

STREAMS OF HISTORY
THE NEW WORLD

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THE NEW WORLD

BY

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YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

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This edition, first published in 2008 by Yesterday's Classics, an imprint of Yesterday's Classics, LLC, is an edited excerpt from a work originally published by Ginn and Company in 1902. For the complete listing of the books that are published by Yesterday's Classics, please visit www.yesterdaysclassics.com. Yesterday's Classics is the publishing arm of the Baldwin Online Children's Literature Project which presents the complete text of hundreds of classic books for children at www.mainlesson.com.

ISBN-10: 1-59915-259-2

ISBN-13: 978-1-59915-259-2

Yesterday's Classics, LLC
PO Box 3418
Chapel Hill, NC 27515

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THE IDEAS WHICH SPAIN DEVELOPED AT HOME AND THEN PLANTED IN AMERICA

WHEN Columbus discovered America, in 1492, there were three strong nations on the western coast of Europe—Spain, France and England. As soon as America was discovered, these three nations reached out their hands across the vast spaces of the Western ocean to lay hold of the New World. Throughout all of the sixteenth and seventeenth and the greater part of the eighteenth centuries these powers struggled for mastery of the Atlantic Ocean and the New World beyond. Before three centuries were gone it was clear that the English people and Teutonic ideas were to rule the western land. The reason why Spain and France failed in the struggle, and England so completely succeeded, was because the first two nations sought to plant medieval ideas in America, while the English colonists, led by ideals of the future and not of the past, came to the new shore full of the new ideas which had burst forth in Europe in the Renaissance, the English Parliament, the printing press, the public school and the Reformation. To study this struggle for the New World and see how it terminated is the work before us now.

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We will first look at Spain and the life developed there, for the ideas Spain had at home were the ideas she brought to the New World.

Spain is a peninsula in the southwestern part of Europe, which, although lying directly east from the central part of the United States, has a much milder climate. In it grow such products as grapes, oranges, figs, dates, almonds and olives. Outside of a narrow coast-plain surrounding the greater part of the peninsula, its surface is a high plateau, broken by mountains. It was hard to subdue the mountaineers living in these fastnesses, and brave people have lived there for thousands of years.

Spain was conquered about two thousand years ago (133 B.C.) by the Romans, who settled it and ruled it very firmly for many years, working the rich mines of gold and silver which they found there and carrying the riches back to Rome. When Rome began to lose her power, the Germans overran the peninsula, and settled it about 415 years after Christ. They learned much from the Roman people they found there, and adopted many of Rome's ways, especially her way of having one man rule arbitrarily,—that is, without consulting the people's wishes, or having them vote upon questions, as we do in America.

About three hundred years after the Germans conquered Spain, that is, about the beginning of the eighth century, the Arab Moors, who were Mohammedans in religion, conquered all of Spain except the mountains in the extreme north. The Moors grew to be very industrious and well educated, and for a time

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had the best universities in the world. Many people from other European countries came to attend their schools. But the brave Christian people in the little mountain states of northern Spain kept fighting back the Mohammedan Moors, driving them slowly farther and farther south, till all of the northern half of Spain was regained by the Christians. Here several brave little Christian states grew up, from about 900 to 1500 A.D. These states not only fought continually against the Moors, but quarreled much among themselves, just as all the feudal states did during the Middle Ages. Two of the largest states were Aragon and Castile. In 1469 Ferdinand, Prince of Aragon, married Isabella, Princess of Castile, thus joining these two states under one power. Ferdinand and Isabella soon ruled all Spain except a little mountainous fringe in the extreme south, called Grenada, held by the Moors.

Now, fighting constantly for almost eight hundred years made the Spanish very brave, but very cruel as well. Fighting for their religion against the Mohammedan Moors made religion the uppermost thought in their minds. Likewise it helped to make them hold to one church and one religion—the Catholic—more firmly than did any other great nation of their time.

