

HALE EDWARD EVERETT

THE LIFE OF COLUMBUS

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Edward Everett Hale

The Life of Columbus / From His Own Letters and Journals and Other Documents of His Time

PREFACE

This book contains a life of Columbus, written with the hope of interesting all classes of readers.

His life has often been written, and it has sometimes been well written. The great book of our countryman, Washington Irving, is a noble model of diligent work given to a very difficult subject. And I think every person who has dealt with the life of Columbus since Irving's time, has expressed his gratitude and respect for the author.

According to the custom of biographers, in that time and since, he includes in those volumes the whole history of the West India islands, for the period after Columbus discovered them till his death. He also thinks it his duty to include much of the history of Spain and of the Spanish court. I do not myself believe that it is wise to attempt, in a book of biography, so considerable a study of the history of the time. Whether it be wise or not, I have not attempted it in this book. I have rather attempted to follow closely the personal fortunes of Christopher Columbus, and, to the history around him, I have given only such space as seemed absolutely necessary for the illustration of those fortunes.

I have followed on the lines of his own personal narrative wherever we have it. And where this is lost I have used the absolutely contemporary authorities. I have also consulted the later writers, those of the next generation and the generation which followed it. But the more one studies the life of Columbus the more one feels sure that, after the greatness of his discovery was really known, the accounts of the time were overlaid by what modern criticism calls myths, which had grown up in the enthusiasm of those who honored him, and which form no part of real history. If then the reader fails to find some stories with which he is quite familiar in the history, he must not suppose that they are omitted by accident, but must give to the author of the book the credit of having used some discretion in the choice of his authorities.

When I visited Spain in 1882, I was favored by the officers of the Spanish government with every facility for carrying my inquiry as far as a short visit would permit. Since that time Mr. Harris has published his invaluable volumes on the life of Columbus. It certainly seems as if every document now existing, which bears upon the history, had been collated by him. The reader will see that I have made full use of this treasure-house.

The Congress of Americanistas, which meets every year, brings forward many curious studies on the history of the continent, but it can scarcely be said to have done much to advance our knowledge of the personal life of Columbus.

The determination of the people of the United States to celebrate fitly the great discovery which has advanced civilization and changed the face of the world, makes it certain that a new interest has arisen in the life of the great man to whom, in the providence of God, that discovery was due. The author and publishers of this book offer it as their contribution in the great celebration, with the hope that it may be of use, especially in the direction of the studies of the young.

EDWARD E. HALE.

ROXBURY, MASS., June 1st, 1891.

CHAPTER I. – EARLY LIFE OF COLUMBUS

HIS BIRTH AND BIRTH-PLACE—HIS EARLY EDUCATION—HIS EXPERIENCE AT SEA—HIS MARRIAGE AND RESIDENCE IN LISBON—HIS PLANS FOR THE DISCOVERY OF A WESTWARD PASSAGE TO THE INDIES.

Christopher Columbus was born in the Republic of Genoa. The honor of his birth-place has been claimed by many villages in that Republic, and the house in which he was born cannot be now pointed out with certainty. But the best authorities agree that the children and the grown people of the world have never been mistaken when they have said: “America was discovered in 1492 by Christopher Columbus, a native of Genoa.”

His name, and that of his family, is always written Colombo, in the Italian papers which refer to them, for more than one hundred years before his time. In Spain it was always written Colon; in France it is written as Colomb; while in England it has always kept its Latin form, Columbus. It has frequently been said that he himself assumed this form, because Columba is the Latin word for “Dove,” with a fanciful feeling that, in carrying Christian light to the West, he had taken the mission of the dove. Thus, he had first found land where men thought there was ocean, and he was the messenger of the Holy Spirit to those who sat in darkness. It has also been assumed that he took the name of Christopher, “the Christ-bearer,” for similar reasons. But there is no doubt that he was baptized “Christopher,” and that the family name had long been Colombo. The coincidences of name are but two more in a calendar in which poetry delights, and of which history is full.

Christopher Columbus was the oldest son of Dominico Colombo and Suzanna Fontanarossa. This name means Red-fountain. He had two brothers, Bartholomew and Diego, whom we shall meet again. Diego is the Spanish way of writing the name which we call James.

It seems probable that Christopher was born in the year 1436, though some writers have said that he was older than this, and some that he was younger. The record of his birth and that of his baptism have not been found.

His father was not a rich man, but he was able to send Christopher, as a boy, to the University of Pavia, and here he studied grammar, geometry, geography and navigation, astronomy and the Latin language. But this was as a boy studies, for in his fourteenth year he left the university and entered, in hard work, on “the larger college of the world.” If the date given above, of his birth, is correct, this was in the year 1450, a few years before the Turks took Constantinople, and, in their invasion of Europe, affected the daily life of everyone, young or old, who lived in the Mediterranean countries. From this time, for fifteen years, it is hard to trace along the life of Columbus. It was the life of an intelligent young seaman, going wherever there was a voyage for him. He says himself, “I passed twenty-three years on the sea. I have seen all the Levant, all the western coasts, and the North. I have seen England; I have often made the voyage from Lisbon to the Guinea coast.” This he wrote in a letter to Ferdinand and Isabella. Again he says, “I went to sea from the most tender age and have continued in a sea life to this day. Whoever gives himself up to this art wants to know the secrets of Nature here below. It is more than forty years that I have been thus engaged. Wherever any one has sailed, there I have sailed.”

Whoever goes into the detail of the history of that century will come upon the names of two relatives of his—Colon el Mozo (the Boy, or the Younger) and his uncle, Francesco Colon, both celebrated sailors. The latter of the two was a captain in the fleets of Louis XI of France, and imaginative students may represent him as meeting Quentin Durward at court. Christopher Columbus seems to have made several voyages under the command of the younger of these relatives. He commanded the Genoese galleys near Cyprus in a war which the Genoese had with the Venetians. Between the years 1461 and 1463 the Genoese were acting as allies with King John of Calabria, and Columbus had a command as captain in their navy at that time.

“In 1477,” he says, in one of his letters, “in the month of February, I sailed more than a hundred leagues beyond Tile.” By this he means Thule, or Iceland. “Of this island the southern part is seventy-three degrees from the equator, not sixty-three degrees, as some geographers pretend.” But here he was wrong. The Southern part of Iceland is in the latitude of sixty-three and a half degrees. “The English, chiefly those of Bristol, carry their merchandise, to this island, which is as large as England. When I was there the sea was not frozen, but the tides there are so strong that they rise and fall twenty-six cubits.”

The order of his life, after his visit to Iceland, is better known. He was no longer an adventurous sailor-boy, glad of any voyage which offered; he was a man thirty years of age or more. He married in the city of Lisbon and settled himself there. His wife was named Philippa. She was the daughter of an Italian gentleman named Bartolomeo Muniz de Perestrello, who was, like Columbus, a sailor, and was alive to all the new interests which geography then presented to all inquiring minds. This was in the year 1477, and the King of Portugal was pressing the expeditions which, before the end of the century, resulted in the discovery of the route to the Indies by the Cape of Good Hope.

The young couple had to live. Neither the bride nor her husband had any fortune, and Columbus occupied himself as a draftsman, illustrating books, making terrestrial globes, which must have been curiously inaccurate, since they had no Cape of Good Hope and no American Continent, drawing charts for sale, and collecting, where he could, the material for such study. Such charts and maps were beginning to assume new importance in those days of geographical discovery. The value attached to them may be judged from the statement that Vesputius paid one hundred and thirty ducats for one map. This sum would be more than five hundred dollars of our time.

Columbus did not give up his maritime enterprises. He made voyages to the coast of Guinea and in other directions.

