constitution, and many had perished by disease. There was a universal desire to leave the island, and to escape from the miseries which they had created. Yet this was the favoured and fruitful land to which the eyes of philosophers and poets in Europe were fondly turned, as realizing the

pictures of the golden age. So true it is, that the fairest Elysium that fancy ever devised, would be turned into a purgatory by the passions of bad men.

One of the first measures of Columbus on his arrival, was to issue a proclamation approving of all the measures of the Adelantado, and denouncing Roldan and his associates. That turbulent man had taken possession of Xaragua, where he had been kindly received by the natives. He had permitted his followers to lead an idle and licentious life among its beautiful scenes, making the surrounding country and its inhabitants subservient to their pleasures and their passions. An event happened previous to their knowledge of the arrival of Columbus, which threw supplies into their hands, and strengthened their power. As they were one day loitering on the seashore, they beheld three caravels at a distance, the sight of which, in this unfrequented part of the ocean, filled them with wonder and alarm. The ships approached the land, and came to anchor. The rebels apprehended at first that they were vessels despatched in pur-

suit of them. Roldan, however, who was as sagacious as he was bold, surmised that they were ships which had wandered from their course, and been borne to the westward by the currents, and that they must be ignorant of the recent occurrences of the island. Enjoining the utmost secrecy on his men, he went on board, pretending to be stationed in that neighbourhood for the purpose of keeping the natives in obedience, and collecting tribute. His conjectures as to the vessels were correct. They were, in fact, the three caravels which had been detached by Columbus from his squadron at the Canary Islands, to bring supplies to the colonies. The captains being ignorant of the strength of the currents, which set through the Caribbean Sea, had been carried west far beyond their reckoning, until they had at length wandered to the coast of Xaragua.

Roldan and his followers kept their secret closely for three days. Being considered a man in important trust and authority, the captains did not hesitate to grant all his requests for supplies. He procured swords, lances,

cross-bows, and various military stores; while his men, dispersed through the three vessels, were busy among the crews, secretly making partisans, representing the hard life of the colonists at St Domingo, and the ease and revelry in which they passed their time at Xaragua. Many of the crew had been shipped in compliance with the Admiral's ill-judged proposition, to commute criminal punishments into transportation to the colony. They were vagabonds, the refuse of Spanish towns, and culprits from Spanish dungeons. They were the very men, therefore, to be wrought upon by such representations, and they promised on the first opportunity to desert and join the rebels.

It was not until the third day, that Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, the most intelligent of the three captains, discovered the real character of the dangerous guests whom he had admitted so freely on board of his vessels. It was then too late; the mischief was effected. He and his fellow captains had many earnest conversations with Roldan, endeavouring to persuade him from his dangerous opposition to the re-