By the last of the fifteenth century the continual snarling and petty warfare between the little Spanish states were largely brought to an end by having the same king and queen rule over all. And, and as I told you, the king and queen themselves decided what they would have done in religion, government, education and the like, and did not ask the people who had helped to fight the battles much about what they

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would like to have done. This kind of rule is what is called despotic government, and Spain grew, like old Rome, to be more and more despotic the older she became. But now that the Spanish were united they joined against the last of the Moors, and, after ten years of fighting, completely conquered them, in 1492.

We have seen already, in the fourth volume of this series, that during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the people from all parts of Europe had gone to the Holy Land on crusades. This led to the circulation of great quantities of products between European cities and the lands of the East. It led no less to new ideas and broader views coming to the West, which filled people with a great desire to know more and to be adventurous. The art of printing, invented in the same year that Columbus was born (1446), spread the new knowledge, and soon made it possible for one to possess a library as easily as in the Middle Ages he could have possessed a single book. In fact, as we saw in our earlier studies, Europe in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was bursting with new thought, as blossoms burst with the coming of fresh showers and sunshine in the springtime.

Now Genoa, the home of Columbus, being favorably situated on the Mediterranean, had carried on extensive trade with southern and eastern Asia for three hundred years before Columbus's time; but when the Mohammedans captured Constantinople, in 1453 A.D., they stopped the ships of Genoa from traveling eastward, and her trade rapidly declined.

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Some of the best-educated people at that time thought that the earth was round, though much smaller than it is; but no one had been brave enough to strike boldly toward the west into the unknown sea to prove whether it was really a sphere or not. But Columbus, full of the free spirit of the time, was bold enough to try it. With three ships furnished by Isabella of Spain, he struck fearlessly out over the vast spaces of the Western ocean to break away the narrow limits of the Middle Ages and carry on trade with Asia across the Atlantic.

The first land he discovered was the island of San Salvador, southeast of Florida, but he thought he had found Asia. How excited the Spaniards and all Europe became when he went home and told what he had found! Spain at once sent over ships to get the spices, silver and pearls of what she thought to be the East Indies, but of course these were not obtained. However, they still thought for many years that they had found Asia, and, in spite of disappointments, kept coming to the new country; for although the war with the Moors was over, the people were quite as fond of adventure as ever. Moreover, Spain wanted to explore the country and get a claim to it before any other country could do so. Monks and missionaries were anxious also to convert the natives to their religion. But besides their love of adventure, desire to extend territory, and desire to convert the natives, the Spaniards had a still stronger motive for hurrying over to explore and settle the new country,—and this was the hope of finding gold, silver, and precious stones.

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They first explored and settled the fertile islands of the West Indies. The most remarkable stories were carried back to Spain of the wonderful fountains of youth, where one had but to bathe to become young again, and of cities built of gold. Many people eagerly came to America in search of these wonders, and with the hope of quickly growing rich and returning to Spain. Ponce de Leon hunted through the swamps of Florida for the fountain of youth and for gold; he found neither, but after many years of weary effort he was killed by the poisoned arrows of the Indians.

About twenty-five years after the voyage of Columbus, 1519–1521, another Spaniard, named Cortez, came to Mexico. He beat his way through the jungles of the tropical lowlands, crossed the mountains of Mexico, and reached the fertile plateau between the mountain ranges near the present city of Mexico, where the Aztec Indians had their city. The Aztecs were at that time more nearly civilized than most of the Indians of America; they had cities and an organized government, and cultivated the land. After a hard and cruel struggle the natives were conquered by Cortez, who plundered them of their gold and silver, sent many of them as slaves to the mines, and set up a government among them, which had for its purpose to get everything possible out of the country for himself and the king of Spain. Cortez was truly as arbitrary and cruel a ruler in Mexico as ever any king was in Spain.

Pizarro, a few years after, went to the mountainous country which is now called Peru, and after much cruelty and deceit conquered the Indians there. He gained even more wealth than Cortez had gained—

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about seventeen million dollars in gold, it is said. Such rapid accumulation of treasure as this set Spain wild. Thousands hurried to America, plunged into forests and swamps, crossed rivers, ascended mountains, endured hardships, fatigue and death, led on always by dreams of sudden wealth.