It is said that he was in command of one of the vessels of his relative Colon el Mozo, when, in the Portuguese seas, this admiral, with his squadron, engaged four Venetian galleys returning from Flanders. A bloody battle followed. The ship which Christopher Columbus commanded was engaged with a Venetian vessel, to which it set fire. There was danger of an explosion, and Columbus himself, seeing this danger, flung himself into the sea, seized a floating oar, and thus gained the shore. He was not far from Lisbon, and from this time made Lisbon his home for many years.¹

It seems clear that, from the time when he arrived in Lisbon, for more than twenty years, he was at work trying to interest people in his “great design,” of western discovery. He says himself, “I was constantly corresponding with learned men, some ecclesiastics and some laymen, some Latin and some Greek, some Jews and some Moors.” The astronomer Toscanelli was one of these correspondents.

We must not suppose that the idea of the roundness of the earth was invented by Columbus. Although there were other theories about its shape, many intelligent men well understood that the earth was a globe, and that the Indies, though they were always reached from Europe by going to the East, must be on the west of Europe also. There is a very funny story in the travels of Mandeville, in which a traveler is represented as having gone, mostly on foot, through all the countries of Asia, but finally determines to return to Norway, his home. In his farthest eastern investigation, he hears some people calling their cattle by a peculiar cry, which he had never heard before. After he returned home, it was necessary for him to take a day’s journey westward to look after some cattle he had lost. Finding these cattle, he also heard the same cry of people calling cattle, which he had heard in the extreme East, and now learned, for the first time, that he had gone round the world on foot, to turn and come back by the same route, when he was only a day’s journey from home, Columbus was acquainted with such stories as this, and also had the astronomical knowledge which almost made him know that

¹ The critics challenge these dates, but there seems to be good foundation for the story.

the world was round, “and, like a ball, goes spinning in the air.” The difficulty was to persuade other people that, because of this roundness, it would be possible to attain Asia by sailing to the West.

Now all the geographers of repute supposed that there was not nearly so large a distance as there proved to be, in truth, between Europe and Asia. Thus, in the geography of Ptolemy, which was the standard book at that time, one hundred and thirty-five degrees, a little more than one-third of the earth’s circumference, is given to the space between the extreme eastern part of the Indies and the Canary Islands. In fact, as we now know, the distance is one hundred and eighty degrees, half the world’s circumference. Had Columbus believed there was any such immense distance, he would never have undertaken his voyage.

Almost all the detailed knowledge of the Indies which the people of his time had, was given by the explorations of Marco Polo, a Venetian traveler of the thirteenth century, whose book had long been in the possession of European readers. It is a very entertaining book now, and may well be recommended to young people who like stories of adventure. Marco Polo had visited the court of the Great Khan of Tartary at Peking, the prince who brought the Chinese Empire into very much the condition in which it now is. He had, also, given accounts of Japan or Cipango, which he had himself never visited. Columbus knew, therefore, that, well east of the Indies, was the island of Cipango, and he aimed at that island, because he supposed that that was the nearest point to Europe, as in fact it is. And when finally he arrived at Cuba, as the reader will see, he thought he was in Japan.

Columbus’s father-in-law had himself been the Portuguese governor of the island of Porto Santo, where he had founded a colony. He, therefore, was interested in western explorations, and probably from him Columbus collected some of the statements which are known to have influenced him, with regard to floating matters from the West, which are constantly borne upon that island by the great currents of the sea.

The historians are fond of bringing together all the intimations which are given in the Greek and Latin classics, and in later authors, with regard to a land beyond Asia. Perhaps the most famous of them is that of Seneca, “In the later years there shall come days in which Ocean shall loose his chains, and a great land shall appear . . . and Thule shall not be the last of the worlds.”

In a letter which Toscanelli wrote to Columbus in 1474, he inclosed a copy of a letter which he had already sent to an officer of Alphonso V, the King of Portugal. In writing to Columbus, he says, “I see that you have a great and noble desire to go into that country (of the East) where the spices come from, and in reply to your letter I send you a copy of that which I addressed some years ago to my attached friend in the service of the most serene King of Portugal. He had an order from his Highness to write me on this subject. . . . If I had a globe in my hand, I could show you what is needed. But I prefer to mark out the route on a chart like a marine chart, which will be an assistance to your intelligence and enterprise. On this chart I have myself drawn the whole extremity of our western shore from Ireland as far down as the coast of Guinea toward the South, with all the islands which are to be found on this route. Opposite this (that is, the shores of Ireland and Africa) I have placed directly at the West the beginning of the Indies with the islands and places where you will land. You will see for yourself how many miles you must keep from the arctic pole toward the equator, and at what distance you will arrive at these regions so fertile and productive of spices and precious stones.” In Toscanelli’s letter, he not only indicates Japan, but, in the middle of the ocean, he places the island of Antilia. This old name afterwards gave the name by which the French still call the West Indies, Les Antilles. Toscanelli gives the exact distance which Columbus will have to sail: “From Lisbon to the famous city of Quisay (Hang-tcheou-fou, then the capital of China) if you take the direct route toward the West, the distance will be thirty-nine hundred miles. And from Antilia to Japan it will be two hundred and twenty-five leagues.” Toscanelli says again, “You see that the voyage that you wish to attempt is much less difficult than would be thought. You would be sure of this if you met as many people as I do who have been in the country of spices.”

While there were so many suggestions made that it would be possible to cross the Atlantic, there was one man who determined to do this. This man was Christopher Columbus. But he knew well that he could not do it alone. He must have money enough for an expedition, he must have authority to enlist crews for that expedition, and he must have power to govern those crews when they should arrive in the Indies. In our times such adventures have been conducted by mercantile corporations, but in those times no one thought of doing any such thing without the direct assistance and support of some monarch.

It is easy now to see and to say that Columbus himself was singularly well fitted to take the charge of the expedition of discovery. He was an excellent sailor and at the same time he was a learned geographer and a good mathematician. He was living in Portugal, the kings of which country had, for many years, fostered the exploration of the coast of Africa, and were pushing expeditions farther and farther South.

In doing this, they were, in a fashion, making new discoveries. For Europe was wholly ignorant of the western coast of Africa, beyond the Canaries, when their expeditions began. But all men of learning knew that, five hundred years before the Christian era, Hanno, a Carthaginian, had sailed round Africa under the direction of the senate of Carthage. The efforts of the King of Portugal were to repeat the voyage made by Hanno. In 1441, Gonzales and Tristram sailed as far as Sierra Leone. They brought back some blacks as slaves, and this was the beginning of the slave trade.

In 1446 the Portuguese took possession of the Azores, the most western points of the Old World. Step by step they advanced southward, and became familiar with the African coast. Bold navigators were eager to find the East, and at last success came. Under the king's orders, in August, 1477, three caravels sailed from the Tagus, under Bartolomeo Diaz, for southern discovery. Diaz was himself brave enough to be willing to go on to the Red Sea, after he made the great discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, but his crews mutinied, after he had gone much farther than his predecessors, and compelled him to return. He passed the southern cape of Africa and went forty miles farther. He called it the Cape of Torments, "Cabo Tormentoso," so terrible were the storms he met there. But when King John heard his report he gave it that name of good omen which it has borne ever since, the name of the "Cape of Good Hope."

In the midst of such endeavors to reach the East Indies by the long voyage down the coast of Africa and across an unknown ocean, Columbus was urging all people who cared, to try the route directly west. If the world was round, as the sun and moon were, and as so many men of learning believed, India or the Indies must be to the west of Portugal. The value of direct trade with the Indies would be enormous. Europe had already acquired a taste for the spices of India and had confidence in the drugs of India. The silks and other articles of clothing made in India, and the carpets of India, were well known and prized. Marco Polo and others had given an impression that there was much gold in India; and the pearls and precious stones of India excited the imagination of all who read his travels.

