

History of the life and voyages of Christopher Columbus



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Excerpt from book: CHAPTER V.
GRANTS MADE TO ROLDAN AND HIS FOLLOWERS DEPARTURE OF SEVERAL OF THE REBELS FOR SPAIN. [1499.]

When Roldan resumed his office of alcalde mayor, or chief judge, he displayed all the arrogance to be expected from one who had intruded himself into power by profligate means. While at the city of San Domingo, he was always surrounded by his faction, he communed only with the dissolute and disaffected, and having all the turbulent and desperate men of the community at his beck, he was enabled to intimidate the quiet and loyal by his frowns. He bore an impudent front against the authority even of Columbus himself, discharging from office one Rodrigo Perez, a lieutenant of the admiral, declaring that no one should bear a staff of office in the island but such as he appointed. Columbus had a difficult and painful task to bear with the insolence of this man, and of the shameless rabble that returned, under his auspices, to the settlements. He tacitly permitted many abuses, endeavouring by mildness and indulgence to allay the jealousies and prejudices which had been awakened against him, and by various concessions to lure the factious to the performance of their duty. To such of the colonists generally as preferred to remain in the island, he offered a choice either of royal pay, or of portions of lands, with a number of Indians, some free, others as slaves, to assist in the cultivation. The latter was generally preferred; and grants were made out, in which he endeavoured, as much as possible, to combine the benefit of the individual with the interests of the colony.

Roldan presented a memorial signed by one hundred and two of his late followers,

demanding grants of land and licenses to settle, and choosing Xaragua for their place of abode. The admiral feared ...

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