

among the natives; prisoners were dragged from the inland countries to the coast, to be sold to the whites, who loaded them with chains in their ships. Yet the Spaniards were at that period, and long after, one of the most polished nations of Europe. The light which art and literature then shed over Italy, was reflected on every nation whose language emanated from the same source as that of Dante and Petrarch. It might have been expected that a general improvement of manners would be the natural consequence of this noble awakening of the mind, this sublime soaring of the imagination. But in distant regions, wherever the thirst of wealth has introduced the abuse of power, the nations of Europe, at every period of their history, have displayed the same character. The illustrious era of Leo X was signalized in the New World by acts of cruelty that seemed to belong to the most barbarous ages. We are less surprised, however, at the horrible picture presented by the conquest of America when we think of the acts that are still perpetrated on the western coast of Africa, notwithstanding the benefits of a more humane legislation.

The principles adopted by Charles V. had abolished the slave trade on the New Continent. But the Conquistadores, by the continuation of their incursions, prolonged the system of petty warfare which diminished the American population, perpetuated national animosities, and during a long period crushed the seeds of rising civilization. At length the missionaries, under the protection of the secular arm, spoke words of peace. It was the privilege of religion to console humanity for a part of the evils committed in its name; to plead the cause of the natives before kings, to resist the violence of the commendataries, and to assemble wandering tribes into small communities called Missions.

But these institutions, useful at first in stopping the effusion of blood, and in laying the first basis of society, have become in their result hostile to its progress. The effects of this insulated system have been such that the Indians have remained in a state little different from that in which they existed whilst yet their scattered dwellings were not collected round the habitation of a missionary. Their number has considerably augmented, but the sphere of their ideas is not enlarged. They have progressively lost that