The immense value of such a commerce may be estimated from one fact. When, a generation after this time, one ship only of all the squadron of Magellan returned to Cadiz, after the first voyage round the world, she was loaded with spices from the Moluccas. These spices were sold by the Spanish government for so large a sum of money that the king was remunerated for the whole cost of the expedition, and even made a very large profit from a transaction which had cost a great deal in its outfit.

Columbus was able, therefore, to offer mercantile adventurers the promise of great profit in case of success; and at this time kings were willing to take their share of such profits as might accrue.

The letter of Toscanelli, the Italian geographer, which has been spoken of, was addressed to Alphonso V, the King of Portugal. To him and his successor, John the Second, Columbus explained the probability of success, and each of them, as it would seem, had confidence in it. But King John made the great mistake of intrusting Columbus's plan to another person for experiment. He was selfish enough, and mean enough, to fit out a ship privately and intrust its command to another seaman,

bidding him sail west in search of the Indies, while he pretended that he was on a voyage to the Cape de Verde Islands. He was, in fact, to follow the route indicated by Columbus. The vessel sailed. But, fortunately for the fame of Columbus, she met a terrible storm, and her officers, in terror, turned from the unknown ocean and returned to Lisbon. Columbus himself tells this story. It was in disgust with the bad faith the king showed in this transaction that he left Lisbon to offer his great project to the King and Queen of Spain.

In a similar way, a generation afterward, Magellan, who was in the service of the King of Portugal, was disgusted by insults which he received at his court, and exiled himself to Spain. He offered to the Spanish king his plan for sailing round the world and it was accepted. He sailed in a Spanish fleet, and to his discoveries Spain owes the possession of the Philippine Islands. Twice, therefore, did kings of Portugal lose for themselves, their children and their kingdom, the fame and the recompense which belong to such great discoveries.

The wife of Columbus had died and he was without a home. He left Lisbon with his only son, Diego, in or near the end of the year 1484.

CHAPTER II. – HIS PLANS FOR DISCOVERY

COLUMBUS LEAVES LISBON, AND VISITS GENOA—VISITS GREAT SPANISH DUKES—FOR SIX YEARS IS AT THE COURT OF FERDINAND AND ISABELLA—THE COUNCIL OF SALAMANCA—HIS PETITION IS AT LAST GRANTED—SQUADRON MADE READY.

It has been supposed that when Columbus left Lisbon he was oppressed by debts. At a subsequent period, when King John wanted to recall him, he offered to protect him against any creditors. But on the other hand, it is thought that at this time he visited Genoa, and made some provision for the comfort of his father, who was now an old man. Christopher Columbus, himself, according to the usual opinion regarding his birth, was now almost fifty years old.

It is probable that at this time he urged on his countrymen, the Genoese, the importance of his great plan; and tried to interest them to make the great endeavor, for the purpose of reaching the Indies by a western route. As it proved, the discovery of the route by the Cape of Good Hope was, commercially, a great injury to Genoa and the other maritime cities of Italy. Before this time, the eastern trade of Europe came by the ports of the eastern Mediterranean, and the Italian cities. Columbus's offer to Genoa was therefore one which, if her statesmen could have foreseen the future, they would have considered eagerly.

But Genoa was greatly depressed at this period. In her wars with the Turks she had been, on the whole, not successful. She had lost Caffa, her station in the Crimea, and her possessions in the Archipelago were threatened. The government did not accept Columbus's proposals, and he was obliged to return with them to Spain. He went first to distinguished noblemen, in the South of Spain, who were of liberal and adventurous disposition. One was the Duke of Medina Celi, and one the Duke of Medina Sidonia. Each of these grandees entertained him at their courts, and heard his proposals.

The Duke of Medina Celi was so much interested in them, that at one time he proposed to give Columbus the direction of four vessels which he had in the harbor of Cadiz. But, of a sudden, he changed his mind. The enterprise was so vast, he said, that it should be under the direction of the crown. And, without losing confidence in it, he gave to Columbus an introduction to the king and queen, in which he cordially recommended him to their patronage.

This king and queen were King Ferdinand of Aragon, and Queen Isabella of Castile. The marriage of these two had united Spain. Their affection for each other made the union real, and the energy, courage and wisdom of both made their reign successful and glorious. Of all its glories the greatest, as it has proved, was connected with the life and discoveries of the sailor who was now to approach them. He had been disloyally treated by Portugal, he had been dismissed by Genoa. He had not succeeded with the great dukes. Now he was to press his adventure upon a king and queen who were engaged in a difficult war with the Moors, who still held a considerable part of the peninsula of Spain.

The king and queen were residing at Cordova, a rich and beautiful city, which they had taken from the Moors. Under their rule Cordova had been the most important seat of learning in Europe. Here Columbus tarried at the house of Alonso de Quintinilla, who became an ardent convert to his theory, and introduced him to important friends. By their agency, arrangements were made, in which Columbus should present his views to the king. The time was not such as he could have wished. All Cordova was alive with the preparation for a great campaign against the enemy. But King Ferdinand made arrangements to hear Columbus; it does not appear that, at the first hearing, Isabella was present at the interview. But Ferdinand, although in the midst of his military cares, was interested in the proposals made by Columbus. He liked the man. He was pleased by the modesty and dignity with which he brought forward his proposals. Columbus spoke, as he tells us, as one specially appointed

by God Himself to carry out this discovery. The king did not, however, at once adopt the scheme, but gave out that a council of men of learning should be called together to consider it.

Columbus himself says that he entered the service of the sovereigns January 26, 1486. The council to which he was referred was held in the university city of Salamanca, in that year. It gave to him a full opportunity to explain his theory. It consisted of a fair representation of the learning of the time. But most of the men who met had formed their opinions on the subjects involved, and were too old to change them. A part of them were priests of the church, in the habit of looking to sacred Scripture as their only authority, when the pope had given no instruction in detail. Of these some took literally expressions in the Old Testament, which they supposed to be fatal to the plans of Columbus. Such was the phrase in the 104th Psalm, that God stretches out the heavens like a curtain. The expression in the book of Hebrews, that the heavens are extended as a tent, was also quoted, in the same view.

Quotations from the early Fathers of the church were more fatal to the new plan than those from the Scripture.

On the other hand there were men who cordially supported Columbus's wishes, and there were more when the congress parted than when it met. Its sessions occupied a considerable part of the summer, but it was not for years that it rendered any decision.

The king, queen and court, meanwhile, were occupied in war with the Moors. Columbus was once and again summoned to attend the court, and more than once money was advanced to him to enable him to do so. Once he began new negotiations with King John, and from him he received a letter inviting him to return to Portugal. He received a similar letter from King Henry VII of England inviting him to his court. Nothing was determined on in Spain. To this day, the people of that country are thought to have a habit of postponement to tomorrow of that which perplexes them. In 1489, according to Ortiz de Zuniga, Columbus fought in battle in the king's army.

When, however, in the winter of 1490, it was announced that the army was to take the field again, never to leave its camp till Grenada had fallen, Columbus felt that he must make one last endeavor. He insisted that he must have an answer regarding his plans of discovery. The confessor of the queen, Fernando da Talavera, was commanded to obtain the definite answer of the men of learning. Alas! it was fatal to Columbus's hopes. They said that it was not right that great princes should undertake such enterprises on grounds as weak as those which he relied upon.