De Soto came (1539–1540) to the southern part of what is now the United States, with high hopes of finding as rich cities as Pizarro had done a few years before. He, like most of the Spanish explorers, was cruel to the Indians. He forced them to act as guides or pack-animals through the country, and killed or tortured those who refused to do so. He failed to find any treasure, though he wandered many miles through the swamps of Florida, the forests of Georgia and Alabama and at last discovered the Mississippi River. This he crossed, and, circling across the grassy western plains, again returned to the Mississippi, where he died. His followers, it is said, lowered his body at midnight in the waters of the river he had discovered.

Cortez, Pizarro and De Soto are but types of the many brave and cruel Spaniards who traversed almost all parts of South and Central America, Mexico, Texas, California, and what are now New Mexico, Arizona and Nevada, during the two hundred years following the conquests of these great explorers. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Spanish soldier and adventurer and the Spanish priest came to America by the tens of thousands to gain territory, grow rich, obtain gold for the king of Spain and convert the natives to Christianity. Since the Spaniards had so much to do with the Indians, and were influenced by

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them so greatly, we must now know something of them.

The Indians differed in different parts of the New World, owing partly to differences in the geographical conditions of the various regions. In many parts of the country they lived by hunting and fishing, and in the warmer parts by gathering the tropical products which were obtained by little labor. Along the coast in the tropics the hot climate and fertile soil produced a luxuriant growth of vegetable life. Farther back from the coast the ground was higher and the climate not so hot and unhealthful. Corn was here grown by the Indians, two crops being raised in a year with little labor. In Brazil the great Amazon River flowed eastward to the sea. All about it stretched jungles and forests, with intertwining vines which made the forest almost impenetrable. Here, too, were fierce animals, enormous reptiles, poisonous insects and plants. With a hot, weakening climate, many wild fruits and berries at hand, and a soil so rich that vegetation sprang up as soon as the ground was cleared, it is no wonder that the Indians of the Amazon Valley did not make the advancement that they did in Mexico and Peru. They lived in tribes, or clans, generally with a chief, or ruler, fighting their battles with bows and arrows, hard wooden spears, and swords tipped with bone or metal.

If you will take your maps, you will see that following the Pacific coast are several long mountain ranges, with high plateaus between, running through Mexico, Central America and South America. In these high mountains were rich mines of gold, silver, copper

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and iron. The climate on these plateaus was much cooler and pleasanter than that in the lowland regions. In many valleys the soil was fertile. The Indians living here had advanced much more toward civilization than anywhere else in North or South America; for they did not have to struggle for existence and face starvation as those in the colder North, nor were their wants supplied with little effort of their own, as in the tropical regions of Central and South America. Those in Mexico and what is now Peru lived in towns, with a regular government, and had farms with irrigating canals on which they raised cotton, corn, tobacco, bananas, oranges and olives. All of the Indians had some way of worshipping God, and a belief in the happy hunting-grounds beyond the grave. They sometimes offered human sacrifices to their gods.

Into this land, then,—a land of flowers and sunshine and ease, a land of gold and silver, a land rather thickly populated in parts by the Indians,—came the Spaniard through the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The mild climate was much the same as in the home he left behind, and the soil so fertile that it had but to be scratched to yield abundant crops. Thus the new settlers, like the Indians, had little trouble in getting enough to eat, and were not obliged to build warm houses and live close together so as to help one another, as were the English settlers along the Atlantic coast. Fifty years before the English or the French had made a single permanent settlement in the New World, Spain had explored so extensively and established military posts and missions over such vast reaches of territory that her claim seemed assured to

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most of South America, all of Central America and Mexico and a large part of what is now the United States.

The king of Spain, who claimed to own all the land himself, just as did the feudal lord of the Middle Ages, made grants of territory to those who wished to found settlements in America, having them promise to convert the natives and to send to Spain one-fifth of all the precious metals found. Along with the land the king granted the colonizer a certain number of Indians, who, according to the rule, were obliged to work a part of the time for the owner, another part for the king, and were then to be free to work for themselves for the rest of the time. But most of the owners obliged the Indians to work as slaves all the time, in spite of the rule. Thus you see, the way the land was granted, the way it was worked, and the treatment of those who worked it, were not essentially different from the way we saw them under Feudalism. Feudalism was no doubt a good government for the Middle Ages, but as compared to democracy, where all the people have an equal chance for the wealth, comforts and pleasures of life, it is very poor.