The sovereigns themselves, however, were more favorable; so was a minority of the council of Salamanca. And the confessor was instructed to tell him that their expenses in the war forbade them from sending him out as a discoverer, but that, when that was well over, they had hopes that they might commission him. This was the end of five years of solicitation, in which he had put his trust in princes. Columbus regarded the answer, as well he might, as only a courtly measure of refusal. And he retired in disgust from the court at Seville.

He determined to lay his plans before the King of France. He was traveling with this purpose, with his son, Diego, now a boy of ten or twelve years of age, when he arrived at night at the hospitable convent of Saint Mary of Rabida, which has been made celebrated by that incident. It is about three miles south of what was then the seaport of Palos, one of the active ports of commercial Spain. The convent stands on level ground high above the sea; but a steep road runs down to the shore of the ocean. Some of its windows and corridors look out upon the ocean on the west and south, and the inmates still show the room in which Columbus used to write, and the inkstand which served his purposes while he lived there. It is maintained as a monument of history by the Spanish government.

At the door of this convent he asked for bread and water for his boy. The prior of the convent was named Juan Perez de Marchena. He was attracted by the appearance of Columbus, still more by his conversation, and invited him to remain as their guest.

When he learned that his new friend was about to offer to France the advantages of a discovery so great as that proposed, he begged him to make one effort more at home. He sent for some friends,

Fernandos, a physician at Palos, and for the brothers Pinzon, who now appear for the first time in a story where their part is distinguished. Together they all persuaded Columbus to send one messenger more to wait upon their sovereigns. The man sent was Rodriguez, a pilot of Lepe, who found access to the queen because Juan Perez, the prior, had formerly been her confessor. She had confidence in him, as she had, indeed, in Columbus. And in fourteen days the friendly pilot came back from Santa Fe with a kind letter from the queen to her friend, bidding him return at once to court. Perez de Marchena saddled his mule at once and before midnight was on his way to see his royal mistress.

Santa Fe was half camp, half city. It had been built in what is called the Vega, the great fruitful plain which extends for many miles to the westward of Grenada. The court and army were here as they pressed their attack on that city. Perez de Marchena had ready access to Queen Isabella, and pressed his suit well. He was supported by one of her favorites, the Marquesa de Moya. In reply to their solicitations, she asked that Columbus should return to her, and ordered that twenty thousand maravedis should be sent to him for his traveling expenses.

This sum was immediately sent by Perez to his friend. Columbus bought a mule, exchanged his worn clothes for better ones, and started, as he was bidden, for the camp.

He arrived there just after the great victory, by which the king and queen had obtained their wish—had taken the noble city of Grenada and ended Moorish rule in Spain. King, queen, court and army were preparing to enter the Alhambra in triumph. Whoever tries to imagine the scene, in which the great procession entered through the gates, so long sealed, or of the moment when the royal banner of Spain was first flying out upon the Tower of the Vela, must remember that Columbus, elate, at last, with hopes for his own great discovery, saw the triumph and joined in the display.

But his success was not immediate, even now. Fernando de Talavera, who had had the direction of the wise council of Salamanca, was now Archbishop of Grenada, whose see had been conferred on him after the victory. He was not the friend of Columbus. And when, at what seemed the final interview with king and queen, he heard Columbus claim the right to one-tenth of all the profits of the enterprise, he protested against such lavish recompense of an adventurer. He was now the confessor of Isabella, as Juan Perez, the friendly prior, had been before. Columbus, however, was proud and firm. He would not yield to the terms prepared by the archbishop. He preferred to break off the negotiation, and again retired from court. He determined, as he had before, to lay his plans before the King of France.

Spain would have lost the honor and the reward of the great discovery, as Portugal and Genoa had lost them, but for Luis de St. Angel, and the queen herself. St. Angel had been the friend of Columbus. He was an important officer, the treasurer of the church revenues of Aragon. He now insisted upon an audience from the queen. It would seem that Ferdinand, though King of Aragon, was not present. St. Angel spoke eloquently. The friendly Marchioness of Moya spoke eagerly and persuasively. Isabella was at last fired with zeal. Columbus should go, and the enterprise should be hers.

It is here that the incident belongs, represented in the statue by Mr. Mead, and that of Miss Hosmer. The sum required for the discovery of a world was only three thousand crowns. Two vessels were all that Columbus asked for, with the pay of their crews. But where were three thousand crowns? The treasury was empty, and the king was now averse to any action. It was at this moment that Isabella said, "The enterprise is mine, for the Crown of Castile. I pledge my jewels for the funds."

The funds were in fact advanced by St. Angel, from the ecclesiastical revenues under his control. They were repaid from the gold brought in the first voyage. But, always afterward, Isabella regarded the Indies as a Castilian possession. The most important officers in its administration, indeed most of the emigrants, were always from Castile.

Columbus, meanwhile, was on his way back to Palos, on his mule, alone. But at a bridge, still pointed out, a royal courier overtook him, bidding him return. The spot has been made the scene of

more than one picture, which represents the crisis, in which the despair of one moment changed to the glad hope which was to lead to certainty.

He returned to Isabella for the last time, before that great return in which he came as a conqueror, to display to her the riches of the New World. The king yielded a slow and doubtful assent. Isabella took the enterprise in her own hands. She and Columbus agreed at once, and articles were drawn up which gave him the place of admiral for life on all lands he might discover; gave him one-tenth of all pearls, precious stones, gold, silver, spices and other merchandise to be obtained in his admiralty, and gave him the right to nominate three candidates from whom the governor of each province should be selected by the crown. He was to be the judge of all disputes arising from such traffic as was proposed; and he was to have one-eighth part of the profit, and bear one-eighth part of the cost of it.

With this glad news he returned at once to Palos. The Pinzons, who had been such loyal friends, were to take part in the enterprise. He carried with him a royal order, commanding the people of Palos to fit out two caravels within ten days, and to place them and their crews at the disposal of Columbus. The third vessel proposed was to be fitted out by him and his friends. The crews were to be paid four months' wages in advance, and Columbus was to have full command, to do what he chose, if he did not interfere with the Portuguese discoveries.

On the 23rd of May, Columbus went to the church of San Giorgio in Palos, with his friend, the prior of St. Mary's convent, and other important people, and the royal order was read with great solemnity:

But it excited at first only indignation or dismay. The expedition was most unpopular. Sailors refused to enlist, and the authorities, who had already offended the crown, so that they had to furnish these vessels, as it were, as a fine, refused to do what they were bidden. Other orders from Court were necessary. But it seems to have been the courage and determination of the Pinzons which carried the preparations through. After weeks had been lost, Martin Alonso Pinzon and his brothers said they would go in person on the expedition. They were well-known merchants and seamen, and were much respected. Sailors were impressed, by the royal authority, and the needful stores were taken in the same way. It seems now strange that so much difficulty should have surrounded an expedition in itself so small. But the plan met then all the superstition, terror and other prejudice of the time.

All that Columbus asked or needed was three small vessels and their stores and crews. The largest ships engaged were little larger than the large yachts, whose races every summer delight the people of America. The Gallega and the Pinta were the two largest. They were called caravels, a name then given to the smallest three-masted vessels. Columbus once uses it for a vessel of forty tons; but it generally applied in Portuguese or Spanish use to a vessel, ranging one hundred and twenty to one hundred and forty Spanish "toneles." This word represents a capacity about one-tenth larger than that expressed by our English "ton."

The reader should remember that most of the commerce of the time was the coasting commerce of the Mediterranean, and that it was not well that the ships should draw much water. The fleet of Columbus, as it sailed, consisted of the Gallega (the Galician), of which he changed the name to the Santa Maria, and of the Pinta and the Nina. Of these the first two were of a tonnage which we should rate as about one hundred and thirty tons. The Nina was much smaller, not more than fifty tons. One writer says that they were all without full decks, that is, that such decks as they had did not extend from stem to stern. But the other authorities speak as if the Nina only was an open vessel, and the two larger were decked. Columbus himself took command of the Santa Maria, Martin Alonso Pinzon of the Pinta, and his brothers, Francis Martin and Vicente Yanez, of the Nina. The whole company in all three ships numbered one hundred and twenty men.

Mr. Harris shows that the expense to the crown amounted to 1,140,000 maravedis. This, as he counts it, is about sixty-four thousand dollars of our money. To this Columbus was to add one-eighth of the cost. His friends, the Pinzons, seem to have advanced this, and to have been afterwards

repaid. Las Casas and Herrera both say that the sum thus added was much more than one-eighth of the cost and amounted to half a million maravedis.

CHAPTER III. – THE GREAT VOYAGE

THE SQUADRON SAILS—REFITS AT CANARY ISLANDS—HOPES AND FEARS OF THE VOYAGE—THE DOUBTS OF THE CREW—LAND DISCOVERED.

At last all was ready. That is to say, the fleet was so far ready that Columbus was ready to start. The vessels were small, as we think of vessels, but he was not dissatisfied. He says in the beginning of his journal, "I armed three vessels very fit for such an enterprise." He had left Grenada as late as the twelfth of May. He had crossed Spain to Palos,² and in less than three months had fitted out the ships and was ready for sea.

The harbor of Palos is now ruined. Mud and gravel, brought down by the River Tinto, have filled up the bay, so that even small boats cannot approach the shore. The traveler finds, however, the island of Saltes, quite outside the bay, much as Columbus left it. It is a small spit of sand, covered with shells and with a few seashore herbs. His own account of the great voyage begins with the words:

"Friday, August 3, 1492. Set sail from the bar of Saltes at 8 o'clock, and proceeded with a strong breeze till sunset sixty miles, or fifteen leagues south, afterward southwest and south by west, which is in the direction of the Canaries."

It appears, therefore, that the great voyage, the most important and successful ever made, began on Friday, the day which is said to be so much disliked by sailors. Columbus never alludes to this superstition.

He had always meant to sail first for the Canaries, which were the most western land then known in the latitude of his voyage. From Lisbon to the famous city of "Quisay," or "Quinsay," in Asia, Toscanelli, his learned correspondent, supposed the distance to be less than one thousand leagues westward. From the Canary islands, on that supposition, the distance would be ten degrees less. The distance to Cipango, or Japan, would be much less.

As it proved, the squadron had to make some stay at the Canaries. The rudder of the Pinta was disabled, and she proved leaky. It was suspected that the owners, from whom she had been forcibly taken, had intentionally disabled her, or that possibly the crew had injured her. But Columbus says in his journal that Martin Alonso Pinzon, captain of the Pinta, was a man of capacity and courage, and that this quieted his apprehensions. From the ninth of August to the second of September, nearly four weeks were spent by the Pinta and her crew at the Grand Canary island, and she was repaired. She proved afterwards a serviceable vessel, the fastest of the fleet. At the Canaries they heard stories of lands seen to the westward, to which Columbus refers in his journal. On the sixth of September they sailed from Gomera and on the eighth they lost sight of land. Nor did they see land again for thirty-three days. Such was the length of the great voyage. All the time, most naturally, they were wishing for signs, not of land perhaps, but which might show whether this great ocean were really different from other seas. On the whole the voyage was not a dangerous one.

According to the Admiral's reckoning—and in his own journal Columbus always calls himself the Admiral—its length was one thousand and eighty-nine leagues. This was not far from right, the real distance being, in a direct line, three thousand one hundred and forty nautical miles, or three thousand six hundred and twenty statute miles.³ It would not be considered a very long voyage for small vessels now. In general the course was west. Sometimes, for special reasons, they sailed south of west. If they had sailed precisely west they would have struck the shore of the United States a little north of the spot where St. Augustine now is, about the northern line of Florida.

² Palos is now so insignificant a place that on some important maps of Spain it will not be found. It is on the east side of the Tinto river; and Huelva, on the west side, has taken its place.

³ The computations from Santa Cruz, in the Canaries, to San Salvador give this result, as kindly made for us by Lieutenant Mozer, of the United States navy.

Had the coast of Asia been, indeed, as near as Toscanelli and Columbus supposed, this latitude of the Canary islands would have been quite near the mouth of the Yang-tse-Kiang river, in China, which was what Columbus was seeking. For nearly a generation afterwards he and his followers supposed that the coast of that region was what they had found.

It was on Saturday, the eighth of September, that they lost sight of Teneriffe. On the eleventh they saw a large piece of the mast of a ship afloat. On the fourteenth they saw a "tropic-bird," which the sailors thought was never seen more than twenty-five leagues from land; but it must be remembered, that, outside of the Mediterranean, few of the sailors had ever been farther themselves. On the sixteenth they began to meet "large patches of weeds, very green, which appeared to have been recently washed away from land." This was their first knowledge of the "Sargasso sea," a curious tract in mid-Atlantic which is always green with floating seaweeds. "The continent we shall find farther on," wrote the confident Admiral.

An observation of the sun on the seventeenth proved what had been suspected before, that the needles of the compasses were not pointing precisely to the north. The variation of the needle, since that time, has been a recognized fact. But this observation at so critical a time first disclosed it. The crew were naturally alarmed. Here was evidence that, in the great ocean, common laws were not to be relied upon. But they had great respect for Columbus's knowledge of such subjects. He told them that it was not the north which had changed, nor the needle, which was true to the north, but the polar star revolved, like other stars, and for the time they were satisfied.

The same day they saw weeds which he was sure were land weeds. From them he took a living crab, whose unintentional voyage eastward was a great encouragement to the bolder adventurer westward. Columbus kept the crab, saying that such were never found eighty leagues from land. In fact this poor crab was at least nine hundred and seventy leagues from the Bahamas, as this same journal proves. On the eighteenth the Pinta ran ahead of the other vessels, Martin Alonso was so sure that he should reach land that night. But it was not to come so soon.

Columbus every day announced to his crew a less distance as the result of the day than they had really sailed. For he was afraid of their distrust, and did not dare let them know how far they were from home. The private journal, therefore, has such entries as this, "Sailed more than fifty-five leagues, wrote down only forty-eight." That is, he wrote on the daily log, which was open to inspection, a distance some leagues less than they had really made.

On the twentieth pelicans are spoken of, on the twenty-first "such abundance of weeds that the ocean seemed covered with them," "the sea smooth as a river, and the finest air in the world. Saw a whale, an indication of land, as they always keep near the coast." To later times, this note, also, shows how ignorant Columbus then was of mid-ocean.

On the twenty-second, to the Admiral's relief, there was a head wind; for the crew began to think that with perpetual east winds they would never return to Spain. They had been in what are known as the trade winds. On the twenty-third the smoother water gave place to a rough sea, and he writes that this "was favorable to me, as it happened formerly to Moses when he led the Jews from Egypt."

The next day, thanks to the headwinds, their progress was less. On the twenty-fifth, Pinzon, of the Pinta, felt sure that they were near the outer islands of Asia as they appeared on the Toscanelli map, and at sunset called out with joy that he saw land, claiming a reward for such news. The crews of both vessels sang "Glory to God in the highest," and the crew of the little Nina were sure that the bank was land. On this occasion they changed from a western course to the southwest. But alas! the land was a fog-bank and the reward never came to Martin Pinzon. On the twenty-sixth, again "the sea was like a river." This was Wednesday. In three days they sailed sixty-nine leagues. Saturday was calm. They saw a bird called "'Rabihorcado,' which never alights at sea, nor goes twenty leagues from land," wrote the confident Columbus; "Nothing is wanting but the singing of the nightingale," he says.