As Spanish settlement increased in America the territory claimed by Spain was divided for governmental purposes into four great districts, called viceroalties. The king appointed officers, called viceroys, to come over from Spain to rule these for him. The viceroy was (1) to get as much gold as possible for the king, (2) to see that the laws were obeyed, (3) to get the colonists to raise what Spain needed, (4) to see that all had the same religion, and (5) to protect the Indians.

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He never failed to look carefully after the gold, both for himself and the king, but generally failed to give much thought to the rights of the Indians.

Many subordinate officers were also appointed, with various duties. The viceroyalty was divided, and each subdivision was ruled by a governor, appointed also by the authorities in Spain. All officers were told to watch one another and report any wrongdoing to the king; this tended to make the official class a body of spies, and did not lead them to work together harmoniously for free government, as was the case among the English colonists in America. As the colonies grew in population, more officers were appointed. In fact, there finally grew to be swarms of officers in the colonies, new offices being continually created for the Spanish nobles and other favorites of the king.

Afterwhile it came to be much as it once was in the worst days of Rome,—the one who would pay the most money for the office was sure to be appointed. Of course the officer must then make enough money in America to reimburse himself, and a fortune besides. This led to the greatest oppression by the official class of both the natives and the poorer Spanish colonists.

All laws for the colonies were made in Spain, not a law having been made by the colonists themselves from the day Spain set foot on the New World at the end of the fifteenth century till she withdrew from it at the end of the nineteenth. The higher judges of the courts also were sent to the colonies from Spain. If some great colonial question were to be de-

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cided, an appeal could be made from the colonies to a court in Spain, or to the king himself, for settlement; but most disputes were settled by the judges in America.

The colonists could elect no officials except some of the town officers, and it soon came about that they did not do even this. It was Spain's fixed policy, in managing her colonies, to give no rights to the colonists in making laws, and none in electing officers. Throughout her entire colonial history she treated her colonies as a parent treats a child. She never thought them old enough or wanted them to become old enough to take care of themselves; nor was she like the English king, who left his colonists to look out for themselves for so long that when he wished Parliament to make laws for them without their consent they refused to permit it. Spain watched over her colonies from the first, and checked every step which tended to teach them to walk alone.

Spain sometimes tried to enforce laws for the proper treatment of the Indians. But though some officers did their best to treat them well, it was always the case, as I have already told you, that those who bought their offices cared more to make money than to protect the Indians. It was, therefore, the general rule that in their mad struggle for gold they enslaved and brutally treated the Indian.

But I must tell you also something of the laws passed in Spain for the treatment of the Spanish colonists who came to America. The Spanish king and his counselors cared more for themselves than for the

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colonists, and made such laws for ruling America as they thought would bring most wealth into their own pockets and into the treasury of Spain. The colonies were not allowed to trade with other countries or with one another. All trade was to be with Spain, wholly by Spaniards and on Spanish ships. Spain thought by following this course not only to make more money, but also to keep her colonies wholly dependent on the home country, so that they would not develop an intercolonial trade and thus grow strong and independent.

Now the result of all this was that the people in Spain, by getting so much gold and produce from America without working for it, became lazy. They did less farming and manufacturing at home from year to year, and depended on American gold to buy what they wanted. They forbade the Americans to manufacture what they used, as woolen or cotton goods, or wine, or olive oil, or hoes or rakes. Thus Spain hoped to make a profit selling manufactured articles to the colonists; but when the home country ceased to manufacture, as was the case very largely through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, because her people grew idle and ignorant, she had to spend all the more money in buying of other countries what the colonists needed, as well as what she herself needed for home use. Thus, in spite of the great influx of gold from the American mines, Spain was really becoming poorer and weaker in industry, in self-reliance, economy, and in the intelligence of her people; and without these no nation can live or hope to grow strong.