Sunday, the thirtieth, brought “tropic-birds” again, “a very clear sign of land.” Monday the journal shows them seven hundred and seven leagues from Ferro. Tuesday a white gull was the only visitor. Wednesday they had pardelas and great quantities of seaweed. Columbus began to be sure that they had passed “the islands” and were nearing the continent of Asia. Thursday they had a flock of pardelas, two pelicans, a rabihorcado and a gull. Friday, the fifth of October, brought pardelas and flying-fishes.

We have copied these simple intimations from the journal to show how constantly Columbus supposed that he was near the coast of Asia. On the sixth of October Pinzon asked that the course might be changed to the southwest. But Columbus held on. On the seventh the Nina was ahead, and fired a gun and hoisted her flag in token that she saw land. But again they were disappointed. Columbus gave directions to keep close order at sunrise and sunset. The next day he did change the course to west southwest, following flights of birds from the north which went in that direction. On the eighth “the sea was like the river at Seville,” the weeds were very few and they took land birds on board the ships. On the ninth they sailed southwest five leagues, and then with a change of wind went west by north. All night they heard the birds of passage passing.

On the tenth of October the men made remonstrance, which has been exaggerated in history into a revolt. It is said, in books of authority, that Columbus begged them to sail west only three days more. But in the private journal of the tenth he says simply: “The seamen complained of the length of the voyage. They did not wish to go any farther. The Admiral did his best to renew their courage, and reminded them of the profits which would come to them. He added, boldly, that no complaints would change his purpose, that he had set out to go to the Indies, and that with the Lord’s assistance he should keep on until he came there.” This is the only passage in the journal which has any resemblance to the account of the mutiny.

If it happened, as Oviedo says, three days before the discovery, it would have been on the eighth of October. On that day the entry is, “Steered west southwest, and sailed day and night eleven or twelve leagues—at times, during the night, fifteen miles an hour—if the log can be relied upon. Found the sea like the river at Seville, thanks to God. The air was as soft as that of Seville in April, and so fragrant that it was delicious to breathe it. The weeds appeared very fresh. Many land birds, one of which they took, flying towards the southwest, also grajaos, ducks and a pelican were seen.”

This is not the account of a mutiny. And the discovery of Columbus’s own journal makes that certain, which was probable before, that the romantic account of the despair of the crews was embroidered on the narrative after the event, and by people who wanted to improve the story. It was, perhaps, borrowed from a story of Diaz’s voyage. We have followed the daily record to show how constantly they supposed, on the other hand, that they were always nearing land.

With the eleventh of October, came certainty. The eleventh is sometimes spoken of as the day of discovery, and sometimes the twelfth, when they landed on the first island of the new world.

The whole original record of the discovery is this: “Oct. 11, course to west and southwest. Heavier sea than they had known, pardelas and a green branch near the caravel of the Admiral. From the Pinta they see a branch of a tree, a stake and a smaller stake, which they draw in, and which appears to have been cut with iron, and a piece of cane. Besides these, there is a land shrub and a little bit of board. The crew of the Nina saw other signs of land and a branch covered with thorns and flowers. With these tokens every-one breathes again and is delighted. They sail twenty-seven leagues on this course.

“The Admiral orders that they shall resume a westerly course at sunset. They make twelve miles each hour; up till two hours after midnight they made ninety miles.

“The Pinta, the best sailer of the three, was ahead. She makes signals, already agreed upon, that she has discovered land. A sailor named Rodrigo de Triana was the first to see this land. For the Admiral being on the castle of the poop of the ship at ten at night really saw a light, but it was so shut in by darkness that he did not like to say that it was a sign of land. Still he called up Pedro

Gutierrez, the king's chamberlain, and said to him that there seemed to be a light, and asked him to look. He did so and saw it. He said the same to Rodrigo Sanchez of Segovia, who had been sent by the king and queen as inspector in the fleet, but he saw nothing, being indeed in a place where he could see nothing.

"After the Admiral spoke of it, the light was seen once or twice. It was like a wax candle, raised and lowered, which would appear to few to be a sign of land. But the Admiral was certain that it was a sign of land. Therefore when they said the 'Salve,' which all the sailors are used to say and sing in their fashion, the Admiral ordered them to look out well from the forecastle, and he would give at once a silk jacket to the man who first saw land, besides the other rewards which the sovereigns had ordered, which were 10,000 maravedis, to be paid as an annuity forever to the man who saw it first.

"At two hours after midnight land appeared, from which they were about two leagues off."

This is the one account of the discovery written at the time. It is worth copying and reading at full in its little details, for it contrasts curiously with the embellished accounts which appear in the next generation. Thus the historian Oviedo says, in a dramatic way:

"One of the ship boys on the largest ship, a native of Lepe, cried 'Fire!' 'Land!' Immediately a servant of Columbus replied, 'The Admiral had said that already.' Soon after, Columbus said, 'I said so some time ago, and that I saw that fire on the land.'" And so indeed it happened that Thursday, at two hours after midnight, the Admiral called a gentleman named Escobedos, officer of the wardrobe of the king, and told him that he saw fire. And at the break of day, at the time Columbus had predicted the day before, they saw from the largest ship the island which the Indians call Guanahani to the north of them.

"And the first man to see the land, when day came, was Rodrigo of Triana, on the eleventh day of October, 1492." Nothing is more certain than that this was really on the twelfth.

The reward for first seeing land was eventually awarded to Columbus, and it was regularly paid him through his life. It was the annual payment of 10,000 maravedis. A maravedi was then a little less than six cents of our currency. The annuity was, therefore, about six hundred dollars a year.

The worth of a maravedi varied, from time to time, so that the calculations of the value of any number of maravedis are very confusing. Before the coin went out of use it was worth only half a cent.

CHAPTER IV. – THE LANDING ON THE TWELFTH OF OCTOBER

—THE NATIVES AND THEIR NEIGHBORS—SEARCH FOR GOLD—CUBA DISCOVERED—COLUMBUS COASTS ALONG ITS SHORES.

It was on Friday, the twelfth of October, that they saw this island, which was an island of the Lucayos group, called, says Las Casas, “in the tongue of the Indians, Guanahani.” Soon they saw people naked, and the Admiral went ashore in the armed boat, with Martin Alonzo Pinzon and, Vicente Yanez, his brother, who was captain of the Nina. The Admiral unfurled the Royal Standard, and the captain’s two standards of the Greek Cross, which the Admiral raised on all the ships as a sign, with an F. and a Y.; over each letter a crown; one on one side of the {“iron cross symbol”} and the other on the other. When they were ashore they saw very green trees and much water, and fruits of different kinds.

“The Admiral called the two captains and the others who went ashore, and Rodrigo Descovedo, Notary of the whole fleet, and Rodrigo Sanchez of Segovia, and he said that they must give him their faith and witness how he took possession before all others, as in fact he did take possession of the said island for the king and the queen, his lord and lady. . . . Soon many people of the island assembled. These which follow are the very words of the Admiral, in his book of his first navigation and discovery of these Indies.”

October 11-12. “So that they may feel great friendship for us, and because I knew that they were a people who would be better delivered and converted to our Holy Faith by love than by force, I gave to some of them red caps and glass bells which they put round their necks, and many other things of little value, in which they took much pleasure, and they remained so friendly to us that it was wonderful.

“Afterwards they came swimming to the ship’s boats where we were. And they brought us parrots and cotton-thread in skeins, and javelins and many other things. And they bartered them with us for other things, which we gave them, such as little glass beads and little bells. In short, they took everything, and gave of what they had with good will. But it seemed to me that they were a people very destitute of everything.

“They all went as naked as their mothers bore them, and the women as well, although I only saw one who was really young. And all the men I saw were young, for I saw none more than thirty years of age; very well made, with very handsome persons, and very good faces; their hair thick like the hairs of horses’ tails, and cut short. They bring their hair above their eyebrows, except a little behind, which they wear long, and never cut. Some of them paint themselves blackish (and they are of the color of the inhabitants of the Canaries, neither black nor white), and some paint themselves white, and some red, and some with whatever they can get. And some of them paint their faces, and some all their bodies, and some only the eyes, and some only the nose.

“They do not bear arms nor do they know them, for I showed them swords and they took them by the edge, and they cut themselves through ignorance. They have no iron at all; their javelins are rods without iron, and some of them have a fish’s tooth at the end, and some of them other things. They are all of good stature, and good graceful appearance, well made. I saw some who had scars of wounds in their bodies, and I made signs to them (to ask) what that was, and they showed me how people came there from other islands which lay around, and tried to take them captive and they defended themselves. And I believed, and I (still) believe, that they came there from the mainland to take them for captives.

“They would be good servants, and of good disposition, for I see that they repeat very quickly everything which is said to them. And I believe that they could easily be made Christians, for it seems

to me that they have no belief. I, if it please our Lord, will take six of them to your Highnesses at the time of my departure, so that they may learn to talk. No wild creature of any sort have I seen, except parrots, in this island.”

All these are the words of the Admiral, says Las Casas. The journal of the next day is in these words:

Saturday, October 13. “As soon as the day broke, many of these men came to the beach, all young, as I have said, and all of good stature, a very handsome race. Their hair is not woolly, but straight and coarse, like horse hair, and all with much wider foreheads and heads than any other people I have seen up to this time. And their eyes are very fine and not small, and they are not black at all, but of the color of the Canary Islanders. And nothing else could be expected, since it is on one line of latitude with the Island of Ferro, in the Canaries.

“They came to the ship with *almadias*,⁴ which are made of the trunk of a tree, like a long boat, and all of one piece—and made in a very wonderful manner in the fashion of the country—and large enough for some of them to hold forty or forty-five men. And others are smaller, down to such as hold one man alone. They row with a shovel like a baker’s, and it goes wonderfully well. And if it overturns, immediately they all go to swimming and they right it, and bale it with calabashes which they carry.

“They brought skeins of spun cotton, and parrots, and javelins, and other little things which it would be wearisome to write down, and they gave everything for whatever was given to them.

“And I strove attentively to learn whether there were gold. And I saw that some of them had a little piece of gold hung in a hole which they have in their noses. And by signs I was able to understand that going to the south, or going round the island to the southward, there was a king there who had great vessels of it, and had very much of it. I tried to persuade them to go there; and afterward I saw that they did not understand about going.⁵

“I determined to wait till the next afternoon, and then to start for the southwest, for many of them told me that there was land to the south and southwest and northwest, and that those from the northwest came often to fight with them, and so to go on to the southwest to seek gold and precious stones.

“This island is very large and very flat and with very green trees, and many waters, and a very large lake in the midst, without any mountain. And all of it is green, so that it is a pleasure to see it. And these people are so gentle, and desirous to have our articles and thinking that nothing can be given them unless they give something and do not keep it back. They take what they can, and at once jump (into the water) and swim (away). But all that they have they give for whatever is given them. For they barter even for pieces of porringus, and of broken glass cups, so that I saw sixteen skeins of cotton given for three Portuguese centis, that is a blanca of Castile, and there was more than twenty-five pounds of spun cotton in them. This I shall forbid, and not let anyone take (it); but I shall have it all taken for your Highnesses, if there is any quantity of it.

“It grows here in this island, but for a short time I could not believe it at all. And there is found here also the gold which they wear hanging to their noses; but so as not to lose time I mean to go to see whether I can reach the island of Cipango.

“Now as it was night they all went ashore with their *almadias*.”

Sunday, October 14. “At daybreak I had the ship’s boat and the boats of the caravels made ready, and I sailed along the island, toward the north-northeast, to see the other port, * * * what

⁴ Arabic word for raft or float; here it means canoes.

⁵ To this first found land, called by the natives Guanahani, Columbus gave the name of San Salvador. There is, however, great doubt whether this is the island known by that name on the maps. Of late years the impression has generally been that the island thus discovered is that now known as Watling’s island. In 1860 Admiral Fox, of the United States navy, visited all these islands, and studied the whole question anew, visiting the islands himself and working backwards to the account of Columbus’s subsequent voyage, so as to fix the spot from which that voyage began. Admiral Fox decides that the island of discovery was neither San Salvador nor Watling’s island, but the Samana island of the same group. The subject is so curious that we copy his results at more length in the appendix.

there was (there), and also to see the towns, and I soon saw two or three, and the people, who all were coming to the shore, calling us and giving thanks to God. Some brought us water, others things to eat. Others, when they saw that I did not care to go ashore, threw themselves into the sea and came swimming, and we understood that they asked us if we had come from heaven. And an old man came into the boat, and others called all (the rest) men and women, with a loud voice: 'Come and see the men who have come from heaven; bring them food and drink.'

"There came many of them and many women, each one with something, giving thanks to God, casting themselves on the ground, and raising their heads toward heaven. And afterwards they called us with shouts to come ashore.

"But I feared (to do so), for I saw a great reef of rocks which encircles all that island. And in it there is bottom and harbor for as many ships as there are in all Christendom, and its entrance very narrow. It is true that there are some shallows inside this ring, but the sea is no rougher than in a well.

"And I was moved to see all this, this morning, so that I might be able to give an account of it all to your Highnesses, and also (to find out) where I might make a fortress. And I saw a piece of land formed like an island, although it is not one, in which there were six houses, which could be cut off in two days so as to become an island; although I do not see that it is necessary, as this people is very ignorant of arms, as your Highnesses will see from seven whom I had taken, to carry them off to learn our speech and to bring them back again. But your Highnesses, when you direct, can take them all to Castile, or keep them captives in this same island, for with fifty men you can keep them all subjected, and make them do whatever you like.

"And close to the said islet are groves of trees, the most beautiful I have seen, and as green and full of leaves as those of Castile in the months of April and May, and much water.

"I looked at all that harbor and then I returned to the ship and set sail, and I saw so many islands that I could not decide to which I should go first. And those men whom I had taken said to me by signs that there were so very many that they were without number, and they repeated by name more than a hundred. At last I set sail for the largest one, and there I determined to go. And so I am doing, and it will be five leagues from the island of San Salvador, and farther from some of the rest, nearer to others. They all are very flat, without mountains and very fertile, and all inhabited. And they make war upon each other although they are very simple, and (they are) very beautifully formed."

Monday, October 15, Columbus, on arriving at the island for which he had set sail, went on to a cape, near which he anchored at about sunset. He gave the island the name of Santa Maria de la Concepcion.⁶

"At about sunset I anchored near the said cape to know if there were gold there, for the men whom I had taken at the Island of San Salvador told me that there they wore very large rings of gold on their legs and arms. I think that all they said was for a trick, in order to make their escape. However, I did not wish to pass by any island without taking possession of it.

"And I anchored, and was there till today, Tuesday, when at the break of day I went ashore with the armed boats, and landed.

"They (the inhabitants), who were many, as naked and in the same condition as those of San Salvador, let us land on the island, and gave us what we asked of them. * * *

"I set out for the ship. And there was a large almadia which had come to board the caravel Nina, and one of the men from we Island of San Salvador threw himself into the sea, took this boat, and made off; and the night before, at midnight, another jumped out. And the almadia went back so fast that there never was a boat which could come up with her, although we had a considerable advantage. It reached the shore, and they left the almadia, and some of my company landed after them, and they all fled like hens.

⁶ This is supposed to be Caico del Norte.

“And the almadia, which they had left, we took to the caravel Nina, to which from another headland there was coming another little almadia, with a man who came to barter a skein of cotton. And some of the sailors threw themselves into the sea, because he did not wish to enter the caravel, and took him. And I, who was on the stern of the ship, and saw it all, sent for him and gave him a red cap and some little green glass beads which I put on his arm, and two small bells which I put at his ears, and I had his almadia returned, * * * and sent him ashore.

“And I set sail at once to go to the other large island which I saw at the west, and commanded the other almadia to be set adrift, which the caravel Nina was towing astern. And then I saw on land, when the man landed, to whom I had given the above mentioned things (and I had not consented to take the skein of cotton, though he wished to give it to me), all the others went to him and thought it a great wonder, and it seemed to them that we were good people, and that the other man, who had fled, had done us some harm, and that therefore we were carrying him off. And this was why I treated the other man as I did, commanding him to be released, and gave him the said things, so that they might have this opinion of us, and so that another time, when your Highnesses send here again, they may be well disposed. And all that I gave him was not worth four maravedis.”

Columbus had set sail at ten o'clock for a “large island” he mentions, which he called Fernandina, where, from the tales of the Indian captives, he expected to find gold. Half way between this island and Santa Maria, he met with “a man alone in an almadia which was passing” (from one island to the other), “and he was carrying a little of their bread, as big as one's fist, and a calabash of water and a piece of red earth made into dust, and then kneaded, and some dry leaves, which must be a thing much valued among them, since at San Salvador they brought them to me as a present.⁷ And he had a little basket of their sort, in which he had a string of little glass bells and two blancas, by which I knew that he came from the Island of San Salvador. * * * He came to the ship; I took him on board, for so he asked, and made him put his almadia in the ship, and keep all he was carrying. And I commanded to give him bread and honey to eat, and something to drink.

“And thus I will take him over to Fernandina, and I will give him all his property so that he may give good accounts of us, so that, if it please our Lord, when your Highnesses send there, those who come may receive honor, and they may give us of all they have.”

Columbus continued sailing for the island he named Fernandina, now called Inagua Chica. There was a calm all day and he did not arrive in time to anchor safely before dark. He therefore waited till morning, and anchored near a town. Here the man had gone, who had been picked up the day before, and he had given such good accounts that all night long the ship had been boarded by almadias, bringing supplies. Columbus directed some trifle to be given to each of the islanders, and that they should be given “honey of sugar” to eat. He sent the ship's boat ashore for water and the inhabitants not only pointed it out but helped to put the water-casks on board.

“This people,” he says, “is like those of the aforesaid islands, and has the same speech and the same customs, except that these seem to me a somewhat more domestic race, and more intelligent. * * * And I saw also in this island cotton cloths made like mantles. * * *

“It is a very green island and flat and very fertile, and I have no doubt that all the year through they sow panizo (panic-grass) and harvest it, and so with everything else. And I saw many trees, of very different form from ours, and many of them which had branches of many sorts, and all on one trunk. And one branch is of one sort and one of another, and so different that it is the greatest wonder in the world. * * * One branch has its leaves like canes, and another like the lentisk; and so on one tree five or six of these kinds; and all so different. Nor are they grafted, for it might be said that grafting does it, but they grow on the mountains, nor do these people care for them. * * *

“Here the fishes are so different from ours that it is wonderful. There are some like cocks of the finest colors in the world, blue, yellow, red and of all colors, and others painted in a thousand

⁷ Was this perhaps tobacco?

ways. And the colors are so fine that there is no man who does not wonder at them and take great pleasure in seeing them. Also, there are whales. As for wild creatures on shore, I saw none of any sort, except parrots and lizards; a boy told me that he saw a great snake. Neither sheep nor goats nor any other animal did I see; although I have been here a very short time, that is, half a day, but if there had been any I could not have failed to see some of them.” * * *

Wednesday, October 17. He left the town at noon and prepared to sail round the island. He had meant to go by the south and southeast. But as Martin Alonzo Pinzon, captain of the Pinta, had heard, from one of the Indians he had on board, that it would be quicker to start by the northwest, and as the wind was favorable for this course, Columbus took it. He found a fine harbor two leagues further on, where he found some friendly Indians, and sent a party ashore for water. “During this time,” he says, “I went (to look at) these trees, which were the most beautiful things to see which have been seen; there was as much verdure in the same degree as in the month of May in Andalusia, and all the trees were as different from ours as the day from the night. And so (were) the fruits, and the herbs, and the stones and everything. The truth is that some trees had a resemblance to others which there are in Castile, but there was a very great difference. And other trees of other sorts were such that there is no one who could * * * liken them to others of Castile. * * *

“The others who went for water told me how they had been in their houses, and that they were very well swept and clean, and their beds and furniture (made) of things which are like nets of cotton.⁸ Their houses are all like pavilions, and very high and good chimneys.⁹

“But I did not see, among many towns which I saw, any of more than twelve or fifteen houses. * * * And there they had dogs. * * * And there they found one man who had on his nose a piece of gold which was like half a castellano, on which there were cut letters.¹⁰ I blamed them for not bargaining for it, and giving as much as was asked, to see what it was, and whose coin it was; and they answered me that they did not dare to barter it.”

He continued towards the northwest, then turned his course to the east-southeast, east and southeast. The weather being thick and heavy, and “threatening immediate rain. So all these days since I have been in these Indies it has rained little or much.”

Friday, October 19. Columbus, who had not landed the day before, now sent two caravels, one to the east and southeast and the other to the south-southeast, while he himself, with the Santa Maria, the SHIP, as he calls it, went to the southeast. He ordered the caravels to keep their courses till noon, and then join him. This they did, at an island to the east, which he named Isabella, the Indians whom he had with him calling it Saomete. It has been supposed to be the island now called Inagua Grande.

“All this coast,” says the Admiral, “and the part of the island which I saw, is all nearly flat, and the island the most beautiful thing I ever saw, for if the others are very beautiful this one is more so.” He anchored at a cape which was so beautiful that he named it Cabo Famoso, the Beautiful Cape, “so green and so beautiful,” he says, “like all the other things and lands of these islands, that I do not know where to go first, nor can I weary my eyes with seeing such beautiful verdure and so different from ours. And I believe that there are in them many herbs and many trees, which are of great value in Spain for dyes (or tinctures) and for medicines of spicery. But I do not know them, which I greatly regret. And as I came here to this cape there came such a good and sweet odor of flowers or trees from the land that it was the sweetest thing in the world.”

He heard that there was a king in the interior who wore clothes and much gold, and though, as he says, the Indians had so little gold that whatever small quantity of it the king wore it would appear large to them, he decided to visit him the next day. He did not do so, however, as he found the water too shallow in his immediate neighborhood, and then had not enough wind to go on, except at night.

⁸ They are called Hamacas.

⁹ Las Casas says they were not meant for smoke but as a crown, for they have no opening below for the smoke.

¹⁰ A castellano was a piece of gold, money, weighing about one-sixth of an ounce.

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